

17th October 2025

RE: Complaint – inaccurate and incomplete minutes of Planning Committee Meeting, 8 October 2025

Dear Mr Holden,

I am writing in regard to the published minutes of the 8 October 2025 Planning Committee, which are materially inaccurate and constitutionally non-compliant. They record only one vote and omit an adjournment during which the Monitoring Officer intervened and the outcome changed. This omission conceals key events and frustrates the very purpose of minutes — to enable any future reader to understand how and why a decision was reached.

The Constitution Rule 1.70 (p. 135) states:

“Minutes will contain all motions and amendments in the exact form and order the chairman put them.”

Rule 1.83 applies the same requirement to committees. This is mandatory. “Will contain” means must contain. There is no discretion to omit motions or votes for reasons of brevity or convenience.

It is clear from BDC’s stream of the meeting on YouTube, that what actually occurred is:

- Vote 1: Motion to approve – 3 For, 4 Against → Failed
- Vote 2: Motion to refuse – 2 For, 5 Against → Failed
- Vote 3: Motion to approve – 4 For, 4 Against (Chair’s casting vote Against) → Failed
- Adjournment: Private discussion with the Monitoring Officer — duration unclear
- Vote 4: Motion to approve – 5 For, 3 Against → Carried

The official minutes record only the final vote, omitting the preceding motions, the adjournment, and the public statement by the Monitoring Officer when the meeting reconvened.

This breach of the rules is important for several reasons:

1. It is a misleading and incomplete record:

Recording only the final vote presents a distorted version of events. Three votes rejecting or failing to approve the application vanished from the record, as did the adjournment that directly preceded the reversal. The result is a set of minutes that cannot be relied upon by members, officers, applicants, or the public to understand how this major decision was reached.

2. It is a breach of transparency and accountability

Rule 1.70 exists to safeguard openness and future comprehension. If minutes omit inconvenient stages of deliberation, they cease to be a democratic record and become an

edited narrative. This failure undermines public confidence and the integrity of the Council's decision-making.

3. It presents an unresolved constitutional conflict

Rule 1.68(2) permits members, at the next meeting, to question only the accuracy of previous minutes. How can this rule be reconciled when the minutes themselves omit three votes and an adjournment that unquestionably occurred? If officers interpret Rule 1.68(2) to block such corrections, the Council risks entrenching a permanent record known to be wrong — a constitutional impossibility that must be resolved.

4. It suggests a possible wider pattern

If minutes of this significance can omit multiple votes and an adjournment without notice, it raises concern that other committees may not be recording motions in full compliance with Rule 1.70. A brief review of recent planning minutes would establish whether this was an isolated lapse or a systemic failure in democratic record-keeping.

There are multiple items that require clarification as the absence of this information leaves the public unable to distinguish between lawful advice and improper influence:

- Exact timing and duration of the adjournment.
- Who was present during the private discussion.
- What guidance or “challenge” was given by the Monitoring Officer.
- Whether any notes, messages, or records of that discussion exist.
- Why the adjournment and its outcome were omitted from the minutes.

In order to remedy the breach of the Constitution I respectfully request the Council takes the following actions:

- Correct the Minutes (within 14 days): Record all four votes, the adjournment, the Monitoring Officer's statement on reconvening, and any relevant procedural motions.
- Publish the Corrected Record: Republish the minutes and notify all interested parties, including applicants and objectors.
- Investigate the Adjournment: Conduct an independent fact-finding review to establish what transpired during the break and whether procedure was properly followed.
- Review Minute-Taking Practices: Examine whether other committees' minutes meet the constitutional requirement to record all motions and amendments.
- Written Response: Within 10 working days, confirm what action will be taken and how the Council will ensure future compliance with both Rules 1.70 and 1.68(2).

Accurate minutes are not a bureaucratic formality — they are the cornerstone of democratic accountability. The Constitution demands a full and truthful record of committee decisions, but the current minutes fail that test comprehensively. By omitting three votes, an adjournment, and the Monitoring Officer's intervention, they obscure how a contentious planning decision was reached and diminish the Council's reputation for transparency. Unless corrected, this record of the meeting will stand as evidence not of good governance, but of its absence.

Yours sincerely,

Justine Thomas