

**Gweinidog dros yr Amgylchedd, Cynllunio a Chefn Gwlad  
Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside**



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Our ref: CL-01-06  
A-PAA 56-03-37

To: Local Authority Cabinet Members responsible for Planning  
Chairs of Planning Committees  
Chief Executives of Local and National Park Authorities  
Chief Planning Officers

12 January 2006

Dear Colleague

### **MEMBER BRIEFING AND DECISION MAKING**

When I met Planning Lead Members and Chief Planning Officers last year, I was urged to write to local planning authorities to emphasise the importance of members receiving training before they take planning decisions.

In 1997, the Committee of Standards in Public Life, the Nolan Committee, recommended that "all members of an authority's planning committee (or equivalent) should receive training in the planning system, either before serving on the committee, or as soon as possible after their appointment to the committee".

I endorse that recommendation, indeed the Assembly Government has incorporated such a requirement into its own Member code in relation to planning decision making, while *Planning: delivering for Wales* considered that elected members of local planning authorities should receive training before they sit on Planning Committees.

The Assembly Government's Planning Agreement with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) also commits the partners to ensuring that elected members have the opportunity for appropriate training before they serve on a planning committee.

The Assembly Government has continued to work with the WLGA, Planning Officers Society for Wales, and other partners to take forward improvements set out in the *Planning: delivering for Wales* programme. Since 2004, we have funded a comprehensive briefing programme for all members, which is designed to better equip them to deal with planning issues and the changing planning system. The programme aims to complement member briefing provided by individual authorities.

I would strongly encourage every authority to continue to provide planning briefing for all members. Wherever possible, individual authorities should require provision of such briefing prior to decision making. It is essential that the knowledge and skills which members gain is used to make the consistent, planning - based decisions the community has a right to expect and on which everyone's confidence in the system depends.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. J. Cane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and a distinct "J".