

Planning Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 17 August 2017

Planning Committee Training and Awareness Raising Programme

Item number	6.2
Report number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to propose a training and awareness programme for the Planning Committee and its subcommittees, to build on the recent induction training workshops.

This programme is an important part of supporting Committee members in their promotion of key economic development, social and environmental objectives set by the Council and how they relate to the Development Plan and the Council's planning decisions.

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Planning Committee Training and Awareness Raising Programme

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee agrees the priorities for training and awareness raising over the next 12 months and the indicative programme of workshops.

2. Background

- 2.1 A member training and awareness raising programme has been in place for the Planning Committee over the last three administrative terms of the Council. Previous members of Planning Committee have confirmed that such a programme provides a helpful way to build awareness and understanding of planning issues for Edinburgh and the wider city region. Similarly the programme has facilitated improved awareness and mutual understanding with partner organisations and key stakeholders, including government agencies, local partners and the development sector.
- 2.2 The programme is designed around practice and subjects recommended by the Scottish Government and the Improvement Service to assist members of a planning committee when they make planning decisions on a range of significant and sometimes contentious issues. This may be major applications or complex policy decisions which require finely balanced judgements.
- 2.3 Over the last five years, a range of topics have been covered which supported the key policy programme of that committee and assisted in the decision-making around current types of development.
- 2.4 Additionally the last committee continued the practice of holding an annual Planning Committee Tour, to give members an opportunity to get an 'on the ground' understanding of key planning issues. The tour visited key developments which had been completed and allowed a reflection on planning objectives in discussion with developers, community representatives and members of the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel.

3. Main report

- 3.1 Members of Planning Committee undertook induction training at the end of May 2017 as part of the overall Council programme. It provided the basic training required before an elected member can take part in planning decisions.
- 3.2 The proposed specialist workshop and awareness raising programme builds on that induction training and covers the period from August 2017 to June 2018. The programme will be based around two hour workshops and five dates have been added to the Council diary for Mondays as follows:
- 7 August 2017 (completed)
 - 2 October 2017
 - 4 December 2017
 - 26 February 2018
 - 14 May 2018 (full day tour included)
- 3.3 The format of workshops will be interactive sessions with lead speakers introducing subjects and allowing time for discussion. Representatives from partner organisations and the development sector will be invited to contribute to the sessions. Although subjects are allocated to dates (paragraph 3.5) the programme may need to be flexible so that priority issues can be addressed when appropriate.
- 3.4 As part of the ongoing Review of the Planning System, the Scottish Government is considering how best to deliver training for elected members who serve on planning committees. This may include mandatory training. In the interim, the Minister for Local Government and Housing wrote to planning authorities in June 2017 offering financial assistance in the form of grants to assist with the delivery of training. An application for grant assistance has been approved to assist with delivery of training in three subject areas of development economics, community empowerment and placemaking as part of the following programme. Subject to the completion of a grant agreement, the resource will be used to support the engagement of specialist trainers / speakers at the workshops through the Improvement Service which has a role in coordinating such workshops to share experience across planning authorities.
- 3.5 Proposed programme for 2017-18
- 3.5.1 Leadership themes:
- 7 August: Improving the quality of design and the aims of the Edinburgh Design Guidance
 - 4 December: Development economics, how projects are financed and factors that can hinder development
 - 26 February: Community engagement and synergies between land use and community planning

3.5.2 Partnership themes:

2 October: Developing the city – estate management strategies of major landholders such as the universities, NHS, and major infrastructure operators.

3.5.3 Practice themes:

14 May: place making and masterplanning in practice – learning from completed developments. This will be a full day workshop involving a tour of various sites.

- 3.6 The new committee structure agreed by Council on 22 June 2017 includes strategic development issues within the remit of the Housing and Economy Committee. This includes the statutory development plan (strategic development plan, local development plan and statutory supplementary guidance). Accordingly, the Planning Committee Training and Awareness Raising Programme may be of assistance also to members of that committee. There is capacity to invite members of other committees to attend such workshops.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 Committee members feel confident and informed to make decisions relating to planning policy and development proposals.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no new financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. Provision for elected member training is contained in the service revenue budget.
- 5.2 An application for grant assistance of up to £1,500 to support the programme was made in response to the invitation to planning authorities from the Minister for Local Government and Housing. Confirmation has been received that grant assistance will be available and an agreement is being prepared by Scottish Government.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There are no perceived risks associated with this report.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 There are positive impacts on equalities as the up-skilling of Planning Committee members can help to promote understanding which can foster good relations and lead to good placemaking thereby reducing issues of poverty and health inequality.

7.2 There are no negative impacts as a result of this report.

8. Sustainability impact

8.1 The proposals in this report will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh because it will highlight the importance of creating good places and a greater understanding of the planning system can have a positive impact on achieving sustainable, economic development.

9. Consultation and engagement

9.1 Member feedback during the induction training held on 30 and 31 May 2017 has been used to inform this training programme.

10. Background reading/external references

None

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: David Leslie, Chief Planning Officer

E-mail: david.leslie@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 3948

11. Links

Coalition Pledges

Council Priorities

**Single Outcome
Agreement**

Appendices none