



Melton
Borough
Council

The Politics of Planning: The Chair's Perspective

Cllr Pru Chandler

**Chair of Local Plan Working Group and member of
MBC Planning Committee
Melton Borough Council**

Introduction



- **Personal background**
- **Interest in planning**
- **How I came to be Chair**
- **Portrait of Melton – more than just Pork Pies.....mainly rural but with big aspirations and high levels of development pressure, but a sometimes cynical and occasional hostile population**
- **Politics – large single political group and strong allegiance to corporate priorities, but we know our own minds and we know our own patches (wards)**



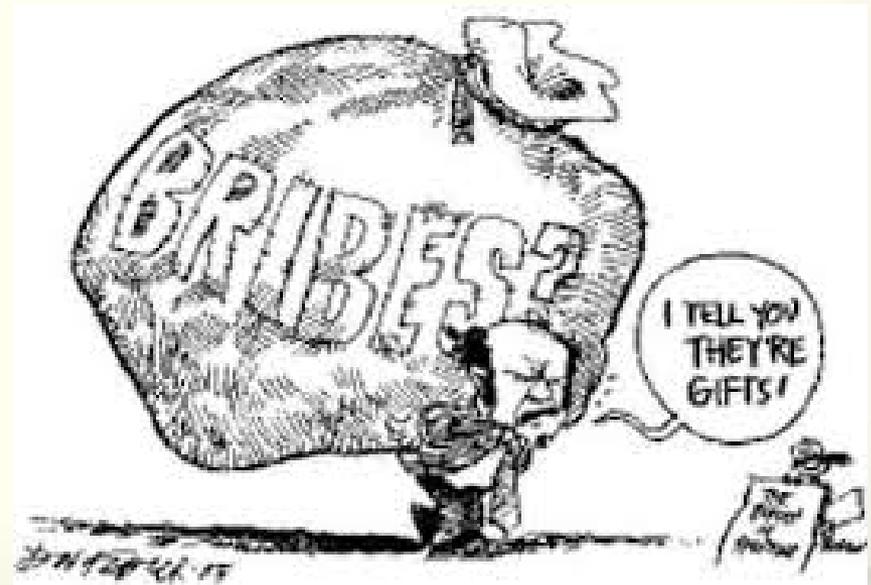
Public perception

Some common misconceptions.....:

- Interests (real and perceived) – suspicions that we have something to gain or lose
- ‘brown envelopes’’there all at it!’
- Cronyism

The reality.....:

- Consistency is important
- Regulatory role is understood
- Law and Policy matters
- Reasons and appeals



Conflicts and tensions

Regulatory decision making and conflict with representative role

- Strong expectation from constituents that you will champion their cause
- A belief that their opinion should prevail because they are local..... ‘we should decide what goes on here’
- Hard to explain that this is not how it works
- Issues with local campaigns
- Techniques at Committee meetings



Committee meetings.



Issues from members:

- Playing to the audience
 - Relevant matters
 - Reminder of the role – policy, material considerations and evidence. Opinion is not the same as evidence, anecdotes.
 - Quantity of objection not a deciding factor
-not that any of these would apply to Melton, of course

Issues from visitors:

- Conduct
- Interruptions
- Cheering, booing and hissing
- Evictions!



Chairing the Committee: What's important

We need to remember for that most people visiting Planning Committee will be a one off experience. It can be daunting and confusing. It may not be what they had expected!

- Inclusivity – making sure everyone is comfortable and feels that they have been listened to
- Ensuring good debate, so that objectors see their points have been taken seriously
- Conduct – Members behave properly and courteously



Decision making

Its important that people understand what's going on. 'Motions' , 'seconding' and amendments is not everyday language

- Make sure the decision proposed are clearly stated
- Make sure the reasons are properly tabled and understood by all
- Explain the content of motions and amendments
- Make sure voting is clear
- Announce the decision

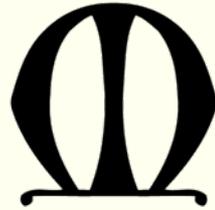


Reflections on Planning

- Widespread misunderstanding, extending from first principles of what planning is there to do ('the will of the people' – Brexit style) through to detailed questions
- Little understanding that applications have a wider context
- Little sympathy that decisions are driven by policy
- Expectations raised by the Localism Act 2010...local opinion TRUMPS all

We all have a duty to try to improve. We need to communicate our purpose better. We need to explain our role in a wider system. We need to help people understand our boundaries.





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THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

Any Questions?