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| <b>Committee(s):</b>  |  |              | <b>Date(s):</b>     |
| Planning & Transportation Committee   |  | For decision | 25 July 2017        |
| <b>Subject:</b><br>Public Comments in Planning Reports  |  |              | <b>Public</b>       |
| <b>Report of:</b><br>Chief Planning Officer   |  |              | <b>For Decision</b> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Summary</b></p> <p>Over the last few Committees, Planning application have been reported which have attracted a substantial number of public comments, both for and against the proposals at a level very unusual for the City of London.</p> <p>Some Members have queried whether it is necessary to attach the comments and expressed concern at the volume of paper that this generates.</p> <p>Officers undertook to review the position and report back.</p> |  |              |                     |
| <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <p>Recommend that the Committee maintains the current report format</p>   |  |              |                     |

### **Main Report**

#### **Background**

1. Over the last few Committees, planning applications have been reported which have attracted a substantial number of public comments, both for and against the proposals at a level very unusual for the City of London Corporation.

#### **Current Position**

2. The City Corporation's approach is to summarise the comments in the body of the report and to attach the emails/letters received.
3. The Statement of Community Involvement (July 2016) at para. 3.26 states

*When an application is referred to the Planning and Transportation Committee, a summary of all relevant comments or objections are included in the report and the comments are attached or placed in the Members' Reading Room. In the case of delegated decisions, the comments are summarised in the report and held on the planning file.*

4. The comments are included in the report itself rather than placed in the Members' Reading Room as a separate bundle, as being the better way to ensure that they are available to Members.
5. Members will be aware that one of the grounds for reporting cases to Committee is that 5 or more objections have been received. This threshold means that there maybe 5 or many hundred representations. While this may be burdensome to read, this approach makes it transparent so that if there were a judicial review of the Committee's decision it is clear that Members have had the relevant information available to them.
6. Some Members have queried whether it is necessary to attach the comments and expressed concern at the volume of paper that this generates, whilst others have appreciated that the information is readily available to them. Members may opt to receive their papers electronically only. This gives the opportunity to reduce the paper copies printed. The number of paper copies available to officers has been substantially reduced.
7. It is inevitable that both objectors and supporters will make points that repeat the points of others. Complaints are received when commentators consider that their comments have not been adequately summarised in the body of the report.
8. Comments are put in date order received and do not differentiate between supporters and objectors because not all comments are clearly for or against a recommendation and some comments may cover both positions.
9. Officers undertook to review the position, particularly in relation to practice at other London Planning Authorities and to report back.
10. A survey was undertaken of practice at other London Planning Authorities through the auspices of the Association of London Borough Planning Officers.
11. They were asked the following questions about how they reported comments to their Committee:

When you have individual comments do you:

1. Summarise them in the report only
2. Summarise them in the report and include them in the report

If you include the comments do you:

3. Summarise and integrate them within the report
4. Summarise them and have a separate bundle of comments as an appendix
5. Not summarise them but only have a separate bundle as an appendix
6. Summarise them and have a separate bundle available for your councillors in paper form elsewhere
7. Summarise them in the report and refer your councillors to a website where the comments have been recorded

8. Not summarise them but only refer them to them being available elsewhere in paper form
9. Not summarise them but only refer them being available on a website
10. Would you adopt the same approach whether there were 10 or 500 comments?

When you have a petition, do you?

11. Attach the comments only with a reference to the number of signatures
12. Attach the signatures as well

Please add any comments that you think would be useful in describing how you deal with comment

## **The results**

12. We received 11 responses which are summarised in the attached Appendix 1.
13. It is to be noted that 9 out of 11 authorities adopt the same practice as the City, except 1 which uses a separate bundle of comments and 2 summarise the comments only.

## **Proposals and recommendation**

15. It is recommended that the current report format is maintained. The current approach makes it transparent so that if there were a judicial review of the Committee's decision it is clear that Members have had the relevant information available to them.
16. However, if Members wish to adopt a different approach, the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) would need to be altered to reflect the Committee's decision. While there is no legal requirement to consult on the proposed amendment, it is best practice and the City Corporation has always done so in the past.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 -

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