

**PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING – 4<sup>th</sup> MAY 2021**

**DELEGATED POWERS OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Councillors will be aware that proceedings seeking to allow virtual meetings to continue after 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 have now been heard in High Court, but unfortunately no decision has yet been made.

As the date of the next Planning Meeting is 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021, should the High Court rule that virtual meeting must cease on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021, this will mean that it will be illegal to hold the next Planning Committee meeting virtually and the practicality of holding face to face Planning Meetings will then come into question.

There are 13 members of the Planning Committee, 2 ETC officers, plus the Planning Advisor present at each Planning Meeting and we also have to give consideration that members of the public/press will also be permitted to attend any meeting.

With this number of people we would not be able to hold Planning Meetings safely in the Council Chamber, as we would not be able to provide the required social distancing measures in view of Covid-19.

An alternative option would be hold Planning Meetings at one of the Community Centres, but as hirers are now resuming classes this would mean it would be likely that we would have to cancel hirers to facilitate the meetings. By doing this, it would impact on the Council's income which has already been severely affected over the last year and it could also upset regular hirers, as many make block bookings several weeks/months in advance.

The other issues we have with holding Planning Meetings at one of the Community Centres are that we have no internet connections and also with a lack of projector screens this would create difficulty, as we would be unable to project plans on a screen.

I am therefore asking the Planning Committee to consider and agree the reintroduction of the delegated powers in relation to Planning, which were in place at the start of 2020. These delegated powers however, would only be introduced should the High Court rule that virtual meetings are to cease on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021. If the High Court rules that virtual meetings can continue after 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021, then Planning Meetings would continue as they are now, but by having the delegated powers agreed in principle, it would mean that we have a "just in case" plan in place and are prepared for any eventuality, well before the next Planning Meeting to ensure that ETC can continue to function and fulfil its responsibilities.

Emma Carroll  
Deputy Town Clerk  
26<sup>th</sup> April 2021