

North Tyneside Council

Report to Planning Committee

Date: 9 June 2020

ITEM 5

Title: Temporary Speaking Rights Scheme 2020

Report from:	Head of Law and Governance
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Wards affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

This report presents for approval a Temporary Speaking Rights Scheme to be adopted during the period when face to face meetings of the Planning Committee are not possible because of the Coronavirus outbreak.

2. Recommendation

The Planning Committee is recommended to approve and adopt, with immediate effect, the Temporary Speaking Rights Scheme 2020 as set out in Appendix 1.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Planning Committee operates a Speaking Rights Scheme to allow objectors and supporters of major and controversial planning applications with a right to attend meetings and speak to the Committee before it makes its decision.
- 3.2 At present face to face meetings of the Planning Committees are not possible because of the Coronavirus outbreak. During this period remote meetings of the Committee are to be held using video conferencing software and streamed live on the Council's YouTube channel where they can be viewed by the press and public. In these circumstances it is proposed that the Speaking Rights Scheme be temporarily varied to provide those people who would normally be allowed to attend meetings and speak to the Committee with an alternative method of contributing to the decision making process.
- 3.3 Following consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee it is proposed that:
- where speaking rights are granted to a member of the public or a Councillor, the speaker will be invited to submit a written statement of no more than 850 words to highlight or expand on the important points made in their representation;
 - where a member of the public or a Councillor has submitted a statement to the Committee, the applicant will be provided with a copy and given a right to respond by submitting a written statement of no more than 850 words; and
 - the clerk to the Committee will read out any written statements submitted by speakers or applicants during the remote meeting.

3.4 Those granted speaking rights will not be invited to participate in a remote meeting. This is to ensure that everyone has the same opportunity to contribute to the process and anyone who is unable to access a remote meeting is not disadvantaged. The submission of written statements in these circumstances is considered to be the fairest system for all.

3.5 Once it is possible to resume face to face meetings the temporary scheme will expire and the Committee will revert to operating its original scheme.

4. Options

4.1 The Committee has the following options:

- a) approve and adopt, with immediate effect, the Temporary Speaking Rights Scheme 2020 as set out in Appendix 1; or
- b) suspend the Speaking Rights Scheme during the Coronavirus outbreak and operate without participation by members of the public and ward councillors.

5. Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to agree option a) because the temporary scheme will enable members of the public and ward councillors to continue to contribute to the decision making process in relation to major and controversial planning applications when face to face meetings are not possible.

6. Appendices

6.1 The Temporary Speaking Rights Scheme 2020 is attached as Appendix 1.

7. Background Information

The following background papers have been used in the compilation of this report and are available for inspection at the offices of the author:

- Planning Committee Speaking Rights Scheme October 2019