



Belfast City Council

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| Report to: | Town Planning Committee |
| Subject: | Streamlining the Processing of Minor Planning Applications |
| Date: | 18 October 2012 |
| Reporting Officer: | Mrs Petra Scarborough, Democratic Services Section |
| Contact Officer: | Mrs Petra Scarborough, Democratic Services Section |

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| 1.0 | Relevant Background Information |
| | <p>The Committee will recall that it had previously agreed to adopt revised arrangements with regard to the Council's determination of planning applications of a minor nature using the streamlined consultation process. The revised process applied to the following categories of application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• extension and alterations to dwellings;• minor works, for example, ATM machines, boundary walls, fences, roads in industrial estates, etc• residential garages, garden sheds and other similar development within the cartilage of an existing dwelling;• reserved matters (where there are no objections);• advertisements and direction signs;• electricity lines (up to 33 kv) and substations;• change of house types on approved sites;• shop fronts and minor alterations to commercial business and industrial premises;• new accesses and hard standing serving development;• agricultural buildings, structures and associated works;• minor alterations and extensions to schools, churches, health centres and other educational, civic or community facilities; and• other similar development proposals which are minor in nature, for example, smoking shelters and disability access arrangements. <p>At a subsequent meeting, the Committee agreed to the extension of the above list of types of planning applications which could be considered within the Streamlined Consultation Process, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• conservation area consent;• listed building consent;• change of use; |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all extensions and alterations; • floodlighting; • housing applications for up to five dwellings; • renewable energy generators; • solar power; • domestic wind turbines; and • open space facilities. |
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| 2.0 | Key Issues |
| | <p>The Minister of the Environment has written to the Council, dated 10 October 2012, advising that the existing scheme is being extended to include all applications currently considered under the streamlined consultation process together with the undernoted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. all other minor and intermediate applications; 2. housing applications up to a maximum of 25 units; and 3. office accommodation up to a maximum of 200 sq metres. <p>The Minister has advised that, to date, the majority of Councils have agreed to the enhanced scheme and have accepted that it will improve efficiencies as well as improving working relationships between the Department of the Environment and the Council. The Minister's letter is attached as appendix 1.</p> <p>In considering the Minister's letter, the Committee may wish to explore the implications of the existing streamlined planning system, any further extension to the system and the impact on the role of Members and the Committee including any support for more considered assessment of the streamlined list.</p> <p>Previous guidance given by departmental officials stated that the level of streamlined delegation appropriate to each Council can be modified in discussion between the divisional manager and the authority and it may be appropriate to consider this in more detail in the context of current experiences and what is proposed.</p> <p>Members will be aware that the current Belfast Divisional Planning Manager, Mr Neil Dunlop, is scheduled to retire in October 2012. As authorised by the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the Council, Mr Dunlop is to be seconded to the Council on part-time basis from the 31 October 2012 to assist with the necessary preparations for the transfer of statutory planning. Accordingly, the Committee may wish to defer consideration of the Minister's letter to enable more detailed discussions and further exploration to take place at a special meeting.</p> |

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| 3.0 | Resource Implications |
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| 4.0 | Equality Implications |
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| 5.0 | Recommendations |
| | The Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to defer consideration of the Minister's letter to enable more detailed discussions and further exploration to take place at a Special Committee meeting early in November 2012. |

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| 6.0 | Decision Tracking |
| | Mrs Petra Scarborough, November 2012 |

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| 7.0 | Key to Abbreviations |
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| 8.0 | Documents Attached |
| | Appendix 1 – Letter from Minister Attwood dated 10 October 2012. |