

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL/CABINET MEETING**  
**21<sup>st</sup> FEBRUARY 2008**

**Recommendations from Community & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee 7<sup>th</sup>**  
**February 2008**  
**The Planning Bill**

The Committee received a report from the Head of Planning Health and Environment regarding proposals set out in the Planning Bill. The Committee noted that the Bill received its second reading in the House of Commons in December 2007 and was now at the Commons Committee stage.

Members discussed the key elements the contained in the Bill, of which 75% relates to major infrastructure policy and decision making. The remaining 25% of the Bill proposes reforms to the current Town & County Planning Act which Members felt would be of much greater local interest.

In short the key issues contained in the Bill are;

- A new Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC)
- National Policy Statements (NPS)
- Streamlining the Local Development Framework
- A new Community Infrastructure Levy
- A review of officer decisions

Members discussed, in detail, the implications of the Bill's proposals to review officer decisions. They were concerned that planning applications, determined by officers under delegated authority, could then be subject to panel of members, not necessarily from the local area. This would apply where the application had been refused or conditions attached to the permission.

Members raised concerns regarding this element of the Bill. They felt that, as they would not have enough local knowledge to determine applications from neighbouring districts, they would not expect Members from neighbouring districts to have enough local knowledge to determine applications in Wyre Forest. It was also noted that, if implemented, it could affect officer / member relations.

**RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:**

**A letter be written to the Local Government Association and M.P's detailing the concerns raised regarding the 'review of officer decision' element of the Planning Bill. Concerns raised include:**

- 1. Members determining planning applications without local knowledge.**
- 2. Officer / Member relations.**
- 3. Government timescales for decisions on planning applications not being met.**