

A meeting of the **CABINET** will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2008** at **11:30 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

## **APOLOGIES**

**Contact  
(01480)**

**1. MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2008.

**Mrs H J Taylor  
388008**

**2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

To receive from Members declarations as to personal and/or prejudicial interests and the nature of those interests in relation to any agenda item. Please see Notes 1 and 2 below.

**3. CALL-IN: CAR PARKING STRATEGY**

To receive an oral report by the Director of Central Services on the outcome of the call-in, by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support), of the decision of the Cabinet relating to the Car Parking Strategy.

**P Watkins  
388002**

**4. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY, COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING STRATEGY, CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY.** (Pages 5 - 46)

To consider a report by the Chief Officers' Management Team seeking approval for the Consultation and Engagement Strategy.

**I Leatherbarrow  
388005**

**5. FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS TO RIVERSIDE PARK, HUNTINGDON**  
(Pages 47 - 62)

To consider a report by the Heads of Planning Services, Operations, Environmental Management, Legal and Estates seeking approval for the Riverside Park Masterplan.

**R Probyn  
388430**

**6. MEDIUM TERM PLAN: REQUEST FOR THE RELEASE OF FUNDS**  
(Pages 63 - 66)

To consider a report by the Head of Financial Services.

**S Couper  
388103**

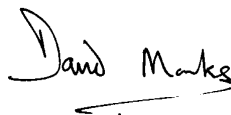
**7. STATE OF THE DISTRICT ENGAGEMENT EVENTS** (Pages 67 - 78)

To consider a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service

**A Roberts**

- Delivery) outlining the findings of a study by the Panel's Consultation Working Group regarding the state of the district engagement events. **388009**
- 8. LOCAL PETITIONS AND CALLS FOR ACTION** (Pages 79 - 84)
- To consider a report by the Head of Administration on the implications of recent legislative change affecting the overview and scrutiny function and inviting comments in response to a consultation paper from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on local petitions and calls for action. **R Reeves  
388003**
- 9. ENFORCEMENT POLICIES** (Pages 85 - 88)
- To consider a report by the Head of Administration regarding the publication of a Regulators' Compliance Code by the Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR) and the implications for the District Council. **R Reeves  
388003**
- 10. CYCLING** (Pages 89 - 94)
- To consider a report by the Cycling Working Group who's report and recommendations have been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) for submission to Cabinet. **Miss H Ali  
388006**
- 11. TRAVEL PLAN** (Pages 95 - 104)
- To consider a report by the Travel Plan Working Group, their recommendations have been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support). **Miss N Giles  
387049**
- 12. PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND OPERATION - COUNTRYSIDE JOINT GROUP** (Pages 105 - 112)
- To consider a report by the Head of Administration outlining proposed terms of reference and method of operation for the Countryside Joint Group. **Miss H Ali  
388006**

Dated this 13 day of February 2008



Chief Executive

**Notes**

1. *A personal interest exists where a decision on a matter would affect to a greater extent than other people in the District –*
  - (a) *the well-being, financial position, employment or business of the Councillor, their family or any person with whom they had a close association;*
  - (b) *a body employing those persons, any firm in which they are a partner and any company of which they are directors;*

- (c) *any corporate body in which those persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000; or*
  - (d) *the Councillor's registerable financial and other interests.*
2. *A personal interest becomes a prejudicial interest where a member of the public (who has knowledge of the circumstances) would reasonably regard the Member's personal interest as being so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of the public interest.*

**Please contact Mrs H Taylor, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Tel No. 01480 388008/e-mail Helen.Taylor@huntsdc.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Cabinet.**

**Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.**

**Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.**

*Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website – [www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk](http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk) (under Councils and Democracy).*

**If you would like a translation of Agenda/Minutes/Reports or would like a large text version or an audio version please contact the Democratic Services Manager and we will try to accommodate your needs.**

***Emergency Procedure***

*In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit and to make their way to the car park adjacent to the Methodist Church on the High Street (opposite Prima's Italian Restaurant).*

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# Agenda Item 1

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 31 January 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor I C Bates – Chairman.

Councillors P L E Bucknell, D B Dew, A Hansard, C R Hyams, T V Rogers and L M Simpson.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds.

### **92. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **93. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor Bates declared a personal interest in Minute No 07/100 by virtue of his directorship of Cambridgeshire Horizons.

### **94. FINANCIAL MONITORING - REVENUE BUDGET**

The Cabinet received and noted a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing expected variations in revenue expenditure in the current year.

In discussing the total amounts of payments written-off in the year for Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rates, Members were advised of the recent decision by the Government to introduce charges for empty properties from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 and requested that a breakdown of the costs outstanding from this be included within future reports. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the spending variations in the Revenue Budget as at the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007 be noted.

### **95. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - 2007/08**

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) highlighting variations to the approved Capital Programme in 2007/08 and the consequential estimated revenue impact. It was

RESOLVED

(a) that the report be received and the variations detailed at Annex A appended thereto noted;

- (b) that the variations outlined in para 2.1 of the report and their estimated capital and revenue impact noted; and
- (c) that a transfer of £65,000 from capital and revenue in respect of the Document Centre business systems development be approved.

**96. MEDIUM TERM PLAN: REQUEST FOR THE RELEASE OF FUNDS: DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS**

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered a request for the release of funding from the Medium Term Plan.

RESOLVED

that the relevant funding as detailed in the report now submitted be released for the award of disabled facilities grants.

**97. FINANCIAL STRATEGY, MEDIUM TERM PLAN AND BUDGET**

Further to Minute No. 07/75 and by way of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with a number of variations to the assumptions made previously for the purpose of preparing the draft Financial Strategy, Medium Term Plan (MTP), the Budget and associated level of Council Tax for 2008/09, together with the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) thereon.

In reviewing the issues involved, Members questioned the desirability or otherwise of reducing the level of the general contingency fund given that there had been no call on it for 3 years.

Reference having been made to the outcome of consultation with the business community on expenditure proposals and in noting the benefit of rewording para 4.1 to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding, the Cabinet

RECOMMENDED

- (a) that, subject to further consideration being given by the Director of Commerce and Technology in conjunction with the Executive Councillor for Finance to a possible reduction in the level of the general contingency fund, the proposed Budget, Medium Term Plan and Financial Strategy appended to the report now submitted be approved; and
- (b) that a Council Tax increase of 4.99% (£5.48) representing a level of £115.39 for Band D properties be approved for 2008/09.

**98. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2008/09**

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) and having considered a proposed Treasury Management Strategy 2008/09, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approve the 2008/09 Treasury Management Strategy as appended to the report now submitted.

**99. CAR PARKING STRATEGY - PROPOSED ACTION PLAN**

Further to Minute No. 07/67 and by way of a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet was invited to consider the content of a proposed Car Parking Strategy Action Plan for Huntingdonshire which set out proposals for car parking in the District up to 2011.

In so doing, Members were reminded that the Plan had been the subject of a consultation exercise carried out by the Car Parking Working Group during November and December and that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) had considered the Plan at their meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008. With regard to the Panel's recommendations arising from that meeting, the view was expressed that a reduction of 25% in the cost of a car parking Season Ticket for cars with CO<sup>2</sup> emissions of 120g/km or less represented a fair and equitable discount. In discussing the use of surplus income generated by increased car parking, Executive Councillors felt it would not be appropriate to ring-fence surplus income from these charges. Having thanked the Car Parking Working Group and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for their input, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Action Plan appended to the report now submitted be approved;
- (b) that steps be taken to amend the current Off-Street Parking Places Order to reflect the changes proposed in the Action Plan referred to in (a) above and their implementation with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2008;
- (c) that the proposed car parking charges outlined as the first option in Annex D to the report be approved and advertised; and
- (d) that the arrangements be reviewed following a period of 12 months of introduction of the revised charges.

**100. A QUALITY CHARTER FOR GROWTH IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

A report by the Head of Planning Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached a draft copy of a "Charter for Quality Growth in Cambridgeshire" which had been produced by Cambridgeshire Horizons in partnership with representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Members were informed that the initial aim of the Charter was to achieve higher standards of new housing developments planned for Cambridgeshire. Having noted that the Charter would be used to secure investment commitments from Government agencies and would assist communications with existing communities and developers, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the publication of a Quality Charter for Growth in Cambridgeshire be supported.

**101. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC**

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial affairs of particular persons and/or information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

**102. ST. NEOTS OUTDOOR POOL**

The Cabinet considered reports by the Head of Legal and Estates (copies of which are appended in the annex to the Minute Book) regarding the proposed disposal for the former St Neots outdoor pool by the St Neots Swimming Pool Trust.

Having considered the information contained therein, together with information in developments in negotiations with interested parties, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to approve terms with the St Neots Swimming Pool Trust to facilitate the disposal of the former outdoor pool site.

Chairman



**CABINET**

**21ST FEBRUARY 2008**

## **GROWING SUCCESS: CUSTOMER SERVICE, COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING AND CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

**(Report by the Chief Officers' Management Team)**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet's endorsement to three updated Corporate Strategies – Customer Service, Communications and Marketing and Consultation and Engagement – which have a significant role in the achievement of the Council's overall aims and objectives as set out in Growing Success, the Corporate Plan. The three strategies are mutually supportive and are inherently connected in terms of the objectives they are seeking to promote. By presenting them collectively it provides the Cabinet with an opportunity to gauge their respective contributions, to ensure consistency in approach and avoid duplication.
- 1.2 The strategies have been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny (Corporate and Strategic Framework) Panel and their views have been incorporated in the individual strategy documents or included in this report as appropriate.

### **2. SUPPORTING/BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 In June 2007 a revised version of Growing Success was adopted which articulated both aspirations for Huntingdonshire's communities and aims for the Council itself in terms of the organisation and operation of services to facilitate the achievement of the wider community objectives. Since that time reviews of a number of strategies, policies and plans have been carried out to ensure that they –
- reflect the Council's strategic approach set out in Growing Success;
  - recognise the achievements and changes implemented since they were last reviewed; and
  - are up to date, reflecting current best practice.
- 2.2 To achieve the aims and objectives for Huntingdonshire's communities, the Council recognises that we must continue to improve our systems and practices. To encourage this we have set several objectives –
- to provide high quality customer services;
  - to be good at communicating with and listening to people and organisations;
  - to improve access to our services;
  - to be clear about what we can do and aspire to achieve;
  - to enable Councillors to carry out their leadership role effectively;
  - to be part of effective partnerships; and
  - to strengthen our commitment and capacity to achieve equality, diversity and inclusion.

- 2.3 The achievement of these objectives means that the Council must be excellent at understanding the needs of the users of our services and those we represent and in organising services around those needs. This requires excellent customer service standards and practices, communications, marketing, consultation and engagement activities.
- 2.4 While the three Strategies stand alone and make individual contributions, when considered together they provide a framework which both directs and supports the Council and individual services to plan and deliver activities. Each Strategy will be supported by a three year action or delivery plan and it is expected that individual services generally will include relevant supporting actions in their own service plans. These action plans are dynamic and will change as activity is completed, targets achieved and new baselines established. The draft plans appended to the strategies represent work to date and final versions will be developed. This strategic approach is based on the principle that responsibility for customer service, communications and marketing or consultation and engagement must remain with individual services but that there should be a corporate approach and that services should be supported in these activities. The approach adopted in the Strategies builds on previous policies of the Council, which are consistent with National policy and accepted good practice.
- 2.5 In the last 12 months or so organisational changes have been made to enhance support for communications, marketing and consultation activities by bringing together and re-organising existing services in the Policy and Strategic Services Division. The Council has also adopting an approach towards neighbourhood management, promoted by the Environmental and Community Health Division, in three localities in the District. It is suggested also – in the proposed Customer Service Strategy - that overseeing and promoting customer service and specifically the arrangements for contact with customers should be the responsibility of a single Head of Service.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 The purpose of the review of the Strategies is to help ensure the continued momentum to achievement in three important areas which will have a significant contribution to meeting the Council's overall aims and objectives. The review has taken account of the Council's other Strategies and policies along with good practice in other councils and organisations.

### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1 The Cabinet are requested to adopt the revised Customer Service, Communications and Marketing and Consultation and Engagement Strategies and to note the development of supporting action plans.

### **Background papers**

Current Customer Service Strategy and Communications & Consultation Strategy

**Contact Officers:** Ian Leatherbarrow, Head of Policy & Strategic Services  
☎ 01480 388005

Chris Hall, Head of Information Management  
☎ 01480 388116

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# Putting the community first

## Consultation and Engagement Strategy

### Purpose

Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to consultation and engagement to ensure that the views and needs of local residents and businesses are taken into account when planning and delivering services.

This strategy provides a framework which both directs and supports the Council's consultation and engagement activities.

### Contribution to the Council's Corporate and Strategic Framework

"Growing Success", the Council's Corporate Plan, includes the following objectives –

- **to provide high quality customer services** – by making it as easy as possible for customers to access our services and get appropriate information;
- **to be good at communicating with and listening to people and organisations** – this will entail regular and effective communication with local residents about Council services, seeking their views on new proposals, and regularly asking them their opinions and considering what they say;
- **to strengthen our commitment and capacity to achieve equality, diversity and inclusion** – by maintaining or establishing statutory equality schemes which consider gender, race and disability equality issues and the needs of disadvantaged groups at all levels of services, policies and practices;
- **to enable Councillors to carry out their leadership role effectively** – determining Council priorities and allocating resources, scrutinising and examining relevant issues as advocates and promoting the interests of the Council and communities.

The achievement of these objectives means that the Council must be excellent at understanding the needs of the users of our services and those we represent and in organising services around those needs. This requires excellent customer service standards and practices, communications, marketing, consultation and engagement activities.

In addition, a series of strategic policies, including the Corporate Equality Policy, Communications and Marketing Strategy and Customer Service Strategy, all contain objectives and activities which require effective consultation and engagement and/or contribute towards the approach adopted within this strategy.

The strategies are mutually supportive and are inherently connected in terms of the objectives they are seeking to promote.

## **Background**

Our residents, communities and businesses have high expectations and expect their views to be listened to and taken into account. The purpose of this strategy is to promote continuous improvement to the way the Council consults and engages with local residents and other stakeholders to ensure that their views are identified and used to improve and shape our decision making, policies and services. The council often has to balance differing views and has to take a balanced and proportionate judgement in the interests of all our communities. A consistent and coordinated approach is needed so that effort and resources are used effectively and not duplicated.

This reflects a detailed and increasingly prescriptive regulatory framework which has seen consultation as a key component of improving service delivery. More recently, through the Local Government and Improvement in Health Act 2007, there is a national drive towards further engagement between service providers and the communities or neighbourhoods which they serve. In response to this the Council, with partners, has instigated a neighbourhood management approach in three locations in the district – Ramsey, Oxmoor and Eynesbury – a key element of which will be to involve local communities in deciding priorities for their areas and helping them to develop and implement, in conjunction with service providers, responses to those priorities.

The Council operates an environment of democratic representation. The role of elected Members as leaders and representatives of our communities is vital to this process. Elected Members therefore have an important role to bring to the Council the needs, views and aspirations of the communities they represent and to use the information that comes from consultation and engagement exercises in order to make decisions and to plan services in a way that meets local needs. Our system of political management demands clear and effective information and processes as to how that information is used to support the principles of transparency and accountability.

This strategy is based on the principle that responsibility for consultation and engagement must remain with individual services but there should be a corporate approach and services should be supported in these activities. The purpose of this strategy is to provide a framework and a consistent approach to our consultation and engagement activities. It will be supported by guidance, protocols and an action plan, which will be based on the principles set out in this strategy and good practice generally. In addition organisational changes already in place will ensure that the Policy and Research Service will carry out corporate activities and support services in their consultation and engagement activities.

Consultation and engagement are intensive and costly activities; however, high spending does not always produce good results. This strategy, associated guidance, protocols and action plan will ensure that our activities are effective and provide good value for the investment we make in them.

### **Where are we now?**

A broad approach to consultation and engagement recognises that a number of different activities will be relevant to different situations and circumstances:

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Communicating information	Good quality communications, such as District Wide, website and service based information
Market research and obtain opinions	Annual surveys and service specific user satisfaction surveys
Consultation – seeking views on or support for a choice between options	Seeking views on formal policies and strategies
Deciding together – sharing views, developing options, agreeing a course of action	The development of the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Development Framework Planning for Real exercises Participation exercises with children and young people
Acting together – working with others to make decisions and carry through the action agreed	Neighbourhood management in Oxmoor, Ramsey and (emerging) Eynesbury
Supporting communities – supporting groups and communities to develop and implement their own solutions	Parish planning Neighbourhood management approach

While the Council can demonstrate activity and success across this spectrum, the majority of the consultation and engagement activities have been concentrated on communication information, market research/obtaining opinions and consultation.

As a Council we have placed a special emphasis on consultation with individuals or communities who do not traditionally engage with us, such as young people, those with disabilities or minority ethnic groups. Effective involvement cannot happen without a good understanding of the make up, needs and interests of all those different groups and their capacity to engage. An inclusive approach will be used by the Council to ensure that different groups have the opportunity to participate and are not disadvantaged by our processes. Equality Impact Assessments are being carried out on all our services and policies and they will highlight issues that need to be addressed through consultation and engagement activities. It is important that we have a coordinated approach to the use of information from these assessments.

## **Objectives**

The Council has identified the following objectives:

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Measure</b>
To ensure that consultation and engagement is appropriate, effective and meaningful	% of local people who feel that the council listens to and considers the views of local residents
To ensure that there are the same opportunities for all local residents and business to be involved in consultation and engagement	% of local people who feel that the council listens to and considers the views of local residents
That elected Members are supported in their role to consult, engage and represent local communities	% of Members who feel they are supported in their role to consult, engage and represent their community

	% of Members who attend consultation and engagement training
That the results of consultation and engagement activities are used in the planning and design of services	% of local people and businesses who believe that council services meet their needs

### **Action Plan**

The action plan appended to this strategy details how we intend to deliver against the objectives over the next three years.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation are critical to ensuring that we achieve the objectives.

To ensure we are making progress we will:

- monitor our performance against local (and national, if any) measures
- report performance on consultation and engagement activities
- collect and publish evidence of good practice throughout the Council.

This strategy, associated guidance and action plan will be reviewed annually so that we can set specific targets for the future. A comprehensive review of the strategy will be undertaken every three years.

### **Risks**

The council's corporate risk register identifies a large number of risks that may have negative effects on the council.

An effective consultation and engagement strategy is imperative to ensure the risks and the possibilities of them becoming a reality are kept to a minimum or prevented altogether.

The following factors would adversely affect the delivery of this strategy:

- Failing to communicate effectively and taking action on the key issues from consultation will lead to falling levels of customer satisfaction.
- Without a corporate lead there will be consultation overload and potentially a waste of resources.
- Low levels of customer satisfaction will affect our reputation.
- Any revenue squeeze may result in financial constraints to implementing consultation and engagement development.
- Lack of engagement with selected/targeted groups.
- HDC employees fail to use the guidance.



## Action Plan 2008 – 2011

Objectives	Action	Measure	Target	By whom	When
To ensure that consultation and engagement is appropriate, effective and meaningful	Ensure employees use the Consultation and Engagement Strategy as good practice guidance	% of consultation and engagement exercises which comply with guidance	100%	Policy and Research Service	On-going
	Establish and promote a database to record information about current and planned consultation and engagement exercises	Production of database	July 2008	Policy and Research Service	July 2008
	Establish consultation calendar	Production of calendar	July 2008	Policy and Research Service	July 2008
	Effective use of consultation and research website (database and calendar)	% of consultation exercises co-ordinated through website	100%	Policy and Research Service to update and promote Heads of Service and Activity managers	April 2010
	Ensure that the results of Equality Impact Assessments are coordinated at a corporate level	Co-ordination of EIAs	100%	Policy and Research Service	March 2009

Objectives	Action	Measure	Target	By whom	When
	Use the results of Equality Impact Assessments in the planning of consultation and engagement activities	Number of actions arising from EIA's which are used.	100% of appropriate actions	Heads of Service and Policy and Research Service	March 2009
	Effective use is made of the Joint Consultation Framework	% of consultation exercises delivered through framework	80%	Policy and Research Service and Heads of Service	2009
	Training and development course for relevant employees in consultation and engagement techniques	Adequate courses to meet personal development plan needs.	100% in relation to personal development plans	Human Resources and Policy and Research Service	April 2009
	Establish and publicise consultation guidance (methods and accessibility)	Publication of guidance	April 2008	PPSD	April 2008
	Investigate and evaluate the setting up of e-panels and the use of ICT for consultation and engagement	Produce evaluation report	April 2010	Policy and Research Service with Information Management Division.	April 2010
	Work with Parish Plan groups to engage partners in the preparation of community questionnaires to incorporate more			Planning Services	

Objectives	Action	Measure	Target	By whom	When
	strategic issues and avoid duplication of work				
To ensure that there are the same opportunities for all local residents and business to get involved	Training in specific areas relating to equality e.g. awareness training for disability, gender, race, age, religious belief, sexual orientation and children and young people	Adequate courses to meet personal development plan needs	100% in relation to personal development plans	HR & Policy and Research Service	April 2009
	Establish and publicise consultation guidance (methods and accessibility)	Production of guidance	April 2008	Policy and Research Service	April 2009
	Establish a contact information of community/voluntary groups within the district that represent the needs of hard to reach groups	Publish information	September 2008	Policy and Research Service	September 2008
That elected members are supported in their role to consult, engage and represent local communities	Training course for Members to support them in their role to consult engage and represent local communities	% of Members who feel that they are supported in their role to consult engage and represent their community	100% of Members who attend consultation and engagement training	Democratic Services & Policy and Research Service	March 2010

Objectives	Action	Measure	Target	By whom	When
	Consider a pilot initiative relating to the 'state of district' debate			Subject to consideration by Cabinet - Democratic Services and Overview & Scrutiny working party	
That the results of consultation and engagement are used in planning and design of services	Develop a process for reviewing the outcomes from key consultation and engagement activities	Process in place	June 2009	Policy and Research Service	June 2009
	Consider incorporation of consultation and engagement within report checklist	Review checklist	April 2008	Policy and Research Service	April 2008
	Establish process to ensure that local research undertaken through the Parish Plan process is disseminated across services and to partners		September 2008	Planning Services	
	Ensure the results of consultation, engagement and research are communicated and used to inform the development of policies, decision making and provision of services	% of local people who feel that the council listens to and considers the views of local residents	Baseline to be determined		April 2009

Objectives	Action	Measure	Target	By whom	When
		% of local people and business who believe that council services meet their needs			

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# Making the Right Connections

## Communications and Marketing Strategy

### Purpose

The Council has many roles, but to achieve our aims and objectives in our corporate plan, Growing Success, we are committed to consistent and sustained communications and marketing.

### Contribution to the Council's Corporate and Strategic Framework

"Growing Success", the Council's Corporate Plan, includes the following objectives –

- **to provide high quality customer services** – by making it as easy as possible for customers to access our services and get appropriate information;
- **to be good at communicating with and listening to people and organisations** – this will entail regular and effective communication with local residents about Council services, seeking their views on new proposals, and regularly asking them their opinions and considering what they say;
- **to strengthen our commitment and capacity to achieve equality, diversity and inclusion** – by maintaining or establishing statutory equality schemes which consider gender, race and disability equality issues and the needs of disadvantaged groups at all levels of services, policies and practices;
- **to enable Councillors to carry out their leadership role effectively** – determining Council priorities and allocating resources, scrutinising and examining relevant issues as advocates and promoting the interests of the Council and communities;
- **to be clear about what we can do and aspire to achieve** – by regularly publishing our plans and services standards and information about our performance.

The achievement of these objectives means that the Council must be excellent at understanding the needs of the users of our services and those we represent and in organising services around those needs. This requires excellent customer service standards and practices, communications, marketing, consultation and engagement activities.

In addition, a series of strategic policies, including the Corporate Equality Policy, Consultation and Engagement Strategy and Customer Service Strategy, all contain objectives and activities which require effective communications and marketing and/or contribute towards the approach adopted within this strategy.

The strategies are mutually supportive and are inherently connected in terms of the objectives they are seeking to promote.

## **Background**

National and local experiences suggest that failure to invest in communications and marketing is likely to result in low satisfaction of local residents in the services we provide and of the Council generally. An extensive piece of research on behalf of the Improvement and Development Agency and Local Government Association for a series of reports 'Connecting With Communities' showed clearly that people who felt well-informed also felt more positive about their Council. The research demonstrated that they felt less likely that their Council was remote and impersonal or out of touch and more likely to feel they received good value for money and good overall services.

## **Communications**

Our residents and communities have high expectations that the Council will meet their needs. There is a demand for information about services and facilities and how the Council represents the interests of Huntingdonshire and its communities, for example our leadership role on issues which affect quality of life. We also need to make sure that those people that visit the area or come to work here are also aware of services and what we provide in Huntingdonshire generally. We work in a complex environment and on occasions there are difficult matters to communicate for example decisions that may have been enforced upon us or decision that may be unpopular with some sections of our community. We aim to communicate these issues in a balanced and sensitive way.

## **Marketing**

Increasingly the Council is required to "market" the services we provide – either because we are in competition with other providers or we need to increase the number of people using our services in a cost-effective way to meet our aims and objectives. By marketing we mean the processes we put in place to identify, anticipate and satisfy the needs of local residents and communities. We need to have a clear insight into the requirements of our customers and provide services in a way that they want from us. For example we must recognise that the needs and aspirations of young people are different from those of elderly people. In order to market our services effectively we must gather and analyse information from many sources. This research will lead to more knowledge, better insight and more informed decision making.

## **Communications and Marketing**

To be effective our communications and marketing activity must be "two-way". The way we engage with our communities and listen to them, encourage and act upon feedback, is as important as the information we give to them. We need to be clear in our communications and marketing about what the Council can do and what we aspire to achieve. The Council must take decisions about competing demands. Clear and effective communications will help our communities to understand these decisions and play an important part in the Council's leadership role.

The Council operates in an environment of democratic representation. The role of elected members as leaders of our communities and in representing local residents is vital to this process. How members undertake their roles has an impact on how the Council is perceived and ultimately our reputation. Our



system of political management also demands clear and effective communications to support the principles of transparency and accountability.

Members contribute to effective communications by collectively defining and taking responsibility for the factors that make up the overall reputation of the Council:

- ◆ our purpose, what are we here to do
- ◆ our underlying values and ethical standards
- ◆ our priorities
- ◆ the delivery of services, do we do what we promise
- ◆ our behaviour, how do we treat users of our services and residents, employees, visitors and other members.

Members are elected to represent their communities and are accountable to them and must seek to balance competing priorities in the best interests of the district as a whole. Marketing and communications support this process and helps to provide a more detailed picture to assist the development of policy and priorities.

Effective communication with our employees is essential to ensuring that we achieve our priorities. Our employees deliver services and the majority live in Huntingdonshire. If they feel informed about our services, priorities and what the Council stands for then they will be more effective in the way they do their job and the way they communicate with residents, communities, service users, visitors and our partners. They can use their knowledge of our priorities and what the council stands for in their day to day contact with customers to communicate key messages. An important element of communication is recording feedback from customers, particularly compliments and satisfaction with the level of service provided. An important 'spin-off' of good levels of customer satisfaction is that employee morale, and productivity is better too. Training and development opportunities are paramount to ensure officers have the key skills they need, and help us to achieve our objective that we are a learning organisation that shares knowledge.

Successful partnerships and relationships with other agencies and organisations are an important aspect of many areas of our work, particularly when we need to share resources towards communications and marketing aims and objectives. When communicating as part of a partnership, care must be taken to ensure all parties are happy and communications are consistent. Opportunities should be identified to promote and implement partnership working for campaigns and initiatives when possible.

This strategy is based on the principle that responsibility for communications and marketing must remain with individual services but that there should be a corporate approach and that services should be supported in these activities. The purpose of this strategy is to provide a framework and a consistent approach to our communications and marketing activities. It will be supported by guidance, protocols and an action plan, which will be based on the principles set out in this strategy and good practice generally. The strategy the guidance and protocols will be conditioned by and help us to follow the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. In addition organisational changes already in place will ensure that the Communications and Marketing Service will carry out corporate activities and support services in their communications and marketing activities.

Communications and marketing are intensive and costly activities, however, high spending does not always result in good results. This strategy, guidance, protocols and action plan will ensure that our communications and marketing are effective and co-ordinated, and provide good value for the investment we make in them. Importantly effective communications and marketing about the Council and the services we provide will help to ensure that we maintain a good reputation.

### Where are we now?

Local residents, the media and other groups have told us that they want clear, factual information about:

Information requirements	Examples of what we provide
◆ Our services and what they can expect	◆ News releases ◆ District Wide ◆ Website ◆ Publications
◆ What's on in the area, facilities and activities	◆ Publications, including visitor guide ◆ District Wide ◆ Website ◆ News releases
◆ Reasons why decisions are made and how local views were taken into account	◆ District Wide ◆ Reports in print and on website ◆ Consultation
◆ Information on how the Council spends money	◆ District Wide ◆ News releases ◆ Leaflets ◆ Website
◆ Planned improvements to services or our area	◆ Exhibitions ◆ Reports ◆ News releases ◆ District Wide ◆ Website
◆ How to complain, comment or simply get in touch	◆ Complaints policy and procedures ◆ All publications and forms ◆ Website
◆ Our priorities and how they relate to them or the district.	◆ District Wide ◆ News releases ◆ Website

This range of information has formed the basis of our communications to date along with specific news or information as appropriate.

In our communications and marketing we use the following methods:

- ◆ Council publications, such as District Wide
- ◆ local newspapers
- ◆ websites, e-mail and other electronic means

- ◆ leaflets and other information material
- ◆ local radio and television
- ◆ specialist publications
- ◆ face to face contact
- ◆ exhibitions, including mobile information unit
- ◆ DVDs, e.g. Huntingdonshire in Perspective
- ◆ advertising
- ◆ events
- ◆ telephone.

In selecting an appropriate medium care must be taken to ensure maximum cost effectiveness in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

New media is becoming an ever-increasing method for communications and marketing. This is something that must be taken into account in this three-year strategic document, as more customers opt to receive electronic messages.

The council website is an important channel for communications and marketing activity. Our website, driven by Government requirements and structures, is led by the web team, and each directorate remains responsible for its own pages. Opportunities to communicate with our residents and visitors and to market our services through the website need to be identified and developed to help us achieve our objectives. However, this channel may not always be the best option for the service or the customer and traditional channels still need to be made available.

### **Knowing our communities**

The Appendix – Knowing our Communities – highlights some of the individuals or communities that will be affected by our communications and marketing and identifies some of the key issues which affect them. This “segmentation” is not intended to be exhaustive and will change as the environment in which we operate changes and as we develop better insight into the needs and preferences of our communities. It will be used to test and develop guidance, action plans and good practice. As well as identifying individuals and communities, it is important to evaluate appropriate ways to communicate with them and to market our services. We recognise that it is vital to deliver information people want using the methods which are most effective to them. Preferences will vary depending on the information to be communicated and will change over time.

As a Council we have placed a special emphasis on communications and marketing with individuals or communities who do not traditionally engage with us, such as young people, those with disabilities or minority ethnic groups. Effective involvement cannot happen without a good understanding of the make up, needs and interests of all those different groups and their capacity to engage. An inclusive approach will be used by the Council to ensure that different groups have the opportunity to participate and are not disadvantaged by our processes. Equality Impact Assessments are being carried out on all our services and policies and they will highlight issues that need to be addressed through customer service activities. It is important that we have a coordinated approach to the use of information from these assessments.

Overall the Council has a good reputation for communicating and marketing its services, but this varies because of different capacity and understanding of the

effectiveness in communications and marketing of service delivery. The Council and its services provide a range of communications and marketing material but there are some areas that are better than others. In order to be effective we need to make sure we are consistent across the whole organisation.

We have a range of communications and marketing skills, but we recognise that we need to develop these skills across the Council.

### Objectives

This strategy identifies the following objectives we wish to achieve from the way in which we communicate, with our residents, communities and our partners and how we market our services and how we will measure our success.

Objective	Measure
Be good at communicating with and listening to people and organisations	% of residents are satisfied or very satisfied with information provided about Council services and plans
Be clear about what we can do and aspire to achieve	% of residents feel well informed about service standards
To increase awareness of attractions, facilities and events, to local residents and visitors to the district	% of residents and visitors with greater awareness of the attractions and facilities of the district
To undertake appropriate marketing of services	Number of marketing plans developed
To ensure Members are supported in their communications	% of Members who feel that they are supported in these activities
Employees are well informed about the Council, its priorities and the services we provide	% of employees who understand what the council stands for and believe it has good reputation
Employees share information and knowledge	% of employees who believe we are a learning organisation

### Action Plan

This strategy is supported by a three-year action plan which will help to ensure a consistent approach across the whole of the Council. The Council's Communications and Marketing service will be responsible for monitoring and implementation of the plan and will work with other services to make sure this happens.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are critical to ensuring that we achieve the objectives.

To ensure we are making progress we will:

- monitor our performance against local (and national, if any) measures
- report performance on communications and marketing
- collect and publish evidence of good practice throughout the Council.

This strategy, associated guidance and action plan will be reviewed annually so that we can set specific targets for the future. A comprehensive review of the strategy will be undertaken every three years.

## **Risks**

The Council's Corporate Risk Register identifies a large number of risks that would damage the council's reputation, attract bad publicity or have a negative effect on staff morale.

An effective communications and marketing strategy is imperative in order that the appropriate messages can be conveyed in the appropriate manner in the event of a risk becoming a reality or to prevent it.

The following factors would adversely affect the delivery of this strategy – and therefore the ability to respond to the situation, to rebuild the council's reputation, counteract the bad publicity, or boost staff morale:

- budgetary restrictions
- staffing/resources issues
- lack of knowledge/expertise
- lack of understanding by services/partners
- lack of support by services/partners
- national government changes.

## Action Plan 2008-2011

Objectives	Action	Measure	Target	By whom	When
Be good at communicating with and listening to people and organisations	Publication of information about Council plans and services	% of residents are satisfied or very satisfied with information provided about Council services and plans	70 % of residents are satisfied or very satisfied with information provided about Council services and plans by 2011	Heads of Service and Communications and Marketing Team	On going  Increase frequency of District Wide to six issues per year by 2009.
	Build key messages from 'Growing Success' into all communications	% of local residents who feel the council has a good reputation	To be determined following baseline assessment after the next annual survey	Heads of Service Communications and Marketing Team	On going
	Develop communications with partners	% of partners who feel they understand the council's role and the services we provide	100% by 2009	Heads of Service, Communications and Marketing Team	March 2009
	Use the results of Equality Impact Assessments in the planning of communications and marketing activities	Number of actions arising from EIA's which are used to inform communications and marketing activities	100% of appropriate actions	Heads of Service	On going
Be clear about what we can do and aspire to achieve	Publication of information	% of residents feel well informed about service standards	70% of residents feel well informed about service standards by 2011	Communications and Marketing Team	Ongoing

Objectives	Action	Measure	Target	By whom	When
	Promote positive news stories on corporate initiatives	% of news releases used by at least one media outlet	70 % of news releases used by at least one media outlet	Communications and Marketing Team Directors Heads of Service	Ongoing
	Support services in identifying and preparing positive news stories	% of news stories published	70% of news releases used	Communications and Marketing Team, Heads of Service, Activity Managers	On going
	Ensure the handling of reactive news inquiries is carried out in a co-ordinated and corporate way	% of news coverage that is neutral or positive	(Baseline to be obtained from media analysis)	Communications and Marketing Team	Ongoing
	Continued development, and updating of web site and web based material	% of customers satisfied that web-based information meets their needs	Baseline to be determined	The Web Team	Ongoing
	Implement new corporate identity	% of compliance to corporate identity guidelines	100% compliance of corporate identity guidelines	Heads of Service, Activity Managers Communications and Marketing Team	Full implementation in accordance with guidelines by 2011
	Use the new complaints system to record feedback from customers, particularly satisfaction with the level of service provided	% of complaints or comments used.	Baseline to be determined	Heads of Service	On going

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>When</b>
To increase awareness of attractions, facilities and events, by local residents and visitors to the district	Marketing of attractions, facilities and events to local residents and visitors	% of residents and visitors with greater awareness of the attractions and facilities of the district	To be determined following baseline assessment after the Next annual survey	Communications and Marketing Team Sustainable Economic Development Team Heads of Service	March 2009
	Marketing of specifically targeted information e.g. Countryside guide	% of people satisfied with the information we provide	70% of people satisfied with the information we provide by 2011	Communications and Marketing Team working with relevant service area e.g. Countryside Services	Ongoing
	Supporting services and external partners in raising the awareness of local attractions	Increased visitor numbers to attractions	At least one annual promotion	Communications and Marketing Team, Sustainable Economic Development Team	Ongoing
	Seek opportunities for positive news coverage in appropriate publications about Huntingdonshire and local attractions	Number of articles in local/national/specialist publications	Baseline to be established	Communications and Marketing Team	On going
	Evaluate the demand in new media and use where appropriate	Complete evaluation	Initial evaluation by April 2009	Communications and Marketing Team and work with Web team	On going
	Ensure the existing information on the website is more accessible			Communications and Marketing Team and work with Web team	On going



<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>When</b>
To undertake appropriate marketing of services	Support services and work with partners to ensure effective marketing of services	Number of marketing plans developed	10 plans produced and implemented	Heads of Service Communications and Marketing Team	2008 - 2011
To ensure Members are supported in their communications	Provide training for members to assist them in communications activities	% of members who feel they are supported in these activities	100% of members who attend training	Communications and Marketing Team	Ongoing
Employees are well informed about the Council, its priorities and the services we provide	To publish information about the Council's priorities	% of employees who understand what the council stands for and believe it has good reputation	60 % of employees who understand what the council stands for and believe it has a good reputation	Communications and Marketing Team	On going
	To publish general information about the Council	% of employees who feel well informed about the council, its aims and objectives and the services provided	60% of employees feel well informed about the council, its aims and objectives and the services provided	Communications and Marketing Team	Ongoing – publication currently 12 issues a year
	Publication of information and briefings on specific topics	% of employees attending receiving information on specific topics who feel well informed	80% of attendance/recipients of specific information	Communications and Marketing Team	On going

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>When</b>
Employees share information and knowledge	Maintain or establish systems to ensure employees know how to share information and knowledge	% of employees who believe we are a learning organisation	85% employees believe we are a learning organisation	Communications and Marketing Team, Policy and Research Team, Human Resources Team	Ongoing
	Production of protocols and good practice guidance for communications and marketing activities	Publications and dissemination of protocols	By Autumn 2008	Communications and Marketing Team	Autumn 2008
	Provide training for relevant employees on external communications	% of officers who feel that they are supported with communications	Two courses a year	Communications and Marketing Team	On going

**Knowing our Communities**

The key issues identified are ones which we will need to keep evaluating to ensure we achieve the outcomes in the marketing and communication strategy.

<b>Who do we communicate with?</b>	<b>Key Issues to evaluate</b>
Local Residents	Have we established two-way communication and marketing? How do local people tell us what they think? Do we listen to our communities? Are the physical means of communication adequate? Do we know what local people think about the Council and the services we provide? Do we provide information in a way which our residents want? Do we provide information and consult with groups and communities that traditionally don't engage with the Council? Raising awareness about what is on offer in Huntingdonshire Marketing Huntingdonshire to our local residents Communities of interest Communities in place Family and friends Means of getting message across
The Media (local, regional, national and specialist)	Do we have a constructive relationship with the media? Does the media think that we have a good reputation and standards? Does the media use the information we provide to it?
Partners (The Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership and other partners)	Have we established two-way communication and marketing? Do our partners think that we have a good reputation and standards? Do we know what each other stand for and what our objectives are? Do we know where the overlaps and the gaps are?
The Business Community	Have we established two-way communication and marketing? Do local businesses think that we have a good reputation? Do they know what services we provide for them?

	Are they aware of our key messages? Potential business who may re-locate
Employees	Do we have a culture of two-way communication? Have we developed communication skills across the Council? Do staff know the key messages and do they communicate them as part of service delivery and in their communities?
Members	Do our communications and marketing support democratic representation? Do our communications and marketing support our political management system? Do members have support in enhancing their communication skills? Do our communications and marketing support our community leadership role?
Town and Parish Councils	Have we established two-way communication and marketing? Do Town and Parish Councils think that we have a good reputation and standards?  Do we know what each other stand for and what our objectives are?
Governmental and non-governmental organisations (Civil Servants, Government Office, Minister, national organisations such as the Audit Commission, etc)	Do they know what the Council stands for? Do they think we have a good reputation and standards of service?
Suppliers	Do they know what the Council stands for? Do they think we have a good reputation and standards of service? Do they know what opportunities are available to them?
People who come to work in Huntingdonshire (including migrant workers from other countries)	Do they know what the Council stands for? Do they think we have a good reputation and standards of service? Do they know what opportunities are available to them? Are they aware of the services and what we provide in Huntingdonshire?
Visitors to the area	Do they know where to stay and what to see and do in Huntingdonshire? Are they aware of the services we provide to help enhance their experience?

Children and Young People	<p>Have we established two-way communication and marketing?  Will the issue impact on children and young people?  If 'yes'  What do we already know about children and young people's needs in relation to this topic?  Which children and young people need to be reached and how can they be reached most effectively?  Can this be linked to existing work?  E.g. in the school curriculum or a children and young people's project/programme.  How will information and actions from this work get fed back to children and young people – both those participating in the consultation and other young people.</p>
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## Appendix

Further appendices to be available as part of the strategy and on the Communications and Marketing Sharepoint site to include:

- Overview of Code of Practice of Local Authority Publicity and reference to the full code
- Writing techniques for District Wide
- Handling media relations
- Writing news releases (including who gets quoted when)
- Handling broadcast interviews
- Plain English and general advice for all published matter
- Correct use of corporate identity
- Civic protocol
- Event management

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# Customer Service Strategy: 'Customer Insight'

## Purpose

Huntingdonshire District Council aims to provide excellent customer service.

Our vision is one where, for each of our services, we have a clear insight into the needs of our customers and provide services in a way which meets those needs. Specifically this means each service will;

- ◆ carefully consider who its customers are, and what services they require; and
- ◆ design service delivery around the needs of those customers.

## Contribution to the Council's Corporate and Strategic Framework

The Council has many roles, but to achieve our aims and objectives in our corporate plan, Growing Success, we are committed to consistent and sustained customer service.

Using our customer insight, the Council aims to achieve the following objectives in Growing Success:

- **to provide high quality customer services** – by making it as easy as possible for customers to access our services and get appropriate information;
- **to improve access to our services** – by introducing new ways of contacting the Council including: self service via web site, mobile/home delivery of services, increase use of call centre and customer service centres;
- **to be good at communicating with and listening to people and organisations** – this will entail regular and effective communication with local residents about Council services, seeking their views on new proposals, and regularly asking them their opinions and considering what they say;
- **to be clear about what we can do and aspire to achieve** – by regularly publishing our plans and services standards and information about our performance;
- **to be a part of effective partnerships** – by continuing to take opportunities to work with others where it will meet community needs and maximise the resources;
- **to strengthen our commitment and capacity to achieve equality, diversity and inclusion** – by maintaining or establishing statutory equality schemes which consider gender, race and disability equality issues and the needs of disadvantaged groups at all levels of services, policies and practices.

The achievement of these objectives means that the Council must be excellent at understanding the needs of the users of our services, those we represent and in organising services around those needs. This requires excellent customer service standards and practices, communications, marketing, consultation and engagement skills and activities.

In addition to the objectives in Growing Success, a series of strategic policies, including the Corporate Equality Policy, Consultation and Engagement Strategy and Communications and Marketing Strategy, all contain objectives and activities which require effective customer service and/or contribute towards the approach adopted within this strategy.

These strategies and policies are mutually supportive and are inherently connected in terms of the objectives they are seeking to promote. In delivering the vision for excellent customer service the Council also has to balance the costs and value of improvements we make.

## **Background**

### **Where are we now?**

Huntingdonshire District Council Customer Service Strategy, approved in 2003, has been successfully achieved. In the past four years the way that customers can contact the Council, obtain services and information has been significantly improved -

- A Call Centre has been established which deals with the majority of initial calls from customers and provides a more detailed call answering service for an increasing range of services.
- A temporary Customer Service Centre has been established in Huntingdon which brought together disparate points of contact for customers, including a tourist information centre. In addition to the physical change this has facilitated a consistent approach towards customer service and improvements in the development of employees. A new permanent centre is being built as part of the Council's new headquarters.
- Satellite Customer Service Centres have been maintained in St Ives and St Neots offering payment facilities and a range of other services.
- Community Information Centres have been successfully established in Yaxley and Ramsey working closely with many external partners.
- Continuous improvements have been made to the Council's website as a means of obtaining information about services.
- The St Neots Tourist Information Centre has been maintained pending its amalgamation with an enhanced customer service centre in the town.
- A network of community and visitor electronic kiosks and access points have been established in each of the market towns and some villages.
- A Mobile Display Unit is used extensively around the district to promote services and as a mobile office. Trials have also been conducted on mobile working, mobile information provision and flexible working for employees. These trials have provided information about the demand and costs of such activities.

In the main, face to face services have developed independently and we need to ensure we learn from existing best practice across these locations. Officers also act as 'advocates' for those customers who need more help than others, and this will continue.



## Where do we want to be?

Having made these achievements and having regard to increasing customer expectation and good practice in this field the time is right to revisit the strategy.

The strategy is planned to have a life of approximately three years and includes a broad action plan required to achieve its objectives. It is intended to reinforce existing good practice and performance already present across the Council. The strategy is focussed on the initial contact we have with customers and the subsequent delivery of service.

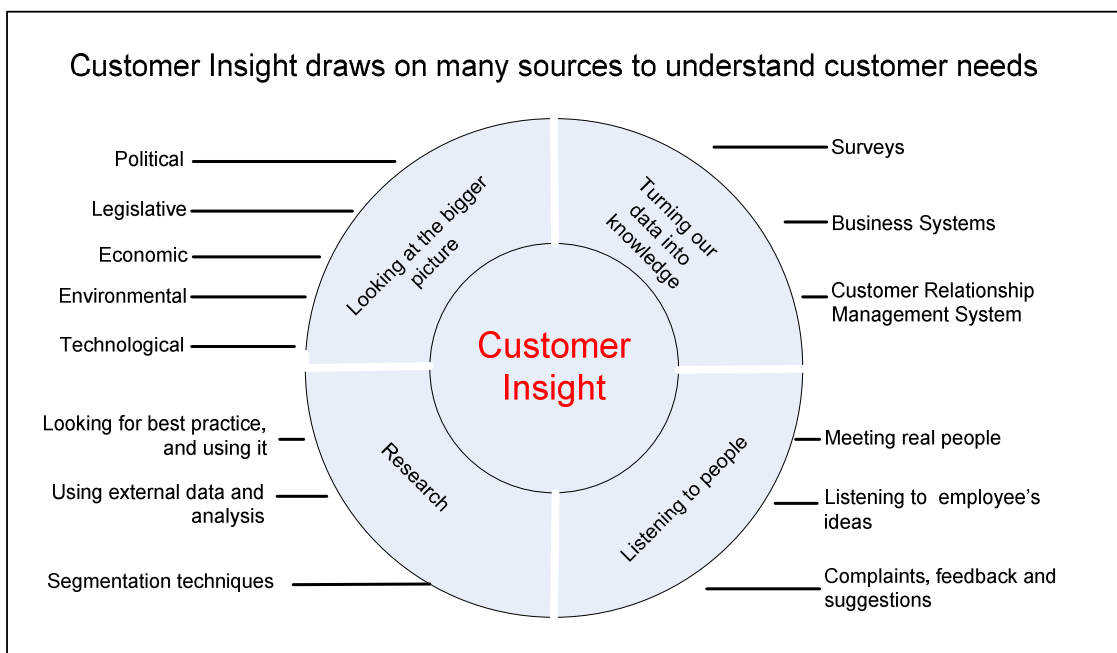
## Understanding our customers better

Every potential or actual user of our services is a customer. The Council works hard to ensure customers receive excellent service, and while it knows a great deal about customers, more can always be done.

The Council wants to better understand the diversity of its communities, and deliver services which respond to different needs and aspirations. To do this, it needs to get maximum value from the information it gathers, and be able to bring different information sources together to build a richer, more comprehensive, picture of its customers.

Equality Impact Assessments are being carried out on all our services and policies and they will highlight issues that need to be addressed through customer service activities. It is important that we have a coordinated approach to the use of information from these assessments.

Each service needs to have a clear insight into the customers it serves. The following diagram highlights many of the sources of information the Council will use to develop this insight.



## **The services the Council provides**

The Council delivers many services and for operational reasons and efficiency they will continue to be delivered in the most appropriate way. However, as our 'customer insight' develops new ways of meeting customer needs will be identified, and opportunities will arise to bring together services to work in a way better suited to meeting customer needs.

The way the Council is structured will need to reflect the objectives of this strategy. While Heads of Service will remain responsible for the delivery of customer service within their own service this level of customer service will concentrate on more complex enquiries, requiring a level of specialist expertise. Such contact may lower in volume, but require more time and resources. However, to promote the exchange of best practice, service development, improved training and consistent levels of high quality customer service it is proposed that Customer Service will become within the remit of an existing single Head of Service who will be responsible for:

- ◆ ensuring a customer perspective is at the heart of all services
- ◆ overseeing the delivery and monitoring of this strategy
- ◆ managing the first point of contact with customers including:
  - The Call Centre
  - Customer Service Centres
  - Community Information Centres
  - Visitor Information Centres

They will deal with high volume, relatively simple transactions. They will interact heavily with customers and will need to be customer service trained. They will also be responsible for:

- ◆ coordinating campaigns which involve services provided by the customer service team
- ◆ providing advice and guidance to services
- ◆ ensuring managers acknowledge their responsibility for customer service in their own service.

## **Customer Service Skills**

Customer service and customer insight are key skills for all employees. This strategy promotes training and development of employees to deliver the Council's objectives on these areas.

## **Meeting the needs of all our customers**

The Council has a duty to ensure the services it provides do not exclude any group of customers, and this remains a high priority. For example we are meeting the needs of the emerging group of customers from the new EU member states. The website now has a screen-reader function enabling access to blind customers. Other new developments are underway and will be completed during the life of the strategy. We will ensure that information and communication requirements of disabled people are considered, specifically, disabled people have asked to be better informed about facilities and funding.

## **Making the most of our website**

Offering 24/7 access to information and services will be a key part of meeting customer needs. By doing this we actively encourage greater access to services, at a cheaper cost to the Council, and free up resources to deliver services to those customers most in need.

Where appropriate as part of our everyday business with our customers, we will:

- ◆ make them aware that the information or service they require is available online, encouraging them to use the website
- ◆ include a link to the Council's home page, or other relevant pages, in e-mails
- ◆ include our website address in printed material.

We will continue to look at the design and scope of the website to ensure it meets customer needs and consideration will be given to personalising the content for particular customers. We will ensure the website provides high quality and useful information, and the number of on-line services will increase.

### **Developing the points of contact with customers**

The Council will continue to develop ways for customers to obtain services from the Council.

- The Call Centre will remain the primary method of dealing with telephone calls and more services will be offered over time.
- Direct dial – customers will be able to contact service areas direct. As services transfer to the Call Centre, direct dial volumes will decrease and these calls will become more focussed on the complex, specialist calls, best dealt with by service experts.
- Face to face - the Customer Service Centre at Huntingdon will be a primary point of access, but there will be Customer Service Centres at St Ives and St Neots. The Community Information Centres at Yaxley and Ramsey will continue to provide services to customers. The range of service and information between these centres will be brought together.
- Mobile or flexibly delivered services – services delivered away from the Council's premises; sometimes in a customer's home will be further developed. Work is underway to introduce more flexible ways of working. Where there is a clear business case, this has potential to provide services at locations more suited to the customer, particularly in rural locations.
- Via the internet – either from their own home, from mobile devices, or from public points of access.
- In writing - this may be within a letter, or a customer may have to apply for a service using application forms.

### **Getting it right first time**

Ensuring we answer customer enquiries first time is important. It means the customer receives an excellent level of service, and the Council does not spend effort dealing with avoidable and repeated customer contact. The establishment of the Call Centre and the Customer Service Centre in Huntingdon has meant a greater percentage of enquiries are dealt with at the first point of contact – but more could be done.

All services can help to improve our performance. Developing a clear customer insight requires all staff to understand the needs of customers and building services around those needs will reduce costs and lead to greater satisfaction. The Council should also use data more effectively to inform day to day contact with customers. This will increase the likelihood that the service offered fits the needs of the customers.

Encouraging customers to provide feedback, and understanding their comments allows the Council to make improvements and this is an area the Council will develop further.

### **Managing and responding to customer demand**

The Council will also manage demand better by 'smoothing' the day-to-day peaks in customer demand. This will increase access to service, especially at busy times.

For example, collecting and publishing information showing the least busy times may encourage some customers to plan their next visit or phone call to coincide with these quieter times. In addition it will help services to plan for peaks in demand.

### **Making more of contact with customers**

The Council has a Communications and Marketing Strategy and structure in place to promote marketing activities and many services already market themselves to customers and deliver excellent results. But the Council has identified that it can do more. Coordinated and targeted campaigns, based upon an increased understanding of customer needs and preferences, will ensure customers are more aware of services delivered by the Council.

### **Increasing the electronic provision of services and information**

For some services currently there are limited practical alternatives to a paper application form, and some customers prefer to write to the Council. New media is becoming an increasingly preferred method for communication for many customers. This is something that must be taken into account and is being considered in the communications and marketing strategy, as more customers opt to receive electronic communications.

The Council will increase the use of e-mail and the website where possible and appropriate. This approach will reduce the time taken for the Council to respond to a customer, reduce the use of paper and reduce expenditure.

### **Bringing together services**

While it is important to the Council that customers appreciate the distinctions between providers of services increasingly they are looking for simple or single points of contact. The Council already shares some elements of our customer service delivery for the benefit of our customers. Where practical, we will engage with partners and other agencies to try to deliver an improved service. This will mean customers can access a number of services in one location. The Council will need to share information with partners, and this will be encouraged.

## Objectives

Objective	Measure
Services are provided in a way that meet customer needs	% of customers who believe services are meeting their needs
Provision of service to customers is right first time	% of transactions right first time
Services are accessible to customers	% of customers who believe services are accessible

## Action Plan

This strategy is supported by a three-year action plan which will help to ensure a consistent approach across the whole of the Council. The Council's Head of Service overseeing customer service will be responsible for the monitoring and implementation of the plan and will work with other services to make sure this happens.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are critical to ensuring that we achieve the objectives.

To ensure we are making progress we will:

- monitor our performance against local (and national, if any) measures
- report performance on customer service
- collect and publish evidence of good practice throughout the Council.

This strategy and action plan will be reviewed annually so that we can set specific targets for the future. A comprehensive review of the strategy will be undertaken every three years.

## Risks

The council's corporate risk register identifies a large number of risks that may have negative effects on the council.

An effective customer service strategy is imperative to ensure the risks and the possibilities of them becoming a reality are kept to a minimum or prevented altogether.

The following key risks have been identified:

- Delivering the strategy may require resources already committed to other activities and projects.
- Customers are targeted in an uncoordinated way, using resources inefficiently and lowering customers' perception of our services.
- Customer insight may focus effort onto the majority of customers at the expense of hard to reach groups.
- Shared service requires commitment from outside the Council; it may be this is not forthcoming.

**Action Plan 2008-2011**

Objective	Action	Measure	Target	By whom	When
Services are provided in a way that meet customer needs	Embed the concept and practice of 'customer insight' into the organisation by encouraging services to implement this strategy				
	Designate a Head of Service to be responsible for overseeing the delivery of this strategy and for the provision of point of contact customer services				
	Ensure all Heads of Service acknowledge their responsibility for the delivery of customer service within their service				
	Review training and development needs to ensure employees can deliver this strategy				
	Capitalise on the opportunities we have to make information on our services available to our customers				

Objective	Action	Measure	Target	By whom	When
	Make better use of available data to improve our understanding of customers needs				
	To provide a more rapid and cost effective service by encouraging employees and the customers to use email and other electronic media				
	Use the results of Equality Impact Assessments in the planning of customer service activities				
Services are accessible to customers	Maintain face to face customer service in St Neots, St Ives, Ramsey and Yaxley				
	Complete the development of the Call Centre and Customer Service Centre in Huntingdon				
	Improve access to services by managing, and responding to, the demand on services better				

Objective	Action	Measure	Target	By whom	When
	Ensure all customers, including those groups which are considered to be excluded or do not engage with the Council, are considered when delivering services				
	Provide information about services in a way that meets the needs of disabled people				
	Promote the use of the website to improve service and 'free-up' resources				
	Develop the website and web based services so they are more personalised to customers needs				
	Improve the delivery of mobile services around the district				
	Explore with other public services and the voluntary sector, opportunities to provide services in a way that meets customer's needs				



Objective	Action	Measure	Target	By whom	When
Provision of service to customers is right first time	Increase the prominence of St Neots customer service Centre by exploring opportunities to establish a "high street" or other prominent town centre location				
	Improve the consistency and quality of face to face service provision				
	Reduce the amount of avoidable customer contact by 'getting it right first time'				
	Ensure the revised complaints process is used to incorporate, and encourage, all forms of suggestions and feedback				
	To set and publicise the standards of service customers can expect				

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# Agenda Item 5

AGENDA ITEM NO

CABINET

21 FEBRUARY 2008

## **FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS TO RIVERSIDE PARK, HUNTINGDON (Report by Heads of Planning Services, Operations, Environmental Management, Legal and Estates)**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Further to the established commitment to enhance the Riverside Park, a new Masterplan for its improvement that includes new planting, footpaths and cycleways, additional recreational areas, new hard surfacing, and moorings and signage together with costings has been produced and members are asked to approve this plan for further public consultation.

### **2. SUPPORTING/BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 In November 2004 the findings of an earlier consultants report entitled 'Riverside Park Options Study' was discussed by Cabinet. The consultant's aim, supported by an earlier Cabinet meeting (April 2003), was to look at ways to positively diversify leisure activity in the Riverside Park. The brief for consultants was:

- To explore options involving the community
- Produce an options report and brief to guide the extent and design of any new development
- Provide indicative costs

- 2.2 In arriving at the options the consultants considered a number of key issues concerning the Riverside Park as follows:

- Poor links and access to the town centre mainly due to barrier of the ring road and poor links through and within the park
- Inadequate footpath/cycle routes and mooring points
- Lack of distinguishable gateway features and arrival point within the town centre
- Negative impact of the existing car park and lack of dedicated spaces for park users
- Ecological and landscape features are not exploited to their potential
- Lack of distinctive and exciting leisure attractions or events – existing leisure facilities are under utilised (football pitches), in need of upgrading ( boat hire facility) or do not appeal to a broad range of people
- There are a number of visual detractors from the site and a lack of visual stimulation
- There is a need to create a critical mass of facilities in the centre of the park

- 2.3 Two options were drawn up and in-order to assist the process the Consultant's considered that the Riverside Park split naturally into three sections:

1. From the Old Bridge to the car park – Formal Park
  2. Car park to the eastern side of the football pitches- including the boat hire, boat club and pavilion - Activity Area
  3. From the eastern end of the football pitches to Church Lane-Green Lung
- 2.4 In drawing up these options a number of particular constraints were identified. The nature of the land, much of which is within the indicative flood plain, would preclude any large scale leisure development. The proposed bus lane along Hartford Road and the associated cycle lane would potentially reduce the available land on that frontage. A preferred option was arrived at after consultation with the public and is set out in Annex A.
- 2.5 The potential scheme with all its elements was costed at £3.375 million which was well above the level of funding available or that could be achieved through an MTP bid. It was agreed, therefore, to produce our own masterplan as an alternative and more selective way forward.
- 2.6 In the preferred option the shape of the car parking area was to be altered to achieve the principles set out in the plan. The car park was to be extended along the Hartford Road and the existing car park was to be reduced in size. A planning application made in 2007 to extend the car park without carrying out any of the proposed improvements was met with some hostility from local people. The application was withdrawn as it was considered to be premature ahead of the development of a car parking strategy and further consideration to achieve a more realistic masterplan for the Riverside Park.
3. **THE NEW MASTERPLAN (see Annex B)**
- 3.1 The new masterplan reflects the key issues identified in 2.2 above and has used specialist consultants as well as our own staff to produce the plans. The proposed new scheme now looks at the park in the same three areas with suggested improvements as described below. A small plan is included in Annex B, with a larger plan included at the end of the papers.
- 3.2 For Area 1 (the Formal Park) the following improvements are suggested:
- Make the two entrance areas opposite the Bridge Hotel and along the ring road more welcoming. In association with the main entrance near the Bridge Hotel, investigate the greening of the traffic island crossing
  - Create a new path parallel to the ring road inside the park
  - Create a focal point with shelter in the centre of the park
  - Improve the mooring facility and the paved area adjacent to Bridge Foot works
  - Remove certain trees and carry out new tree planting
  - Have less regimented grass maintenance in certain areas
  - Clear the river bank in certain locations to encourage easier access, short term moorings and formal fishing areas.
  - Standardised signs and interpretation boards erected

3.3 For Area 2 (the Activity Area) the following improvements are suggested:

- Reconfigure the equipment in the play area and reduce the area in size to enable a footpath to be created on the south eastern side.
- Removal of certain trees to allow more light into the play area.
- Remove south eastern side of car park (loss of 17 spaces) and incorporate into a wider landscaped walkway
- Make up for the removal of car park spaces by providing an additional 16 spaces adjacent to the Pavilion and Boat House
- Replace adult football pitches with 2 mini soccer pitches
- Create an area of reinforced grass on part of the former football pitch closest to the Pavilion for use as an events area (fair/circus/Town events/overspill car parking). The removal of the fair from the car park will reduce the spaces and income lost during each visit.
- Provide a Multi Use Games Area adjacent to the Boat Club
- Retain tarmac path linking the Boat Club area with Area 3 but remove chain link fence
- De-formalise the large green open space/football pitches with additional planting and a less rigid management regime with areas for mini soccer pitches or equivalent
- Clear riverbank in certain locations to encourage easier access.
- Make allowance for loss of land to cycleway and bus priority measures
- Encourage the redevelopment of the boat yard in accordance with the brief
- Standardised signs and interpretation boards erected

3.4 For Area 3 - (the Green Lung)

- Carry out management plan to enhance the biodiversity and attractiveness of the area (see Annex C for copy of draft management plan)
- Provide better signposts to car park in Church Lane and pedestrian signposts to the entrance to the Riverside park
- Provide small informal parking area adjacent to pumping station on Hartford Road for both visitors and to assist with maintenance
- Standardised signs and interpretation boards erected

3.5 The future of the Purvis Marine boatyard has not been included in this report, as separate discussions are taking place with the owners, for them to come up with a development plan for the site. The options being consider by the owners generally fit with our plans.

#### 4. COST IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The costings for the scheme are detailed in Annex D and are split into the different areas as described above.

4.2 The construction costs for each area are:

Area 1	£317,000
Area 2	£213,000
Area 3	£ 32,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£552,000</b>

Design costs of 10% need to be added to these costs to give a final cost of £607,000

- 4.3 A revised MTP bid has been submitted for this scheme to give a new expenditure of £610,000. This MTP bid also includes £5k per year for extra maintenance required for these works. No formal decision has been made on this bid as yet. If this is approved, then the full funding for the scheme will be available.

## **5. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 The risk assessment to the completion of the scheme is:
- The land is all in the ownership of the district council except the traffic island near the Bridge Hotel. The traffic island improvements will need County Council approval. The extent of the works will determine their opinion.
  - Planning permission will be required for certain aspects of the work. Refusal is not expected
  - Environment Agency approval will be needed as work is within the flood plain. Refusal is not expected as works will not reduce flood storage.
  - Increased costs above the budget will mean that lower priority works will not be completed, or extra monies may be found from S106 funds.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 Huntingdon Riverside Park is an important entrance feature to the town of Huntingdon, and as it contains the main long stay car park for the town, is the area that visitors see first.
- 6.2 Various reports have been carried out in the past on the park and all come to similar conclusions. The site has a potential to be greatly improved by: enhancing the views from and through it; replacing certain trees with better specimens; giving better footpath access that link the three areas; providing signage within the park and to and from the park to the town centre, and; replacing the adult football pitches with mini soccer pitches together with more general playing areas that are usable by a wider group.
- 6.3 In view of the time lapse since the Gillespie proposals were considered and the changes in the detail that are now proposed it is important that a similar consultation exercise is carried out. This would include a manned exhibition during times and at a location to maximise publicity.
- 6.4 The scheme meets many of the aims of Growing for Success as it improves the diversity of the habitat, gives better access to the public to good public open space, encourages youth activity and young play all within safe surroundings. It can also help the local economy by bringing more visitors to Huntingdon.

## **7. RECOMMENDATION**

7.1 It is recommended that –

- (1) Cabinet approve the scheme for consultation and receive feedback at a future meeting.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Riverside Park Options Study October 2004 (Gillespies)

**Contact Officer: R Probyn**  
 **01480 388430**

**Contact Officer: R Ward**  
 **01480 388635**

# ANNEX A - 2004 MASTERPLAN







## EXAMPLES OF FOCAL POINT/MEETING SHELTER FOR FORMAL AREA



## EXAMPLES OF MULTI USE GAMES AREAS FOR ACTIVITY AREA



**ANNEX C**

**MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR HUNTINGDON  
RIVERSIDE PARK – EASTERN END**

**May 2007**

**COUNTRYSIDE AND PARK SERVICES  
HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**DRAFT**



## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

Huntingdon Riverside Park is a linear park owned by Huntingdonshire District Council which stretches from Huntingdon's Old River Bridge at the western end, to Church Lane in Hartford at the eastern end. The site is bounded by the River Great Ouse on one side and Huntingdon town on the other.

The park is designated in planning policy as an Area of Best landscape and an Open Space and Gap for Protection which restricts development on the land. Much of the site is in the floodplain identified by the Environment Agency.

The western part of the park is semi-formal parkland with a number of single trees, and a hard surfaced path running through it. At the western end there is also a children's play area, a large car park, Purvis Marine boat repair yard, a boat club, a pavilion and two football pitches.

To the east of the football pitches a line of mature Poplar and Willow trees marks the point where Riverside Park changes to a more rural environment with more naturalised tree belts and pockets of woodland, a wide expanse of meadow, ditches and wet areas as well as ancient trees. In addition to the hard surface path which continues from the southern end, there are less formal grass mown paths around the meadow.

This management plan is concerned with the area of Riverside Park which is east of the football pitches. Also included is the small mown area by Church Lane at the very eastern point where there is a small car park.

The eastern end of Riverside Park, to which this management plan refers, totals 0.0901 km<sup>2</sup> or 0.3478 miles<sup>2</sup>.

## **MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS**

The eastern end of Riverside Park has been divided into zones, which are shown on the aerial photograph.

ZONE 1 : Poplars and Grassland Strip  
ZONE 2 : Meadow  
ZONE 3 : Tree Belt  
ZONE 4 : Woodland Pocket  
ZONE 5 : Car park and Green

For each zone the main plant/tree species are noted and a proposal given for management of that area. A separate map has been used to identify particular areas within the zones where work has been suggested.

### **ZONE 1: POPLARS AND GRASSLAND STRIP**

Main Species: Poplar and Willow trees, bramble and nettle.  
Hedge along grassland strip consists of Hawthorn and Elm.

- The line of Poplars and Willows at the edge of the playing field have been cut in the past and this should be continued. The trees should be checked every 8 years to see if the tops need cutting.



- The path running parallel to the Poplars should be mown between April and September if the ground is dry. To encourage wildflowers along the edge of the path, a 1 metre strip along the middle could be mown with the blade on low and for 1 metre either side the blade could be raised slightly.
- The entrance from the playing field at point 1A should be kept accessible. The bramble bush here needs to be trimmed each year in the autumn to prevent it from growing across the path.
- The grassland strip which runs parallel to the road is kept short by rabbits but periodic mowing of the nettles and creeping thistles will discourage these from spreading.
- The hedgerow along the grassland strip, which is an important boundary to the road, both visually and for wildlife, is thin and gappy. To encourage the hedge to thicken out, the hedge bottom should not be sprayed with herbicides and an un-mown strip of 2 metres from the base should be left. This will benefit all wildlife from invertebrates to small mammals.
- The Guided Bus Route is expected to have an impact on this hedgerow when the route is constructed. Reinstatement of a native, rabbit protected hedge, needs to take place following this work.
- There is a dangerous manhole cover in the grassland strip which has a hole in the corner big enough for a child or dog to loose their foot through. This needs to be dealt with to avoid any accidents.

## **ZONE 2: MEADOW**

Main Species: Cut-leaved Cranesbill, Meadow and Creeping Buttercup, Cow Parsley, Meadowsweet, Dock species, Dandelion, Ground Ivy, Cleavers, Nettle, Sorrel, as well as Cuckoo Flower, Pond Sedge, Marsh Marigold, Reed Sweet Grass and Common Reed in wetter areas.

- Mow the meadow once per year in June/July and ensure hay is removed from site. This will encourage less coarse grasses and more wildflowers to grow. There are areas where trees such as Poplar and Blackthorn are encroaching onto the meadow. Annual mowing is important to limit the succession to woodland.
- Between April and September mow the grass around benches and either side of the hard surfaced path – 1 metre either side, unless the path is close to the river bank when a 0.5 metre strip should be cut.
- Between April and September mow a grass path around the meadow 1½ metres wide, keeping well away from the river bank. This provides more varied walks for visitors to the site.
- The wet corner of the meadow at point 2A is good for Marsh Marigold and Meadowsweet and should be included in the hay cut. If this is not possible to do by machine, it should be cut and raked off by hand. This will help to reduce the dominance of the coarse grasses. The Poplar is seeding in this area and the small poplars should be cut to prevent encroachment into the meadow.
- Leave some areas of the meadow which are close to the river out of the hay cut to discourage people getting close to the river during the summertime. Monitor scrub encroachment in these areas in order to maintain viewpoints of the river and Westside Common.
- At 2B the Ash tree has lost a large limb which needs clearing up. The wood could be cut up into smaller sections and placed away from the path in Zone 4 as a habitat pile for invertebrates and small mammals.

- At the footbridge at point 2C, on the side of the bridge which is furthest away from the river bank, the two willows could be re-pollarded during the winter time.
- Create a large glade at 2D between the Horse Chestnut trees, and another glade nearer the footbridge at 2C. These should be mown in September, raked up and the cuttings removed. For the first two years mow them again at the first cut of the year in April and then in July, removing the cuttings. This will reduce the amount of nettles and increase the variety of wildflowers.
- At 2E the Weeping Willow should be removed.

### **ZONE 3: TREE BELT**

Main Species: Willows, Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Elm, Maple, Ash, Lime, Black Walnut, Apple, Ornamental fruit trees:

- At point 3A cut a small glade either side of the path and rake off the cuttings, to reduce the stinging nettles and add variety. Avoid making the glade too big as this will encourage unwanted public access into the wooded area. Maintain the standing dead wood in the area where possible. The glade should be cut on one side of the path one year and the other side the following year.
- The wooden bridges either side of 3A should be inspected regularly to check they are safe and are not rotten.
- At 3B the Elm with 3 stands should be re-coppiced and the leaning branch of the other Elm next to the bridge should be taken off.
- At 3C on the other side of the bridge, the dead elms should be cut down at shoulder height.
- Create glades on the edge of the tree belt at 3D and 3E by again cutting the vegetation and raking off the cuttings. Since the meadow circular path passes next to these areas, the dead Elms which are near to the path should be removed.
- Set up a programme to remove the non native trees in the tree belt. This work would need to be carried out over 10 years to avoid too much public concern. The gaps and hollows in the tree belt could be planted up with native shrub willows.
- Maintain standing dead wood as much as possible to provide valuable habitat for invertebrates and birds. Standing dead wood close to paths should be inspected, closely monitored and removed only if necessary.
- There are several dead Elm trees along the tree belt on the meadow side which are a potential danger to the public taking the circular mown path around the meadow. Some of these need to be cut down and stacked to form habitat piles.
- Consider developing a programme of pollarding for some of the ancient Willows in order to prolong their life. Some of the younger Willows on the edge of the grassland strip could be pollarded first to allow light onto the ancient Willows. The very old Willows will need a lot of light if they are going to survive any pollarding.

### **ZONE 4: WOODLAND POCKET**

Main Species: Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Elm, Ash, Field Maple, Green Alcanet (garden escape), Forget me not, Comfrey, Speedwell, Cow Parsley, Hard Rush, Gypsywort, Rosebay Willowherb, Lesser Celendine, Hedge Garlic:

- Improve the entrance to the park at the Hartford end by trimming back vegetation to let more light in. Some of the Elder trees could be cut back slightly.
- Involve the Enforcement team in any fly tipping that is found next to the residential areas here.
- Remove the old Nature Trail posts.
- Mow 1 metre either side of the path and side up any overhanging branches to give a more open feel to the Woodland Pocket.
- Allow more light to the ditch and ponds at 4A by coppicing trees and removing scrub within 2 meters of the edge. This will also help to improve flow by reducing the amount of leaf litter that can fall, and will allow water plants to grow. Retain some scrub for structural diversity, landscape and as a food source for wildlife. It is important that this work isn't done all at once because it will look very drastic and it may encourage unwanted access off the path to these areas. The coppicing could be done on one side 1 year and the other side the next year. This would then be left for 5 years until it is done again.
- At point 4B, thin out some of the Elms to allow regeneration of ground flora and to allow more space for the remaining Elm's to broaden out.

### **ZONE 5: CAR PARK AND GREEN**

Main Species: Horse Chestnut, Ash, Hawthorn, Sycamore and Willow and species poor grassland.

- Continue to mow the green, maintain the car park and maintain the open views of the river and meadows on the opposite side.
- At the base of the 2 trees in the middle of the green, leave an un-mown large circle for wildflowers. Mow once each year in September and remove the cuttings.
- Decide on the management required for the ditch which is next to the car park, if it is HDC's responsibility. There are some very large trees which are very close to the houses.
- The Weeping Willow in the northern corner of the green at point 5A needs reducing as it is too big.
- Metal plates could be secured onto the picnic benches to prevent barbeques from burning the benches.
- Consider putting in a 48 hour mooring by the Green to encourage people to visit Huntingdon Riverside Park by boat.

### **FURTHER POTENTIAL ENHANCEMENTS FOR BIODIVERSITY AND PEOPLE**

Other projects affecting the whole of the Huntingdon Riverside Park Eastern End which could be discussed are:

- Reinstatement of the redundant ditches through the whole of the site could improve their amenity and wildlife value.
- Create wetland areas by installing sluices etc
- Provide fishing platforms along the river bank.
- Re-seed parts of meadow to improve diversity of the flora.

## **EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Riverside Park is well used by local people for getting to town, work, school as well as to walk their dogs. The eastern end is particularly popular with people because of the varied habitats and the wide range of wildlife associated with it.

Working with the community is an extremely effective way of solving problems, encouraging people to enjoy the site and planning for its long term future. By encouraging local people to become involved in practical work and events on the park, a sense of pride and ownership will develop.

## **PROPOSALS TO ENCOURAGE INVOLVEMENT**

- Work with local schools and groups to offer activities such as: mini-beast hunting, tree activities, scavenger hunts, guided walks and countryside events.
- Develop links with secondary schools and encourage use of the park for project work for older children e.g. GCSE and A level Geography and Biology Projects.
- Encourage people of all ages and abilities to enjoy and be involved in practical work on the park such as litter picking and conservation tasks. Pond and ditch management, scrub clearance, litter picking, tree planting and maintenance are all very suitable for volunteers, and will help to develop pride in the site and understanding of the management of Riverside Park.
- Encourage fishing along the river by formalising an agreement with a local club.
- Review the number of moorings along river bank and consider increasing the number to allow more day visitors by boat.

## **GENERAL PUBLICITY**

- Welcoming information boards would help to link the fragmented western and eastern ends of Riverside Park, as well as provide information on the history and wildlife value of the site. They could be placed at either end, and one in the middle could focus more specifically on the wildlife of the eastern section.
- Press releases and features would help to inform the public about management and to ensure good publicity for HDC's Parks Service.

## **WIDER ISSUES**

- Erosion of banks by river

## **FUTURE MANAGEMENT**

- It is anticipated that the park will continue to be managed by HDC's Parks Service with support from Countryside Services.
- There are a lot of interested people living near to the park and using the site so a Friends Group could be formed to help with day to day management, events, positive publicity and fundraising.





**Huntingdonshire**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Huntingdon Riverside Park,  
Eastern End**

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## ANNEX D

### SCHEME COSTINGS

#### AREA 1 – THE FORMAL PARK

Greening Traffic Island	15,000
Bridge Foot Moorings	75,000
Reconstruct exist footpath	47,000
New Footpath	46,000
Decorative paved areas	14,000
Focal Point Shelter	30,000
Seating and Information Boards	32,000
Planting scheme	92,000

Total Area 1 297,000

#### AREA 2 – THE ACTIVITY AREA

Alterations to existing car park	6,000
New car parking	31,000
Revision to play area	5,000
Multi Activity area	34,000 (up to 66,000)
Reinforced grass area	116,000
Activity trail	10,000
Planting scheme	21,000

Total Area 2 223,000

#### AREA 3 – THE GREEN LUNG

Seating and Information Boards	12,000
Hartford road car park	20,000

Total Area 3 32,000

**CONSTRUCTION COST ALL AREAS £552,000**

**DESIGN COSTS £ 55,000**

**TOTAL COSTS £607,000**

CABINET

21 FEBRUARY 2008

## MEDIUM TERM PLAN REQUESTS FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

(Report by the Head of Financial Services)

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to allow Cabinet to decide whether to release funds for the MTP scheme detailed in the attached annexes.

### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council agreed in December 2005 *that, having regard to the implications for future spending and Council Tax levels, Directors review with appropriate Executive Councillors the need for schemes/projects included in the MTP but not yet started and that specific prior approval be sought and obtained from the Cabinet before such schemes/projects are implemented.*
- 2.2 Officers have identified the schemes that they wish Cabinet to consider releasing funding for and have discussed them with the relevant Executive Councillor.
- 2.3 Annex A summarises and the following Annexes detail these requests.

### 3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Cabinet is recommended to release the funds shown in Annex A.

#### ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT 1985

None

#### Contact Officer:

**Steve Couper**

Head of Financial Services ☎ 01480 388103

<b>SUMMARY</b>		<b>Net Revenue Impact (£'000)</b>						<b>Net Capital (£'000)</b>					
		2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013
<b>Annex</b>													
<b>B</b>	<b>Project – 715 Network Infrastructure</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>						
	<b>Total amount for which release now requested</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>						

## Project – 715 Network Infrastructure

Project Officer: Mike Oakley

## Financial Impact

	Net Revenue Impact						Capital							
	2006/ 2007 £000	2007/ 2008 £000	2008/ 2009 £000	2009/ 2010 £000	2010/ 2011 £000	2011/ 2012 £000	2012/ 2013 £000	2006/ 2007 £000	2007/ 2008 £000	2008/ 2009 £000	2009/ 2010 £000	2010/ 2011 £000	2011/ 2012 £000	2012/ 2013 £000
Approved Gross Budget		49	49	49	49	49								
Approved Net Budget		49	49	49	49	49								
Already released														
<b>Amount for which release now requested</b>		<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>								

## Justification for Release

99

It is necessary maintain the IT network server and support hardware at an acceptable service level. Failure to do this by allowing the infrastructure to operate beyond its intended lifetime and/or to grow obsolete will open up all of the Council's Services and Customer access channels to a significantly higher risk of service disruption, inefficiency and even loss of valuable information assets. IMD has a programme of equipment replacement around a four-year cycle to minimise the risk of this so that we can ensure hardware components are replaced as they come to the end of their life, preventing growing numbers of failures and ensuring the hardware remains suitable for the application software requirements.

As the Council has become more dependant on IT over the last few years the amount of affected equipment has grown, and this budget provides the capability to extend the four year cycle to all the network and server equipment used to provide our services.

Failure to do this will lead to increasingly severe disruptions to the business systems and hence our services to the public, and in turn will create additional costs and reduce the efficiency of ICT Services as more effort has to be ploughed into fault resolution, user support and unplanned maintenance and procurement activity.

Provided the release is granted shortly there will still be time to complete the replacement schedule for 07/08 (ie the full 49k is required).

For further details please see the original MTP submission (715).

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## STATE OF THE DISTRICT ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

(Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery))

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report summarises the findings of a study by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) state of the District engagement events and contains recommendations arising from the study.

### 2. STUDY REMIT

- 2.1 In the course of the last review of the Constitution, the full Council referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel a detailed proposal to introduce a biennial state of the District conference. The proposal was that every two years a "State of the District" half-day conference should be held on the second Saturday in September. The public would be invited to attend and would be able to speak. Specific invitations would be sent to Parish Councils, local businesses and various representative bodies, including those for young people. The following Council meeting, at the end of September, would consider the views expressed. These views also would inform the budget and MTP processes. In addition, the conference might generate issues for the Scrutiny Panels to consider.

- 2.2 During initial discussion the Overview and Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the difficulty in engaging with the public, particularly on a District level and, as a result, Members were keen to investigate the use of smaller area consultation groups involving all tiers of local government in the process. A Working Group was established comprising Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, K J Churchill and P J Downes to consider the proposal. The Working Group was, therefore, originally asked to discuss the concept of local area forums, together with potential subject areas for discussion. The Working Group has held meetings on a number of occasions, the last being 11th January 2008, and interim reports have been submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

- 2.3 On receipt of one such report, at the meeting on 4th December 2007, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's Members expressed doubt that significant numbers of members of the public would attend four meetings. This gave rise to concerns over the costs of advertising events and hiring venues. It was felt that initially only one of the area consultation events should be held in order to determine the level of public interest in such an event.

- 2.4 The Working Group has noted the views expressed. Members, however, decided to proceed with recommending that four area events are held. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel's initial justification for this format was that members of the public would not be prepared to travel to a distant venue to attend a single District-wide meeting and this still applies. In addition, the purpose of the pilot exercise is to evaluate various mechanisms so as to establish the most effective means to carry out consultation in future. Finally, the argument that holding four events would be excessively costly is

not supported as the marketing costs would be similar whether one or four events are held and, as Appendix A shows, the costs of hiring venues are, in comparison, relatively low.

2.5 In the course of the study the Working Group held discussions with:

- ◆ I Brandstatterova, Policy Officer,
- ◆ H Gilling, Communications and Marketing Manager,
- ◆ I Leatherbarrow, Head of Policy and Strategic Services, and
- ◆ L Sboui, Senior Policy Officer.

### **3. ENGAGEMENT EVENT PURPOSES**

3.1 The potential benefits of holding events to engage Huntingdonshire residents in discussing the Council's strategies and services have been considered. Members concluded that holding engagement events could potentially provide forums:

- for Councillors to obtain an understanding of the state of the District;
- for two way information exchange and mutual learning;
- to enable County, District, Town and Parish Councils to engage in a joint debate on local authority services; and
- for direct contact between Councillors and members of the public.

3.2 On the basis of these discussions it has been concluded that there could be merit in holding engagement events. Details of a similar exercise planned in Bristol appear at Appendix B.

3.3 In order to ensure the events are effective, however, Members are of the view that they should be introduced initially on a trial basis. The implication of this is that it is not recommend at this stage that the Council's Constitution is amended to include a state of the district consultation mechanism.

### **4 THE COUNCIL'S CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

4.1 In the course of the study the draft Consultation and Engagement Strategy has been reviewed. It was concluded that engagement events could help to deliver the Strategy's aims and the Council's commitment under it by ensuring a strategic approach is taken to consultation and that the outcomes are used to inform policy and decision making by contributing to the variety of methods used, which will enable as many people as possible to have the opportunity to give the Council their views. These events will fit with the emerging Consultation Engagement and Strategy.

4.2 it is suggested that the Action Plan to the Consultation and Engagement Strategy should include reference to Member state of the District engagement events.



## 5 ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

5.1 In compliance with the original study remit it is recommended that four area events are held in Huntingdon, St Ives, St Neots and Yaxley. Details of suitable venues together with costs are attached at Appendix A.

5.2 As part of the pilot study various formats have been discussed that might be used at each of the proposed area consultation events. Members are of the view that a different approach to engagement should be adopted at each area event. Each of the formats identified will be assessed as part of the trial for their ability to:

- a). attract local residents to the forums, and
- b). generate “fine-grained”, qualitative information.

This will enable the Council to assess the effectiveness of each for future use.

5.3 Each event format commences with statements by the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition. Each Executive Councillor will then make a brief statement on their portfolio responsibilities. Following the opening statements four models will be employed, one for each area event:

- a question and answer session involving all those present;
- groups will be formed to discuss Cabinet Portfolios. A stand might be provided at the event that discusses Cabinet portfolios for each Cabinet Member to provide information and an opportunity for 1:1 dialogue.
- groups will be formed to discuss topics that have been identified in advance, which are within the remit of the Council; and
- groups will be formed to discuss broad cross-cuttings issues – members of the public will be invited to suggest the issues for discussion. Invitations may be extended to the Police and health bodies to attend. Representatives of the Council’s partners should form part of the audience as this will prevent the event becoming dominated by issues that are not relevant on the night but will provide the Council with the opportunity to find out more about its partners. Online measures should be employed only for this format. The existing “have your say” page on the Council’s website should be used for this purpose. It should be prominently displayed on the home page

A plenary session will be held at the end of each event.

5.4 It is suggested that Cabinet Members might use power point for their presentations. A rehearsal and briefing should be held in advance. The Communications and Marketing Manager might provide advice to Cabinet Members on their presentations/language and research if required. The cost of this work appears in Section 7.

- 5.5 Engagement events should take place on consecutive weeks in late September / early October 2008. An independent Chairman should preside at each event.

## 6 PROMOTING EVENTS

- 6.1 The advice of the Communications and Marketing Manager has been obtained on the general principles of promoting engagement events. Her view is that the approach adopted should emphasise consistency of message on a "little and often" basis. She also has suggested:

- Start early! Little and often works better than one 'big bang.'
- Make use of channels that people are familiar with in their own local networks.
- Make sure there is a consistent message - familiarity breeds content.
- Brand all communications in the same way.
- Make sure the messages are relevant to the respective communities.
- Messages should be tailored according to the particular area – highlighting or offering to discuss items of local interest or concern.

- 6.2 The Communications and Marketing Manager also has made specific suggestions on marketing events, including:

- Publicity in the March, June and September editions of District Wide.
- Half page ads in local papers in the two weeks in advance of events.
- Radio stations' community programmes to be approached.
- Fliers to be produced for shops, doctors, leisure centres, fetes, shows etc.
- The mobile unit to be located in town/villages.

- 6.3 The suggested timetable for publicity is:

- **March:** District Wide published Monday 24 to include 'teaser' that the events are happening - 'look out for more details in the next issue'.
- **June:** District Wide published Monday June 16 – more detailed information about the events, venues etc. could include a coupon for people to supply their question or nominate a topic – whether or not they are coming to the meeting. Could post responses in District Wide.

Website – replicate information in District Wide and use this as a medium for people to post questions/comments again offering feedback facility.

Write to town and parish councils at the same time as District Wide is produced. Write to voluntary organisations, community groups etc. Circulate to local community newsletters ---

timescale to be confirmed according to their publication dates. Ensure relevant ward members are informed and onsite to encourage constituents to come along.

Produce posters/flyers for distribution locally – post offices, shops, schools, our buildings, libraries, health centres, supermarkets, parish notice boards and the Council's community information centre in Yaxley.

- **August:** 'holiday month' – people are away, groups don't meet – but can take advantage of the quiet time of the newspaper 'silly season' for editorial coverage.
- **September:** Advertisements in local press. The item in District Wide will be distributed during the week commencing 15th September 2008.

Hand out leaflets the weekend before – set up mobile unit in local centres.

Seek radio publicity. Including events programme the Saturday before and interviews with the Leader of the Council immediately before the events.

## 7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS OF ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

7.1 Such an intensive publicity campaign will not happen without being carefully managed and monitored to check its effectiveness. This will have implications on existing resources (unless it is deemed appropriate to employ outside help to manage the process).

7.2 Estimated time spent by communications and marketing representative:

Researching and booking venues	4 hours
Researching topics/issues	8 hours
Preparing items for District Wide	3 hours
Preparing posters and flyers	4 hours
Researching audiences	3 hours
Researching media	2 hours
Preparing press statements	2 hours
Preparing letters	4 hours
Distributing promotional material (more if hand delivered)	4 hours
Follow up calls to media	2 hours
Briefing for radio interviews	1 hour
Preparing material for website	4 hours
Researching answers to questions	8 hours
Mobile unit promotions (x4)	32 hours
Attendance at events	<u>12 hours</u>
Total	<u>93 hours</u>

Estimated costs for the above activities: £2,000 using in-house resources (£3,000 using consultants)

Cost of advertisements in local papers. Suggest half page full colour for maximum impact

Town Crier	£260 per insertion
Hunts post	£500 per insertion
	(all exclusive of VAT)

Cost of producing posters/flyers – approximately £1,500

**The total cost (without using consultants) is £5,020**

- 7.3 It is recommended that the cost of the pilot for 2008 only is met from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's budget. This will enable the potential benefits of engagement events to be ascertained. If successful and events are held in future years the cost would have to be met by the Cabinet.

## **8 EVALUATION**

- 8.1 As a pilot there is a need to carry out evaluation of each format to ascertain their potential benefit to the Council. It is suggested that the Working Group should undertake this evaluation. It is, however, also recommended that independent evaluation should be carried out. As it is rare for district councils to hold such events and it is being largely prompted by Overview and Scrutiny, it is suggested that the Centre for Public Scrutiny might be approached to do this work. Failing this Members suggest that a councillor or officer from another local authority, a representative of the Local Government Association or an academic is approached. Any of these would probably be require payment.

## **9 CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The principle and potential outcomes of holding state of the District engagement events have been considered and it has been concluded that they are likely to have some benefit for the Council. A range of options by which consultation events might take place also have been considered and a number of conclusions have been reached on the format of events.
- 9.2 Holding engagement events will contribute the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy and also with the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy. A series of proposals has been produced to implement these events. The proposals have been fully costed.

## **10 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Panel RECOMMENDS:

- a) that the Corporate Governance Panel is informed of the findings in respect of the Council's Constitution; and
- b) that the Cabinet is advised
  - that four area engagement events are held in Huntingdon, St Ives, St Neots and Yaxley at the venues identified in Appendix B initially on a trial basis;

- that the Panel notes that engagement events could help to deliver the Consultation and Engagement Strategy's aims and endorses the suggestion that the Action Plan to the Strategy is amended to include reference to Member state of the District engagement events;
- that the formats set out in Section 5 be adopted for engagement events;
- that the general principles of promoting engagement events, specific marketing suggestions and timetable for publicity are adopted;
- that the total cost (without using consultants) of £5,020 be met for 2008 only from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's budget;
- that the Working Group be requested to evaluate the events; and
- that the Centre for Public Scrutiny be approached to carry out an evaluation of the events and failing this the assistance of another independent individual be sought.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Notes of meetings of the State of the District Consultation Working Group.

Reports and Minutes of the Corporate Governance Panel, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) and the Council.

**Contact Officer:   A Roberts**  
**☎           01480 388009**



Consultation Area							
VENUE	OCCUPANCY	PARKING	CATERING	P/POINT	COST	CONTACT	
Aquarius Hall (St Ives)	1) 30 2) 30	250 spaces	Tea/Coffee £1 pp	Yes	f/d £240 (9-4). h/d £120	John Giddings:01480 388506 E: john.giddings@huntsdc.gov.uk	
The Priory Centre (St Neots)	2 meeting: 20	Public (Huntingdon)	£1.35 per head	Bring own	£11 p/hr, min 2hrs	Helen King: 01480 388944 F: 01480 388915	
Yaxley British Legion (Yaxley)	Main: 150 Small: 30	30 spaces	Bring own	Bring own	£10 - 15 p/hr	Barry: 01733 240873	
Hinchingbrooke House (Huntingdon)	Assembly: 40 Pedegrey: 14	Sufficient	£1.50	£50 per day	£50 + £25p/hr £38 + £10p/hr (Min 2hr)	Lisa Wardropper: 01480 375678 www.hhpac.co.uk	
* Each venue has sufficient disabled access							
* Each venue is open on weekdays							





***RESIDENTS GET CHANCE TO PUT VIEWS ON CITY'S PRIORITIES***

Local people are being offered the chance to influence Bristol Council's first ever 'State of the City' debate which will take place next week in an effort to define the council's priorities and shape its Corporate Plan for 2008-09. The debate will occupy the first two hours of next Tuesday's full meeting of the authority and residents have been invited to submit statements to inform the discussion among the 70 elected members.

The debate will be broadcast live on the web so local people can follow the discussions without attending the meeting. The city's Lord Mayor, Royston Griffey, said the debate would be a new experience for everyone and he hoped it would be an informative and useful experiment.

The leader of the council, Helen Holland, said it was an improving authority but there was still a long way to go before it could claim it confidence to be consistently delivering high quality, value for money services to all. "We want Bristol to be an ambitious city that includes and values all its citizens. We want to drive forward change that makes a difference to people's lives," she said. Priorities included ensuring the city was safer and healthier with visible improvements to streets, parks, open spaces, community facilities and transport. .

"The Cabinet's draft budget, published just before Christmas, seeks to reflect those priorities - and this debate offers an unprecedented opportunity for all elected councillors to discuss the issues and influence the council's future direction," Councillor Holland added."

Opposition groups on the council have also welcomed the idea of the debate. Liberal Democrat leader Steve Comer said, "Many Bristol residents feel promises are made but not delivered. This debate gives councillors an opportunity to discuss the future of our city and contribute their ideas and solutions." His Conservative opposite number, Richard Eddy, said an open public discussion was a welcome development for local democracy.

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**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL  
(SERVICE DELIVERY)  
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL  
(SERVICE SUPPORT)  
CABINET**

**5<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2008  
12<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2008  
21<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY 2008**

## **LOCAL PETITIONS AND CALLS FOR ACTION**

**(Report by Head of Administration)**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet and Panels on the implications of recent legislative change affecting the overview and scrutiny function and invite comments in response to a consultation paper from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on local petitions and calls for action.

### **2. Legislative Change**

2.1 Both the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Police and Justice Act 2006 have enhanced the powers of overview and scrutiny committees. The relevant sections of both Acts are likely to be brought into force later in the year and are subject to regulations and statutory guidance which have yet to be issued. The recent DCLG consultation paper is the first step towards the preparation of the Secretary of State's guidance.

2.2 The key changes to the role of scrutiny can be summarised as follows –

- Provision for any member of an overview and scrutiny committee to refer to the committee any matter of relevance to the functions of the committee.
- Provision for any member of the Council to refer to an overview and scrutiny committee any matter of relevance to the functions of the committee that affects his/her ward.
- A requirement to establish a crime and disorder committee to review, scrutinise and make reports and recommendations to authorities responsible for crime and disorder strategies.
- Provision for any member of the Council to refer to a crime and disorder committee any matter of relevance to the functions of the committee that affects his/her ward.
- Power to scrutinise the discharge of functions by individual councillors in their wards if the Council devolves decision making to ward councillors under the 2007 Act.
- Power for an overview and scrutiny committee to require information from the County Council and certain partner authorities.
- Power for a crime and disorder committee to similarly require information and also require attendance at committee meetings by responsible authorities.
- Power to co-opt additional persons to a crime and disorder committee.
- Discretion for an overview and scrutiny committee to publish its report and recommendations to the executive.
- A duty for the executive to respond in writing to an overview and scrutiny's report and recommendations within 2 months and to publish the response if the committee's report was published.
- Power for a county council and partner district councils to establish a joint overview and scrutiny committee to scrutinise the attainment of local improvement targets specified in a local area agreement.

- Power for a district council to make reports and recommendations to a partner county council relating to the attainment of local improvement targets specified in a local area agreement.
  - Power for councils responsible for crime and disorder strategies to appoint a joint crime and disorder committee to exercise scrutiny functions.
- 2.3 Further information will be brought to the Panels' attention when the regulations and guidance have emerged.

### **3. Local Petitions**

3.1 The Government believes that there should be a duty on local authorities to respond to petitions in the following circumstances –

- The subject of the petition relates to the functions of the authority or other public services with shared delivery responsibilities through a local area agreement or other partnership arrangement.
- The petition has been organised by a local person.
- The petition demonstrates a sufficient level of support from local people.
- The petition satisfies minimum requirements in relation to the manner in which it was submitted, its form and its content.

3.2 It is proposed that petitioners ought to be able to present their petitions either to the council or to a councillor.

3.3 The DCLG has invited comment on such issues as the definition of a local person, the number of signatures required for a petition to be considered, how qualifying signatures could be extended to children and what minimum information a petition should contain.

### **4. Calls for Action**

4.1 The Government take the view that the proposal in the Government's white paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' in October 2006 for a 'community call for action' is satisfied by the duty for authorities to respond to qualifying local petitions.

4.2 The legislative changes outlined above that enable councillors to refer a local government matter to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee and a crime and disorder matter to a local crime and disorder committee are regarded by the DCLG as amounting to a 'councillor call for action'. A local government matter is defined as relating to the discharge of any function of the authority which affects a member's ward but which is not excluded by order of the Secretary of State, for example planning and licensing appeals. A crime and disorder matter is defined as relating to crime and disorder (including in particular anti-social behaviour) and the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances that affects a member's ward.

4.3 The DCLG has invited comment on any matters that should be excluded from the calls for action and what key issues should be included in the statutory guidance.

### **5. Conclusion**

5.1 The regulations and guidance on the implementation of the changes outlined in this report are likely to be extensive. Further reports will be submitted as these emerge, in particular how the requirement for a crime and disorder committee is to be dealt with.

- 5.2 In the interim, the Secretary of State has invited comments on how certain aspects of the new procedures will work in practice. The questions posed in the consultation paper are listed in the annex to this report, together with suggested responses.
- 5.3 The impact of the changes on the Council's existing governance and scrutiny arrangements will depend upon the extent to which the public and individual members take advantage of the new powers to encourage greater participation in local democracy. Local people already can submit petitions for consideration by the Council and the constitution provides for individual members to include items on a meeting's agenda. Both are used sparingly at the moment but the Government's aim of enhancing public participation and reinvigorating local democracy may lead to wider use of the new statutory powers. This is to be welcomed but the impact on the workload of both the existing overview and scrutiny panels and support staff will need to be monitored and reviewed if there is a proliferation of petitions and calls for action.
- 5.4 This report has been considered by both Overview and Scrutiny Panels. The developments have been welcomed by the Service Delivery Panel and the suggested responses to the consultation document endorsed. The Service Support Panel has stressed the desirability of local discretion in the treatment of local petitions and calls for action to avoid national guidelines being overly prescriptive. Members also remarked upon the potential additional workload both for themselves and officers in the event of the new access to the democratic process being used extensively by the public. The Panel therefore added a comment to the last question posed in the Annex attached to the effect that the costs incurred by local authorities should be acknowledged by Government in the distribution of additional resources through the Revenue Support Grant

## **6. Recommendations**

### **6.1 The Cabinet is**

#### **Recommended**

- (a) to note the content of this report; and
- (b) to consider the suggested responses to the consultation paper as set out in annex A, as amended in paragraph 5.4 above and comment accordingly to the DCLG.

#### **Background Papers:**

DCLG Strong and Prosperous Communities White Paper  
DCLG Local Petitions and Calls for Action consultation

#### **Contact:**

Roy Reeves – Head of Administration 01480 388003

## LOCAL PETITIONS AND CALLS FOR ACTION.

The following specific questions are raised by DCLG in the consultation paper –

### Petitions

*The Government believes there should be a statutory duty on local authorities to respond to local petitions. What conditions should be met before a local authority is required to respond formally to a petition?*

Petitions have been used by the public for many years as a way of drawing attention to an issue of concern and many authorities already make provision in their constitutions that formalises the way in which petitions are handled. Although a response to a petition will become a statutory duty, some flexibility must remain to enable individual authorities to decide whether a petition is repetitious, vexatious, frivolous or indeed libellous. The Council should remain the final arbiter in such circumstances. It would be unwieldy and unnecessarily bureaucratic for any form of external appeals mechanism to be put in place for an aggrieved party who disagrees with an authority's rejection of a petition. That person could always approach the Local Government Ombudsman with a claim of maladministration if an authority failed to follow its own procedures.

Further flexibility as to how petitions are to be dealt with would be welcome to enable an authority to decide whether a petition should be submitted to council, executive or scrutiny, how petitions are to be presented personally etc.

A petition must relate to a matter in which the Council has an interest either in terms of the direct or shared provision of services or its wider community well-being role.

*In particular, how should we define the level of support required before a petition must get a formal, substantive response?*

*By a fixed number of signatures?*

*By a percentage of the electorate in the area?*

*By a hybrid of the two?*

*Or in some other way?*

It would be preferable to set maximum standards and permit some local flexibility as opposed to a rigid national standard which might be too difficult to attain if set too high or cause an unmanageable proliferation of petitions if too low. As most petitions are likely to relate to local as opposed to authority-wide matters, a fixed number of signatures is preferable to a percentage of the population. A minimum of 100 persons is suggested.

Signatories must have a relevant connection with the authority's area. A reliance upon names appearing on an authority's register of electors would exclude those who work but don't live in the area, children and migrant workers. There does need to be an ability to check the validity of a signature where doubt exists as to its authenticity but simple headings such as name, address, place of work (if non resident in the area), age (if under 18) and e-mail address (in the case of electronic petitions) may be sufficient.

### Calls for Action

*What, if any, matters should be excluded from the call for action?*

Councillors should not be able to raise items that relate to specific quasi-judicial decisions such as planning and licensing applications nor employment issues that relate to individual employees by name or designation.

*What guidance should Government provide on the operation of the councillor call for action?*

Guidance should include provision for a councillor who is not a member of an overview and scrutiny committee to address the committee on the item that he/she has placed on the agenda. There should also be a limit on the number of items that can be placed on the agenda for each meeting and by an individual councillor within a prescribed period to prevent repetition or an unmanageable proliferation of calls for action.

## **Overall**

*Taken together, would petitions and calls for action sufficiently empower communities to intervene with their elected representatives? Should we contemplate other measures?*

Much will depend upon the extent to which the public avail themselves of the new opportunities. There are various avenues through which the public can raise issues of concern with councils and ward councillors and no additional measures are required of a statutory nature.

*Do you have other views on the operation of the new duty to respond to petitions and the call for action?*

No.

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LICENSING AND PROTECTION PANEL  
LICENSING COMMITTEE  
CABINET

11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2008  
11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2008  
21<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY 2008

## ENFORCEMENT POLICIES (Report by Head of Administration)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members that a **Regulators' Compliance Code** has been published by the Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR) and will come into effect on 6 April 2008. It extends to a wide variety of regulators and applies to local authorities in respect of many of their enforcement activities, primarily but not exclusively public health, environmental protection and licensing. This is a statutory code of practice and those regulators that are prescribed must have regard to its content. The new code can be viewed at [http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/documents/compliance\\_code/compliance\\_code\\_071217.pdf](http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/documents/compliance_code/compliance_code_071217.pdf)
- 1.2 The code is based upon the recommendations contained in the Hampton Report commissioned by the Government on "Reducing Administrative Burdens: Effective Inspection and Enforcement" which was published in 2005.
- 1.3 Several of the Council's Divisions are required to have an enforcement policy with some having more than one to meet the specific requirements of national bodies, most notably Environmental and Community Health, which has discrete areas of enforcement such as Food Safety, Private Sector Housing, Health & Safety and Environmental Protection.
- 1.4 The Council's existing enforcement policies are based on the principles contained in an enforcement concordat published by the Local Government Association some years ago. They are comprehensive and should generally comply with the requirements of the new code but each policy will need to be reviewed and updated to ensure compliance.
- 1.5 As the current policies were approved previously by committee or form part of various statements of policy that the Council has to have regard to in complying with its statutory functions, it is proposed that they be reviewed where necessary and approved after consultation with the appropriate executive councillor or committee chairman.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Section 21 of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 imposes a duty on any person exercising a specified regulatory function to have regard to 5 principles of good regulation. These are defined in the Act to provide for regulatory activities to be carried out

in a way that is **transparent, accountable, proportionate** and **consistent** and for them to be **targeted** only at cases in which action is needed. Section 22 of the Act enables the relevant Minister to issue a Code of Practice relating to the exercise of regulatory functions (the Regulators' Compliance Code) and places a duty on those exercising specified regulatory functions to have regard to the code when determining enforcement policies. The new code forms a central part of the Government's better regulation agenda with the aim of ensuring a risk-based, proportionate and flexible approach to regulatory inspection and enforcement that allows and encourages economic progress.

2.2 The code stresses the need for regulators to adopt a positive and proactive approach towards ensuring compliance by:

- helping and encouraging those who are regulated to understand and meet regulatory requirements more easily; and
- responding proportionately to regulatory breaches.

### **3. IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 The existing enforcement policies have been designed for the Council to carry out its duties in accordance with its statutory powers and guidance and are already based upon various principles including openness, proportionality, consistency, transparency and targeting. However some changes will be required to ensure that the policies meet the code and extend to all of the Council's regulatory functions.

3.2 Once the code has been implemented, future enforcement action will be constrained by the content of the enforcement policies. Any failure to act in accordance with an adopted policy could be raised in a defence against enforcement action in the courts and complaints about the Council's actions or inaction in carrying out its statutory duties can be pursued under the internal complaints code and with the Local Government Ombudsman.

3.1 There is a general requirement to consult those affected by the adoption of an enforcement policy but this has already been undertaken when the existing policies were formulated. The changes envisaged hopefully should not be extensive and any consultation required will be dealt with electronically through the medium of the Council's website.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

4.1 It will be necessary for relevant Heads of Service to update a range of enforcement policies to reflect the requirements of the new Regulators' Compliance Code which will be undertaken in consultation with the relevant executive councillors and chairmen.

### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 It is

### **RECOMMENDED**

that the Panel/Committee/Cabinet

- (a) note the content of this report; and
- (b) authorise relevant Heads of Service to review their enforcement policies having specific regard to the content of the new Regulators' Compliance Code and to approve any necessary changes after consultation with the relevant executive councillor or chairman;

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006.

Reducing Administrative Burdens: Effective Inspection and Enforcement,  
Philip Hampton, March 2005.

The Regulators' Compliance Code.

**Contact Officer: Roy Reeves**  
**☎ 01480 388003**

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CABINET

21<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY 2008

## **CYCLING** **(Report by the Cycling Working Group)**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At their meeting held on 13th March 2007, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) decided to establish a Working Group to investigate the Council's expenditure on cycling in Huntingdonshire and its effectiveness in providing dedicated cycle paths and promoting cycling as a means of transport. The Working Group comprised Councillors K M Baker, P J Downes and P M D Godfrey and has met on a number of occasions in the ensuing months.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Panel's initial interest in the subject was prompted by concern expressed by a ward member over a lack of progress in providing a cycleway in his Ward, notwithstanding a financial contribution under a Section 106 Agreement. This led to a discussion in October 2006 when the Panel considered the level of expenditure on cycleway development in Huntingdonshire, vis-a-vis the provision made in the Council's medium term plan and in Section 106 Agreements with developers.
- 2.2 The Panel acknowledged at the outset that the authority with principal responsibility for cycling is Cambridgeshire County Council and that both Councils have agreed previously that it would not be practical to scrutinise the level of service provision by each other. Nevertheless, the Panel was conscious that the District Council plays an active role in cycling provision in a number of ways, namely –
- ◆ contributing towards expenditure on cycleway provision in Huntingdonshire;
  - ◆ the negotiation of Section 106 Agreements for transportation provision with money being paid by developers direct to the County Council and its expenditure through the market town transport strategies;
  - ◆ financial contributions towards the County Council's safe cycle routes programme;
  - ◆ the provision of cycle racks in the market towns;
  - ◆ the production of leaflets on cycle routes in Huntingdonshire;
  - ◆ working with Sustrans on the national cycle network, two of the major routes of which pass through the District; and
  - ◆ the adoption in 2000 of a cycling strategy for Huntingdonshire.
- 2.3 Having regard to that level of investment and involvement, the Panel sought information from the County Council on their programme and financial commitment to cycleway provision and the promotion of cycling in Huntingdonshire. In the context of the partnership arrangements between the two authorities, the relevant executive councillor and officer of the

County Council were invited to attend a Scrutiny Panel meeting but the invitation was declined.

- 2.4 The Panel therefore established a Working Group to review the Council's strategy, plans and expenditure on cycling in Huntingdonshire and examine the influence which the Council's financial commitment was having in the practical delivery of new routes and the growth of cycling in the District.

### **3. PROMOTION OF CYCLING**

- 3.1 The Working Group recognised the many benefits of encouraging the use of cycles both in terms of reducing traffic congestion and town centre pollution and in improving the fitness and health of the cyclist. During the course of its study, other issues have emerged to reinforce that view, including the growing concern over climate change and each individual's carbon footprint and the development of the Council's Environment Strategy.

- 3.2 The evidence of the health benefits of physical activity is well documented. People who are physically active reduce their risk of developing major chronic diseases (such as coronary heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes) by up to 50% and reduce the risks of premature death by 20-30%. Regular physical activity also has benefits for mental health and a sense of well-being. The National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence published Public Health Guidance on 'Physical Activity and the Environment' in January 2008 which offers the first national, evidence-based recommendations on how to improve the physical environment to encourage physical activity. Recommendations are aimed at those developing Local Development Frameworks and Local Transport Plans and the emerging Huntingdonshire Sustainable Community Strategy seeks to promote active and healthy lifestyles, as well as tackle obesity in both children and adults. A major contributor to this work will be increasing local levels of physical activity, including the promotion of active travel.

- 3.3 Nevertheless the volume of traffic on Huntingdonshire's roads can tend to discourage cycling unless dedicated cycleways or paths have been provided. The Working Group did not seek evidence to support its perception but the view held by Members was that most casual cyclists would be deterred from using the more busy roads in the District. Observations suggest that cyclists often use footways adjoining carriageways in such circumstances which can lead to conflict between the pedestrian and the cyclist.

### **4. CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS**

- 4.1 The promotion of cycling is encouraged in the Local Transport Plan prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council and to which the District Council is a partner signatory. In the towns, the development of cycling initiatives is promoted through the market town transport strategies compiled by the County Council, again in partnership with the District Council, and approved by the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee. The picture is less clear outside the market towns and the Working Group found little or no evidence of any active district-wide policy to link settlements by the construction of cycleways or to connect those living on the outskirts of the market towns with the town centres.

4.2 That being said, the attention of the Working Group has been drawn to the existing cycling strategy adopted by the Council in 2000 which has the following objectives –

- ◆ to maximise the role of cycling as a transport mode in order to reduce the use of the private car;
- ◆ to develop a safe, convenient, efficient and attractive transport infrastructure which encourages and facilitates cycling within and beyond Huntingdonshire and which minimises reliance on and discourages unnecessary use of private cars;
- ◆ to ensure that policies to increase cycling and meet the needs of cyclists are fully integrated into the Local Plan and in all complementary strategies including transport, environmental improvement, leisure, tourism and Local Agenda 21 strategies;
- ◆ to ensure that the development of cycle networks in Huntingdonshire considers, where appropriate, the views of the general public and other interest groups through regular consultation.

4.3 In conjunction with the approval of the strategy, the Council approved a list of 41 priority routes for future consideration containing a mixture of urban and rural locations. The urban routes are considered as part of the market town transport strategies but progress on the rural routes that were identified has been slow. No specific provision is contained in the Local Transport Plan for new cycleways in Huntingdonshire and, given the relatively high cost of construction of dedicated cycle paths, it appears unlikely that the rural routes will be addressed unless additional resources are made available.

## **5. FINANCIAL PROVISION**

5.1 The Working Group found that, over the past five years, the District Council's direct expenditure on cycling provision has amounted to just over £600,000, comprising –

safe cycle routes - £243,000  
cycle shelters - £59,000  
specific cycleway provision - £299,000.

Included in the MTP for the current and next four years is a total of £347,000 for safe cycle routes to school plus £524,000 for St. Neots pedestrian bridges (which can be used by cyclists) and £505,000 towards schemes (not specifically identified for cycling) in the market town transport strategies.

5.2 Section 106 contributions play an increasingly important role in the delivery of the latter strategies. Some contributions for specific schemes are negotiated with developers by the District Council, such as those relating to development west of St. Ives which make provision for a new cycleway as part of improvements to the St Ivo Outdoor Centre. Others form part of the wider transportation contribution which is paid direct to the County Council and spent under the market town transport strategies with individual schemes being approved by the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee.

- 5.3 The Working Group wished to establish the precise extent of any County Council funding that might be available for cycleway provision in the District.

## **6. WORKING GROUP INVESTIGATIONS**

- 6.1 The Working Group found that, although not the authority with principle responsibility for this function, the District Council makes a significant contribution to the promotion of cycling in Huntingdonshire, both by way of financial expenditure and the promotion of cycling as an environmentally friendly and healthy alternative to the car.

- 6.2 On that basis, the Working Group was disappointed that officers of the County Council had not been prepared to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to discuss the subject. During the course of the Working Group's study, Councillor Downes, in his role as a County Councillor, met one of the highways officers to discuss the partnership arrangements and the County Council's expenditure on cycling provision in Huntingdonshire. This was followed up by a meeting between District and County Council officers.

- 6.3 Notwithstanding the efforts of the Working Group, it has not been possible to identify the precise extent of the County Council's past or planned expenditure on cycleway provision in Huntingdonshire. Principally this seems to be because, unlike the District Council, there is no specific allocation for cycling in the County Council's transportation budget. Similarly an analysis of recent Section 106 Agreements shows numerous references to contributions by developers towards transportation provision of up to £2,000 per dwelling but more limited references to cycleway provision which are usually site specific. Most of that expenditure is being allocated through the market towns transport strategies with little likelihood that rural routes will be progressed

- 6.4 Although expenditure on cycleway provision is dependent on a variety of sources from Government grant through the Local Transport Plan to County and District Councils budgetary allocations and Section 106 Agreements, the Working Group was disappointed that it was unable to establish the precise amount of available funding and plans for its expenditure, whether in the market towns or elsewhere.

## **7. OUTCOMES**

- 7.1 A significant development from the working party's inquiries is an offer by County Council officers to update the District Council's cycling strategy to align its content with the Local Transport Plan and to prepare, in conjunction with District Council officers, an action plan for its implementation, including the identification of inter-urban routes. A similar exercise has already been carried out for South Cambridgeshire District Council which has led to an allocation of funding from the Local Transport Plan each year for cycleway provision in that District.

- 7.2 With limited exceptions where an individual scheme can be identified, Section 106 Agreements do not tend to make specific provision for a financial contribution towards cycleway development. The adoption of an action plan to implement the cycling strategy will enable more Agreements to target expenditure on specific cycleway provision. If those receipts were



to be made payable to the District Council as opposed to the County Council, this should establish a clearer link to the implementation of the cycling strategy.

7.3 With regard to the market towns, the Working Group has been unable to distinguish with any accuracy how much money is available for expenditure on cycleway provision through the market town transport strategies. Where the Council itself has allocated specific funding, the Working Group has been informed that this is released on a scheme by scheme basis following approval by the Area Joint Committee with District officers often designing the individual projects. The Working Group feels that this practice should continue.

7.4 The Working Group had hoped, at the outset of the study, that it might be possible to establish what influence the District's Council's expenditure and involvement in cycling provision had in encouraging and promoting investment in cycleway development in Huntingdonshire. Despite the enquiries made, it has not been possible to identify the amount of funding available nor a programme for cycleway development outside the market towns. The Working Group has therefore concluded that it is impractical to pursue this matter any further.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

8.1 Members of the Working Group wish to extend their appreciation to the District Council's officers in the Planning Division for their assistance during the course of the review and for their candid advice and views.

8.2 The Working Group had hoped to establish a clear link from Section 106 contributions for transportation to its expenditure on individual cycleway schemes but this has not proved possible. The updating of the cycling strategy and an associated action plan will however enable the Council to distinguish between contributions for cycleway provision and transportation generally in appropriate cases. Given the District's existing commitment to cycling provision, the Working Group considers that the contributions negotiated for cycling should be paid by developers to the District Council as opposed to the County Council. The funding available for expenditure can be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) in the same way as existing Section 106 receipts with the money being committed to individual schemes approved by the Area Joint Committee as currently.

8.3 The updated strategy and action plan should hopefully attract specific funding through the Local Transport Plan which, together with targeted Section 106 receipts, will enable progress to be made in the creation of inter-urban cycleway routes in Huntingdonshire and thereby encourage more people to cycle with all of the associated benefits in terms of reduced traffic congestion, improved air quality and a healthier population.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 The Working Group therefore

### **RECOMMEND**

- (a) that the offer by the County Council to update the Council's existing cycling strategy and to prepare an action plan for its implementation be welcomed and officers requested to conclude this work within the next six months;
- (b) that, following completion of the strategy and action plan, specific contributions be sought in Section 106 Agreements for cycleway provision in Huntingdonshire in appropriate cases;
- (c) that contributions negotiated under (b) above be retained by the District Council for expenditure on implementation of the cycling strategy action plan;
- (d) that the District Council seek the allocation of specific funding through the Local Transport Plan for cycleway provision in Huntingdonshire;
- (e) that the approval of individual cycleway schemes continue to be the responsibility of the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee with District Council expenditure continuing to be allocated on a scheme by scheme basis.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Notes of the Cycling Working Group

Medium Term Plan

Reports and Minutes of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) and the Section 106 Agreement Advisory Group


Market Town Transport Strategies

Cycling Strategy for Huntingdonshire 2000

Local Transport Plan

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2006). Transport Interventions Promoting Safe Cycling and Walking: Evidence Briefing.

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2008). Promoting and creating built or natural environments that encourage and support physical activity.

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## TRAVEL PLAN (Report by the Travel Plan Working Group)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At their meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2007, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) decided to establish a working group to investigate the Council's Travel Plan and the question of travel allowances and incentives/disincentives for Members and Officers to use more environmentally sensitive means of transport.
- 1.2 The working group comprised Councillors M G Baker, P M D Godfrey, J A Gray and R J West and has met on a number of occasions in the ensuing months. (Councillor D B Dew was initially appointed to the working group but was replaced by Councillor Godfrey when he ceased to be a member of the Scrutiny Panel).

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council's Travel Plan was approved by the Cabinet in October 2006. It applies equally to employees and Members of the Council and is intended to encourage them to make better travel choices by reducing inefficient car usage and promoting healthier travel. In discussing the Plan prior to its approval by Cabinet, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) doubted whether the actions proposed would be sufficient to achieve the targets identified. Members also felt that there was a lack of incentives for employees to discourage the use of private cars to travel to and from work and that there was a need for further consideration to be given to possible concessions to employees to encourage the use of alternative forms of transport such as reductions on season tickets for bus travel.
- 2.2 The Panel also discussed the current scheme for the payment of mileage allowances and was concerned that these tended to favour the use of cars with larger engine sizes. The Panel therefore felt that the Plan provided an opportunity to review both the employees and Members schemes.
- 2.3 The employees' car mileage allowances form part of their contracts of employment with the Council. Although pay negotiations are determined locally, travel allowances are part of the wider national agreement approved by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services. Mileage rates are currently determined by engine size as shown in Appendix A attached.
- 2.4 Allowances for members are set by the Council, having regard to the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel. The mileage rates currently are aligned with those of the employees. These were last reviewed by the Panel in their report of November 2006. The Panel had received representations that the mileage allowance for members be reduced to 40 pence per mile which is the rate above which income tax is payable to HM Customs and Revenues. The Panel concluded that the Members' rate should be fixed to that of the employees on the

grounds of equity but should track the employees' rate if that should vary at any time in the future.

- 2.5 In establishing a study of the subject, the Service Support Panel asked the working group to look at ways of encouraging the use of more energy efficient vehicles and whether greater incentives could be made available to discourage the use of the car.

### **3. INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The working group made extensive enquiries on the websites of other local authorities into their travel allowances and incentives and the content of their travel plans. Information was obtained on the estimated costs of running a car provided on the Royal Automobile Club's website and the taxable allowances operated by HM Customs and Revenues. Enquiries were made into the car sharing arrangements available for employees in Cambridgeshire.

- 3.2 Extensive use was made of the [vcacarfueldata](http://vcacarfueldata.org.uk) website which contains data on the emissions of all recently manufactured vehicles.

### **4. VEHICLE EMISSIONS**

- 4.1 With the emerging Environment Strategy and a growing recognition of the importance of carbon footprints, the working group felt that the current mileage rates for employees and Members based on engine size with no regard to emission values was becoming rapidly outdated. With only three engine bands and the highest being for vehicles with an engine size over 1,200 cc, the great majority of employees and members will be eligible for the maximum rate of 54.4 pence per mile. Tax is payable on that element of reimbursement over 40 pence per mile which HM Customs and Revenues regard as 'profit'.

- 4.2 The working group did not feel that it was within its remit to propose an alteration to the mileage rates paid to employees which, as mentioned above, forms part of their contracts of employment. Any change would have to be the subject of negotiation between the Council and the employees and could result in a move from the national to a locally determined scheme.

- 4.3 However, the working group did consider that members could demonstrate their commitment to reducing emissions, reducing their carbon footprint and improving local air quality. By altering the mileage rate for members to one based on emission rates, the working group is of the opinion that this may set an example for others to follow.

- 4.4 Information on exhaust emission ratings or 'Euro' standards (expressed as the amount of grams per kilometre of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted) is readily available on [www.vcacarfueldata.org.uk](http://www.vcacarfueldata.org.uk). These have been converted to bandings for the purposes of vehicle excise duty which are shown in the following table, together with the VED rates –

Vehicles registered on or after 1st March 2001		Diesel Car TC 49		Petrol Car TC 48		Alternative Fuel Car TC 59	
Bands	CO <sub>2</sub> Emission Figure (g/km) *	12 months rate £	6 months rate £	12 months rate £	6 months rate £	12 months rate £	6 months rate £
Band A	Up to 100	<u>0.00</u>	-	<u>0.00</u>	-	<u>0.00</u>	-
Band B	101 to 120	<u>35.00</u>	-	<u>35.00</u>	-	<u>15.00</u>	-
Band C	121 - 150	<u>115.00</u>	<u>63.25</u>	<u>115.00</u>	<u>63.25</u>	<u>95.00</u>	<u>52.25</u>
Band D	151 - 165	<u>140.00</u>	<u>77.00</u>	<u>140.00</u>	<u>77.00</u>	<u>120.00</u>	<u>66.00</u>
Band E	166 - 185	<u>165.00</u>	<u>90.75</u>	<u>165.00</u>	<u>90.75</u>	<u>145.00</u>	<u>79.75</u>
Band F	186 - 225	<u>205.00</u>	<u>112.75</u>	<u>205.00</u>	<u>112.75</u>	<u>190.00</u>	<u>104.50</u>
Band G	226+	<u>300.00</u>	<u>165.00</u>	<u>300.00</u>	<u>165.00</u>	<u>285.00</u>	<u>156.75</u>

- 4.5 Exhaust emissions are not available for vehicles first registered before 1<sup>st</sup> March 2001. Some examples of the types of cars that fall in the various bands are shown in Appendix B.
- 4.6 Taken together with the varying excise duty rates, the working group considers that the payment of mileage rates based upon emissions may influence Members to choose cars that have less impact on the local environment. A suggested alternative to a mileage allowance based on engine size is:

	First 8,500 miles	thereafter	Element of expense liable to tax
Band A	64.0p	32.0p	24.0p
Band B	56.0p	28.0p	16.0p
Bands C&D	40.0p	20.0p	0p
Bands E&F	36.0p	18.0p	0p
Band G	30.0p	15.0p	0p
Vehicles registered before 1/1/2001	30.0p	15.0p	0p
Motorcycles	24.0p	24.0p	0p

- 4.7 The allowance is intended to be attractive to those who drive a low emission car and penalise those with a heavy polluting vehicle. The rates are deliberately drawn much wider than the existing allowance based on engine size to provide a greater incentive to change.
- 4.8 The working group do not think that this should be mandatory for existing Members but would hope that most will opt to be paid on the new basis. All newly elected Members would be paid on the emissions rating allowance. This would mean that the Council would have to operate two systems of payment at a small additional administrative cost which the working group feels would be far outweighed by the benefits both to the Council and the local environment.
- 4.9 Any alteration to the Members mileage allowance would have to be agreed by the Independent Remuneration Panel. Enquiries have been made with the Chairman of the Panel as to whether it would be

necessary to reconvene the Panel to approve the change but his view is that this can be dealt with in a convenient manner without the expense of holding a meeting of the Panel.

## **5. INCENTIVES TO EMPLOYEES**

- 5.1 Having regard to the nature of the public transport system and the impracticality of walking or cycling to work because of the distance involved and the lack of dedicated cycleways, the working group acknowledge that, for many of the Council's employees, the car will remain for some time the only viable means of travel to work.
- 5.2 That being the case, the working group feels that greater encouragement should be given to car sharing which has clear benefits in reducing pollution and improving air quality. The working group's attention has been drawn to a number of car sharing initiatives that have been developed with an ability to search on various websites for possible people with whom to share. Car sharing remains, however, a matter of choice for the individual and there is no incentive to encourage the Council's employees to share with colleagues or others travelling to the same location.
- 5.3 Circumstances will change if the Cabinet decide to accept the recommendations of the Car Parking Working Party and introduce car parking charges for the Riverside, Huntingdon and Bridge Place, Godmanchester car parks which will represent a negative incentive to car share for employees to avoid paying parking charges. The working group feels that the Council should take a more positive step by reducing charges for those who do car share. This could be limited to one car park only such as Bridge Place where charges currently do not apply. The loss of income that the Council would incur is difficult to predict as this would depend upon take up but, as no charge has been made for this car park in the past, this should not result in any reduction in income compared to previous years. As employees will no longer have the option of free parking in future, this may also help to cushion the impact of charging later in the year.
- 5.4 The working group is aware of a concern that an employee who has come to work by car share may encounter a problem in travelling home either during the day in an emergency or at the end of the day if the driver has had to leave early in similar circumstances. Such occasions are likely to be rare but in those isolated incidents, it is suggested that the Council meet the cost of a taxi for the employee to travel home if public transport is unavailable.
- 5.5 The working group has discussed how a concession for car sharing might be administered, bearing in mind that tickets will be dispensed by machine for the Bridge Place car park. Information has been presented to the Panel previously that ticket machine are likely to become more sophisticated in their programming which will create an opportunity for greater flexibility in the charging structure. Until that time, a concession for employees could simply be by way of a monthly claim for reimbursement by the driver of a vehicle who has carried a passenger. Verification, if considered necessary, could be undertaken by checking CCTV records with false claims being a disciplinary offence in the same way as any other allowances claim.

5.6 The working group also discussed briefly possible incentives for employees to use public transport or travel by foot or cycle. Further investigations will be necessary before any recommendations would be formulated and in order not to further delay this report, the Group will report on this subject at a future date.

## 6. POOL CARS

6.1 The working group investigated the use of the District Council's pool car status and the frequency/mileage of each car to date. The fleet comprises three diesel powered Toyota Yaris and a petrol/electric hybrid Toyota Prius. The pool cars have been specifically chosen for their low carbon emission output. The Toyota Yaris, tax band B, has an engine capacity of 1.3 and emits 119 g/km of CO<sub>2</sub> whilst the Prius, also tax band B, has an engine capacity of 1.5 and emits 104 g/km of CO<sub>2</sub>. Although these were not actively promoted during their first quarter (April – June 2007), their usage has provided encouraging results:

Month	Mileage	Cost per mile – private car (54.4p)	Cost per mile – pool car (40p)	Saving £
May	1789	966.06	715.60	250.46
June	1430	772.20	572.00	200.20
July	3756	2,028.24	1,502.40	525.84
August	2714	1,465.56	1,085.60	379.96
September	2625	1,417.50	1,050.00	367.50
October	3616	1,952.64	1,446.40	506.24
November	3871	2,090.36	1,548.40	541.96

6.2 As anticipated, active promotion of the pool cars coupled with the loss of onsite parking has caused an increase in their usage in the second quarter reflecting the positive incorporation of the pool car into everyday work. The charge of 40p per mile includes the running costs of the vehicle and, as shown in the table above, highlights the increasing savings made by the Council through their use. The Group welcomes the use of the lower emission vehicles purchased by the Council and foresee their use to a greater extent in the future with increased publicity of their availability to employees and members.

6.3 The Group felt that it would be useful also if it were possible to assess what the saving in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions was from the use of pool cars and in order to monitor the continuous use of the cars, the Group suggest that regular reports be made available highlighting the reductions in both costs to the Council and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## 7. FINANCIAL PROVISION

7.1 As the concept of changing mileage rates to emission rates is an innovative approach, the group researched the potential availability of funding for publicity and the implementation of the scheme. To date no

source has been identified but further enquiries may lead to possible opportunities for support.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The working group is firmly of the belief that the Council should be innovative in its approach to the question of mileage allowances and that incentives should be made available for employees and Members to reduce the use of cars in general and the more heavily polluting cars in particular.
- 8.2 By moving to a different basis for the payment of mileage allowances to Members, the working group hopes that the Council will be seen as offering an example of good practice that will be followed by others. Positive incentives for car sharing by employees will help to make this more attractive as opposed to individual travel to work in single occupancy vehicles and again may be regarded as a step towards reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The working group therefore

### **RECOMMEND**

- (a) that an alternative form of mileage allowance be introduced for Members of the Council as set out in paragraph 4.6 above based upon exhaust emissions;
- (b) that the new mileage allowance be optional for existing Members but compulsory for all newly elected Members with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008;
- (c) that the Members' Independent Remuneration Panel be requested to confirm their agreement to the changes to the mileage allowance for Members;
- (d) that the necessary changes be made to the Members Allowance Scheme;
- (e) that employees travelling to work by means of car share be permitted to park in Bridge Place car park at a concessionary rate if car parking charges are introduced for that car park by the Council and suitable arrangements be made to enable those who have car shared to travel home in an emergency if they are left without suitable means of transport;
- (f) that enquiries continue to be made regarding potential funding for the implementation and publicity of the proposed changes to the mileage allowances to Members;
- (g) that regular reports be produced highlighting the savings in both emissions and costs to the Council from the use of pool cars; and



- (h) that further consideration be given to incentives for employees to use public transport, cycling and walking by the working group in the future.

**Background papers**

See Appendix C

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**Mileage Rates**

**Inland Revenue approved mileage rates**

<b>Tax Year</b>	<b>Business Miles</b>	<b>Engine &lt;1000cc</b>	<b>Engine 1001-1500cc</b>	<b>Engine 1501-2000cc</b>	<b>Engine &gt;2000cc</b>
2007/08	< 10,000	40 p/mile	40 p/mile	40 p/mile	40 p/mile
2007/08	> 10,000	25 p/mile	25 p/mile	25 p/mile	25 p/mile

**Current Huntingdonshire District Council (Councillor)**

<b>Mileage Bands</b>	<b>451-999cc</b>	<b>1000-1199cc</b>	<b>1200-1450cc</b>
< 8,500	39.7p	43.1p	54.4p
> 8,500	12.1p	12.0p	14.3p

**APPENDIX B**

**Examples of Vehicles within Tax Bands A – G**

TAX BAND (emissions)	MAKE	MODEL	ENGINE CAPACITY	FUEL	CO2 (g/km)
A (up to 100)	Seat	Ibiza	1.4 TDI	Diesel	99
	Volkswagen	Polo	1.4 TDI	Diesel	99
B (101-120)	Citroen	C3	1.6 HDI	Diesel	118
	Peugeot	207	1.4 HDI	Diesel	120
	Fiat	500	1.2	Petrol	119
	Daihatsu	Sirion		Petrol	118
C (121-150)	Honda	Civic - Type S	2.2	Diesel	138
	Toyota	Avensis	2.2	Diesel	146
	Chevrolet	Matiz	1	Petrol	139
	Ford	Ka	1.3	Petrol	150
D (151-165)	Audi	A4 Saloon	1.9 TDI	Diesel	152
	Hyundai	Sonata	2	Diesel	159
	Renault	Clio	1.6	Petrol	160
	Suzuki	SX4	1.6	Petrol	165
E (166-185)	Mazda	5 series	2	Diesel	173
	Renault	Coupe	1.9	Diesel	180
	Chrysler Jeep	Sebring	2	Petrol	185
	Alfa Romeo	159	1.8	Petrol	181
F (186-225)	Skoda	Superb	2.5	Diesel	206
	Land Rover	Freelander 2	2.2	Diesel	224
	Kia	Sportage	2	Petrol	194
	Audi	Cabriolet	2	Petrol	197
G (226+)	Citroen	C6	2.7	Diesel	230
	Nissan	Patrol	3	Diesel	313
	Ford	Galaxy	2.3	Petrol	242
	Toyota	Land Cruiser	4	Petrol	291

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Notes of the Travel Plan Working Group
- Reports and Minutes of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support)
- LGA Members' Allowance Scheme
- NJC Officer Mileage Rates
- HDC's Travel Plan
- RAC Report on Motoring 2006: Chapter 4 – Greener Motoring
- East of England Development Agency
- HM Revenue and Customs
- Manchester Green City Campaign
- Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
- DVLA Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP) April 2007 – March 2008

### Websites for the following Councils:

Birmingham City  
Bristol City  
Dundee City  
South Bedfordshire District  
Cambridgeshire County  
London Boroughs of Bromley  
Camden  
Havering and Islington  
Manchester City  
Newcastle Upon Tyne City  
North Lincolnshire  
West Oxfordshire District  
Sheffield City  
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough  
Southampton City  
Warwickshire County

### WEBSITES

[www.vcacarfueldata.org.uk](http://www.vcacarfueldata.org.uk)  
[www.huntsdc.gov.uk](http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk)  
[www.rac.co.uk](http://www.rac.co.uk)  
[www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)  
[www.hmrc.gov.uk/green-transport/travel-plans.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/green-transport/travel-plans.htm)  
[www.camshare.co.uk](http://www.camshare.co.uk)  
[www.peterboroughcarshare.com](http://www.peterboroughcarshare.com)  
[www.liftsharesolutions.com/carbudi.asp](http://www.liftsharesolutions.com/carbudi.asp)  
[www.globalactionplan.org.uk/transportfacts.aspx](http://www.globalactionplan.org.uk/transportfacts.aspx)

**PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHOD OF OPERATION –  
COUNTRYSIDE JOINT GROUP  
(Report by Head of Administration)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At their meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2007, the Countryside Joint Group considered a report which proposed a revised terms of reference and method of operation for the Group. The report had been written in response to uncertainty expressed by Members as to the new remit and status of the Group, since the earlier Cabinet decision to reconstitute the body from the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Liaison Group to the Countryside Joint Group in May 2006.
- 1.2 A copy of the report considered by the Group is appended at Annex A. Specifically, the report endeavoured to propose a work programme and pattern of operation which would more fully engage Members in the work of the Countryside Service.

**2. VIEWS OF THE JOINT GROUP**

- 2.1 Having discussed their role and function at great length and the programme of activity which had been proposed, Members continued to express dissatisfaction as to the purpose of the Group given its perceived inability to take decisions and exert any influence over the management of the service. It was also considered that the title of the Group did not fully reflect its transition into a body with oversight of the Countryside Service.
- 2.2 In seeking clarification on the role of the Group, Members expressed a desire to exercise increased decision making over the Countryside Service and to enhance their management responsibilities. It is for this purpose that the Group wished to engage the views of the Cabinet.

**3. CONSTITUTIONAL ADVICE**

- 3.1 Regulations made under the Local Government Act 2000 prescribe which local government functions are not the responsibility of an authority's executive. These do not include countryside management which is therefore the responsibility of the Cabinet. When the constitution was approved, no provision was made to delegate decision making in respect of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park to the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Liaison Group. It could therefore only make recommendations to Cabinet on matters affecting the Country Park. That situation remained unaltered when the remit of the Group was extended to all countryside services in Huntingdonshire.

- 3.2 The Act does not permit executive decisions to be made by non-executive Members, except in certain prescribed circumstances, i.e. area committees and joint committees. In those circumstances, non-executive Members may only take decisions if the function delegated relates to that area or, in the case of a joint committee, to less than two fifths of the area of the District, or the area contains less than two fifths of the population of the District. Neither of these circumstances apply in the case of the Countryside Joint Group.
- 3.3 If the Joint Group is to exercise decision making on behalf of the Cabinet, its membership must therefore comprise executive Members of the Cabinet only. There is an exception in the case of the County Councillor if that Member represents an electoral division of the County that is situated in Huntingdonshire.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The Countryside Joint Group was established to monitor performance and report with or without recommendations to the Cabinet on the Countryside Service. As such, its membership can comprise non-executive Members and its membership must be politically balanced.
- 4.2 If the Cabinet were to delegate decision making to the Joint Group, only Cabinet Members may be appointed and its membership will not be politically balanced. The current Chairman of the Joint Group would be excluded from membership.
- 4.3 The Joint Group has invited the Cabinet to delegate decision making to the Group which would fundamentally alter its composition and terms of reference.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 Acceptance of the Joint Group's proposal would be contrary to the intention of the Cabinet when the Group's remit was initially established and it is therefore

##### **RECOMMENDED**

that the Cabinet approve the terms of reference of the Countryside Joint Group as set out in Appendix B attached.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Hinchingbrooke Country Park Joint Liaison Group – Terms of Reference  
Cabinet Minutes – 18<sup>th</sup> May 2006  
File LA/H/1 held by the Administration Division of the Central Services Directorate.

**Contact Officer: Miss Habbiba Ali, Democratic Services**  
**☎ 01480 388006**

# ANNEX A

COUNTRYSIDE JOINT GROUP

12<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2007

## PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHOD OF OPERATION – COUNTRYSIDE JOINT GROUP (Report by Head of Administration)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.3 At their meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2006, the District Council's Cabinet agreed to reconstitute the former Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Liaison Group as the Countryside Joint Group. The terms of reference of the Group were extended to include all matters relating to countryside and riverside and other parks and open spaces across the District.
- 1.4 Since then, Members have expressed uncertainty as to the new remit and status of the Group given that Hinchingsbrooke Country Park originally was a joint initiative between the District and County Councils.
- 1.5 The purpose of this report, therefore, is to respond to the Group's request for guidance, to confirm terms of reference and a method of operation and to propose a work programme which will more adequately reflect the new wider remit of the Group. Given the involvement of the County Council in the former Liaison Group and the continuation of their membership in the new Group, their views on the proposed new arrangements are reported in Section 3 of the report.
- 1.6 A copy of the former Liaison Group's Terms of Reference is appended hereto as Appendix A.

### 2. THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Bearing in mind the concept of the original Liaison Group and having regard now to its broader remit, it is proposed that the new Group should meet on 4 occasions each calendar year. Two of the four meetings should operate as formal meetings and the other two informally.
- 2.2 The formal meetings will continue in a similar way to that of the former Joint Liaison Group, with biannual reports to be submitted to Members by the Countryside Services and Service Development Managers of the District Council. Meetings will continue to take place at 10:00am on Fridays in March and October each year and be administered by the Democratic Services Team. Both reports will provide an overview of countryside, parks and open space areas with items relating to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park featuring within the Countryside Services Manager's report. It is suggested that these meetings take place in meeting rooms at the Country Park and Paxton Pits Nature Reserve.

2.3 Informal meetings will only require the presence of District Council representatives and will be delivered in the form of site visits across the District. This will enable the Group to embrace their wider remit without conflicting with the County Council's ongoing freehold interests in the Country Park. The District Council's Countryside Services Manager and Service Development Manager will be required to produce an itinerary of places to visit for District Council Members. Arrangements for these events will be made centrally by the Democratic Services Team. An informal tour of Countryside Services already has taken place.

2.4 The following programme of meetings is envisaged:-

<b>PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS</b>		
	<b>MONTH</b>	<b>VENUE</b>
<b>FORMAL MEETING SCHEDULE</b>	March	Hinchingbrooke Country Park
	October	Paxton Pits Nature Reserve
<b>INFORMAL MEETING SCHEDULE</b>	January	Itinerary to be set by the District Council's Service Development Manager
	June	Itinerary to be set by the Countryside Services Manager

2.5 As part of the Group's new remit, newsletters and information on what is happening across the District will be circulated electronically to District Council Members for information purposes only.

### **3. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S COMMENTS**

3.1 A letter was sent to the County Council seeking their views on the proposed new arrangements.

3.2 No objections had been received to the proposal and no further comments had been made.



#### **4. AMENDMENTS TO THE GROUP'S TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- 4.1 To reflect these new arrangements and the wider remit of the Joint Group, revised terms of reference and a method of operation have been proposed. These are reflected in Appendix B hereto. The draft proposal is based on the agreement previously made with the County Council and operating practices since the Joint Liaison Group was first constituted.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1 The Joint Group are requested to endorse the proposed new approach to the work and responsibilities of the Countryside Joint Group as set out in paragraphs 2.1 – 2.5 of this report and recommend approval to the District and County Councils of the proposed terms of reference and new method of operation for a trial period of 12 months duration commencing in October 2007 after which time the success or otherwise of the arrangements will be reviewed.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Hinchingbrooke Country Park Joint Liaison Group – Terms of Reference  
Cabinet Minutes – 18<sup>th</sup> May 2006  
File LA/H/1 held by the Administration Division of the Central Services Directorate.

**Contact Officer: Miss Habbiba Ali, Democratic Services**  
**☎ 01480 388006**

**HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK LIAISON GROUP**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**1. MEMBERSHIP**

4 Members appointed by Huntingdonshire District Council  
1 Member appointed by Cambridgeshire County Council.

**2. ADMINISTRATION**

Servicing of meetings of the Liaison Group will be undertaken by the District Council.

Attendance at meetings of the Liaison Group will be open to Officers of both the County and District Councils.

The Liaison Group will meet at least once each year.

**3. RESPONSIBILITIES**

To monitor implementation of Clause 2 of the Agreement between the County Council and the District Council under which -

- ◆ the County Council wish to see the District Council continue to run the existing services listed in the attached Appendix and to adopt performance measures similar to those listed; and
- ◆ any change to the existing service levels will be agreed between the County Council and the District Council via the Liaison Group before its implementation.

To liaise, on behalf of the District Council, with users of services at the Country Park and to undertake periodic public consultation to which all users, Officers and Members are invited to discuss and plan future developments at the Country Park.

To agree annually the wider role of the Rangers at the Country Park in offering specialised expertise of importance to the residents of Cambridgeshire as a whole.

To ensure on behalf of the District Council that the Rangers continue to provide support for the Care in the Community Programme which provides work placements for handicapped adults.

To receive for information an annual budget for the Country Park.

Upon closure of the accounts in each financial year, to receive a statement from the District Council of all income received and expenditure incurred in the use of the Country Park, all surplus income over expenditure continuing to be reinvested in the Country Park in accordance with previous practice.

**COUNTRYSIDE JOINT GROUP**

**PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHOD OF OPERATION**

1. The Joint Group will consider all matters relating to countryside, riverside and other parks and open spaces in the ownership of or managed by Huntingdonshire District Council.
2. The Joint Group will not have responsibility for any executive functions within the meaning of the Local Government Act 2000.
3. The Joint Group will be constituted in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the District Council's Constitution with a membership comprising four members of Huntingdonshire District Council (appointed by the Cabinet) and one Member appointed by Cambridgeshire County Council.
4. The Joint Group will meet formally on at least two occasions in each year. Its formal meetings will be open to the public. The quorum for formal meetings shall be not less than three Members and attendance will be open to Officers of both the County and District Councils.
5. The Joint Group also will meet informally on at least two occasions per year.
6. The Minutes of the formal meetings of the Joint Group will be presented for confirmation to the ensuing formal meeting and copies of the Minutes will be supplied to the District Council and the County Council. Servicing of meetings will be undertaken by the District Council.
7. The Joint Group will monitor implementation of Clause 2 of the Agreement between the County Council and the District Council in relation to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park dated 1<sup>st</sup> April 1998 under which –
  - ◆ the County Council indicated their wish to see the District Council continue to run the existing services listed in the attached Appendix and to adopt performance measures, similar to those listed;
  - ◆ any change to the existing service levels will be agreed between the County Council and the District Council via the Joint Group before their implementation;
  - ◆ the Joint Group will liaise, on behalf of the District Council, with users of the Parks and Countryside Service and undertake periodic public consultation to which all users, Officers and Members would be invited to discuss and plan future development;
  - ◆ the Joint Group will consider annually the wider role of the Parks and Countryside Service in offering specialist advice to the residents of Cambridgeshire as a whole; and
  - ◆ the Joint Group will ensure, on behalf of the District Council, that the Parks and Countryside Service continue to offer support for the Care in the Community Programme which provides work placements for handicapped adults.

- 8.** The Joint Group will receive financial information and an annual budget for Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, in particular, and the Parks and Countryside Service of the District Council as a whole. Upon closure of the accounts in each financial year, the Joint Group will receive a statement from the District Council of all income received and expenditure incurred in the use of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. All surplus income over expenditure will continue to be re-invested in the Country Park in accordance with previous practice.
- 9.** The Joint Group may report with or without recommendations on any aspect of the management and operation of the land referred to in Clause 1 of this agreement to the District Council and County Council.