

ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

28 JULY 2020

Member Questions

1. The following questions have been asked by Cllr Bullivant

Question 1

The policies of the council are decided by the executive. Such policies are passed to officers who base their professional recommendations upon these policies.

When an officer, having followed the requirements of such a policy makes a recommendation that confirms that an application meets the requirements of the agreed policy is it appropriate that an executive member votes against the officer recommendation?

Response from the Leader

Planning applications are decided individually on their merits taking account of national and local planning policy and other material planning considerations. Policies are often subjective in nature and can be interpreted differently. Therefore it is possible for any member of the Planning Committee to vote either way based on personal judgement of all relevant factors. Where other policy has been made by Executive, decisions are made within the confines of policy but also often taking account of Executive's political views, which are obviously not for officers to advocate

Question 2

This issue has been recognised by another local council who have changed their committee membership to ensure that executive members do not take part in decisions made in committees where such policies apply.

Should Executive members be excluded from committees such as planning where a potential conflict of interest arise?

Response from the Leader

The issue of whether Executive members should be members of the Planning Committee, a non-executive function, is a matter of debate. Personally, I do not have an issue with such; others may have different views. The Constitution Working Group, of which the Conservative Group Leader like me is a member could consider this but it hasn't to date – I am happy to include this on a future agenda of the group. Nevertheless, the position always remains that any person with a conflict of interest, to which our Code of Conduct refers, should act in accordance with the Code.