

Thoughts on improving the Planning Process (Development Management)

1. Reports of Handling

- a. Maps:
 - i. Background:

Reports of handling feature maps of the ground the application relates to. There are usually two maps, one at 1:50,000 and one at 1:25,000. When printed on a black & white printer, these appear as a black blob on a map.
 - ii. Comments:
 - 1. There is no scale given on the maps
 - 2. There is no detail on the maps
 - iii. Suggestions:
 - 1. There should be a scale on the maps
 - 2. A plan should be included showing the proposed works to be done, preferably the proposed site plan
 - 3. In the case of buildings, there should be an elevation drawing
- b. Objections and letters of support
 - i. Background:

Currently Objections and letters of Support are summarised
 - ii. Comments:
 - 1. The summary can be confusing and often fails to highlight the main areas of concern of objectors
 - 2. When sitting on DMC, I always read the letters of Objection and often print them out in order to better understand why the matter is coming to DMC (most applications coming to committee are because they are recommended for approval, but there are more than 6 households objecting to the application)
 - iii. Suggestions:
 - 1. Letters of Objection and Support should be contained verbatim in the report and the summary should be omitted

2. Referrals to DMC

- a. Background:
 - i. Currently, referrals to DMC occur when the Quality Manager decides a matter should go to committee and where 6 households object to an application.
- b. Comments:
 - i. Community Councils are treated as one household, when in fact their consultee comments can be the result of widespread consultation and in some cases are the result of meetings attended by large numbers of residents. This causes upset with Community Councils on a regular basis and goes against empowering Communities. Fife, Angus, Dundee and Aberdeenshire allow automatic referral when a Community Council objects to an application.
 - ii. Fife and Angus Councils require only 5 individual objections, Stirling require "significant local objections", Aberdeenshire require 5 Households. Perth and Kinross are therefore setting a higher bar for matters to be referred to their planning committee (DMC) than many other Local Authorities.

- iii. Local Members have no way of referring an application to the Development Management Committee. Stirling and Aberdeenshire allow Local Members to refer planning applications to their planning committees.
- c. Suggestions:
 - i. Our Current policy of not triggering a referral to DMC on receipt of a Community Council objection is at odds with Fife, Angus, Dundee and Aberdeenshire Councils. It is suggested that we adjust our rules to allow an automatic triggering of referral to DMC when an objection is made by a Community Council.
 - ii. Our current policy of 6 household objections causes problems where the application is in a small community or a rural area as there may not be 6 households affected by the application. It is suggested that the Fife and Angus policy of 5 individual objections triggering a referral to DMC be adopted.
 - iii. Our Current Policy of not allowing Local Members to refer an application to DMC, is at odds with the policies of Stirling and Aberdeenshire Councils. It is suggested that the policy of Aberdeenshire Council be considered for adoption, this states: "At least 2 Local Members in the Ward in which the development is proposed, having been given prior notification of the planning officers recommendation to grant permission, request in writing within 5 clear working days".

3. Comment Dates

- a. Background:

Currently the period allowed for comments is triggered when the application is validated. Restarting or stopping the clock rarely happens.
- b. Comments:
 - i. Often the dates for comments do not fit with Community Council meeting dates and for this reason, the Community Council is unable to discuss the matter in public, having to make a decision and then report it to the next Community Council meeting. This goes against the philosophy of transparency. Matters are often raised at Community Council meetings from the general public present, which can have a bearing on the matter being discussed.
 - ii. On occasion additional information is sought from the developer, which can have a material bearing on the application. The clock does not get stopped pending the receipt of this information. Nor does the clock get reset following the receipt of this information.
- c. Suggestions:
 - i. A method should be found whereby Community Council meeting dates are taken into account, thereby allowing them to discuss the matter in public in order to garner the thoughts of residents.
 - ii. Where a material piece of information is sought from the developer, the clock should be restarted from the date the information is made public.

4. Weekly Lists

- a. Background:
 - i. The weekly list is produced and sent out once a week, this includes: Reference Number; Ward No; Development, Location, Name and Address of Applicant and Agent(if any); Planning officer

- b. Comments:
 - i. There is one ward listed in each case. In some cases, other wards are affected by the application (e.g. windfarms)
 - ii. Ward numbers are sometimes missing
 - iii. The planning officer field is blank
- c. Suggestions:
 - i. Consideration could be given to incorporating more than one ward when an application affects a number of wards. An recent example of this might be application reference 10/02181/FLM - Variation of Condition (3) of Planning Permission 84/956/MW to enable the winning and working of minerals to continue to 2035 at Glendevon Quarry, Glenquey. This application sits within the Strathallan Ward, but directly affects the Kinross-shire ward. Mentioning both would trigger review by the relevant Community Councils.
 - ii. The procedure being followed should be reviewed to ensure that ward numbers are always inserted.
 - iii. The Planning officer field should be filled or taken off.

5. Scheme of Delegation - Definition of which applications need to go automatically to DMC

- a. Background:
 - i. Perth and Kinross Council use the definition "Member or Chief Officer" for applications which must go to DMC.
- b. Comments:
 - i. Fife Council use the definition "members of staff involved in the consideration of planning applications, Fife Councillors and senior Fife Council staff."
 - ii. Angus Council use the definition "elected members of Angus Council, senior members of staff employed by Angus Council or those staff working closely with elected member"
 - iii. Dundee Council use the definition "An application submitted by or on behalf of an Elected Member of the Council."
 - iv. Stirling Council use the definition: "A member of the Planning Authority or by members of staff directly involved in the planning process"
 - v. Clackmannanshire Council use the definition "Any application by a member of the Council"
 - vi. Aberdeenshire Council use the definition "By, or on behalf of, an elected Member, or their spouse or partner; or on behalf of, a member of staff in the Development Management and Building Standards service or Planning Policy and Environment service"
- c. Suggestion:
 - i. I prefer the Aberdeenshire Council definition, excluding the reference to Planning Policy and Environment service, which might be changed to reflect the PKC structure. The rationale for this is that our definition excludes those employed in delivering Development Management decisions, which could potentially be seen as allowing unreasonable influence on a planning decision.

6. Planning portal

- a. Background:
 - i. The planning portal is now the main route for people to view and comment on planning applications received by the Council. The

system used by the Council is the same as other Local Authorities.
However the page setups are different.

- b. Comments:
 - i. Various items of data are difficult to find on the existing site.
- c. Recommendations:
 - i. The PKC portal has 6 tabs including, Details, Comments, Constraints, Documents, Related Cases, Map.
Fife and Clackmannanshire have only 5 tabs. Both exclude the Constraints tab. Is this ever used? If not then it is recommended that it be removed.
 - ii. The PKC portal has the following sub headings under the Details page: Summary, Further Information, Contacts, Important Dates. Fife have: Summary, Further Information, Important Dates.
Clackmannanshire have: Summary, Further Information, Important Dates. Only PKC have the Contacts page and this page has only Local Member information for the specific ward the application lies in. The result of this extra page is potentially that Local Members get more contact on planning matters than they would should the page not exist. In addition, the lead officer is not on this page, resulting in difficulties for users in finding this information. It is recommended that this page and the links to it be removed.
 - iii. The basic search function is awful, one has to know the exact postcode or correct address. Try finding Glenquoy for example. I suggest that the managers of the site are made aware of this and asked to address it as a priority.
 - iv. The map search is awful. Incredibly clunky and slow. One has to know exactly where an application is situated and one has to zoom in about 10 times in order for the applications to show. In the case of Glenquoy, the extant application doesn't even appear. I suggest that the managers of the site are made aware of this and asked to address it as a priority.