

REPORT: Development Committee Processes Update	
Executive Summary	This report focussed on a review of the 'Call-In Form Process' that results in items being 'tabled' for 'decision' by Development Committee.
Options considered	This report does not consider options (with the exception of 'not doing' the elements proposed at paragraph 2.10).
Consultation(s)	The main contents of the report have been discussed with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement and the Development Committee Chair.
Recommendations	That the new version of the Call In Form (at Appendix 1) be agreed for use from 1 st September 2025.
Reasons for recommendations	The recommendation sets out the proposed outcome of a review of the Call In Form process that has taken place (i.e. 12 months after the matter was discussed at Committee on 25 th July 2024).
Background papers	<p>Planning Service Improvement Update Report – Development Committee – 25th July 2025.</p> <p>Cal In Form and Guidance Note (sent weekly to all councillors within an email containing the 'weekly list' of (planning) applications validated).</p>

Wards affected	All
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr Andrew Brown
Contact Officer	Russell Williams

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	Customer Focus
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	No direct links to the MTFS
Council Policies & Strategies	Not applicable

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	No
Has the public interest test been applied	N/A
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	None

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This report looks at the current 'Call In Form' process started from 1st September 2025 – following agreement at Committee on 24th July 2025.
- 1.2 The process was introduced to ensure consistency, make the process more transparent and to ensure there is a published reason as to why matters are 'Called In' and by whom.
- 1.3 A year on the process has been reviewed and it is recommended that the Council should continue with the 'Form' – but with some minor changes being made to it and the accompanying 'Guidance Note'.
- 1.4 The issue is covered in a more detail in Section 2 of this report.
- 1.5 It should be noted that work is underway on reviewing the Council's Constitution and a new version is likely to be discussed at Council in the coming months. While the 'Planning' section of the Constitution may well change – it is not anticipated that it will be amended in a manner that fundamentally changes the rules around what applications are - and aren't – considered by Committee. Therefore it is not anticipated that the new Constitution will have any bearing on this process.
- 1.6 However – the position with the proposed 'National Scheme of Delegation' may well be different – as the consultations that have taken place on that suggest that the Government are likely to mandate a new system is introduced that would remove any involvement of local councillors, town or parish councils or local people in determining or influencing what goes to Committee. This matter was most recently discussed at Development Committee on 27th June 2025 (see [Dev Comm MHCLG Consultation Papers](#)). For the avoidance of doubt, the Council is opposed to the reduction of local democratic involvement in the process that the Government appears to be intent on introducing. If a 'national scheme' is introduced, then it will supplant the Council's Constitution as it relates to this matter and would probably mean that the Call In Form would be redundant from that point onwards.

2. Substance of Report

- 2.1 The current system has been in effect since 1st September 2024.
- 2.2 It basically means that whoever wishes to 'call a matter' in to Development Committee has to fill in a set form and submit it centrally to Council Officers. Council Officers then complete the form and – if necessary – share drafts of it with the person who initially filled it in. When it is finalised it is published on the Council web-site and parts of it are included within the subsequent Committee Report (including the full text of the 'reason' for the Call In).
- 2.3 Every week, all Councillors are sent a 'Weekly List' of newly 'validated' applications, a copy of the Form and a copy of the Guidance Notes. Councillors can also use the form through the 'consideration' period of the application.

- 2.4 For the avoidance of doubt, if a Councillor wishes to Call In an application, then they can do so providing the request accords with the Constitution – i.e. officers do not have the ability to ‘over-rule’ the Councillor due to possible concerns about the quality of the reason given.
- 2.5 For the period 1st September 2024 to 31st July 2025 (i.e. 11 months) the following statistics have been extracted from our records:
- 40 forms have been received
 - Nearly a third of them have been submitted by Officers (i.e. mainly the Assistant Director for Planning)
 - 21 different councillors have submitted at least one form
 - No councillor has called in more than three applications
 - 51 applications have been considered by Committee in that same 11 month period.
- 2.6 While records haven’t been kept on this matter, Officers are of the view that in about half the cases where a councillor has submitted the form, they have gone back to the councillor to query something about the form (e.g. to suggest the reason could be a bit clearer or that it could be shortened (e.g. with the longer version submitted as a representation). But in all those cases, agreement has easily been reached and the point about the councillor having primacy in the matter is clear (see paragraph 2.4 above).
- 2.7 It is also clear that councillors can choose to complete the form in a manner where they effectively ‘pre-determine’ their position on the application – but they can also choose a neutral form of wording which means that they haven’t pre-determined their position e.g. there is a big difference between submissions using wording such as *“I support this application because (etc)”* and *“I believe Committee should be asked to consider the compatibility of this proposal with Policy X .. (etc)”*.
- 2.8 Officers are of the view that the new system works reasonably well and should remain in place. It is certainly helping the Council achieve the aims set out in paragraph 1.2 above (i.e. consistency, transparency and having a published reason as to why matters are ‘Called In’ and by whom).

2.9 Officers would though suggest a few minor alterations to the form. These are all shown in **yellow** highlight on the form at **Appendix 1**. The Committee could choose not to make them – or to make other changes. They can be summarised as:

- Updates relating to some amendments to job titles;
- Adding in reference to the fact that our Development Manager can now also call matters in – as recently authorised by the Director for Service Delivery;
- Inclusion of two additional questions in the ‘office completion’ section – to record which officer finalised the form and that the form meets the provisions of the constitution; and,
- Explaining more clearly how the answer to the ‘Next Available Committee’ should be interpreted.

2.10 Officers have also reviewed the Guidance Notes (see **Appendix 2**) and do not believe that they require any amendment at this time. However, if the Constitution is amended, then the section on the final page starting ‘Part 5 ...’ that is followed by a list of eleven issues will almost certainly be out-of-date – even if, just, by referring to the wrong page numbers. Officers will ensure that section is updated - in the light of any new Constitution – i.e. to ensure it refers to the correct pages, titles and / or issues.

3. Corporate Priorities

3.1 The topic covered by this Report closely relates to parts of ‘A Strong, Responsible and Accountable Council’ Priority of the Corporate Plan 2023-2027.

[Note: Sections 4 and 5 are shortened versions of the relevant sections from the last time the Call In Form was reported to Committee. The Assistant Director for Planning has taken the view that there aren’t any material changes since then that would necessitate – or make useful - a new consultation with those two senior officers]

4. Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report.

Comments from the S151 Officer:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this paper

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 While there are not thought to be any legal implications directly associated with this report, there would be implications – and potentially significant one's – if the Government bring forward mandatory changes to how our Development Committee – and planning decision making – processes operate.

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

This report sets out a proposed procedure around planning committee and related decision making.

6. Risks

- 6.1 There are not thought to be any risks associated with this report as it does – effectively – advocate the continuation of a system that has been in place since September 2024.

7. Net Zero Target

- 7.1 No implications for this update report.

8. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- 8.1 No impact identified with this update report.

9. Community Safety issues

- 9.1 No impact on community safety issues with this update.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 It is recommended that:
- the new version of the Call In Form (at **Appendix 1**) be agreed for use from 1st September 2025.