

A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY)** will be held in **COUNCIL CHAMBER, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN** on **TUESDAY, 5TH FEBRUARY 2008** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

**Contact
(01480)**

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 8th January 2008.

**A Roberts
388009**

2 Minutes.

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.

2 Minutes.

3. DISABILITY ACCESS STUDY

To receive a presentation by Mrs G Bird, Forum Manager, Directions Plus, on access for those with disabilities.

**A Roberts
388009**

45 Minutes.

4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 - FORWARD PLAN (Pages 5 - 10)

A copy of the current Forward Plan, which was published on 16th January 2008, is attached. Members are invited to note the Plan and to comment as appropriate on any items contained therein.

**R Reeves
388003**

15 Minutes.

5. STATE OF THE DISTRICT CONSULTATION WORKING GROUP (Pages 11 - 22)

To consider the final report of the State of the District Consultation Working Group.

**A Roberts
388009**

20 Minutes.

6. LOCAL PETITIONS AND CALLS FOR ACTION (Pages 23 - 28)

To consider a report by the Head of Administration on legislative changes affecting Overview and Scrutiny and on consultations on local petitions and calls for action.

**R Reeves
388003**

15 Minutes.

7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) - PROGRESS (Pages 29 - 38)

To consider a report by the Head of Administration on the Panel's programme of studies.

**A Roberts
388009**

15 Minutes.

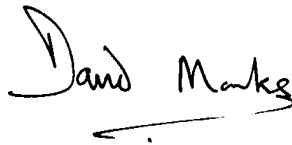
8. SCRUTINY

To scrutinise decisions taken since the last meeting as set out in the Decision Digest (**TO FOLLOW**) and to raise any other matters for scrutiny that fall within the remit of the Panel.

**A Roberts
388009**

10 Minutes.

Dated this 25th day of January 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 Miss H Ali, Democratic Services Officer, Tel No 01480 388006/e-mail: Habbiba.Ali@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 Committee/Panel.

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 (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 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 8th January 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, Mrs M Banerjee, K J Churchill, Mrs K E Cooper, J E Garner, D A Giles, Mrs C A Godley, P G Mitchell, J M Sadler, P K Ursell and J S Watt.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R W D Bailey and Mrs P A Jordan.

54. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

55. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

56. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 - FORWARD PLAN

The Panel considered the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Leader for the period 1st January to 30th April 2008. Members were acquainted with the various strategies that would be submitted to future Overview and Scrutiny meetings.

57. MIGRANT WORKERS IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

The Panel gave consideration to a report by the Community Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on migrant workers in Huntingdonshire. In introducing the report the Community Manager, Mr D Smith, referred to the recent increase in migrant workers arriving in new areas of the Country and specifically in Huntingdonshire. He recommended that the figures should be treated cautiously as data was difficult to obtain. Members' attention was drawn to the key areas of activity for the District Council regarding migrant workers. Mr Smith concluded by outlining the additional financial burden on Councils in a number of service areas for which no additional funding was available.

In response to a question by the Chairman, Mr Smith informed the Members of the remit and work of the Cambridgeshire Migrant Workers Network which comprised agencies that engaged with migrant workers. The Panel discussed migrants' entitlement to

benefits and noted that only limited benefits were available.

Having discussed the effect of migrant workers on local businesses and on the economy, Members discussed the language and accommodation problems migrant workers experienced and the cessation of funding for the Regional College for language courses. With regard to the latter the Panel suggested that the Local Strategic Partnership should lobby the Government for Cambridgeshire to become an English for Speakers of Other Languages targeted area.

The Panel commented on the need for improved recognition of migrant workers qualifications and for partner organisations to refer unregistered workers to other appropriate agencies.

In response to a question submitted to the Panel by Councillor Mrs P A Jordan, Mr Smith reported that the Citizens Advice Bureau was one of the most active organisations working with migrant workers and he explained the additional resource burdens on the Bureau caused by language difficulties which prolonged client interviews.

Following a suggestion by Councillor J M Sadler that the Council should establish a register of interpreters, the Panel was informed of the role of the Migrant Gateway which included providing interpreters for employers.

58. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to individuals and is subject to an obligation of confidentiality.

59. ENHANCED CLEANSING SERVICES: PILOT STUDY

In pursuit of the study on Town Centre Cleaning Regimes, the Panel considered a report by Mr R Ward, the Head of Operations, (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the current arrangements for cleansing in the District and details of options to increase service levels in St Ives. Mr Ward reminded Members of the background to the study and provided a detailed explanation of the options. In particular, he referred to the street cleansing standards the Council had adopted and the current financial constraints within which Council managers were working.

Members commented on the cleanliness of the District's town centres as a result of the Saturday night time economy and the adverse effect of litter on Sunday trade and tourism. Mr Ward outlined the financial implications for the Council of providing a full cleansing service on Sundays principally arising from its health and safety responsibilities.

Having considered alternative ways of achieving enhanced levels of street cleansing, the Panel discussed the options contained in the report. Given the levels of litter in towns on Sundays, Members expressed general support for the introduction of a full cleansing service on every day of the week. As a result, it was

RESOLVED

that a further report be submitted to the Panel's meeting in March giving full details including costs of providing a full cleansing service on every day of the week.

In response to questions by the Chairman, the Head of Operations provided the Panel with updates on the move to Eastfield House and on future plans for kerb-side glass recycling.

60. READMITTANCE OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be readmitted to the meeting.

61. DISABILITY ACCESS STUDY

With the aid of a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was acquainted with progress of the study on Disability Access. With regard to a list of potential organisations to consult on the Council's policies, it was suggested that each should be asked whether they would be prepared to assist the Council in this way.

62. PATIENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FORUMS - ANNUAL REPORT

The Patient and Public Involvement Forums Annual Report 2006/07 National Summary (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) was received and noted. It was decided to await the establishment of Local Involvement Networks before considering whether to undertake any studies on health matters.

63. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) - PROGRESS

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of actions taken in response to recent discussions and decisions and reviewing the programme of studies. Members accepted a suggestion that Councillor D Harty should continue on the Older Persons Working Group until the study was concluded.

Updates were received on the studies on the Adoption of Roads and Sewers, Grant Aid and the State of the District Consultation.

64. SCRUTINY

The 79th edition of the Decision Digest was received and noted.

Chairman

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FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

Prepared by
Date of Publication:
For Period:

Councillor I C Bates
16th January 2008
1 February 2008 to 31 May 2008

Membership of the Cabinet is as follows:-

Councillor I C Bates	- Leader of the Council	4 Church End Hilton Huntingdon PE28 9NJ Tel: 01480 830250 E-mail: Ian.Bates@huntsdc.gov.uk
Councillor L M Simpson	- Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Councillor for Headquarters and Information Technology	45 Devoke Close Stukeley Meadows Huntingdon Cambs PE29 6XE Tel: 01480 388946 E-mail: Mike.Simpson@huntsdc.gov.uk
Councillor P L E Bucknell	- Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport	Compass House Pathfinder Way Warboys PE28 2RD Tel: 01487 824222 E-mail: Peter.Bucknell@huntsdc.gov.uk
Councillor D B Dew	- Executive Councillor for Leisure Centres	4 Weir Road Hemingford Grey Huntingdon PE28 9EH Tel: 01480 469814 E-mail: Douglas.Dew@huntsdc.gov.uk
Councillor C R Hyams	- Executive Councillor for Operations, Parks and Countryside	22 Bluegate Godmanchester Huntingdon Cambs PE29 2EZ E-mail: Colin.Hyams@huntsdc.gov.uk
Councillor A Hansard	- Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy	78 Potton Road Eynesbury St Neots PE19 2NN Tel: 01480 388942 E-mail: Andrew.Hansard@huntsdc.gov.uk

Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds - Executive Councillor for Housing and Health	17 Virginia Way St Ives PE27 6SQ Tel: 01480 388935 E-mail: Deborah.Reynolds@huntsdc.gov.uk
Councillor T V Rogers - Executive Councillor for Finance	Honeysuckle Cottage 34 Meadow Lane Earith Huntingdon PE28 3QE Tel: 01487 840477 E-mail: Terence.Rogers@huntsdc.gov.uk

Any person who wishes to make representations to the decision maker about a decision which is to be made may do so by contacting Mrs Helen Taylor, Senior Democratic Services Officer on 01480 388008 or E-mail: Helen.Taylor@huntsdc.gov.uk not less than 14 days prior to the date when the decision is to be made.

The documents available may be obtained by contacting the relevant officer shown in this plan who will be responsible for preparing the final report to be submitted to the decision maker on the matter in relation to which the decision is to be made. Similarly any enquiries as to the subject or matter to be tabled for decision or on the availability of supporting information or documentation should be directed to the relevant officer.

Roy Reeves
Head of Administration

- Notes:- (i) Additions/significant changes from the previous Forward Plan are annotated ***
 (ii) For information about how representations about the above decisions may be made please see the Council's Petitions Procedure at <http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/3F6CFE28-C5F0-4BA0-9BF2-76EBAE06C89D/0/Petitionsleaflet.pdf> or telephone 01480 388006

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Consultation	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Draft Proposals for Riverside Park, Huntingdon	Cabinet	21 Feb 2008	Riverside Park Options Study by Gillespies 2004	Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager Tel No. 01480 388430 - email - Richard.Probyn@huntsdc.gov.uk	Approve for Consultation	P L E Bucknell	Service Support
Caxton Road Depot, St. Ives - development of new industrial/commercial units	Cabinet	21 Feb 2008	Estates File - C/165	Keith Phillips, Estates Manager and Property Manager Tel No. 01480 388260 or email - Keith.Phillips@huntsdc.gov.uk	Not applicable	A Hansard	Service Support

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Consultation	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Consultation and Engagement Strategy, Communications and Marketing Strategy, Customer Service Strategy	Cabinet	21 Feb 2008	Strategy appendices and covering report	Ian Leatherbarrow, Head of Policy and Strategic Services Tel: 01480 388005 - email - Ian.L Leatherbarrow@huntsdc.gov.uk	Equality Steering Group, State of District Working Group.	A Hansard	Corporate Strategic Framework
Asset Management Plan	Cabinet	21 Feb 2008	None.	Keith Phillips, Estates Manager and Property Manager Tel No. 01480 388260 or email - Keith.Phillips@huntsdc.gov.uk	Approve annual report	A Hansard	Service Support
Shared Services	Cabinet	21 Feb 2008	None.	Terry Parker, Director of Commerce and Technology Tel No. (01480) 388100 - email - Terry.Parker@huntsdc.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny – Service Support.	T V Rogers	Service Support
Parish Plans and Local Plan Policy	Cabinet	21 Feb 2008	Previous Cabinet Report - December 2003	Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager Tel No. 01480 388430 or email - Richard.Probyn@huntsdc.gov.uk	Adopt process of incorporating relevant Parish Plan Policies into Planning Policies	P L E Bucknell	Service Support
Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2008 - 2028***	Cabinet	13 Mar 2008	Consultation outcomes available in Members Room. Draft Strategy documents will be available in March 2008.	Robert Ward, Head of Operations Tel No. 01480 3888635 or email - Robert.Ward@huntsdc.gov.uk	Consultation already carried out.	C Hyams	Service Delivery
Development Control Policies Preferred Options	Cabinet	13 Mar 2008	Issues and Options Report and Summary of Representations	Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager Tel No. 01480 388430 or email - Richard.Probyn@huntsdc.gov.uk	Approve for Consultation	P L E Bucknell	Service Support

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Consultation	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Growing Success Performance Reports	Cabinet	13 Mar 2008	Growing Success	Ian Leatherbarrow, Head of Policy and Strategic Services Tel No. 01480 388005 - or email - Ian.L Leatherbarrow@huntsdc.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Panels	A Hansard	Service Delivery and Service Support
To adopt Earith Conservation Area Boundary Changes and Character Statement	Cabinet	3 Apr 2008	Draft Consultation Document	Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager Tel No. 01480 388430 or email - Richard.Probyn@huntsdc.gov.uk	Approve changes for adoption having followed consultation with the public and statutory bodies	P L E Bucknell	Service Support
To adopt Somersham Conservation Area Boundary Changes and Character Statement	Cabinet	3 Apr 2008	Draft Consultation Document	Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager Tel No. 01480 388430 or email - Richard.Probyn@huntsdc.gov.uk	Approve changes for adoption having followed consultation with the public and statutory bodies	P L E Bucknell	Service Support
To adopt Hemingfords Conservation Area Boundary changes and Character Statement	Cabinet	3 Apr 2008	Draft consultation document	Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager Tel No 01480 388430 or e-mail Richard.Probyn@huntsdc.gov.uk	Approve changes for adoption having followed consultation with the public and statutory bodies	P L E Bucknell	Service Support
To adopt the Core Strategy for submission to the Secretary of State	Cabinet	3 Apr 2008	None.	Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager Tel No. (01480) 388430 - or email - Richard.Probyn@huntsdc.gov.uk	Approve changes for adoption having followed consultation with the public and statutory bodies.	P L E Bucknell	Service Support

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Consultation	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Environment Strategy and 2008/09 Action Plan	Cabinet	3 Apr 2008	Environment Strategy and 2008/09 Action Plan	Chris Jablonski, Environment Team Leader Tel No. (01480) 388368 - or email - Chris.Jablonski@huntsdc.gov.uk	The Strategy and Action Plan have been developed through an extended period of discussion with partners and stakeholders and through public consultation.	P L E Bucknell	Service Support
To adopt Godmanchester Conservation Area Boundary Changes and Character Statement	Cabinet	24 Apr 2008	Draft consultation document	Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager Tel No 01480 388430 or e-mail Richard.Probyn@huntsdc.gov.uk	Approve changes for adoption having followed consultation with the public and statutory bodies	P L E Bucknell	Service Support
Sustainable Community Strategy	Cabinet	24 Apr 2008	None.	Ian Leatherbarrow, Head of Policy and Strategic Services Tel No. 01480 388005 - email - Ian.L Leatherbarrow@huntsdc.gov.uk	Public/Stakeholder Consultation	I C Bates	Corporate Strategic Framework

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STATE OF THE DISTRICT CONSULTATION WORKING GROUP
(Report of the Working Group)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report summarises the findings of a study by the State of the District Consultation Working Group and contains Members' 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 have, 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 B shows, the costs of hiring venues are negligible.

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 Working Group has discussed the potential benefits of holding events to engage Huntingdonshire residents in discussing the Council's strategies and services. Members have 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 the Working Group has concluded that there could be merit in holding engagement events. Details of a similar exercise planned in Bristol appear at Appendix A.

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 the Working Group does 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 their deliberations, Working Group Members have reviewed the draft Consultation and Engagement Strategy. It has been 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 have the opportunity to give the Council their views. These events will fit with the emerging Consultation Engagement and Strategy.

4.2 The Working Group suggests that the Action Plan to the Consultation and Engagement Strategy is amended to include reference to Member state of the District engagement events. The Strategy will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) on 6th February 2008.

5 ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

5.1 In compliance with its original remit the Working Group recommends 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 B.

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 ??????

- 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 onside 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 The Working Group recommends 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 Working Group has considered the principle and potential outcomes of holding state of the District engagement events and has 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 It is the Working Group's view that 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 Working Group RECOMMENDS that the Cabinet is advised

- a) that the Corporate Governance Panel is informed of the findings in respect of the Council's Constitution;
- b) 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;

- c) 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;
- d) that the formats set out in Section 5 be adopted for engagement events;
- e) that the general principles of promoting engagement events, specific marketing suggestions and timetable for publicity are adopted;
- f) that the total cost (without using consultants) of £5,020 be met for 2008 only from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's budget;
- g) that the Working Group be requested to evaluate the events; and
- h) 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

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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

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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)**

5TH FEBRUARY 2008

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

12TH 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 Panel 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 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 Panel's 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.

6. Recommendations

6.1 The Panel 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 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 maximum 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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Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
4/07/06	<p><u>The Health Implications of the Council's Activities.</u></p> <p>Final report of the Working Group considered. Recommendations endorsed for submission to the Cabinet. Reports requested on the Cabinet's decision and progress with the implementation of measures contained in the report.</p>	<p>Further meeting to be arranged.</p> <p>Further reports to be submitted.</p>	<p>Meeting held.</p> <p>The Cabinet noted the report and asked for further information on the operational and financial implications of the recommendations before coming to a decision.</p>	
3/10/06	<p>Working Group requested to meet to discuss the submission of further information to the Cabinet.</p>	<p>Meeting held on 8th November 2006.</p> <p>Further meeting scheduled for 27th November 2006.</p>	<p>Costing of the proposals in relation to the leisure centres requested. Further meeting arranged to discuss the next report with appropriate Heads of Service.</p> <p>Report to be submitted to the Cabinet on 4/10/07 to include appendices by the Heads of Administration and of Environmental and Community Health Services on the financial implications of the Panel's recommendations.</p> <p>Subject to clarification of the Council's financial commitment for the pilot programme of exercise for older people the Cabinet approved the Panel's recommendations.</p>	

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
6/11/07	<u>The Health Implications of the Council's Activities (Contd).</u> Details of the Cabinet's decision requested.	Meeting held on 29/01/08.		
4/12/07	Working Group asked to meet to discuss the Cabinet's request and other matters raised in the course of the study.			
1/11/05	<u>Town Centre Cleaning Regimes</u> Cleaning regimes in town centres added to the programme of studies.	Scoping report requested.		
3/10/06	Presentation by Head of Operations. Working group formed to look at Sunday cleaning and enforcement.	Meeting of Working group held on 13th November 2006. Further meeting to be held to consider a possible pilot of new cleaning arrangements in St Ives.		
3/07/07	Update received from Head of Operations.			
6/11/07	Further update requested.	Report requested.		

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
8/01/08	<p><u>Town Centre Cleaning Regimes</u></p> <p>Report requested giving details, including costs, of providing a full cleansing service on every day of the week.</p> <p><u>Recycling Credits – Payments to Other Organisations</u></p>		Report to be submitted to a future meeting.	5/03/08
7/03/06	<p>Recommendations made on the content of a future report to the Cabinet. Sight of the report requested prior to its submission to the Cabinet.</p>	Report requested.		
4/12/07	<p>Report not scheduled to be submitted to the Cabinet. The possibility of introducing a kerbside class collection service will be considered as part of the Environment Strategy.</p> <p><u>Disability Access.</u></p>	Information requested to be submitted to a future meeting.	Environment Strategy to be submitted to a future meeting.	5/03/08
7/11/06	<p>Preliminary report considered. Further information requested on the Council's existing policies in relation to disability equality and access and on research carried out in this area.</p>	Further reports submitted.		

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
5/12/06	<p><u>Disability Access (Contd.)</u></p> <p>Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan endorsed. Further research to be undertaken within Members' wards and officers of the County Council and of the Police requested to attend future meetings to discuss the study.</p>	<p>Representatives of the County Council and of the Police invited to future meetings.</p>		
6/02/07	<p>Panel met with representatives of Speaking Up and G Morris. A number of matters were identified for further consideration. – improved enforcement of disabled parking bays, extending bus pass hours for disabled users, Council paperwork, advertising of disabled facilities at leisure centres and advocacy services at Council offices.</p>	<p>Report submitted to the Cabinet on high dependency toilets on 28/06/07.</p>	<p>The Cabinet decided to approach Papworth Trust for their advice on the need for high dependency facilities for people whose disabilities are so severe as to prevent them from using conventional toilets designed for the disabled and in particular on the possibility of extending the availability of facilities at Saxongate, Huntingdon for such use.</p>	
5/06/07	<p>Meeting attended by County Council's Access Officer. A number of avenues identified for further investigation. Cabinet to be requested to consider providing high dependency toilets.</p>	<p>Survey sent to Town and Parish Councils and District Councillors. Returns received.</p>		

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
4/12/07	<p><u>Disability Access (Contd.)</u></p> <p>Findings of survey considered. The Panel requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further consultation with Town and Parish Councils on dropped kerbs and parking, the findings of which will be forwarded to the County Council and police respectively for action/comment; • that views on the need for more low liner buses and training for employees on the needs of those with disabilities be forwarded to bus operators; • that a suggestion that carers be provided with free bus passes be forwarded to the County Council; • details of potential consultees on Council policies and services representing local disability groups. 			

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
	<p><u>Disability Access (Contd.)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that a representative of Directions Plus be invited to a future meeting to discuss the study; and • further investigation of the existence of the Disability 'Blue' Route scheme implemented by the Council. 		See item elsewhere on the Agenda	5/02/08
5/12/06	<p><u>Adoption of Roads and Sewers</u></p> <p>Study to be undertaken into the processes and procedures involved with the adoption of roads and sewers.</p>	Information requested.	Scoping report to be submitted to a future meeting. Representative of the Anglian Water to be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss the study.	
5/06/07	Report deferred to next meeting.	Meeting to be arranged.	First meeting held on 22/10/07.	

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
3/07/07	<p><u>Adoption of Roads and Sewers (Contd).</u></p> <p>Working Group established comprising Councillors J D Ablewhite, D A Giles, Mrs C A Godley and P K Ursell, to undertake a review on the process of adopting estate roads and sewers with an aim to put measures in place that will streamline the process and make the procedures more transparent, initially by an investigation of introducing a District-wide register of un-adopted roads and sewers.</p>			
4/12/07	<p>Working Group requested a meeting with the Head of Planning Services and Principal Building Control Officer.</p>	Meeting arranged.		
5/12/06	<p><u>Grant Aid</u></p> <p>Study to be undertaken into the processes in applying for grant aid and the effectiveness of grant schemes.</p> <p>Details of all grant schemes requested.</p>	Information requested.		

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
<p>3/14/07</p>	<p><u>Grant Aid (Contd).</u> Review of Small Scale Environmental Improvement schemes to be undertaken. Details of all grant schemes considered. With the exception of Shopmobility, the Working Group undertaking the review of the Small Scale Environmental Improvements scheme was requested to examine the schemes' criteria, publicity, application process, officer involvement and approval process.</p>	<p>Meeting arranged.</p>	<p>Meeting held on 24/10/07 to plan further study work.</p>	
<p>4/12/07</p>	<p>Renew of Small Scale Environmental Improvements Scheme completed. Working Group awaiting further information on other grant schemes administered by the Council.</p>	<p>Meeting held on 1/02/08.</p>		

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
3/07/07	<p><u>State of the District Conference</u></p> <p>Working Group established comprising Councillors K J Churchill, P J Downes and Mrs M Banerjee to discuss the concept of local area forums, together with potential subject areas, for discussion at a future meeting of the Panel.</p>	Meeting arranged.	Meeting held on 18/10/07. Further meeting held on 12/11/07.	
6/11/07	Suggestion made that a number of consultation methods should be used during the consultation trial.			
4/12/07	The Panel requested that the Working Group consider the provision of one area consultation event rather than four events.		See report elsewhere on the Agenda.	5/02/08

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