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Angelika Kaufhold
Overview and Scrutiny
Democratic Services
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29 June 2012

Dear Angelika

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 7th March 2012

I thank you for your letter of 27th June, on behalf of Councillor Parbutt and given its content, I have spoken to my colleagues, Sue Flack, Tony Kirkham and Claire Richmond.

It seems to me that there are 3 key issues being raised by the Committee:

- Ward Councillor engagement in budget decisions
- Ward Councillor engagement in planning decisions
- More general Ward Councillor engagement

Budget Process

The budget process is increasingly an all-year round process as the search for savings and more efficient ways of working intensifies in response to economic pressures, coupled with the Coalition Government's austerity programme.

The formal budget proposals are set out in the budget booklet, which this year is scheduled to be considered by Executive Board on 18th December, prior to being considered by Council on 4th March.

Specific budget proposals are developed by Portfolio Holders, with Officer support and I am aware that the budget booklet is separately presented to political groups.

I know that, from experience, Area Committees also ask for more detailed briefings on budget proposals that specifically affect certain areas of the city and that these have been provided, forming part of the broader consultation process.



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My colleague, Claire Richmond, is developing a proposed budget consultation process for the 2013/14 budget and if there are specific suggestions to enhance or improve upon last year's process, then I suggest these ideas are raised with Claire directly.

Planning Decisions

I have spoken to my colleague, Sue Flack, about the current arrangements for considering planning applications.

I understand that each Councillor receives a weekly list of all planning applications by email and that all applications are set out on the City Council's website; this can be viewed on a Ward by Ward basis.

If there is a sizeable application that may have a significant impact on a particular Ward, the relevant Planning Officer is able to provide a more detailed briefing to the Ward Councillor, either on a one to one basis or via Area Committee if timescales allow. For some applications, the Planning Officer may identify this but it is also helpful if Councillors could identify any applications of contention, which may not always be obvious to the Planning Officer at first glance.

Ward Councillor Engagement

As part of the new Neighbourhoods Management structure, each ward has an allocated Neighbourhood Development Officer (NDO). The NDO should be helping to support Ward Councillors in their Ward role and as such, I've asked that the list of weekly planning applications is also sent to NDOs.

On a more general level, we are also developing Ward performance reports, which the NDO will present at each Area Committee; it is hoped that this will act as a catalyst for debate about the key performance issues impacting upon the ward on a quarterly basis.

I hope the above note is of some assistance and if I can be of any further help, then please do not hesitate to contact me; alternatively, please liaise with Tony, Sue or Claire on the specifics.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely



Andy Vaughan
Director for Neighbourhood Services

Cc Tony Kirkham
Sue Flack
Dave Halstead
Heidi May

John Marsh
Dorothy Holmes
All Neighbourhood Development Officers