

Agenda Item 58.

TITLE	Disbanding the Commuted Sums Advisory Panel
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 29 September 2016
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Stuart Rowbotham, Director for Health and Wellbeing
LEAD MEMBER	Julian McGhee-Sumner, Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

This decision will streamline the process for approving the release of commuted sums to fund much-needed affordable housing.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive approves the disbandment of the Commuted Sums Advisory Panel with immediate effect.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The establishment of the Commuted Sums Advisory Panel was approved by the Executive in March 2015 with the purpose of overseeing the allocation of Section 106 commuted sums for affordable housing. The Panel has met once.

Under the Constitution, any decision involving “the application of Section 106 developers’ contributions over £100,000” must be taken by the Executive, resulting in duplication. Therefore, in order to streamline the process, it is proposed that the Panel is disbanded with any relevant matters being reported and taken to Executive for approval.

Background

The establishment of the Commuted Sums Advisory Panel was approved by the Executive in March 2015. Its stated purpose is:

- i. To make recommendations to the Executive for the allocation of affordable housing commuted sums
- ii. To monitor and report on the allocation of commuted sums to the Capital Finance Team and Wokingham Housing Limited Holding Company

Since its establishment, the Panel has only met once in May 2016.

Analysis of Issues

Under the Constitution, any decision involving “the application of Section 106 developers’ contributions over £100,000” must be taken by the Executive, ensuring there is transparency and accountability in the process.

The Commuted Sums Advisory Panel has been in operation for over a year, but has only met on one occasion. As the three schemes considered by the Panel exceeded the threshold in the Constitution, its recommendation then proceeded to the Executive for approval. It would be extremely unlikely for a housing scheme to come in below the threshold of £100,000. Therefore, the Panel process is duplicating the work of the Executive and delaying decisions on the release of commuted sums for the delivery of much-needed affordable housing.

In the interests of streamlining the process, it is proposed that the Panel is disbanded with any relevant matters being reported and taken to Executive for approval (as required in the Constitution). Any particular matters which would benefit from more detailed Member involvement can still be carried out in liaison with the Portfolio Holder and as previously via informal working groups in advance of the Executive decision.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	Not Applicable
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	Not Applicable
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	Not Applicable

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None.

Cross-Council Implications
None

List of Background Papers
None

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Date 16 September 2016	Version No. 0.1

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