Appendix 6

Planning Applications Sub-Committee Panel Arrangements - Draft Protocol

1. Purpose and status

1.1 This Protocol governs the operation of the three Planning Applications Sub-Committee Panels.

1.2 It is intended to:

- provide a transparent and predictable basis for Panel membership;
- maintain an appropriate balance of planning experience across the three Panels;
- discourage short-term changes to the membership of the Planning and Transportation Committee for the purpose of securing a place on a particular Panel;
- avoid (for the time being) routine substitutions between Panels[1];
- preserve continuity when an application is deferred or otherwise requires further consideration; and
- establish an objective process for allocating additional or extraordinary meetings.

1.3 Each Panel is a separately constituted decision-making body for the business allocated to it. No Panel may comprise more than 13 Members when exercising functions governed by the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026.

1.4 The Chair and Deputy Chair of the Planning and Transportation Committee shall be members of all three Panels and shall serve in this capacity across all three.

2. Annual constitution and allocation

2.1 In October 2026 and at the first meeting of each civic year thereafter, the Planning and Transportation Committee shall receive the proposed membership of three "Panels" which act as Sub-Committees: A, B and C. These Panels will comprise no more than 13 Members each, with the quorum for each Panel being 7 Members.

2.2 Members shall be allocated to each Panel by the Town Clerk using a seniority-based method, having regard to their aggregate length of service on the Planning and Transportation Committee and the need to distribute experience as evenly as reasonably possible across the Panels.

[1] This matter will be revisited in April 2027 in the event we have issues relating to achieving a quorum

2.3 Once approved, the Panel allocations shall remain fixed until the next annual review. A Member may not move between Panels solely because another meeting date is more convenient or because the Member wishes (or indeed does not wish) to participate in the determination of a particular application.

2.4 No Member other than the Chair and Deputy Chair, may sit on more than one Panel.

2.5 The Town Clerk shall publish and maintain the approved Panel membership and the rolling schedule of meetings in the usual manner.

3. New Members of the Grand Committee

3.1 Any Member newly appointed to the Planning and Transportation Committee after the annual Panel allocations have been approved shall not be appointed to a Panel vacancy until they have completed two calendar months of continuous service on the Grand Committee.

3.2 The two-month period shall begin on the date on which the appointment to the Planning and Transportation Committee takes effect.

3.3 During that period, the Member may observe Panel meetings, receive papers and undertake the required planning training, but may not sit or vote as a member of a Panel.

3.4 The two-month qualifying period is intended to support induction and familiarity with the Committee's planning responsibilities and to prevent temporary or short-term changes to Grand Committee membership being used as a mechanism to alter Panel composition.

3.5 Completion of two months' service does not create an automatic right to join a Panel. Appointment remains subject to:

- completion of all mandatory training;
- compliance with the maximum Panel size; and
- formal approval under paragraph 4.

3.6 The two-month requirement may be waived only where an appointment is essential to secure a lawfully constituted and quorate Panel and no eligible Member is available. In these instances, the mandated relevant training will still need to be undertaken by any new Panel Member before they are able to consider applications. Any waiver shall be approved by the Planning and Transportation Committee or, where urgency makes this impracticable, by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair under a standing Delegated Authority arrangement in accordance with the provisions set out in Standing Order no. 40b. The reason shall be recorded and reported to the next meeting of the Grand Committee.

4. Panel vacancies and changes in membership

4.1 A Panel vacancy arises when:

- a Member resigns from the Planning and Transportation Committee and therefore relinquishes their position on the relevant Panel;
- a Member ceases to be eligible to serve on, or is otherwise removed from, the Planning and Transportation Committee in accordance with the Corporation's governing or standards arrangements;
- a Member dies or becomes disqualified from holding office;
- the Court of Common Council, or another body acting within its authority, changes the composition of the Planning and Transportation Committee in a way that ends the Member's appointment; or
- there are fewer than 35 Members on the Grand Committee due to pairing arrangements, with the result that at least one Panel has fewer than 13 Members. If a Ward subsequently ceases its pairing arrangement and appoints a Ward Representative, there will in principle be capacity on one Panel for that Member, subject to the remaining provisions of this Protocol.

4.2 A vacancy shall not trigger a complete reallocation of all three Panels during the civic year.

4.3 An eligible replacement shall ordinarily be appointed directly to the Panel on which the vacancy arose.

4.4 Where more than one eligible Member is available, having served the required two months on the Committee, the proposed appointment shall be recommended by the Town Clerk in accordance with the principle set out in paragraph 2.2, above.

4.5 The appointment shall be made by the Planning and Transportation Committee at the recommendation of the Town Clerk. Where an appointment is required urgently to maintain a lawfully constituted or quorate Panel, the Town Clerk may make an interim appointment in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair, to be reported to the next meeting, under a standing Delegated Authority arrangement in accordance with the provisions set out in Standing Order no. 40b.

4.6 All Panel allocations shall be reconsidered afresh at the start of the next civic year.

5. Substitutions

5.1 There shall be no routine system of meeting-by-meeting substitution between Panels.

5.2 Inability to attend or participate in a particular meeting shall not result in the absent Member being replaced.[2].

[2] This matter will be revisited in April 2027 in the event we have issues relating to reaching quorum

6. Normal rolling meeting schedule

6.1 Ordinary meetings shall operate on a rolling r rotating cycle:

- Panel A;
- Panel B;
- Panel C; and
- thereafter returning to Panel A.

6.2 The rota shall continue sequentially across civic years unless reset as part of the annual appointment process.

6.3 Business shall be placed before the Panel whose meeting is next due under the published rota, subject to paragraphs 7 and 8.

6.4 Applications shall not be delayed, expedited or reassigned for the purpose of securing consideration by a particular Panel.

7. Additional or extraordinary meetings

7.1 An additional or extraordinary meeting may be called (in accordance with Standing Order No. 28. 1 (e)) where this is necessary to:

- determine urgent business within a statutory or otherwise material timescale;
- reconsider a matter deferred by a Panel;
- reconvene substantially the same decision-making body following an adjournment or legal requirement;
- address a volume of business that cannot reasonably be accommodated at the next ordinary meeting; or
- deal with another exceptional circumstance identified by the Planning and Development Director.

7.2 The Panel for an additional or extraordinary meeting shall be selected in the following order of priority.

A. Continuity of decision-making

Where the meeting concerns an adjourned, deferred, remitted or otherwise continuing matter, it shall be allocated to the Panel that first considered it. Every reasonable effort shall be made to secure the attendance of the same Members who participated in the earlier consideration, subject to legal requirements and continuing eligibility. Only those Members who attended the meeting which initially considered the application will be eligible to vote at the reconvened meeting, and those Members should therefore make every effort to attend. If there is a deferral or adjournment of a matter that extends across the annual committee cycles, resulting in the

change of the membership of the Panel that originally considered such an application, the Town Clerks shall in respect of any such application constitute a special Panel to consist of those members that attended the meeting which initially considered the application.

B. Next Panel in the rota

Where the business is new and cannot await the next ordinary scheduled meeting, it shall ordinarily be allocated to the Panel next due to meet under the rolling rota.

C. Workload balancing

Where using the next Panel would create a material imbalance in workload, or where that Panel cannot meet within the required timescale, the meeting shall be allocated to the Panel that has:

- held the fewest meetings in the current civic year; or
- if equal, considered the fewest substantive applications; or
- if still equal, allocated at random by the Town Clerk.

D. Earliest lawfully available Panel

If the preceding tests do not produce a Panel able to meet in time, the meeting shall be allocated to the earliest available Panel that can be lawfully constituted and is expected to be quorate.

7.3 Availability alone shall not permit individual Members to be assembled into an ad hoc Panel. The fixed membership of the selected Panel shall apply, with no routine system of meeting-by-meeting substitution between Panels as set out within paragraph 5.

7.4 The Town Clerk shall determine the appropriate Panel by applying the criteria in this section, in consultation with the Planning and Development Director and the Chair and Deputy Chair.

7.5 A written allocation note shall record:

- why an additional or extraordinary meeting was required;
- the Panel selected;
- the criterion used;
- any exceptional substitution; and
- any departure from the normal rota.

7.6 The allocation note shall be retained with the meeting record and reported to the next meeting of the Planning and Transportation Committee.

7.7 An extraordinary meeting allocated to a Panel shall not normally alter the ordinary, rolling scheduled meeting rota. However, where two Panels would otherwise meet in immediate succession and this would create a significant imbalance, the Town Clerk may adjust the

subsequent rota after consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair. Any adjustment shall be published and recorded.

8. Allocation of multiple or related applications

8.1At the judgement of the Chief Planning Officer, related applications that ought reasonably to be considered together shall be allocated to the same Panel.

8.2 Where an application is materially connected with an application previously determined or deferred by a Panel, consideration shall be given to allocating it to the same Panel where this supports continuity, provided that doing so does not conflict with statutory timescales or other legal requirements.

8.3 Where an extraordinary meeting contains several unrelated items, all business shall ordinarily be considered by the selected Panel.

9. Transparency, monitoring and review

9.1 The following information will be a matter of public record, visible on the Committee webpages:

- annual Panel allocations;
- mid-year vacancies and appointments;
- additional and extraordinary meetings;
- adjustments to the rolling rota; and
- the number of meetings and substantive applications considered by each Panel.

9.2 The operation of this Protocol shall be reviewed at the first meeting of each civic year. The review shall consider:

- whether the Panels have carried a broadly equitable workload;
- whether the two-month qualifying rule has operated effectively;
- whether additional meetings have been allocated consistently;
- whether any Panel has experienced recurring quorum difficulties; and
- whether amendments are required to promote fairness, continuity, efficiency or legal compliance.

9.3 Any material amendment to this Protocol shall be approved by the Planning and Transportation Committee and reflected, where necessary, in the Panel terms of reference or Planning Protocol.

This draft supports the Government's objective of greater clarity and consistency in planning decision-making, while preserving the statutory maximum of 13 members for a planning committee or sub-committee. It also builds on the fixed three-panel, tenure-based allocation discussed and approved at the 8 September 2026 Planning and Transportation Committee meeting.