

A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY)** will be held in the **KESTREL ROOM, COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK, BRAMPTON ROAD, HUNTINGDON, PE29 6DB** on **TUESDAY, 7 APRIL 2009** 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 3rd March 2009.

**Miss H Ali
388006**

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 overleaf.

2 Minutes.

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

A copy of the current Forward Plan, which was published on 16th March 2009, is attached. Members are invited to note the Plan and to comment as appropriate on any items contained therein.

**R Reeves
388003**

10 Minutes.

4. REVIEW OF THE HOME-LINK SCHEME AND THE COUNCIL'S LETTINGS POLICY (Pages 11 - 54)

To consider a report by the Head of Housing Services detailing the outcome of a review of the Home-Link Scheme and the Council's Lettings Policy.

**S Plant / J Collen
388240 / 388220**

20 Minutes.

5. SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY (Pages 55 - 112)

To receive a report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services on the Sports Facilities Strategy.

**Ms J Peadon / Dr S
Lammin
388048 / 388280**

20 Minutes.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS TO ST IVES TOWN CENTRE
(Pages 113 - 128)

To receive a report by the Head of Environmental Management on the outcome of the consultation undertaken by the Council on the St Ives Environmental Improvements Scheme.

P Jose / C Allen
388332 / 388380

20 Minutes.

7. RECYCLING

To receive a verbal update from the Head of Operations on the outcome of recent negotiations concerning recycled materials.

R Ward
388635

15 Minutes.

8. REVIEW OF DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE (Pages 129 - 238)

To consider a report by the Structure Review Working Group detailing the findings of their review of the Council's democratic structure.

R Reeves
388003

20 Minutes.

9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007 - IMPLICATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
(Pages 239 - 248)

To consider a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services outlining the implications for Overview and Scrutiny with regards to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

A Roberts
388015

15 Minutes.

10. NHS CAMBRIDGESHIRE STRATEGIC PLAN 2009 - 2014 (Pages 249 - 256)

To receive and note details of a consultation being undertaken by NHS Cambridgeshire on their Strategic Plan for 2009 – 2014. A copy of the Executive Summary is appended hereto. The Panel is requested to submit a response to the consultation by 29th May 2009.

A copy of the full document will be circulated electronically to Panel Members in advance of the meeting.

10 Minutes.

11. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) - PROGRESS (Pages 257 - 266)

To consider a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services on the Panel's programme of studies.

Miss H Ali
388006

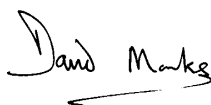
10 Minutes.

12. SCRUTINY (Pages 267 - 276)

To scrutinise decisions 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.

5 Minutes.

Dated this 31 day of March 2009



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 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.

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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 Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Brampton Road, Huntingdon, PE29 6DB on Tuesday, 3 March 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, Mrs M Banerjee, Mrs K E Cooper, J E Garner, P Godley, Mrs P A Jordan, P G Mitchell, M F Shellens and P K Ursell.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs J A Dew, J M Sadler, Ms M J Thomas and J S Watt.

84. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 3rd March 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

85. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor S J Criswell declared a personal interest in Minute No. 87 by virtue of his membership of Somersham Parish Council.

Councillor M F Shellens declared a personal interest in Minute No. 87 as Chairman of Brampton Parish Council.

Councillor P K Ursell declared a personal interest in Minute No. 87 by virtue of his membership of St Neots Town Council.

Councillor Mrs M Banerjee declared a personal interest in Minute No. 91 by virtue of her membership of the Board of Directors of Luminus.

86. 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 of the Council for the period 1st March to 30th June 2009. In so doing, the Panel were advised that items on the Older Persons Housing Strategy Update, Lettings Policy Review, Leisure Facilities Strategy and St Ives Environmental Improvements would be submitted to the Panel's April meeting. In addition, it was reported that all Members of the Council had received a copy of the report on Capital Grant Aid Awards.

87. PROVISION OF LEISURE FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Pursuant to Minute No. 08/62, the Panel received a report by the Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book)

containing information on the leisure facilities owned and maintained by the District Council or where the Council had an involvement in their maintenance. Having drawn the Panel's attention to the report's Appendix, Mr J Craig, the Service Development Manager, reported that the information presented excluded those facilities under the direct control of the District's Town and Parish Councils.

Having drawn attention to the efforts of independent community groups in raising funds for youth facilities within villages, Councillor P G Mitchell expressed the view that support should be provided by the District Council to assist the groups with the ongoing revenue costs associated with such facilities. In response, Mr Craig stressed the importance of budgeting for revenue costs when planning for new facilities.

In discussing the provision of funding through Section 106 agreements for the construction and maintenance of facilities, Members drew attention to the resulting difference between towns and villages in the availability of facilities. The view was expressed that there should be more consistency in the provision of youth facilities across the District. It was, therefore, agreed to establish a Working Group to meet with the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services to discuss the matter further. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the report now submitted be noted; and
- (b) that a Working Group be established comprising Councillors J D Ablewhite and P G Mitchell to investigate the provision of leisure facilities, with a view to making recommendations on achieving an even distribution of youth facilities across the District and on meeting the ongoing revenue costs associated with such facilities.

88. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing details of the Council's performance against its priority objectives in the quarter to 31st December 2008.

Having endorsed the comments made by the Corporate Plan Working Group (a copy of which is also appended in the Minute Book) Members confirmed the Working Group's request for a report on the private housing retrofit project to be submitted to the Panel's June meeting. In addition, it was suggested that a representative of the Carbon Trust should be invited to attend a subsequent meeting, with a view to examining the retrofit project's principles in the context of the Trust's work. It was further suggested that environmental efficiency data should be compiled in order to determine the energy efficiency levels of the homes before and after completion of the refurbishment works. It was anticipated that the availability of such data would encourage residents and developers to adopt energy efficiency measures.

Members concurred with the Corporate Plan Working Group's recommendation that promotion of the disabled facilities available at Sawtry Leisure Centre should be undertaken.

In terms of the key measure relating to the number of households living in temporary accommodation, the Panel noted that the quarterly target had been exceeded. However, it was reported that the performance achieved represented an increase in the number of households prevented from becoming homeless during the reporting period. In that context, Members were reminded of the measures that had been put in place to tackle homelessness within the District.

Finally, the Panel reiterated their concern at the issue raised in the previous quarter's monitoring report regarding a potential risk should the bid for funding to re-model Coneygear Court not be successful. Having expressed overall satisfaction with the levels of performance achieved in the year to date, the Panel

RESOLVED

- (a) that the report be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet; and
- (b) that the Cabinet be formally notified of the Panel's views on the contents of the report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services.

89. ADOPTION OF ROADS AND SEWERS

Pursuant to Minute No. 08/80, the Panel received and noted a report by the Adoption of Roads and Sewers Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which provided a further update on the investigations by the Working Group. The District Council's Head of Legal and Estates had advised the Working Group that, in his opinion, there were adequate legal provisions in existence to ensure that the adoption of roads and sewers could be brought to completion. Furthermore, Members were advised that the Head of Legal and Estates had made enquiries with local Solicitors on conveyancing practices and, as a result, had established that during the purchasing process, purchasers and mortgage providers were made fully aware of the status of the roads and sewers servicing properties and of the associated financial liabilities should either not have been adopted. A suggestion was endorsed that the Working Group should undertake further work intended to ensure that all solicitors operated to this standard.

Following further discussion, the Panel concluded that new legislation to be introduced by the Government in 2010/11 would ensure that sewers were adopted and that this would expedite the adoption of roads.

90. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) - STUDIES

The Panel considered 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. Updates were received on developments relating to the Panel's final report on grant aid and on the future governance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. With regard to the latter, the Panel were advised that the Department of Health had approved the Strategic Health Authority's proposal but that formal approval had yet to be obtained from Her Majesty's Treasury.

91. SCRUTINY

In scrutinising the 92nd Edition of the digest of decisions taken by the Cabinet and other Panels etc, Members raised the following queries:-

Review of Central Services Directorate – in response to a question by Councillor J E Garner, the Panel were advised that the review would result in savings of £273,000 being achieved over the next three years.

New Accommodation – Building A – Options Review – Councillor M F Shellens questioned whether a Section 106 agreement would be sought in relation to the proposals for the site. Clarification of this matter would be circulated electronically to Members.

Chairman

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

Prepared by Councillor I C Bates
Date of Publication: 16 March 2009
For Period: 1 April 2009 to 31 July 2009

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 Customer Services 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 and Transport	Compass House Pathfinder Way Warboys PE28 2RD Tel: 01487 824222 E-mail: Peter.Bucknell@huntsdc.gov.uk
Councillor K J Churchill	- Special Advisor to the Cabinet	51 Gordon Road Little Paxton St Neots PE19 6NJ Tel: 01480 352040 E-mail: Ken.Churchill@huntsdc.gov.uk
Councillor D B Dew	- Executive Councillor for Leisure	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 Operational and Countryside Services	22 Bluegate Godmanchester Huntingdon Cambs PE29 2EZ Tel: 01480 388968 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 Public 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 and Environment	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 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
Structure Review Working Group - Findings	Cabinet	2 Apr 2009	Previous Working Group Papers	Roy Reeves, Head of Democratic and Central Services Tel No 01480 388003 or email Roy.Reeves@huntsdc.gov.uk	Members	K Churchill	Service Delivery 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
The RSS Review - the Cambridgeshire Development Study***	Cabinet	23 Apr 2009	None.	Steve Ingram, Head of Planning Services Tel No 01480 388400 or email Steve.Ingram@huntsdc.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Panels	P L E Bucknell	Service Support
Proposals for Riverside Park	Cabinet	23 Apr 2009	Draft Proposals for Riverside Park	Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager Tel No. 01480 388430 or email - Richard.Probyn@huntsdc.gov.uk	Approve following consultation with other key stakeholders	P L E Bucknell	Service Support
Great Fen Collaboration Agreement	Cabinet	23 Apr 2009	None	Malcolm Sharp, Director of Operational Services Tel No 01480 388301 email - Malcolm.Sharp@huntsdc.gov.uk		P L E Bucknell	Service Support
St. Ives Environmental Improvements	Cabinet	23 Apr 2009	None.	Paul Jose, Head of Environmental Management Tel No 01480 388332 email - Paul.Jose@huntsdc.gov.uk	Interested parties	T V Rogers	Service Delivery
Master Plan for land Formerly East of Sapley Square, Oxmoor	Cabinet	23 Apr 2009	Draft Issues and Options Document	Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager Tel No 01480 388430 or email Richard.Probyn@huntsdc.gov.uk	Approve for adoption as informal planning guidance	P L E Bucknell	Service Support
Land Adjacent to - the Grand Cinema, Ramsey	Cabinet	23 Apr 2009	Report to Cabinet - 7th June 2007	Keith Phillips, Estates and Property Manager Tel No 01480 388260 or email Keith.Phillips@huntsdc.gov.uk		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
Lettings Policy Review	Cabinet	23 Apr 2009	HDC Lettings Policy: Allocation of Accommodation: Choice Based Lettings - Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities, CLG August 2008	Jon Collen, Housing Needs and Resources Manager Tel No 01480 388220 email - Jon.Collen@huntsdc.gov.uk		Mrs D C Reynolds	Service Delivery
New Industrial Units, Caxton Road, St. Ives	Cabinet	23 Apr 2009	None.	Keith Phillips, Estates and Property Manager Tel No 01480 388260 email - Keith.Phillips@huntsdc.gov.uk	Not applicable	A Hansard	Service Support
Huntingdon West Area Action Plan Preferred Options	Cabinet	23 Apr 2009	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
Great Fen Masterplan	Cabinet	23 Apr 2009	None	Malcolm Sharp, Director of Operational Services Tel No 01480 388301 or email Malcolm.Sharp@huntsdc.gov.uk	Consultation process in preparation.	P L E Bucknell	Service Support
Leisure Facilities Strategy	Cabinet	23 Apr 2009	Leisure Facilities Strategy	Ms J Peadon, Leisure Development Manager Tel No 01480 388048 or email Jo.Peadon@huntsdc.gov.uk		D B Dew and L M Simpson	Service Delivery
St. Ivo and St. Neots Leisure Centres - Proposals for Development***	Cabinet	14 May 2009	None	Simon Bell, General Manager, Leisure Centres Tel No. 01480 388049 or email Simon.Bell@huntsdc.gov.uk	Not applicable	D B Dew	Service Delivery

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 Document: The End of an EERA - What Future for Regional Local Government Arrangements in the East of England***	Cabinet	18 Jun 2009	None.	Ian Leatherbarrow, Director of Central Services Tel No 01480 388002 or email Ian.L Leatherbarrow@huntsdc.gov.uk		I C Bates	Service Support
Corporate Equality Policy Action Plan Progress***	Cabinet	18 Jun 2009	Corporate Equality Policy - Action Plan Progress	Mrs Louise Sboui, Policy Officer Tel No. 01480 388032 or email Louise.Sboui@huntsdc.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny (Service Delivery) Equality Steering Group	A Hansard	Service Delivery
Proposed Changes to Policy of Gypsies and Travellers in East of England Plan***	Cabinet	18 Jun 2009	Report of Panel on Gypsy and Traveller Policy	Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager Tel No. 01480 388430 or email Richard.Probyn@huntsdc.gov.uk	Approve HDC comments to Go-East	P L E Bucknell	Service Support
Carbon Management Plan***	Cabinet	18 Jun 2009	None.	Chris Jablonski, Environment Team Leader Tel No 01480 388368 or email Chris.Jablonski@huntsdc.gov.uk		T V Rogers	Service Delivery
Covert Surveillance Policy Review***	Cabinet	18 Jun 2009	Existing Policy Legislation	Wayland Smalley, Solicitor Tel No 01480 388022 or email Wayland.Smalley@huntsdc.gov.uk	Internal Steering Group	A Hansard	Service Support
Sustainable Communities Act***	Cabinet	18 Jun 2009	Sustainable Communities Act 2007	Mrs Corrine Garbett, Acting Head of People, Performance & Partnerships Tel No 01480 388459 or email Corrine.Garbett@huntsdc.gov.uk		I C Bates	Service Delivery

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 Planning Contributions Supplementary Planning Document	Cabinet	18 Jun 2009	Huntingdonshire Development Plans	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
To adopt Somersham Conservation Area Boundary Changes and Character Statement	Cabinet	18 Jun 2009	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
A14 Statutory Orders Consultations	Cabinet	18 Jun 2009	None.	Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager Tel No 01480 388430 or email Richard.Probyn@huntsdc.gov.uk	Endorse HDC's position on the orders	P L E Bucknell	Service Support
Leisure Centres - Performance Monitoring Report***	Cabinet	16 Jul 2009	None.	Simon Bell, General Manager, Leisure Centres Tel No 01480 388049 or email Simon.Bell@huntsdc.gov.uk		D B Dew	Service Delivery

Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery)
Cabinet

7 April 2009
23 April 2009

Review of the Home-Link Scheme & the Council's Lettings Policy (Report by the Head of Housing Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In February 2008 the Council introduced a choice based lettings scheme, branded Home-Link. This changed the way in which housing association properties in the district were let, from a system where officers allocated properties to households on the Housing Register based on their areas of choice, to one where the applicant is able to express an interest, or bid, for specific vacant properties. Through this scheme properties available for letting are openly advertised so that applicants on the Register are able to see what is available and, within certain criteria, make choices as to what they would like to bid for.
- 1.2 The Home-link scheme was introduced in partnership with the six other councils that form the Cambridge sub region and attracted funding from central government to help with the set up costs of the scheme. Each partner reviewed their individual Lettings Policies and agreed a common priority system as part of the scheme so that Register applicants across the sub region have their overall priority for housing assessed in the same way. Cabinet approved the adoption of Huntingdonshire's new Lettings Policy in July 2007 and this was introduced in February 2008 when the scheme went live. This changed the priority assessment from a points based system to a broader brush priority band system. All applicants on the Register are now prioritised under this banding system.
- 1.3 At the time of agreeing the new Lettings Policy and approval to implement the Home-Link scheme, Cabinet recommended it receive a report on the progress of the Home-Link scheme within 12 months of its implementation. The Home-link partnership has carried out a review of the scheme over the last few months and this report highlights the findings.

2. SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

- 2.1 The review considered Home-Link's strategic and operational issues, and involved consultation with housing association partners, statutory and voluntary agencies, as well as customers of the scheme to gauge their experiences and views. A detailed report on the review's initial findings and recommendations was considered by the Home-Link Management Board on 6 March 2009. The Management Board

consists of chief housing officers of all the local authority partners as well as representatives from the housing association partners. Steve Plant is Huntingdonshire's representative on this board. The areas covered by the review and the issues raised included:

- 2.2 **Performance Management Information.** The Home-Link IT system holds a great deal of information about the demand for social housing, the circumstances of people applying for housing, and the letting of council and housing association properties across the sub region. The Management Board has requested that the reports produced from the IT system be refined to produce a range of performance management data and other information. This may then be used to inform the development of the Home-Link scheme and also give councils information that will be useful in delivering affordable housing on new sites across the sub region.
- 2.3 **Developing the Home-Link brand.** The initial plan was to establish the core function of the Home-Link scheme to let social rented properties by advertising them to applicants on the Housing Register. It was then hoped that the scheme would be extended to advertise low cost home ownership properties, including key worker housing as well as privately rented properties. This would then give households a range of property tenures that they could consider to try and meet their housing need. Having consulted with applicants on the Register throughout the first year of operation, over 70% of respondents said they would like to see privately rented housing advertised through Home-Link. This piece of work is due to be progressed through a project that the Cambridgeshire councils are currently involved in called the Enhanced Housing Options programme. The partnership is also in discussion with Key Homes East, the agent for delivering low cost homeownership housing, as to how they may make use of Home-Link to advertise their properties.
- 2.4 **Accessing and understanding the Home-Link scheme.** The Home-Link partnership sent a questionnaire to 10% of the households on the Housing Registers across the Cambridge sub region to ask their views on the Home-Link scheme, a total of over 2,200 households. Although only 364 responded this gave some interesting feedback:
- 79% of respondents understand how the scheme works.
 - 73% report they have enough information to allow them to use the scheme.
 - 72% know where/how to obtain a copy of property magazine or find out what properties are available.
 - 46% knew they could subscribe to the property magazine for a fee.
 - 18% of respondents state they have never bid because they have difficulty in understanding or using the scheme.

- Of the 18% above who did not bid because of difficulties understanding and using the scheme:
 - 12% had difficulties accessing the scheme due to lack of computer facilities, unable to get/afford magazine.
 - 8% said they needed help with accessing the scheme.
 - 5% were not aware of Home-Link.

What did respondents like most about the scheme?

- Top responses – Ease of use; transparency of the scheme; choice – not only of property but the increase in geographical area.

What did respondents like least about the scheme?

- Top responses – Not enough houses; complicated system; lack of feedback; don't like the system; unfair process; band C & D disadvantaged.

Overall rating of the scheme.

Good/Excellent – 40%

Average – 25%

Poor – 35%

2.5 Communications and raising awareness of the support available –

As some of the responses to the customer questionnaire above indicate, even from a small sample of households on the Register, it suggests there are still a significant number of people who do not fully understand how the Home-Link scheme works and/or require help to be able to access the scheme and bid for properties. This was one of the main concerns raised at the time the scheme was launched and as a result:

- A welcome pack is sent to everyone applying to the Register giving details of how the scheme works and the ways in which they can get information on the properties available and how they may bid for properties.
- The agencies able to offer support to customers were trained on the Home-Link scheme with many signing up to an 'Access Strategy' giving details of the type of support they may offer customers.
- Customer Contact and Call Centre staff within each council were trained on Home-Link so that they can advise and help customers.

2.6 As it appears that some people may still not be able to use the Home-Link system the Management Board has recommended that a Communications Strategy be put together to make sure that the

information regarding Home-Link and the places that support can be provided are publicised as widely as possible in order to help those people who may require help. This would also include an on-going training plan for other agencies to ensure they are kept up to date with the scheme and are confident about advising their customers about the scheme.

2.7 Lettings Policy issues. The review considered whether there were any aspects of the Lettings Policies of each of the partners that affected their ability to deliver their legal duties and strategic objectives in relation to meeting their own local housing needs. This part of the review was particularly important for two reasons:

- Ensuring that the relative weighting awarded to different housing circumstances within the common priority system of the Home-Link scheme (the banding system), did not restrict those in perceived greatest need being prioritised for housing.
- Ensuring that the policies were legal and complied with the relevant legislation.

2.8 Each partner felt that the banding system prioritised those households in greatest need and generally only minor changes to wording in the policy have been recommended. The only recommendation for change to the banding system was that applicants who were homeless and sleeping rough should have a higher priority than the band C priority the policy awarded. The logic to this was that other applicants awarded band C priority included people living in properties where they had to share facilities, such as a bathroom and a kitchen. A person without a roof over their head should therefore have a higher priority and a recommendation was made that they be awarded a band B priority. It is proposed that this Council adopts this recommendation.

2.9 Several choice based lettings schemes have faced legal challenge relating to how they prioritise households on their Register. It is sensible to review our policy in line with the rulings made in any of these cases so that any necessary changes may be made. Changes to policy would require formal adoption by Cabinet and so members will be kept informed of any legal rulings that impact on the Council's Lettings Policy. This will be an on-going process as any legal challenges and rulings emerge.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The Home-Link scheme has had a positive first year of operation and it continues to have encouraging feedback in terms of its transparency and ease of use, particularly amongst those applicants that use the website as a means of finding vacant properties and placing bids. The partnership recognises thought that it needs to continue to promote the scheme widely and ensure that the most vulnerable households in

housing need are supported so that they can participate in the scheme. This will include reviewing the Access Strategy and support voluntary and statutory agencies provide their clients and ensuring that any gaps in support provision are filled. This will be one of the major pieces of work over the coming months.

- 3.2 It is felt that the Council's Lettings Policy ensures that those households in greatest need continue to receive priority for housing and it has therefore only required minor amendments. The Policy will however remain open for review in the light of changing local circumstances and rulings on legal challenges against choice based lettings schemes elsewhere in the country. Any changes will be brought back to members as required.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that Scrutiny Panel:

- a) note the findings of the review of the scheme and the planned enhancements to Home-Link;
- b) support the proposal to Cabinet for the amendment to the Lettings Policy for homeless rough sleepers; and
- c) determine if there are any comments that the Panel would like Cabinet to consider or note.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Choice Based Lettings & Lettings Policy report – Cabinet July 2007

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Huntingdonshire District Council

LETTINGS POLICY DOCUMENT

This document sets out how Huntingdonshire District Council, in partnership with Housing Associations with properties in the district, let their properties through the “Cambridge Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme” (Home-Link scheme)

April 2009

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This is the letting policy for Huntingdonshire District Council, (“HDC”) and should be considered in conjunction with the Cambridge Sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme (“CBL”), framework document, which outlines how the CBL scheme will work. The Partnership Organisations (“PO’s”) to the Sub-regional CBL scheme are:

- Cambridge City Council
- East Cambridgeshire District Council
- Fenland District Council
- Forest Heath District Council
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- South Cambridgeshire District Council
- St Edmundsbury Borough Council

1.1.2 The CBL scheme and this lettings policy have been designed in collaboration with the sub regional POs listed above, with the aim of having as much consistency in the letting of social housing as is possible in a very diverse sub-region. The lettings policy aims to ensure that all people seeking social housing in Huntingdonshire are able to exercise choice in deciding where they wish to live and in the type of property they would prefer.

1.1.3 The policy enables HDC to consider the individual needs of its applicants whilst making best use of the scarce resource of housing stock. The policy sets out:

- How to apply for housing
- Who is eligible to be accepted onto the housing register
- Who is not eligible to be accepted onto the housing register
- How priority for housing applicants will be given
- What the decision making processes are
- How homes will be let

1.1.4 You may view the CBL framework document and this lettings policy, at www.huntsdc.gov.uk, or request a copy from any of the PO’s offices. (See appendix 1)

1.2 Objectives of the lettings policy

- To meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social housing as set out in the Housing Act (1996) as amended by the Homelessness Act (2002)
- To assist applicants in the highest assessed need
- To let properties in a fair and transparent way and provide a consistent lettings process

- To make best use of housing stock
- To ensure that applicants are not unlawfully discriminated against, whether directly or indirectly
- To support vulnerable applicants
- To provide increased choice and information to applicants
- To provide information and feedback on homes that are let through the CBL scheme
- To improve mobility across the sub-region
- To promote social inclusion and help achieve sustainable communities

1.3 Statement on choice

- 1.3.1 HDC is fully committed to enabling applicants to play a more active role in choosing where they live, whilst continuing to house those in the greatest need in Huntingdonshire.
- 1.3.2 The CBL scheme will enable applicants from Huntingdonshire to have access to a percentage of available homes from all the PO's across the sub region.

1.4 Legal context

- 1.4.1 All applicants for housing will be placed in the appropriate housing needs band, based on an assessment of their household's needs. This is to ensure homes are let to those in the highest assessed need and ensures that the Council meets its legal obligations as set out in the Housing Act (1996) as amended by Homelessness Act (2002).
- 1.4.2 The law states that there are five groups of applicants where reasonable preference must be considered:
- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII (7) of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.)
 - People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2), or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3)
 - People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
 - People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability); and
 - People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others)

1.4.3 The Lettings Policy has been designed to ensure applicants who fall into the above reasonable preference categories will be awarded reasonable preference.

1.4.4 Every application received by HDC will be considered according to the facts unique to that application as HDC recognises that every applicant's situation is different. Applications will be considered on an individual basis and individual circumstances will be taken into account. However, all lettings will be made in accordance with this lettings policy

1.5 Equal opportunities and diversity

1.5.1 The lettings policy will be responsive, accessible and sensitive to the needs of all. HDC will not tolerate prejudice and unlawful discrimination and we will actively promote equality.

1.6 Monitoring and reviewing the lettings policy

1.6.1 HDC will monitor the operation of the lettings policy by:

- Regularly reviewing the policy to ensure that the policy meets its stated objectives and complies with legislative changes.

Chapter 2

2. Applying for housing

2.1 How to apply for housing

- 2.1.1 Anyone can apply to HDC for housing. However, not everyone will be eligible for housing. HDC will not register people who are not eligible to be housed. Evidence of eligibility may be required to complete registration. (See chapter 3) Applicants are advised that due to a high demand for available housing in Huntingdonshire, not everyone who is eligible to be considered for housing is guaranteed housing from the register
- 2.1.2 To apply to go on the housing register, applicants are required to complete a housing application form. This can be completed on-line at www.home-link.org.uk or by requesting a paper form from any of the Home-Link partners offices. Paper forms should be returned to Huntingdonshire District Council, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN or any of the POs offices as detailed in appendix 1.
- 2.1.3 An applicant may include anyone on their application who may reasonably be expected to live with them as part of their household.
- 2.1.4 Where more than one eligible applicant wishes to have a shared application they will be known as joint applicants. Although siblings and friends may jointly apply to the register, due to the level of demand for family sized accommodation from family households, they will not be prioritised for an offer of this size of accommodation ahead of families.
- 2.1.5 On receipt of the application form HDC will assess the form and may request additional information and supporting evidence so that the applicant's eligibility and housing need can be confirmed. HDC will verify the information provided which may include inviting the applicant for an interview or visiting them at home.
- 2.1.6 After assessment HDC will write to applicants to inform them:
- Whether the applicant is eligible for housing and if so:
 - Their unique reference number, which allows them to bid for homes through the CBL Scheme
 - The Housing Needs Band in which the application has been placed
 - The date that the application was placed in the band (the "date in band")
 - The size of property for which the applicant is likely to be able to bid
 - How decisions may be reviewed

2.2 Date of registration

2.2.1 The registration date of an application form will be the date the housing application form is received at the office of HDC, or any of the POs. If the form is completed over the Internet the date the form is received electronically is the date of registration.

2.3 Date in band

2.3.1 The principle of the policy is that normally no applicant should overtake existing applicants in a band. Therefore applicants will be placed within a band in date order.

- **New applications:** the date in band will be the same as the applicant's date of registration.
- **Change of circumstances which results in a higher band assessment:** the date in band will be the date the applicant provides evidence of the change of circumstances leading to the award of a higher priority band.

2.3.2 When applicants move down bands due to a change in their circumstances the following applies:

- **Returning to a band that they were previously placed in (whether this is a higher or lower band):** the date in band reverts to the date that applied when the applicant was previously in that band.
- **Moving into a lower band they have not previously been placed in:** the date in band will be the date that the application was first placed into a higher band. In most circumstances this is likely to be their date of registration.

2.4 Multiple applications

2.4.1 An applicant can have only one active application as a main applicant on the housing register at any time.

2.5 Change of circumstances

2.5.1 Where an applicant registered with HDC has a change in their circumstances they must promptly inform HDC. Applicants can obtain a change of circumstances form from any PO, but this must then be sent to the PO where the original application was made. Change of circumstances received by HDC will be assessed based on the new circumstances. Examples of change of circumstances are detailed below, although this list is not exhaustive.

- Change of address
- People joining or leaving the household

- Pregnancy/birth of a child
- Relationship breakdown
- Change to the medical circumstances of anyone included on the application
- Death of a household member
- Death of a joint applicant
- Change of income and/or capital

2.6 Applicant's consent and declaration

2.6.1 When an applicant applies for housing, they will be required to sign a declaration to confirm that:

- The information they have provided is true, accurate and complete
- They will promptly inform HDC of any change in circumstances
- They understand that information will be shared with all the POs
- They consent to HDC making enquiries of any relevant persons to confirm the information on the application form is correct
- They consent to the release of any relevant information either to HDC held by third parties, or by HDC to third parties

2.6.2 HDC may take legal action against applicants who withhold or provide false information regarding their housing application. Where an applicant has been let a property as a result of providing false information, their landlord may take court action to obtain possession of the property.

2.7 Data protection

2.7.1 HDC policy on Data Protection is available on request.

2.8 Application review

2.8.1 When an applicant has not bid for any available properties for one year, we will normally write to them to see if they still wish to be on the housing register. If there is no response within the required time limit, (28 days from the letter being sent) the application will be cancelled. We will write to the applicant to notify them of this. If an applicant contacts HDC within 28 days of their application being cancelled and indicates that they still want to be considered for housing the application will be reinstated from their last applicable date in band (see section 2.3 above)

2.9 Cancelling an application

2.9.1 An application will be cancelled from the housing register in the following circumstances:

- At the applicant's request
- If the applicant becomes ineligible for housing (see chapter 3)

- When the applicant has been housed through the Lettings Policy
- When a tenant completes a mutual exchange
- Where an applicant does not maintain their application through the review process, or where they move and do not provide a contact address
- Where the applicant has died

2.9.2 When an application is cancelled, we will write to the applicant or their representative to notify them. Where an applicant has been highlighted as vulnerable, HDC will contact the applicant to check their circumstances before cancelling the application. Any applicant whose application has been cancelled has the right to ask for a review of the decision, (see chapter 6)

2.9.3 Where an applicant wishes to re-join the housing register at a later date their new date of registration will be the date they re-apply.

Chapter 3

3. Eligibility to be accepted onto the housing register

3.1 Eligibility categories

- 3.1.1 Under the Housing Act (1996), local authorities must consider whether applicants are eligible for housing assistance. This relates to some people who may have been living abroad or who do not have permanent permission to remain in the UK.
- 3.1.2 HDC cannot, by law, allocate housing accommodation to anyone who is subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act (1996), unless they fall within a class exempted from this restriction by Government regulations.
- 3.1.3 In addition, HDC cannot allocate housing accommodation to other classes of persons from abroad if, by law, Government regulations dictate we cannot.

3.2 Notifying an ineligible applicant

- 3.2.1 Applications whose immigration status makes them ineligible to be considered on the register will be notified in writing of the decision and the reason for the decision. If an applicant is accepted onto the register, but subsequently becomes ineligible, their housing application will be cancelled and the applicant notified. Applicants found to be ineligible have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see chapter 6).

3.3 Exclusions from the housing register

- 3.3.1 HDC may exclude someone from the register if it considers it proportionate and reasonable to do so as a result of unacceptable behaviour.
- 3.3.2 Unacceptable behaviour is defined as behaviour which would, if the person was either a secure tenant or a member of a secure tenant's household, entitle a landlord to a possession order under any grounds of grounds 1 to 7 of the Housing Act 1985 schedule 2.
- 3.3.3 Unacceptable behaviour can include tenancy related debt or other breach of tenancy conditions.
- 3.3.4 When considering whether to exclude an applicant from the register HDC will consider when the unacceptable behaviour took place, the length of time that has elapsed since and whether there has been any change in circumstances which would show that the applicant had amended their behaviour so that they are considered suitable to become a tenant.

3.4 Notifying applicants who are excluded due to unacceptable behaviour

- 3.4.1 All applicants who are excluded due to unacceptable behaviour, will be informed of this decision in writing and how they can become eligible, for example, by agreeing an arrangement to make payments towards rent arrears and adhering to this, or by the applicant showing that the circumstances or behaviour that made them unsuitable to be a tenant, has changed.
- 3.4.2 If an applicant is accepted onto the register, but subsequently becomes ineligible, due to unacceptable behaviour, their housing application will be removed and the applicant will be notified.
- 3.4.3 Applicants found to be ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see chapter 6).

Chapter 4

4. Assessment of housing need

4.1 Legal background

4.1.1 All applicants will be placed in a housing needs band following an assessment of their household's needs. This is to ensure that HDC meet their legal obligations as set out in the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

4.2 Advice and information

4.2.1 HDC will ensure that advice and information on how to apply for housing in Huntingdonshire is available free of charge to everyone. If applicants are likely to have difficulty in making an application without assistance, then any necessary assistance they require will be made available by the council.

4.3 Assessment of housing need

4.3.1 Assessments of housing needs are based on an applicant's current housing circumstances. These assessments are made by housing officers of HDC.

4.4 Local connection criteria

4.4.1 To ensure local housing needs are met, 90% of properties advertised through the CBL scheme will be labelled as available to applicants with a local connection to HDC. 10% of advertised properties will be open to bidding from applicants with a local connection to any authority in the Cambridge Sub-region. 25% of new growth homes will be made available for cross boundary mobility. The relevant local connection requirement will be clearly labelled on the property advertisement.

4.4.2 The housing register is open to all customers who are eligible for housing even if they do not have a connection to HDC. They are able to express interest in advertised homes, but usually the property will be labelled as available to a customer with a local connection to HDC or the Sub region. If there is no local connection criteria required for the property, this will be stated in the property advert.

4.4.3 Having a local connection with Huntingdonshire means that one of the following conditions must apply:

- The applicant works in the local authority area for sixteen hours or more per week
- The applicant has lived in the local authority area for at least 6 of the last 12 months, or 3 of the last 5 years

- The applicant previously lived in the local authority area for 5 or more years
- The applicant has family members who are resident in the local authority area. Family members are defined as parents, children or brothers or sisters who have been resident in the local authority for a period of 5 years or longer. Other close family ties will be considered on a case by case basis
- There are special circumstances which HDC considers give rise to a local connection

4.4.4 When applying for a sub-regionally advertised property a local connection to any of the POs will enable applicants to bid for it.

4.5 Housing needs bands

4.5.1 Housing need is assessed and applicants will be placed in one of the following four bands in date order. Applicants placed in band A will have the highest assessed need, band D the lowest. When an applicant is placed in a housing needs band the same level of priority will apply with all PO's in the sub-region.

4.6 Band A: Urgent Need

Applicants with the following circumstances will be placed into band A:

a) Urgent transfer

Where a housing association tenant living in Huntingdonshire or a PO tenant needs to move urgently because of circumstances that could include:

- Major repairs are required on the property in which they live and which cannot be undertaken with the tenant living in the property
- The property is being demolished
- Urgent social need to move

b) Statutorily overcrowded

Applicants who have been assessed as being overcrowded as defined in Part X (10) of the Housing Act 1985. An Environmental Health Officer will carry out this assessment.

c) Current supported housing resident

Applicants leaving Social Services care, or other supported accommodation, and are ready to move to a permanent home of their own. This will be subject to the council, Social Services and the landlord of the supported accommodation agreeing that the applicant is ready to move to their own home. If the applicant needs an on going support package to be able to live independently confirmation that this

will be put in place will also be required from the proposed support provider.

d) Urgent health and safety risk

Applicants whose current accommodation has been assessed by HDC or a PO as posing an urgent health and safety risk. This will apply where the assessment has classified the accommodation as unsafe, or where there is a risk of imminent harm as identified in the assessment, which cannot be remedied in a reasonable time and where the health and safety risk has not been caused intentionally by the applicant or a member of the applicant's household.

e) Urgent medical need

An assessment of medical need will be made by a medical professional or senior officer, using sub-regionally agreed criteria for assessment.

Urgent medical need priority will be awarded when an applicant's current housing conditions have been assessed as having a major adverse effect on the medical condition or disability of the applicant or a member of their household.

f) Homeless households (Full homelessness duty owed under s.193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002)

Means where an applicant is not homeless intentionally or threatened with homelessness intentionally, is eligible for assistance and has a priority need for accommodation, and HDC or a PO has accepted a duty under s193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 (referred to as the full homelessness duty).

g) Urgent multiple needs

Means where an applicant is assessed as having two or more band B needs. This may include an application where two household members have the same assessed need. i.e. two high medical needs.

For multiple needs in band A please see emergency housing status (see chapter 5)

4.8 Band B: High Need

Applicants with the following circumstances will be placed into Band B:

a) High health and safety risk

Means applicants whose current accommodation has been assessed by HDC or a PO as posing a high health and safety risk to them or

members of their household. This will apply where the assessment has identified that the applicant is living in a property, the condition of which places them or members of their household at a high risk of harm as identified in the assessment, which cannot be remedied in a reasonable time and where the health and safety risk has not been caused intentionally by the applicant or a member of the applicant's household.

b) High medical need

An assessment of medical need will be made by a medical professional or senior officer, using a sub-regionally agreed criteria for assessment.

High medical need priority will be awarded where an applicant's current housing conditions have been assessed as having a significant adverse effect on the medical condition or disability of the applicant or member of their household and this will be improved by alternative accommodation.

c) Victims of harassment, violence or abuse

Where HDC or a PO has investigated and identified that the applicant or a member of their household is being subjected to harassment or other conduct causing alarm and distress that will be improved by a move to alternative accommodation. Harassment might be, but is not limited to, harassment due to, race, gender, sexual orientation, mental health, physical disability, learning disability, religion, domestic abuse or harassment by a former partner or associated persons.

HDC will offer advice and support to assist the applicant in identifying possible ways to resolve the situation.

d) Lacking two bedrooms

Means the household is assessed as lacking two bedrooms based on the bedroom calculation in chapter 5,.

e) Under-occupancy by two or more bedrooms or release of adapted property

Means where an existing social housing tenant living in the sub region is living in a property which:

- Has two bedrooms more than are required by the household
- Where a property has been adapted and the adaptations are no longer required. For example if the person requiring the adaptations has moved or died.

f) Homelessness prevention (prior to homelessness decision being made)

Where an applicant is threatened with homelessness within a period of more than 28 days, HDC will work with the applicant to try and prevent their homelessness. Those applicants, who appear likely to have a priority need in the event of a homelessness application, will be placed in band B whilst the prevention measures are being pursued. Existing housing register applicants within band A will retain their band A status.

Where homelessness prevention has not been possible and an applicant remains threatened with homelessness within the next 28 days, they may choose to make a homeless application which will be assessed under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

g) Sleeping Rough

Means where it is confirmed that an applicant is sleeping rough and has no other accommodation available to them. The council will verify that an applicant is sleeping rough before awarding this priority. Rough sleeping priority will not be awarded when accommodation is available to the applicant, including a placement at a direct access hostel, but the applicant chooses not to take up this offer of accommodation.

h) Multiple needs

Means where an applicant is assessed as having three or more band C needs. This may include an application where more than two household members have the same assessed need eg. three medical needs.

4.9 Band C: Medium Need

Applicants with the following circumstances will be placed into band C:

a) Medium medical need

An assessment of medical need will be made by a medical professional or senior officer, using a sub-regionally agreed criteria for assessment.

Medium medical need will be awarded where an applicant's current accommodation is having a minimal effect on the medical condition or disability of the applicant or member of their household, but a move to different accommodation would be likely to improve their quality of life.

b) Lacking one bedroom

Means the household is assessed as lacking one bedrooms based on the bedroom calculation in chapter 5,.

c) Under-occupancy by one bedroom.

Means where an existing social housing tenant living in the sub region lives in a property which has one bedroom more than is required by the household.

d) Need to move for social reasons

Means where HDC or a PO has assessed the applicant's need to move for social reasons.

For example, where it has been confirmed that an applicant:

- Needs to move to or within an area of the sub region to give or receive support, and a proven level of support is required and can be given
- Has found employment in the Huntingdonshire area and needs to move closer to work, or will otherwise lose their employment
- Has staying contact with a child/children and is living in accommodation where the child/children are not allowed to stay overnight
- Is living in a first floor or above property and has children under 10 years of age as part of their household, or is more than 24 weeks pregnant with their first child.

e) Housing conditions.

Means where the applicant/s either lack or share one or more of these facilities with persons, who are not members of their household.

Facilities may include:

- A living room
- Kitchen
- Bathroom

f) Other homelessness

Applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and are:

- Intentionally homeless
- Homeless or threatened with homelessness but not in priority need
- Owed a main homelessness duty by a local authority that is not a PO in the sub-region

4.10 Band D: Low Need

Any applicant who does not meet any of the criteria in bands A, B and C will be assessed as having a low level of housing need and their application will be placed in band D.

4.11 Low priority

4.11.1 In certain circumstances, applicants will be accepted onto the housing register, but their application will be considered as low priority as a result of behaviour or circumstances that affects their suitability to be a tenant. In these circumstances their application will be placed in a housing needs band but they will not be actively considered for an offer of a tenancy and they will not be able to express interest in available properties. Their application will remain in low priority until the applicant has shown that the circumstances or behaviour has changed so that they are considered suitable to be a tenant.

4.11.2 The following categories will be considered as low priority:

- Applicants with rent arrears, former rent arrears or other housing-related charges or debts, where these are not sufficiently high to exclude the applicant from the register (see section 3.3). Other than in exceptional circumstances, an applicant with outstanding rent arrears, former rent arrears or other housing-related debts will not be considered for an offer of a tenancy or eligible to bid for housing until they have shown a regular repayment record.
- Applicants guilty of anti social behaviour where this is not sufficiently severe to exclude them from the register (see section 3.3).

4.11.3 All applicants who are considered low priority will be informed of this decision in writing, and how their application could be re-assessed, for example, by agreeing and keeping to an arrangement to make payments towards rent arrears, or by the applicant satisfying the council that the circumstances or behaviour that made them unsuitable to be a tenant has changed.

4.11.4 HDC expects applicants to clear any housing related debts owed to any registered social landlord before an offer of a tenancy is made, where it is clearly within their means to do this (for example where the debt is relatively low and the applicant has a reasonable disposable income or has sufficient savings available).

4.11.5 When a financial assessment shows that the debt cannot be cleared immediately then a realistic and affordable repayment arrangement should be agreed to clear the debt. The applicant may become eligible to bid for property as long as they have made regular payments in line with the agreement they have made.

4.11.6 Applicants found to be low priority have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see chapter 6). A designated senior officer will undertake the review.

4.12 Intentionally worsening housing circumstances

- 4.12.1 If, in the reasonable opinion of a PO, an applicant has intentionally worsened their housing situation in circumstances to deliberately improve their housing priority, their housing need will be assessed on the basis of their previous accommodation.
- 4.12.2 Applicants found to have intentionally worsened their circumstances have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see chapter 6).
- 4.12.3 All applicants deemed to have intentionally worsened their circumstances will have their application reviewed on the anniversary of the decision, unless there is a change in their circumstances in the meantime.

4.13 Financial resources

- 4.13.1 All eligible applicants are entitled to apply for housing regardless of income levels. However if an applicant has an income and/or capital, which will enable them to resolve their own housing need through other tenures they will not receive any preference for rented housing and will be given a low priority.

This assessment will be based on the following

- The total income of the applicant/partner
- Any capital available to the applicant/partner
- Average property prices in the area for the type of accommodation needed by the household
- The ability of the applicant/partner to meet the required mortgage repayments based on a realistic assessment of their financial position and commitments.

4.14 Officer review for band A applicants

- 4.14.1 Where an applicant has held band A status for three months from their applicable date in band, HDC will carry out a review of their circumstances. This will result in either:
- A direct let – usually for statutorily homeless applicants living in temporary accommodation
 - Priority being maintained
 - Moving into a lower priority band if the circumstances under which they were placed in band A no longer apply

Chapter 5

5.1 Assessment information and criteria

- 5.1.1 The following section outlines criteria taken into account when considering assessments of housing need.

5.2 Transfer applicants

- 5.2.1 Transfer applicants are those applicants who are tenants of a housing association property in the Huntingdonshire area who wish to move to alternative accommodation.

5.3 Homeless applications

- 5.3.1 Applicants who are already on the housing register will remain in their existing housing needs band whilst a homeless assessment is carried out (unless the criteria in paragraph 5.3.3 below applies).
- 5.3.2 When a decision has been made by HDC that an applicant is owed a full homelessness duty under s.193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) their application will be placed in band A. (See chapter 4 section 4.7.1 b)
- 5.3.3 Where a person is threatened with homelessness within a period of more than 28 days, the Council will work with the applicant to try and prevent their homelessness. Those persons, who would appear likely to have a priority need in the event of a homelessness application, will be placed in band B whilst the prevention measures are being pursued.
- 5.3.4 A person who is threatened with homelessness may have an existing housing register application. Applicants already in band A will retain their existing band A status whilst homelessness prevention measures are pursued.
- 5.3.5 An applicant who is statutorily homeless or threatened with homelessness but deemed not to have a priority need will be placed in band C (unless other circumstances are such that they are eligible for placement within a different band).
- 5.3.6 Applicants who have been assessed as being in priority need but are intentionally homeless will have their housing application assessed on their current accommodation, if an applicant has intentionally worsened their circumstances the housing needs assessment will take this into account. (See section 4.12).

5.4 Split families

- 5.4.1 Where an application is made by family members who it would be reasonable to expect them to live together but they are unable to do so,

the council will assess their particular circumstances to consider the best way of addressing their housing needs.

5.5 Bedroom requirement guidelines

5.5.1 The following guidelines will be used when assessing the overcrowding in an applicant's own home:

- Couples require one double bedroom
- Single applicants require one bedroom
- Two children of the same sex under 10 years old require one double bedroom
- Three children share a bedroom because they have no other option they will be assessed as lacking one bedroom
- Two children of the opposite sex, where the oldest child is aged 6 years or over require two bedrooms
- Two children of the same sex over 10 years old require two bedrooms
- A pregnant woman expecting her first child requires two bedrooms after 24 weeks pregnant
- Bedrooms below 50 square feet in size will not be included as a room in bedroom and overcrowding calculations
- Where a property has two reception rooms one of these will be counted as a bedroom in the bedroom and overcrowding calculations

5.6 Staying contact with children

5.6.1 A child living between parents at separate addresses will only be considered as having one main home. An assessment will be made by the council as to which parent's property is considered as the child's main home. If the council considers that an applicant does not provide the child with his or her main home then the child will not be considered as part of the register application. This means that the child will not be considered as part of the bedroom and overcrowding calculations for that applicant.

5.7 Medical assessments

5.7.1 Medical assessments will be carried out for any applicants who believe that their medical condition or disability is affected by their current accommodation. The applicant will be required to fill in a self-assessment medical form, detailing the effect that their current accommodation has on their medical condition or disability. These forms will be assessed and where appropriate referred to a medical professional for their opinion of how the medical condition is affected by the applicant's housing circumstances.

5.8 Harassment and domestic violence

5.8.1 Where the applicant is a victim of harassment, domestic violence or anti-social behaviour, HDC will offer advice and support to assist applicants in identifying possible ways of resolving their situation.

5.9 Applicant subject to Multi Agency Public Protection arrangements, (MAPPA)

5.9.1 Where an applicant is subject to Multi Agency Public Protection (MAPPA) arrangements, HDC will liaise with the panel to ensure an appropriate housing solution to meet the needs of the applicant and the community as a whole.

5.10 Emergency housing status

5.10.1 An emergency housing status may be awarded to applicants in exceptional circumstances, where remaining in their current accommodation may cause risk of death or serious injury, or where an applicant has been assessed as having multiple needs that fall within band A. An applicant with emergency housing status who bids for a home will be considered as a priority above all other applicants in any other band.

5.11 Direct lets

5.11.1 Most properties will be advertised through the CBL scheme. However in certain circumstances some properties may be let directly to applicants. Where an applicant is identified as requiring a direct let the case will be referred to a senior officer for approval. The list below gives some examples of where this may happen.

- Where the council has accepted a full homelessness duty towards a household but the household has not found suitable accommodation during a period of choice through the CBL scheme.
- Where an applicant and their household require a specific size, type or adapted property and the applicant has not been able to find suitable accommodation through the CBL scheme
- Where an existing social housing tenant is required to move to make the best use of stock, and they have not been successful in finding a suitable property through the CBL scheme

5.11.2 Information as to which properties have been allocated though direct lets will be made available though the CBL feedback mechanism.

5.11.3 Direct lets will be made on the basis of a suitable property becoming available. Where a property becomes available that is suitable for more than one applicant with a direct let status, the date applicants

were awarded a direct let status will be used as a deciding factor in deciding to whom the property will be let.

5.12 Direct lets to homeless applicants

5.12.1 Homeless applicants who are owed a full homelessness duty by HDC (under s.193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002), will be placed in band A and will be able to bid for properties via the CBL scheme. Their date in band will be the date they originally applied to the council as homeless.

5.12.2 Where homeless applicants in band A have not been successful in bidding for properties within 3 months of their date in band, HDC reserves the right to make a direct let of a property under the council's homelessness policy. The decision to make a direct let will depend on the extent to which homeless applicants have had the opportunity to bid for a property during the initial 3 month period of the full duty being accepted.

5.12.3 Where a homeless applicant bids for a property within the initial 3 month period of being owed the full homelessness duty, is offered the tenancy and subsequently refuses the offer, their application will remain within the same housing band and the s.193 (2) duty under the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, will continue.

5.12.4 The full homelessness duty will come to an end, and a homeless applicant lose their priority under this section, when any of the circumstances within s.193 (6) of the Act are met. This will include an applicant:

- accepting an offer of accommodation made through the CBL scheme
- accepting an offer made via the direct let mechanism within the policy (see 5.11 above), or
- if, having been informed of the consequences and the right to request a review, refuses a reasonable offer of suitable accommodation made via the direct let mechanism

S. 193(6) of the Housing Act 1996 Act gives the full circumstances under which the full homelessness duty comes to an end.

5.12.5 Where a homeless applicant is to be allocated a property through the direct let process HDC has responsibility for determining the suitability of any allocation. They will do this by assessing the household's particular needs and circumstances within the context of the general housing conditions in the area as a whole.

5.12.6 Where a homeless applicant is offered accommodation via a direct let, but does not feel that this offer is suitable, they have the right to

request a review of the decision that the offer is suitable. For details of the review process (see chapter 6).

5.12.7 As the property does not have to remain available during the review of the suitability and reasonableness of a direct let, homeless applicants are advised to accept and move in to the accommodation pending the decision on review. If the review outcome is unsuccessful for the applicant they will still have accommodation to live in whilst they consider their further options.

5.12.8 If a direct let is refused by a homeless applicant and it is then deemed suitable at review, the full homelessness duty will come to an end. They will also have to vacate any temporary accommodation that is being provided.

5.12.10 If, on review reviewing an applicant's refusal of a direct let, the property offered is considered to be unreasonable or unsuitable, the duty under s.193 (2) will continue and the applicant will be made a further offer of suitable accommodation.

5.13 Applicants who require a specific size, type or adapted property.

5.13.1 Where an applicant requires a specific size, type or adapted property, they will be placed in the appropriate housing needs band, but may be offered a direct let if HDC have a shortage of suitable properties. For example:

- An applicant requires a very large property to accommodate their household
- An applicant requires a property of a specific type in a specific area of the district
- An applicant requires a property with specific adaptations and such a property becomes available
- Where an applicant is willing to move to release a large family home

5.14 Sheltered housing

5.14.1 Sheltered housing will be advertised through the CBL scheme. Sheltered housing is available to applicants over 60 years of age and prior to an offer of a tenancy applicants will be subject to an assessment by the landlord of the accommodation to establish their prospective support needs and suitability to living in sheltered housing.

5.15 Extra care homes

5.15.1 Extra care homes are properties for older people where additional support services are provided. Allocation to extra care homes will not be advertised through CBL but will be made by an allocation panel.

5.16 Refusals of direct let

5.16.1 Where an applicant (other than a person owed the full homelessness duty) refuses a reasonable offer of a direct let a senior officer will review the reasons for the refusal and the applicant may lose any housing priority they held, dependent on the reasons for the offer refusal. Applicants have the right to ask for a review of this decision (see chapter 6)

5.17 Area specific policies

5.17.1 Area specific policies, also known as local lettings policies, are used within the sub region to help create balanced and sustainable communities. Where an area specific policy applies, it will be stated in the property label. Details of these area specific policies/ schemes will be available from the local authority. Some schemes may ask for an applicant to have a local connection to a specific parish or village. In those cases, the connection criteria will be stipulated in the legal agreement for the development.

Chapter 6

6.1 Reviews of decisions

6.1.1 A designated senior officer will carry out reviews of assessment decisions as required.

6.1.2 Examples of circumstances that may be reviewed include:

- Multiple need in band
- Emergency housing status
- Moving people up a band or down a band
- Priority assessments, in complex cases.
- Housing people in different accommodation to designated need size
- Low priority review decisions
- Direct lets

This list is not exhaustive.

6.2 Statutory reviews

6.2.1 An applicant has the right to request a review of certain decisions made under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. These are:

- Decisions about the facts of the applicant's case which are likely to be, or have been, taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing accommodation to the applicant
- Lack of any reasonable preference based on previous behaviour s167 (2C) Housing Act 1996
- Ineligibility for an allocation based on immigration status s160A (9).

6.2.2 Decision letters issued in respect of housing applications will advise the applicant of their right to request a review and provide appropriate guidance on how to do this. An applicant can obtain further details of the review procedure from HDC.

6.2.3 A request for a review of a decision can be made in writing or verbally to a member of staff at HDC. The request should be made within 21 days following the notification of the decision. Reviews will be considered within 28 days of the request being received and the applicant will receive a written response outlining the result of the review.

6.2.4 An applicant will only be entitled to one internal review. If an applicant is still unhappy following the review of a decision, they can make a complaint through the council's complaints procedures, contact the Local Government Ombudsman (see section 6.5) or seek to challenge the decision via a judicial review.

6.2.5 Reviews will be undertaken by a designated officer who was not involved in the original decision, and who is senior to the original decision making officer.

6.3 Homeless reviews

6.3.1 Homeless applicants have the right to request a review of certain decisions made by HDC in respect of their homeless application. Within the context of the council's lettings policy this includes the decision to bring to an end the full homelessness duty by making a suitable offer of permanent accommodation via the housing register (through the direct let mechanism).

6.3.2 If an applicant wishes to request a review of the reasonableness of an offer or the suitability of the property, this must be made within 21 days of notification of a decision to make the offer. Late review request can be considered under exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the local authority.

6.3.3 Applicants who request reviews of decisions about suitability of accommodation will be advised to accept and move into accommodation pending the outcome of their review request. If the review goes in their favour alternative accommodation will be provided as quickly as possible. However if the reasonableness and suitability of the offer is upheld the applicant will still have accommodation to live in whilst they consider their further options.

6.3.4 The applicant has the right of appeal to the county court if he or she is dissatisfied with the decision on a review.

6.4 The Local Government Ombudsman

6.4.1 The Local Government Ombudsman investigates complaints of injustice arising from maladministration by local authorities and other bodies. They can be asked to investigate complaints about most council matters including housing.

6.4.2 If an applicant is not satisfied with the action the council has taken, and has exhausted the council's own complaints procedure, they can send a written complaint to the ombudsman.

6.4.3 The Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Local Government Ombudsman
The Oaks No 2
Westwood Way
Westwood Business Park
Coventry CV4 8JB

Tel: 024 7682 0000
Website: www.lgo.org.uk

If an applicant wishes to make a complaint against a housing association, they should contact:

The Housing Ombudsman Service
Norman House
105 -109 Strand
London
WC2R 0AA

Tel: 08457 125 973
Website: www.ihos.org.uk

Chapter 7

7.1 Letting of accommodation

- 7.1.1 Properties will be advertised through the sub regional CBL scheme. The advertising will be carried out on a regular basis and for specific periods of time, known as advertising cycles. (See framework document).

7.2 Labelling property advertisements

- 7.2.1 All adverts will include a description of the property and any other relevant information, for example rent charge, property size, local facilities, disabled adaptations or if the property is sheltered housing. The property will be labelled to show who is able to express an interest in it, for example, where a local connection is required, or if there is an age restriction on the property.

7.3 Bedroom requirements

- 7.3.1 Table 1 below will be used to assess applicant's/household bedroom requirements.
- 7.3.2 Table 1 below shows the size of property that applicants may be considered for based on their household composition, either when expressing interest for an advertised property or for a direct let. (See section 5.11)

Table 1

Key; Bungalow = B Maisonette = M House = H

	Studio Flat M	1 Bed Flat or H or B or M	2 Bed Flat or M.	2 Bed H or B	3 Bed H or B	3 Bed Flat or M.	4 Bed H	4 Bed Flat or M	5 Bed -
Single Person	√	√							
Single Person with overnight contact to 1 or more children		√							
Couple or 2 Adults		√	√						
Household with 1 child			√	√					
Household with 2 children of same sex; or 3 individual adults				√	√	√			
Household with 2 children of opposite sex; or 3 or more children					√	√			
Household with 4 or more children; or household of at least 6 people in total					Large √	√	√	√	
Household with 5 or more children; or household of at least 8 people in total					Large √	√	√	√	√

7.3.3 Please note that these are general guidelines. All properties that are advertised through the CBL scheme will be clearly labelled to identify the household size eligible to bid for each property as some landlords may have different policies on the different property sizes offered to the various household sizes. Applicants should check the information contained in the labelling to see if they are able to be considered for the property.

7.4 Short listing

- 7.4.1 After the end of an advertising cycle a shortlist of applicants bidding for the property will be taken from the CBL computer system. The shortlist will identify the order of applicants based on who has been in the highest housing needs band for the longest time. In circumstances where there is more than one applicant in the same band and they have the same date in band, priority will be given to the applicant with the earliest registration date. If there is more than one applicant with the same band, date in band and registration date a senior officer will make an allocation decision based on the best use of the housing stock and needs of the applicants.
- 7.2.2 When a short list of applicants is completed the landlord of the available property will offer an accompanied viewing of the property to the highest priority applicants. This is to ensure that if the applicant who tops the short list decides not to take the tenancy, the property can be quickly offered to the next person on the shortlist.
- 7.2.3 After viewing the property the applicant at the top of the shortlist will be given 24 hours to accept or refuse the offer. If the offer is refused the next person on the short list will be offered the property.
- 7.2.4 In exceptional circumstances a senior officer may make a decision not to offer a property to the applicant who tops a short list, eg. if, in doing so, the offer could put a vulnerable person at risk of any harm. Any such decisions will be explained fully to the applicant in writing.

7.3 Formal offer of the property

- 7.3.1 Once the applicant has confirmed their acceptance of the tenancy the landlord of the property will write to confirm the formal offer of the tenancy. The CBL system will then not allow that applicant to be considered for any further properties and once the tenancy starts their Register application will be cancelled.
- 7.3.2 Once the property is ready to let the landlord of the property will complete the tenancy sign up.

7.4 Withdrawal of offers

- 7.4.1 In exceptional circumstances an offer of a property may be withdrawn, for example:
- Where there has been a change in the applicants circumstances
 - Where the successful applicant has rent arrears or other housing related debts that had previously not come to light
 - Following verification the applicant is not eligible for the property
 - Where an error has been made in the advertising criteria

- Where an offer of accommodation could put a vulnerable person at risk of any harm

7.5 Refusing an offer of accommodation

7.5.1 Usually, if an applicant refuses an offer of accommodation made through CBL, they will remain in their housing needs band. If an applicant refuses three offers of a property made through CBL, a housing officer will contact the applicant to offer support and assistance and verify their circumstances.

7.6 Allocations to staff, council members or their family members

7.6.1 Members of staff, their close family and elected members who require housing with HDC may apply for housing in the same way as other applicants. Their status should be disclosed on the application form at the time of applying.

7.6.2 If an applicant who is a member of staff, elected member or a member of their direct family, makes a successful bid for a property the Head of Housing Services will be informed and must approve the letting prior to the formal offer being made.

7.7 Tenancy management outside the scope of the lettings policy

7.7.1 The following tenancy management areas are not included as part of this lettings policy as they are not included within part 6 of the Housing Act 1996:

- Mutual exchanges
- Introductory tenancies converted to secure tenancies
- Where a secure tenancy of a property is assigned by way of succession to the same property
- Where a secure tenancy is assigned to someone who would be qualified to succeed to that tenancy if the secure tenant died immediately before the assignment
- Where court orders are made under one of the following:
 - Section 24 of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973
 - Section 17 (1) of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984
 - Paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Children Act 1989

Chapter 8

8 Confidentiality and access to information

8.1 Applicants' Rights to Information

8.1.1 Applicants have the right to request such general information as will enable them to assess:

- How their application is likely to be treated under the Lettings Policy (including in particular whether they are likely to be regarded as a member of a group of people who are to be given preference by virtue of this Policy, (see chapter 4)
- Whether housing accommodation appropriate to their needs is likely to be made available to them.

8.1.2 Applicants have the right to request information held about their application which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account when considering whether to allocate them housing.

8.2 Data protection

8.2.1 When an applicant applies to the CBL scheme the POs will only ask for information that they need to assess their eligibility and housing needs. The POs will collect and keep data in accordance with the council's guidelines on handling personal data.

8.2.2 These guidelines are in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 that covers both electronic and manual records and the Act governs everything we do with the personal data, including collecting, storing, using and disposing of it.

8.2.3 Confidential information held about applicants will not be disclosed to third parties apart from:

- Where the individual who is the subject of the confidential information has consented to the disclosure
- Where the council or a PO is required by law to make such disclosures
- Where disclosure is made in accordance with an information sharing protocol

8.3 Requesting information

8.3.1 Applicants are able to request copies of the information held regarding their application. This information is held in line with Data Protection Act guidelines.

Please note that we cannot provide you with personal information about other people if doing so will breach the Data Protection Act 1998.

Appendix 1

Cambridge Sub regional Choice Based Lettings Partner Organisation list

Local Authority

LSVT Landlord

Cambridge City Council

Hobson House
44 St Andrews Street
Cambridge City Council CB2 3AS

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge, CB3 6EA

East Cambridgeshire District Council,

The Grange,
Nutholt Lane,
Ely, CB7 4PL

Hereward Housing

St Mary's Lodge
St Mary's Street
Ely
Cambridge
CB7 4EY

Huntingdonshire District Council

Housing Services
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon
PE29 3TN

Luminus Group

Brook House
Ouse Walk
Huntingdon
Cambs
PE29 3QW

Fenland District Council

Fenland Hall
County Road
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 8QN

Forest Heath District Council

District Offices
College Heath Road
Mildenhall
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
LP28 7EY

Kings Forest Housing Association

College Heath Road
Mildenhall
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
LP28 7EY

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

Borough Offices
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
1P33 1XB

Havebury Housing Partnership,

Havebury House, Western Way
Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 3SP
and also Manor Road, Haverhill, Suffolk
CB9 OEP.
Email is Office@Havebury.com

Appendix 2

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adapted properties

Property that has been adapted for an applicant with disabilities.

Advertised

Properties that are advertised and are available for applicants to bid for under CBL.

Age restrictions

Where a property is labelled, as only being available to applicants of a certain age.

Application number

A unique housing number generated by the computer system.

Bedroom eligibility

How many bedrooms a household is assessed as needing

Choice Based Lettings (CBL)

A method of letting social housing through openly advertising property, and allowing applicants to bid for those advertised properties.

Customer/Applicant

Is either a tenant of a PO (including those in temporary accommodation) or a housing applicant on the housing needs register

Date of registration

The date an application form is registered with a PO

Date in band

The date an application is placed in a housing needs band, used as the applicable date when short-listing.

Decision making organization

The PO that made a particular decision with regard to a housing or homeless application

Direct lets

Property that is offered directly to an applicant, without them having to bid.

Domestic violence

Is threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (physical, psychological, sexual, financial or emotional) by a former partner or associated person.

Bid

The process of applicants saying which property they would like to live in

Housing Associations

Also known as Registered Social Landlords. These are landlords who also provide social rented housing for which applicants/ customers can bid through the CBL scheme.

Housing options

Looking at what housing might be available to an applicant, including private rented accommodation and other solutions.

Housing needs register

A list of those requesting and eligible for housing

Housing Related Debts

Are defined as current rent arrears, former tenant arrears, outstanding re-chargeable repairs, current and former housing related service charge arrears

and court costs. They do not include Council Tax debts or Housing Benefit overpayments.

Joint Application

Where one or more applicant applies to join the housing register on one application form.

Labelling properties

Describing who is eligible to bid for a property

Local Connection

The connection an applicant has to a specific area within the sub region

Local elected members

Each local authority is governed by a group of elected member.

LSVT Landlord

Local Stock Voluntary transfer, where a Local authority has sold its housing stock to a Registered Social Landlord

Mutual exchange

A scheme which allows two tenants to swap their homes.

Partner organizations (POs) All the organizations that are partners to the Sub regional CBL scheme these may be local authority or RSL organizations.

The Cambridge Sub Region

The seven Local Authorities that make up the sub-region.

Transferring tenant

An applicant who is currently a tenant of a partner organization

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**SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY
Report by Head of Environmental and Community Health Services**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the proposal to seek Cabinet consent to the adoption and implementation of a Sports Facility Strategy for Huntingdonshire. The development and implementation of a Sports Facility Strategy is needed to assist in guiding the future provision of a range of sports facilities in the district.
- 1.2 There are two main factors which are particularly relevant to the future provision of sports facilities; these are the future implementation of the Building Schools for the Future Programme (BSF) in the District, and the significant likely population growth particularly around the area of St Neots. This strategy will be used to guide and inform the nature and extent of resources, financial and operational, which are needed to ensure that Huntingdonshire has up to date, fit for purpose, accessible and welcoming sports facilities for the existing community, people working in, or visiting the District, and any new residents in the District.

2. SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

- 2.1 This strategy examines all known sports facility provision within the district. Whilst Huntingdonshire District Council provides, manages and maintains a diverse range of sports facilities, this strategy recognises that the council is not solely responsible. Therefore the remit of the strategy is to examine all sporting provision, including private, voluntary and education provision, all of which makes an important contribution to the sporting offer of Huntingdonshire.
- 2.2 It is important to stress that this strategy focuses on community sports facility provision and the needs for provision both now and into the future.
- 2.3 This strategy is seeking to identify the following:
- ◆ Sports facilities that need to be preserved and maintained because of identified strategic need.
 - ◆ Existing facilities that require to be repaired, upgraded/improved to meet identified strategic need.
 - ◆ Any new sports facilities that may be required to meet identified strategic need.
 - ◆ Sites where new facilities may be required to meet identified strategic need.
 - ◆ A priority for future investment.
 - ◆ Those facilities that need to be expanded or redeveloped to meet identified strategic need and a timetable for any proposed sports-developments
 - ◆ Future opportunities for disinvestment in or redevelopment of existing sports facilities in Huntingdonshire, as a result of under-use and perceived lack of future demand or inappropriateness.

- 2.4 Over 180 individual sites and 330 facilities have been identified and mapped spatially onto GIS. Strategically significant sites have been proposed from this list.

3 PROGRESS

- 3.1 In September 2008 Cabinet approved local standards for the major sports facilities in the district: sports halls, swimming pools; indoor bowls; synthetic turf pitches and health and fitness based on the available national methodology. It is acknowledged however that sports facilities cover a much wider range than those covered by the national methodology.
- 3.2 This strategy takes the work a step further in identifying all key sports facilities in the district and makes recommendations on standards for other types of sports facilities.
- 3.3 The strategy has been written to take into account all relevant national, regional and local documents and strategies including Cambs Horizons Major Sports Facilities Strategy 2006, the Local Investment Framework and Local Development Framework.
- 3.4 The first draft of the Sports Facility Strategy was distributed in March 2009 for consultation to members of Task and Finish Group and key stakeholders. The consultation period closed on the 19th March and feedback received, where appropriate, has been used to further develop the strategy.
- 3.5 A copy of the draft strategy was submitted to the Chief Officers Management Team on 24th March, and is proposed to be submitted to Cabinet on 23rd April.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The development and implementation of a Sports Facility Strategy is key to ensuring high quality accessible sports facilities for the public and in guiding the future provision of sports facilities in the district. The strategy explores the policy context, examines existing provision as well as identifying known projects that are currently in development. The draft strategy has been subject to consultation with key stakeholders and will be amended where appropriate, to take account of relevant comments received.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 Overview and Scrutiny (Service Delivery) is asked to review and endorse the draft Sports Facilities Strategy for Huntingdonshire for submission to Cabinet for adoption.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Adoption of Local Standards for the Provision of Sports Facilities in Huntingdonshire,
Sept 08

Contact Officer: Jo Peadon
 **01480 388048**



Sports Facilities Strategy for Huntingdonshire

2009-2014

Draft Copy



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1. Introduction

1.1 The Need to Develop a Sports Facilities Strategy

Huntingdonshire District Council has identified the need for a strategy to assist in guiding the future provision of sports facilities in the district. The need for a clear framework for future investment is particularly critical given the projected population growth within Huntingdonshire.

The development of the sports facilities strategy also provides the opportunity to assess the condition of existing provision, establish whether it is appropriate to meet local needs and demand and to ensure that potential new provision helps to address any current quantitative or qualitative deficiencies. In addition, there is a need to facilitate increased participation and improve the health of the local community.

Strategies have been developed regionally and at county level highlighting facility provision within the district, and so there is now a need to develop a complementary strategy at this local level. Therefore, a Director-led task and finish group has been established to help develop and implement the Sports Facilities Strategy, drawing on different areas of expertise across the council including both officers and elected members (a detailed breakdown of the steering group is provided in Appendix 1).

1.2 Strategy Vision:

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a clear framework for the prioritisation, provision and enhancement of sports facilities within Huntingdonshire. With this in mind, the overarching vision of this strategy is:

To promote active lifestyles: providing facilities/events and encourage participation in active leisure pursuits for everyone. (Huntingdonshire District Council's Corporate Plan, "Growing Success", 2008/9).

1.3 Scope of the Strategy:

This strategy examines all known sports facility provision within the district. Whilst Huntingdonshire District Council provides, manages and maintains a diverse range of sports facilities, this strategy recognises that the council is not solely responsible. Therefore, the remit of this strategy is to examine all sporting provision, including private, voluntary and education provision, all of which makes an important contribution to the sporting offer of Huntingdonshire.



This strategy is seeking to identify the following:

1. Sports facilities that need to be preserved and maintained because of identified strategic need.
2. Existing sports facilities that need to be repaired, upgraded/improved to meet identified strategic need.
3. Any new sports facilities that may be required to meet identified strategic need.
4. Sites where new facilities are required to meet identified strategic need.
5. A priority for future investment.
6. Those facilities that need to be expanded or redeveloped to meet identified strategic need, and a time table for any proposed sports-developments.
7. Future opportunities for disinvestment in or redevelopment of existing sports facilities in Huntingdonshire, as a result of under-use and perceived lack of future demand or inappropriateness.



2. The Wider Picture

2.1 The Agenda for Sport

Encouraging participation in physical activity is important. It is recognised that sedentary lifestyles can contribute to increased health problems, with obesity a major concern within the United Kingdom.

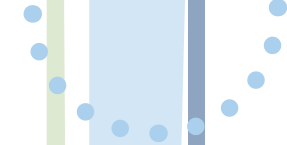
To address this, a range of documents and strategies have been driven forward by central government and leading national sports bodies that identify leisure and sports opportunities as a major contributory factor in helping to address health issues, which in turn impact positively on issues such as community cohesion, economic development, and crime reduction.

At the national level, the Chief Medical Officer's Report (2004) outlines that fundamental changes in attitude to active lifestyles should occur in every household. The report backs the recommendation that for health benefits to accrue the population must undertake a minimum of 5x30 minutes of moderate physical activity per week, which can help towards preventing coronary heart disease, musculoskeletal disorders, some forms of cancer, obesity, diabetes and mental illness. It also showed that not being physically active is a major risk factor for many diseases and chronic illnesses. People who are not active have been shown to have a poorer health outlook than active people.

Linked to this, the Department for Health White Paper, "Choosing Health" (2004), set out new far reaching proposals for supporting the public to make healthier and more informed choices with regard to their health in order to address the issues raised within the Chief Medical Officer's report. It emphasised that effective partnerships across communities are essential in making available and promoting healthier choices and lifestyles. It also identified the need to reduce the number of people who smoke, reduce obesity through diet and exercise, and increase activity levels with particular emphasis on targeting young people.

At the start of 2009, the Department of Health, in partnership with other Government Departments, published a new plan, "Be active, be healthy: a plan for getting the nation moving", setting out new ideas for determining and responding to needs of local populations and encouraging more physical activity.

Sport England is the strategic lead for sport nationally, responsible for the delivery of government wide objectives. In 2008, it published a new strategy, "Grow, sustain, excel – Sport England Strategy 2008 – 2011", aimed at encouraging more people to play and enjoy sport. In summary, it seeks to create a vibrant sporting culture, in which the needs of sports participants are addressed. Within the strategy, Sport England make a commitment to work closely with the national governing bodies of sport and forge strong partnerships with local authorities, acknowledging that local authorities are key to driving local provision and helping to deliver high class community sport infrastructure.



2.2 The 2012 Olympics

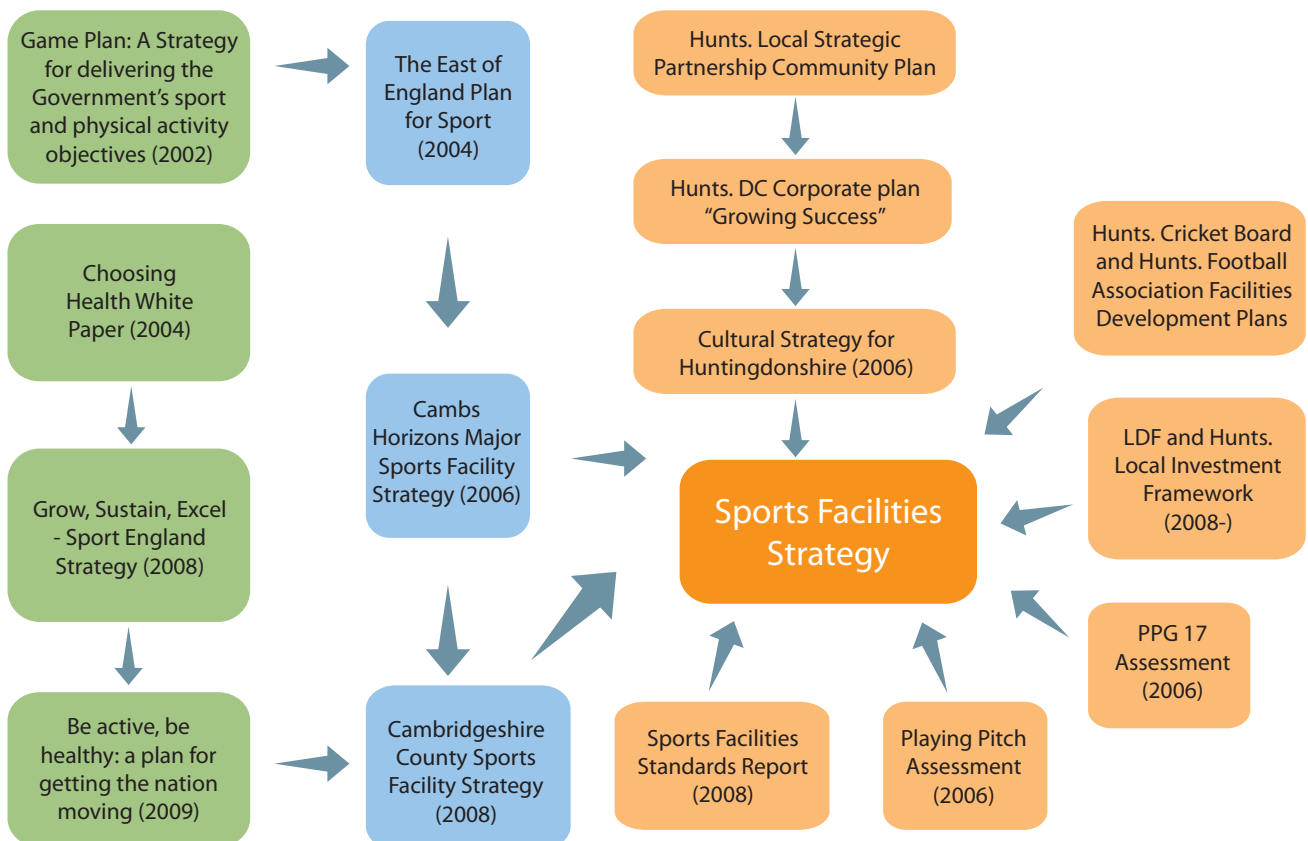
In 2012, London will be hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Central to this successful bid was the notion that hosting the Olympics in this country will inspire and encourage more people to get active, and increased participation in sport is a key goal underpinning legacy commitments and objectives designed to deliver improved community services and facilities as well as enhanced sporting opportunities within the United Kingdom.

In the lead up to the Games, it is crucial that local communities have the opportunity to access high quality sports facility provision. The Olympic and Paralympic Games provide an ideal opportunity to encourage participation and ensure that the games have a lasting effect on people's participation levels.

2.3 How this Sports Strategy fits within the National Agenda

In light of the desire to improve the quality of provision and to seek an increase in sports participation, a number of studies have taken place, both locally and regionally, to examine the current distribution of sports facilities and to identify required provision in the future. The Cambridgeshire Horizons Major Sports Facility Strategy (2006), which has subsequently been followed by the Cambridgeshire County Sports Facility Strategy (2008), outlines a co-ordinated county-wide approach to improve sports facilities, identifying specific recommendations for Huntingdonshire.

Locally, a number of key documents are important when considering both current and future sports facility provision. The Council's corporate plan, "Growing Success", the Huntingdonshire Local Strategic Partnership "Community Plan", the Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework and a range of other service-led strategies and reports all have an impact and a detailed overview of these documents is provided within Appendix 2. The link between local, regional and national policy is shown chronologically below.



3. The Districts Sporting Needs

3.1 District Profile

The district of Huntingdonshire covers an area of approximately 350 square miles and has a population of 168,200 (based on the Government Actuary Department population figures published in 2007). This is anticipated to expand to 188,400 by 2021 and this has important implications when considering long-term management of the districts sports facilities as there is a need to ensure that there is sufficient provision to meet the demands of an increased local population.

A large proportion (approximately half) of the district's current population is found within four market towns; Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives and Ramsey, with the remaining residents distributed within key settlements and rural villages. Much of the anticipated population growth is expected to occur around the St Neots area and this needs to be considered when assessing future needs. Similarly, the rural nature of the district means that accessibility to community provision, including sports facilities, is a challenge (Sports Facilities Standards Report, 2008), and consideration needs to be made as to how best to provide participative opportunities and ensure accessibility to rural residents.

The district has a large younger population, and a high proportion of 30-44 year olds; this profile is important with regard to sports provision, as individuals tend to be more active when younger.

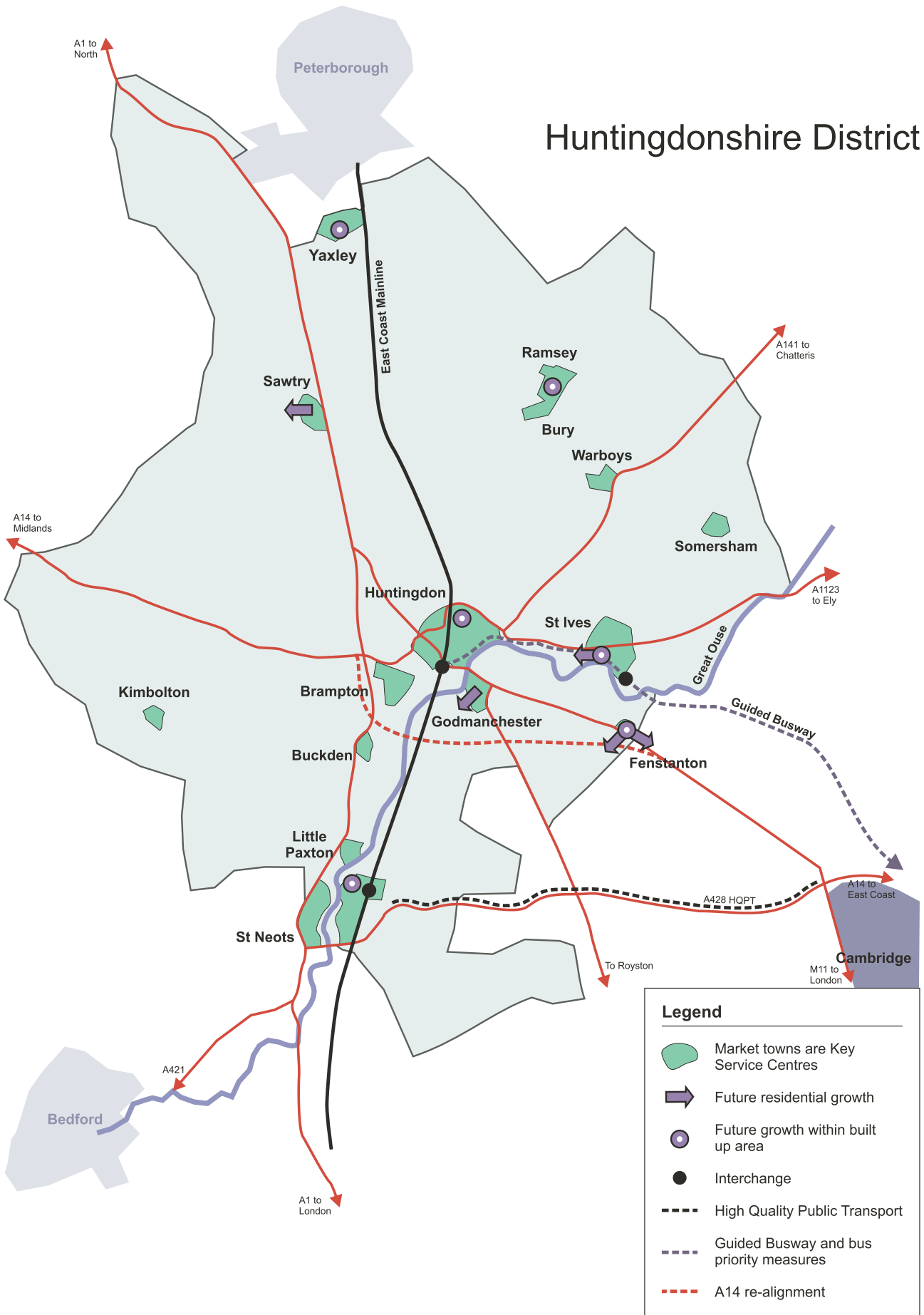
In 2008, Huntingdonshire's District Council Annual Survey highlighted that 84% of people were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with Huntingdonshire as a place to live and most have a good quality of life. Life expectancy in Huntingdonshire is high compared to the national average, and general health and well-being is good as demonstrated by the 2001 census, which highlighted that 73.4% of people described their health as 'good', a percentage that is almost 5 points higher than the national average.

Transport links within the district are good with roads such as the A1 and A14, which in turn link to the M1, M11, and M6 motorways. This network is important when considering accessibility issues and planning the location of new facility provision. It should also be noted that 4% more households in the district have access to two or more cars, compared with the national average. This again reflects the rural nature of the district and the need to travel by car.

When looking at the distribution of facilities, consideration needs to be given to the fact that some local communities experience higher levels of relative deprivation compared with the district as a whole or the region generally. For instance, Huntingdon North ward has the lowest levels of both household income and educational attainment in the district and is in the 10% most deprived areas in Cambridgeshire.



Huntingdonshire District



3.2 Overview of Current Participation in Sport

There are 1.5 million annual visitors to the council's leisure centres and active users of these leisure centres accounts for approximately 10% of the local population. With regard to wider participation in sport and leisure activities, Sport England has published an 'Activity Profile' for Huntingdonshire, derived using data from the Active People Survey. This was first released in 2006 and subsequently updated in 2008, and contains a range of sports participation analysis for the district. The headline participation statistics are as follows:

Activity	Huntingdonshire District Council		East Region		National Level	
	2005-2006	2007-2008	2005-2006	2007-2008	2005-2006	2007-2008
Participation (3 x 30 minutes per week)	23.5%	22.8%	20.5%	21.4%	21.0%	21.7%

This shows that nearly one in four respondents in Huntingdonshire engage in regular sport or recreational activity, a level that exceeds both the regional and national figures, although it should be noted that there has been a slight decline in participation since the first survey was conducted in 2005/2006.

This measure of participation is important - at the national level, the Government sets a range of national indicators as a means of measuring agreed national priorities. National Indicator 8 (NI8) is the indicator for sport and active recreation and is measured by the percentage of the adult population in a local area who participated in sport and active recreation, at moderate intensity, for at least 30 minutes on at least 12 days out of the last 4 weeks (equivalent to 30 minutes on 3 or more days a week). Therefore, the above data shows that Huntingdonshire is performing well against NI8.

In addition to participation data, the second Sport England survey has shown that within Huntingdonshire, since 2006:

- The percentage of people volunteering – defined as people that offer support to sport for at least one hour a week - has increased from 5.1% to 8.1%
- The percentage of people that are a member of a sports club has decreased from 25.6% to 25.0%
- The percentage of people who have received tuition from an instructor or coach to improve sports performance has decreased from 22.0% to 21.1%
- The percentage of people who take part in any organised competition in any sport or recreational activity has increased from 17.2% to 18.5%
- The percentage of adults who are very or fairly satisfied with sports provision in their local area increased from 73.9% to 75.3%.



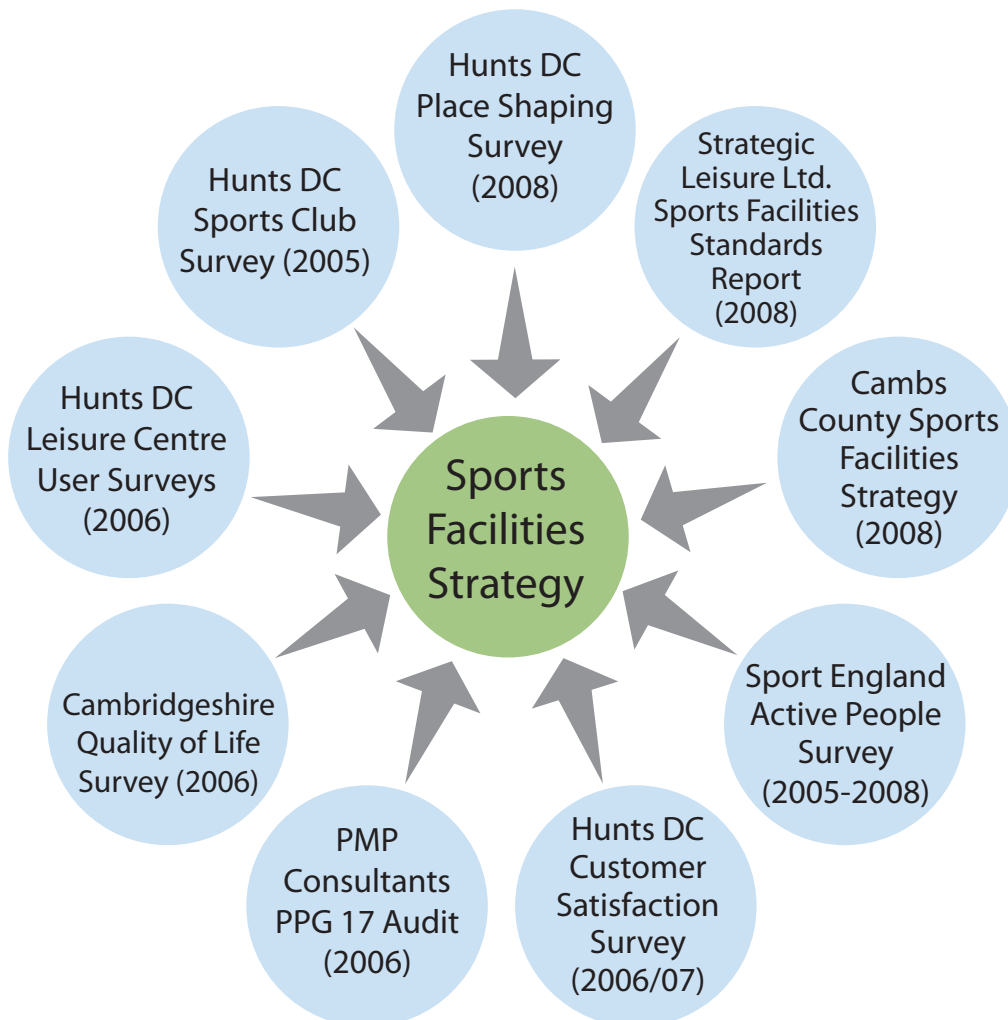
3.3 Participation by Age Group

Given that the 2008 update of the Activity Profile has only recently been released, there is currently no detailed analysis of the participation data by age group. Therefore, the 2006 data is still used as the baseline, and within this report, Huntingdonshire was identified as having higher levels of participation than those in the East of England.

One in six over 55 year olds participated 3 times a week compared to one in three 16-34 year olds and one in four 35-54 year olds. However, Huntingdonshire had among the lowest participation rates in the 16-34 age group when compared to similar Index of Multiple Deprivation and Office of National Statistics areas, yet the highest in the over 55 age group. This indicates that more needs to be done to develop facilities that will encourage greater levels of participation within the 16 to 34 year old demographic.

3.4 Do existing facilities meet the needs of local communities and clubs?

In addition to the information provided within 3.1 and 3.2, it is also important that future policy decisions relating to sports facility provision are based on an understanding of the sporting needs and aspirations of key stakeholders, including local communities and sports clubs. Therefore, detailed community engagement has been undertaken during the past four years and this is summarised in the diagram below. (A detailed breakdown of the consultation undertaken is displayed in Appendix 3).



Key findings from the consultation

- Current satisfaction levels concerning sport and leisure facilities are high, exceeding those of other authorities within the county (Sport England Active People Survey).
- There is scope for trying to encourage more people to use sports and leisure facilities with the Council's Customer Satisfaction Survey (2006/2007) showing that 1 in 5 people had never used sports or leisure facilities. However, encouragingly, the same survey showed that 37% of respondents used sports / leisure facilities at least once a month.
- Sports clubs within the district feel that there is sufficient pitch provision to meet demand, and many view the quality of provision as good.
- Although transport is seen as a major barrier to accessing cultural facilities within the district, particularly within rural areas, (Huntingdonshire District Council Cultural Strategy, 2007), the main mode of transport of respondents using outdoor sports facilities was via car (63%), indicating that people are willing to travel to reach their chosen facility (Planning Policy Guidance 17 assessment – Household Survey).
- When asked to assess how easy it is to get to a sports / leisure centre, more than 2 in 3 people (69%) of Huntingdonshire residents stated that it is very / fairly easy (Cambridgeshire Quality of Life Survey).
- Responses to the household survey suggested that perceived shortfalls in outdoor sports facilities relate to the provision of tennis and synthetic pitches.
- The Sports Club Survey (2005) highlighted that sports clubs generally felt that the quality and accessibility of pitch provision in the district was good. The only aspect that scored less than average was the provision of training areas. Most clubs did not possess a training area and hence scored this as zero, whilst changing rooms need improving in some instances. Similar to the scores given for pitch quality factors, the scores given for ancillary facilities were good, with only cycle parking scoring below average.
- Consultation suggests that access to training facilities is a key issue, with only limited slots available at synthetic pitches for clubs wishing to train midweek. There are few floodlit training areas and teams struggle to access facilities between the peak hours of 6 and 9pm, particularly at the leisure centres where there is high demand for facilities.





4. Sports Provision in Huntingdonshire

4.1 Collation of Sports Facilities Data

To help inform development of this strategy, a comprehensive database of all known sports facilities has been mapped on to the council's geographical information system including over 180 sites and 340 facilities. Furthermore, additional sites will be mapped as they are developed or identified. In the long-term this information will be continually updated and will be publicly accessible; functioning as an enhancement to the Active Places mapping system that is currently available through the Sport England website. The council has also compiled a database that identifies sports facilities that are located within each of the district's settlements, and this information is available on request from the council.

4.2 Development of Local Standards for Sport

There is a need for objective standards, as they are important tools when looking to measure change. In particular, keeping pace with changes in population numbers and needs is important when seeking to ensure accessibility to sports facilities. The dispersed nature of the district, means that district-wide standards are a means of maintaining a strategic overview of provision versus demand.

Given the potential population expansion within the district, local standards can be used when new developments are proposed to guide and inform the nature and extent of resources, financial and operational, which are needed to ensure that Huntingdonshire has sufficient up-to-date, fit-for-purpose, and accessible sports facilities. This should allow proactive planning to meet future demand.

In order to assist in the development of local standards, Strategic Leisure Limited were commissioned to undertake a comprehensive review of existing provision and to identify future needs based on predicted population growth using Sport England's nationally recognised model the 'Sports Facility Calculator'. This work focused on a select number of sports facilities but included all known provision irrespective of ownership, thereby incorporating local authority leisure centres, voluntary sector sports clubs, private sector facilities, and secondary schools - including those that will be re-built or re-furnished under PFI or the Building Schools for the Future programme. (The Sports Facilities Standards Report, produced by Strategic Leisure Limited, is available on request from Huntingdonshire District Council).



Following on from this report, on the 4th September 2008, the council formally adopted the following local standards for sports facilities, based on national methodology.

Facility	Standard
Sports halls	51.2 sq metres per 1,000 population
Swimming Pools	10.96 sq metres per 1,000 population
Indoor Bowls Rink	0.05 rinks per 1,000 population
Artificial Turf Pitch	0.04 turf pitch per 1,000 population
Fitness Stations	3.6 stations per 1,000 population

There are many facilities where there is no nationally agreed methodology to form standards. Therefore based on existing levels of provision the following standards are suggested for the following facilities:

Facility	Standard
Outdoor sports pitches, courts & greens	16.1 sq m per resident
Outdoor Tennis Courts	1 court per 2,200 people (Min 2 court facility)
Outdoor Bowling Greens	1 rink per 2,000 people (Min 5 rink facility/39m ²)
Indoor Tennis Facility	1 facility per 40,000 people
Changing Rooms	1 facility per 2,000 people
Active Lifestyle Contribution	£50,000 per 1,000 people



4.3 Existing Provision and Future Needs

The following section will provide an overview of current provision levels of each of these headline sports facilities (refer to appendix 4 to view maps showing the spatial distribution of these facilities) and explore whether existing levels are sufficient to meet current and future demand. Whilst the main focus is on provision within the boundary of Huntingdonshire, this strategy recognises that facilities in neighbouring local authority areas can have an important role for residents of the district, and where relevant, these facilities are also highlighted.

Sports Halls

Overview

Sports halls are multi-purpose in their very nature, allowing for a range of indoor sporting activities to take place. This is important in ensuring the long-term viability of such facilities.

There are currently twelve sports halls located within the district with six sites being a minimum of four badminton courts in size. Of these, St Ivo Leisure Centre and Kimbolton School provide the largest halls, each providing up to six courts. A further five sites provide sports halls that are of three courts size, whilst Spring Common School provides a 1 court facility.

Is there sufficient provision within Huntingdonshire?

The adopted local standard for sports halls has been applied to current provision levels and is summarised below.

Facility Type	Local Standards of Provision per 1000 population	Required level of provision based on suggested standards (population 168,200)	Current level of Provision (2008)
Sports Hall (@ min 594 sq m)	51.20 sq m	8612 sq m	4536 sq m

Notes: The survey discounted smaller sports halls. There is 2376 sq m of space within these smaller venues and there are 2 sports halls currently in development. Predicted need for <1 additional sports hall. There are issues about the types of activities small sports halls can support.

By excluding halls that are less than four badminton courts in size (i.e those less than 594 sq metres, there is currently a large deficit in sports hall provision within the district.



The table below identifies the level of provision required in 2021:

Facility Type	Local Standards of Provision per 1000 population	Provision based on standards (predicted population 188,400)	Current level of Provision (2008)
Sports Hall (@ min 594 sq m)	51.20 sq m	9646 sq m	4536 sq m
Notes: 2 in development in 2008-11. Further 2 large sports halls required (by 2021) to cope with demand from population increase. There are some small halls in the district that may not be fit for purpose.			

Future Options:

There is a clear shortfall in existing provision, and additional developments at Huntingdonshire Regional College and Little Paxton will not address this deficit in the long-term. Spatially, there is a lack of fit-for-purpose sports halls within Sawtry and Ramsey. Four court halls are identified as 'fit for purpose' and one way in this could be addressed is through the Building Schools for the Future programme (BSF). The Sports Facilities Standards report suggests that the implementation of BSF in the north of the district may provide the opportunity to address the need for sports halls in these areas e.g. Sawtry Community College.

Furthermore, the Local Investment Framework also suggests the need for enhanced leisure facilities in St Neots, and so there is a need to look at the strategic options and feasibility of providing enhanced facilities within this locality.

More widely the need for an 8 court hall could be considered as part of any new development as identified in both the Cambs Horizons Major Sports Facility Strategy (2006) and the Cambridgeshire Sports Facility Strategy (2008).

Given the current deficit in provision, there is a long-term need to retain existing sports hall provision.





Indoor Swimming Pools

Overview

Swimming pools have to accommodate a range of users, including those of all ages and abilities and those wishing to swim for social, fun, fitness, health or competitive reasons.

There are currently fourteen indoor swimming pools across the district, although only four sites have 25 metre length swimming pools. The largest pools are located at Huntingdon Leisure Centre and Kimbolton School (each of which is 250 sq metres in size).

Is there sufficient provision within Huntingdonshire?

The adopted local standard for indoor swimming pools has been applied to current provision levels and is summarised below.

Facility Type	Local Standards of Provision per 1000 population	Required level of provision based on suggested standards (population 168,200)	Current level of Provision (2008)
Indoor Swimming Pool (@ min 212 sq m)	10.96 sq m	1844 sq m	938 sq m

Notes: Recommended Community Pool size: 325 sq m. The survey discounted smaller pools. Including all smaller pools there is 2202.7 sq m of water space in the district. There are issues about both accessibility and the types of activities small pools can support.

In 2021, the level of provision required is calculated to be:

Facility Type	Local Standards of Provision per 1000 population	Provision based on standards (predicted population 188,400)	Current level of Provision (2008)
Indoor Swimming Pool (@ min 212 sq m)	10.96 sq m	2065 sq m	938 sq m

Notes: Recommended Community Pool size: 325 sq m. The 2202.7 sq m of water space in the district, includes some very small pools that may not be fit for purpose.



Future Options:

When reviewing the data it is clear that the district currently has a deficit of swimming pools that are 25 metres in length. However, this masks the fact that there are a range of other pools (private and public) that are smaller in size.

With regard to the need for new provision, the Sports Facilities Standards Report (2008), identifies that there “could be demand” for a new swimming facility with St Neots, linked to the extensive population growth projected for this area. Furthermore, the district’s Local Investment Framework supports the notion of providing a new leisure facility, including an indoor swimming pool within the St Neots area to help address the large increase of population.

However, given that there is already a 25 metre length pool in St Neots, further consultation will be required to ascertain whether there is the need for an additional swimming facility within this location.

It is also necessary to highlight proposed developments outside of the district’s boundary. For instance, there are plans to provide a new community 25 metre swimming pool linked to a new residential development within Hampton. Communities within the north of this district may choose to access swimming provision here.





Indoor Bowls

Overview

Indoor bowls is a sport that offers social interaction, general fitness and well-being as well as competitive opportunities to a range of age groups.

There are currently two sites that provide indoor bowls facilities; Huntingdon Indoor Bowls Club and St Neots and District Indoor Bowls Club, with the latter providing the largest number of rinks, eight.

Is there sufficient provision within Huntingdonshire?

The adopted local standard for indoor bowls has been applied to current provision and is summarised below:

Facility Type	Local Standards of Provision per 1000 population	Required level of provision based on suggested standards (population 168,200)	Current level of Provision (2008)
Indoor Bowls	0.05 rink	8.41 rinks	14 rinks

Notes: There is an apparent over supply of bowls facilities. These are club-based.

Predicted provision requirements are calculated as follows:

Facility Type	Local Standards of Provision per 1000 population	Provision based on standards (predicted population 188,400)	Current level of Provision (2008)
Indoor Bowls	0.05 rink	9.4 rinks	14 rinks

Notes: There is still likely to be an apparent oversupply of bowls facilities. These are club-based.

Future Options:

Although there are only two indoor bowls facilities, this is sufficient to meet both current and future needs. Provision is centrally located and is within 20-30 minutes drive-time of the rest of the district, and so there is no requirement for additional provision.



Artificial Turf Pitches

Overview

Artificial turf pitches provide high quality provision for both sports training and matches.

The district currently has five full size artificial pitches (three sand-based and two third-generation pitches), and an additional four sand-based and two third generation sites of training size within the district.

Is there sufficient provision within Huntingdonshire?

The adopted local standard for artificial turf pitches has been applied to current provision levels and is summarised below.

Facility Type	Local Standards of Provision per 1000 population	Required level of provision based on suggested standards (population 168,200)	Current level of Provision (2008)
Synthetic Turf Pitches (Full size) (min 640 sq m pitch per 25,000 population)	0.04 pitches	6.7	5
Notes: There was an identified need for more pitches.			

Predicted provision requirements are calculated as follows:

Facility Type	Local Standards of Provision per 1000 population	Provision based on standards (predicted population 188,400)	Current level of Provision (2008)
Synthetic Turf Pitches (Full size) (min 640 sq m pitch per 25,000 population)	0.04 pitches	7.5	5
Notes: More pitches planned before 2021.			

Future Options:

There is currently a deficit of full size provision when compared to the adopted local standard, but it should be noted that the figures above do not show the important contribution made by six training pitches. Future options regarding new artificial turf pitch provision are being considered.

The Local Investment Framework identifies the potential need for a new artificial turf pitch in St Neots. This report acknowledges that there is insufficient demand generated for an artificial turf pitch based solely on the growth of St Neots, but given the level of growth across the district as a whole, an additional pitch is recommended.

The implementation of Building Schools for the Future may also lead to the development of additional facilities, including artificial turf pitches.

When considering artificial turf pitches it should be acknowledged that it is not just the quantity of provision that is important, but also the quality and type of provision. Some surfaces are not conducive to all types of sport, likewise, new surfaces are being developed such as new third-generation pitches. Therefore, it is important to keep updated with technological developments when seeking to provide new developments or re-surfacing existing provision.



Health and Fitness

Overview

Health and fitness centres are popular with people attending these facilities for a variety of reasons including general health and well being, and weight loss.

The District Council has five Leisure Centres with St Ivo Leisure Centre providing the largest number (75 stations - including free weights room). There are a range of other providers across the district providing almost twice as much provision as the council, with RAF Alconbury the largest provider of 100 stations.

Is there sufficient provision within Huntingdonshire?

The adopted local standard for fitness stations has been applied to the quantitative data available and is summarised below.

Facility Type	Local Standards of Provision per 1000 population	Required level of provision based on suggested standards (population 168,200)	Current level of Provision (2008)
Fitness Stations	3.6 stations	605	586

Notes: Almost 40% of these facilities are in HDC leisure centres. At the time of the survey there was a shortfall of 19 fitness stations. Since the survey new fitness stations are being developed within HDC leisure centres.

Predicted provision requirements are calculated as follows:

Facility Type	Local Standards of Provision per 1000 population	Provision based on standards (predicted population 188,400)	Current level of Provision (2008)
Fitness Stations	3.6 stations	678	586

Notes: Increasing demand for fitness stations set to continue.

Future Options:

The Sports Facilities Standards Report highlights that communities living in the four main settlements all have access to fitness stations within a 20 minute walk-time. Furthermore, the deficit / surplus table above does not take into account provision located outside of the district. Those residents living on the edge of Huntingdonshire may seek to use facilities outside of the district. Harper's in Wyboston attracts significant use from residents in and around the St Neots area, important when considering the projected growth within this location. Residents in the north of the district have easy access to Fitness Express on the outskirts of Peterborough.



Concerning council provision, each of the five leisure centres have 'Impressions Fitness Suites'. The Sports Facilities Standards Report states that all of the leisure centres are in 'reasonable condition, but none of them are fully DDA compliant', unsurprising given that the majority were built in the mid 1970's-early 1980's. Therefore, the council proposes to commit investment into these facilities to ensure that the quality of the facilities offered and the fabric of the buildings continue to meet users expectations given that increasing demand for fitness stations is set to continue.



Outdoor Grass Pitches, Courts and Greens.

Overview

Outdoor sports pitches, courts and greens provide a range of sporting opportunities for all ages. Usage levels are dependent upon the quality of the facility. This is particularly important for grass pitches where heavy usage can be to the detriment of the pitch quality.

The Council's Playing Pitch Strategy, undertaken in 2006 as part of the Planning Policy Guidance 17 assessment, identified all known provision as follows:

- 88 adult football pitches
- 54 junior football pitches
- 14 mini soccer pitches
- 43 cricket pitches
- 7 adult rugby pitches
- 7 junior rugby pitches
- 1 junior rugby league pitch
- 8 x 18 hole golf courses
- 2 x 6 lane athletics tracks

Is there sufficient provision within Huntingdonshire?

A detailed Playing Pitch Strategy has been completed by PMP Consultants in 2006. Within this, Sport England's Playing Pitch Methodology has been used to identify surplus / deficits in provision. However it should be noted that the overview of provision outlined above does not identify seasonal and temporal variations in pitch usage, an important factor when considering grass pitch provision. Furthermore, the analysis of provision is based upon the peak load of games to be played at a specific time during the week (i.e. am or pm on a day).

However, for some sports such as mini-soccer it may be possible to spread the games during the course of a Sunday morning and therefore not require the maximum number of pitches. The calculations take into account the capacity of pitches available. Improvements to pitch quality would increase the number of games a pitch is able to sustain (capacity) and would therefore reduce any shortfalls. (Refer to the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy for a detailed overview of the assessment process)

With regard to current outdoor pitch provision, key findings include:

- there is an oversupply of full size adult football pitches on the identified peak day across the district
- there is an undersupply of junior football pitches on the identified peak day and a large undersupply of mini-soccer pitches on the peak day
- there is a slight shortfall of cricket pitches on the identified peak day
- there is an undersupply of both adult rugby union pitches and junior rugby pitches on the identified peak day



Concerning future provision, as is the current situation, the most severe pitch shortage is of mini soccer pitches. In 2021, there will be a shortage of these pitches in all of the analysis areas in the district, whilst there will be a surplus of provision of adult football pitches.

Future Options:

The Local Investment Framework identifies the potential need for an additional 49.6 ha of outdoor grass pitches, courts and greens across the district, with slightly less than half of this being required within St Neots.

In terms of addressing this need, whilst the current quantity of pitches in Huntingdonshire secured for community use is high, there remain some pitches at school sites that are not dual use facilities at the present time and access to these facilities could provide a vital community resource, both in terms of access to open space (particularly in smaller settlements where there is limited provision) but more specifically through meeting the demand for pitch provision.

The Council should seek to secure section 106 contributions to improve the quality of existing outdoor playing fields or alternative sporting provision in the district and provide new ones where a shortfall has been identified. Developers cannot be asked to make up existing deficiencies, only to contribute to those caused by or exacerbated by their development. This is particularly relevant when considering the potential for new provision within the growth area of St Neots.

The quality of outdoor grass pitches, courts and greens vary across the district. Key sites to consider improving, based on poor quality identified within the Planning Policy Guidance 17 Assessment include:

Market Towns:	Stukeley Meadows Primary School (Huntingdon) Town Hall Pitch (Ramsey) Longsands College – St Neots
Key Centres:	Adam Lyons Recreation Field (Warboys) Fenstanton Sports Facility
Smaller Settlements:	Great Stukeley Sports Facility Southoe Football Pitch Broughton Sports Facility Colne Sports Facility Ashbeach – Ramsey St Marys Abbotsley Sports Pitch Hail Weston New Town Sports Area Thornhill Estates Archery Fields – Offords Yelling Cricket Club

4.4 Other Sports Facilities in Huntingdonshire

In addition to the headline facilities outlined in 4.3, there is a diverse range of additional sporting provision located within Huntingdonshire, including facilities such as horse riding schools and outdoor water sports facilities. Water sports in particular are important locally with a number of sites and clubs providing a good infrastructure of water sports venues, together with the River Ouse which flows through the district. In the quest to encourage physical activity, the potential contribution of water sports should not be underestimated.

5. Facility Prioritisation Work

Section 1.3 of this strategy outlined a number of key considerations that need to be addressed by this strategy, and in view of the information provided within sections 3 and 4, recommendations are now made to address the districts sporting requirements.

5.1 “Sports facilities that need to be preserved and maintained because of identified strategic need”

The following existing facilities and clubs have been identified as being strategically important to the district, and should therefore be maintained and enhanced:

St Ivo Leisure Centre (Community Leisure Centre)
St Ivo Outdoor Centre (Community Leisure Centre)
St Neots Leisure Centre (Community Leisure Centre)
Huntingdon Leisure Centre (Community Leisure Centre)
Ramsey Leisure Centre (Community Leisure Centre)
Sawtry Leisure Centre (Community Leisure Centre)
Hinchingsbrooke School (Specialist Sports College)
Huntingdon Gymnastics Club (Gymnastics)
Grafham Water Centre (Water sports)
Paxton Lakes Sailing Club (Sailing)
Hunts Sailing Club (Sailing)
Kimbolton School (Multi-sports)
Hemingford Sports Pavilion (Squash)
Huntingdon Tennis Club (Indoor Tennis)
St Neots Table Tennis Club (Table Tennis)
St Neots Town Football Club (Artificial Turf Pitch)
St Ives Rugby Club (Rugby Union)
St Neots Rugby Club (Rugby Union)
St Neots Rowing Club (Rowing)
Jubilee Park, Huntingdon (Football)
Somersham Town Football Club (Football)¹
Stilton FC (Football)¹
Sawtry Colts (Football)¹
Warboys Colts (Football)¹
Ramsey Town Colts (Football)¹
Little Paxton Colts (Football)¹
Godmanchester Town Cricket Club (Cricket)²
St Ives Town Cricket Club (Cricket)²

¹ Identified as a priority by the Huntingdonshire Football Association

² Identified as a priority by the Huntingdonshire Cricket Board



5.2 “Existing sports facilities that need to be repaired, upgraded/improved to meet identified strategic need”

Significant investment has been made to sports facilities across the district in recent years and more is planned, as shown within Appendix 7. It is particularly important that leisure centres are maintained to a high standard given that they provide a range of sporting facilities including swimming, indoor hall provision and fitness stations.

Appendix 7a provides a summary of condition survey spending at each of the five district council leisure centres for the period 2007 to 2011.

A further condition survey will be undertaken in 2009 and this will provide a clear strategic framework for the management and maintenance of leisure centre facilities until 2016, and this is important given the high level of satisfaction regarding leisure centre provision within the district.

Aside from leisure centres, it is important that the quality of all sports facilities are maintained to a suitable standard to ensure high quality, fit-for-purpose sporting opportunities are available within Huntingdonshire. Furthermore, all facilities should comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). As a result of this act, service providers have had to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people, such as providing extra help or making changes to the way they provide their services since October 1999. Service providers have also had to make reasonable adjustments to the physical features of their premises to overcome physical barriers since October 2004.

Another important consideration is that all existing sports facilities should seek to improve energy efficiency. Similarly, all new projects should aim to minimise energy usage and consider the potential impact on climate change. It is also important that all council maintained sites fully embrace the recommendations made within the Huntingdonshire District Council Environment Strategy.

Within Appendix 5, a number of priority sporting and leisure projects have been identified including improvements to a number of existing facilities, examples being the redevelopment of St Neots Table Tennis Club and Huntingdon Gymnastics Club.



5.3 “Any new sports facilities that may be required to meet identified strategic need, and proposed sites for where these facilities should be located”

Section 4 identified that there is a lack of fit-for-purpose sports halls within Huntingdonshire, particularly within Sawtry and Ramsey. Furthermore, there is the potential requirement for additional swimming pool provision, with St Neots identified as a possible location based on projected population growth.

Given the national agenda for encouraging participation in sport linked to positive health benefits, it is important that existing facilities are of a suitable standard to encourage participation. Linked to the health agenda, there is a need for more trim trails/active places/outdoor gyms, as shown in 5.4 - increasing this form of provision will hopefully encourage more 16 to 34 years to participate in sport, addressing the concerns raised in section 3.3.

One of the key aspects of the local consultation that has been conducted is that there is general satisfaction with the quantity of sporting provision within the district. However, a lack of provision and access to high quality training pitches and ancillary facilities was identified as key barriers to participation.

Therefore, new training facilities are required within the district to address this and changing facilities have been identified as priorities for football clubs such as Ramsey FC (particularly the colts site), Sawtry FC and Stilton FC. The Cambs Horizons Major Sports Facility Strategy (2006) and the Cambridgeshire Sports Facility Strategy (2008) also identify the need for a specialist minimum 2 lane indoor cricket facility to address the lack of adequate indoor cricket practice facilities. These key regional documents also highlight the need for an 8 court sports hall, as well as the need for a ‘dojo’ specialist martial arts facility.



5.4 “Sites where new facilities are required to meet identified strategic need”

Based on existing facility provision and utilising the database that was compiled to identify facilities across the district (highlighted in 4.1), settlements identified as priorities are summarised below:

Settlement	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
St Neots		-Trim Trails/Active Places/Outdoor Gyms	-Athletics Track (synthetic), Indoor Tennis
Huntingdon			
St Ives	- Synthetic Turf Pitch	- Trim Trails/Active Places/Outdoor Gyms	
Yaxley		- Outdoor Tennis Courts	- Trim Trails/Active Places/Outdoor Gyms
Godmanchester		- Outdoor Tennis Courts	- Trim Trails/Active Places/Outdoor Gyms
Ramsey (town)			- Football Grass Pitches (Adult, Junior, Mini)
Sawtry		- Football Grass Pitches (Adult, Junior, Mini) - Outdoor Cricket Pitch - Outdoor Tennis Court	- Trim Trails/Active Places/Outdoor Gyms
Brampton			- Trim Trails/Active Places/Outdoor Gyms - Tennis Courts
Warboys			
Little Paxton			- Outdoor / lawn bowls
Stilton			- Football Grass Pitches (Adult, Junior, Mini)

These settlements have been identified based on the fact that they are large enough to support additional provision, none currently exist, or the need for new facilities is identified within other strategies or through engagement with sports clubs and organisations. It should be noted that this information is continually being updated as knowledge of new provision emerges, and this impacts upon which settlements are prioritised for new facilities.



5.5 “A priority for future investment”

Appendix 5 outlines known sporting and leisure facilities projects within the district. Within this matrix, projects at Ramsey Football Club, Godmanchester Town Cricket Club, Huntingdon Gymnastics Club, St Neots Table Tennis Club, St Ives Golf Club, Paxton Lakes Sailing Club, St Neots Leisure Centre and St Ivo Outdoor Leisure Centre are identified as highest priority projects based on local strategic need, sustainability and current / potential participation.

A sports hierarchy has been developed to assist with the prioritisation of any future investment within the district. This hierarchy is summarised below and has been developed based on assessments made by Huntingdonshire District Council, with the priority level based on club infrastructure, current and potential participation levels, and facilities on offer (refer to Appendix 6 for a detailed overview).

Sporting types	Priority
Football, golf, swimming, cricket	1
Squash, tennis, athletics, gymnastics, rugby union, netball, rowing, sailing, martial arts	2
Hockey, bowls, basketball, canoeing, cycling, table tennis, equestrian, badminton	3
Angling, archery, boxing, fencing, judo, rugby league, volleyball	4
Triathlon	5

This shows that football, golf, swimming and cricket are the highest priority facilities within the district. Priority levels were calculated based on club infrastructure, current and potential participation levels and facilities available. Future investment should seek to address facilities where there is clear potential for improvement. For instance, there is scope for tennis to improve its overall priority classification by having greater levels of participation which can be encouraged through improved facilities and better access to some tennis courts. Accessibility is an important consideration within the district; in many instances it is not the quality of the provision that limits participation, instead it is a lack of accessibility that acts as the key barrier.

Future priorities should seek to address this issue of access. Another case-in-point of this is rugby union, with current participation levels good given the limited number of clubs in the district. However, there is scope for improving the working relationship between schools, clubs and the council to encourage even greater levels of accessibility to playing rugby. Therefore, future investment should not simply focus on providing new facilities, but looking at wider issues of access and capacity to increase participation.

Linked to participation, future investment also needs to contribute towards achieving the Local Area Agreement target of 1.5% growth in National Indicator 8 (as detailed within 3.2).



5.6 “Those facilities that need to be expanded or redeveloped to meet identified strategic need and a timetable for any proposed sports-developments”

Appendix 5 provides an overview of future sports and leisure projects within the district. This table provides details of projects that will help to improve existing facilities.

5.7 “Future opportunities for disinvestment in or redevelopment of existing sports facilities in Huntingdonshire, as a result of under-use and perceived lack of future demand or inappropriateness”

At present, community engagement suggests that satisfaction levels concerning sport and leisure facilities are high, and most of the available evidence is that there is demand for existing facilities. Furthermore, given that there is a deficit in provision of most headline facilities (section 4.3), it is important that these facilities are protected and enhanced. Therefore, demand should be continually assessed by monitoring of national, regional and local trends as well as participation levels.

6. Strategic Overview

The district's future sporting requirements have been set out in section 5. In support of this, there is a need to establish a set of clear policy recommendations to help guide long-term decisions that are made about sports facility provision.

6.1 Policy Recommendations

1a: Seek to maximise section 106 contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy tariff to enhance sports facilities across the district through the creation of a Supplementary Planning Document within the Local Development Framework to secure contributions from housing developers.

Outcome: Contributions from housing developers to maintain and enhance sport and recreation facilities.

Timetable: On-going.

1b: Seek to maximise external funding, grant aid or sponsorship contributions to enhance sports facilities in the district.

Outcome: Reduced pressure on limited funding sources.

Timetable: On-going.

2: Embed the local standards advocated within this strategy into key documents such as the Local Development Framework and Local Investment Framework.

Outcome: High quality provision through new or improved sports facilities, as a result of engaging with the planning framework to ensure that provision meets strategic need.

Timetable: Complete by June 2009.

3: Encourage the retention of all 'strategically important sports facilities' as highlighted in section 5.1.

Outcome: Maintain a mix of strategically important facilities.

Timetable: On-going.

4: Given the current level of provision and identified need there is a long-term need to retain existing sports halls within the district.

Outcome: Public access to sports halls with indoor facilities for a range of sports activities.

Timetable: On-going.

5: To have regard to the recommendations made within the Local Investment Framework as it relates to new areas of growth.

Outcome: Potential new provision to meet demands within growth areas.

Timetable: On-going.



6: Ensure all council Leisure Centres provide facilities that are fit-for-purpose.

Outcome: High quality leisure provision that continues to meet the needs of all users.

Timetable: On-going.

7: Encourage the retention of good quality outdoor sports facilities.

Outcome: High quality pitches that meets the needs of users.

Timetable: On-going.

8: Seek to encourage greater use of all existing sports facilities irrespective of whether they are school, local authority or privately run.

Outcome: Enhanced access to existing facilities.

Timetable: On-going.

9: Work with neighbouring Local Authorities to identify key facilities that are located outside of Huntingdonshire that benefit this district. Consult with neighbouring councils when planning to improve or provide new facilities.

Outcome: Enhanced understanding of facility provision within the county and surrounding boundaries, and increased sharing of information.

Timetable: On-going.

10: Work with other sports and leisure facility providers to seek improvements in sports provision and encourage participation in sport.

Outcome: A comprehensive range of sports facilities within the district.

Timetable: On-going.

11: The district council does not currently have any dedicated funding for sports applications. In considering requests for support, the council will critically evaluate the contribution of the club and the associated club facilities in light of this strategy and wider council objectives, within the resources available.

Outcome: High quality, accessible leisure provision.

Timetable: On-going.

This Strategy has been produced by Huntingdonshire District Council working in partnership with the following consultant:



jones plus limited⁺

Consultant: Alex Jones
e-mail: jonesplusltd@yahoo.co.uk

Appendix 1:

Sports Facilities Strategy Task Group:

Elected Members:

Executive Councillor for Leisure Centres - Cllr Doug Dew
Deputy Leader of the Council - Cllr Mike Simpson

Officers:

Leisure Development Manager - Jo Peadon
Lifestyle Manager – Chris Lloyd
Director of Environmental & Community Services – Malcolm Sharp (Chairman)
Leisure Centres General Manager - Simon Bell
Operations Service Development Manager - John Craig
Head of Environmental & Community Health - Dr Sue Lammin



Appendix 2:

Key Local Policy Documents

i. Huntingdonshire's Community Strategy

The Huntingdonshire Local Strategic Partnership (HLSP) includes a number of organisations and community representatives formed to improve the area. This partnership includes key partners from the public, private and voluntary sector, including:

- Huntingdonshire District Council
- NHS Cambridgeshire
- Cambridgeshire Community Service
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Cambridgeshire Police
- Local businesses
- Voluntary Sector Organisations

One of the major tasks undertaken by the HLSP was the development, implementation and on-going monitoring of a 'Community Strategy' – a key document that outlines how members of the HLSP will work in partnership to improve the quality of life in the area.

Huntingdonshire's Community Strategy's long term vision is based on what local people have told the council is important for them now and in the future, which is:

Huntingdonshire is a place where current and future generations have a good quality of life and can:

- Make the most of opportunities that come from living in a growing and developing district;
- Enjoy the benefits of continued economic success;
- Access suitable homes, jobs, services, shops, culture and leisure opportunities;
- Realise their full potential;
- Maintain the special character of our market towns, villages and countryside; and
- Live in an environment that is safe and protected from the effects of climate change and where valuable natural resources are used wisely.

To support this Huntingdonshire District Council will strive to:

- Make the most of the opportunities that come from growth by promoting the development of sustainable communities;
- Enable people to realise their full potential and have access to suitable homes, jobs and services;
- Work towards achieving a balance between social, economic and environmental needs;
- Maintain 'excellent' standards.

ii. Growing Success - Corporate Plan

Huntingdonshire District Council is responsible for promoting the economic, social and environmental well being of its communities, with the desired objective of achieving a good quality of life. This is achieved by delivering actions and principles established within the Community Strategy.



'Growing Success' is Huntingdonshire District Council's Corporate Plan and details how the Council will achieve its part of the Community Strategy. It is based on detailed community engagement so that the council can identify local communities' needs. 'Growing Success' identifies aims that the council will work towards, and details how these aims will be delivered.

iii. Local Development Framework (LDF)

This is one of the principle vehicles for achieving the corporate plan. It is a spatial plan that goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influences the nature of places and how they function. The LDF consists of a number of documents including a core strategy and development control policies which together set out a spatial strategy to manage the amount and direction of growth and policies to help guide and judge that development. It also includes a document identifying where allocations for development will occur.

iv. Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework (HLIF)

The Council commissioned a joint consultancy team, led by EDAW plc, to undertake an in-depth study into the physical and social infrastructure needs, including sports facilities, arising from the projected population growth within the district. The HLIF was produced to assist and inform the development of the Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework.

The HLIF divides the district into five key areas of Huntingdon, Yaxley, Ramsey, St Ives and St Neots, enabling for more detailed analysis of social infrastructure demand. For each area, priorities and demands are identified up until 2026 and the report provides information relating to leisure and recreation facilities including swimming pools, sports halls, indoor bowls halls, artificial turf pitches and outdoor sports facilities.

v. Huntingdonshire Cultural Strategy

This strategy sets out Huntingdonshire District Council's key targets and aspirations for culture between 2007 and 2010. It provides a distinctive vision for the development of cultural activities, facilities and services and focuses on improving the quality of life and wellbeing of Huntingdonshire's residents, workers and visitors through the provision and development of cultural activities, events and facilities and by helping to achieve other quality of life goals such as providing lifelong learning opportunities, improving health, stimulating economic development and helping to improve safety within local communities.



The strategy contains a comprehensive action plan with detailed outputs, outcomes and targets, which establishes a partnership-based approach to sustaining, developing and improving the cultural life of the district. The action plan will be monitored on a quarterly and annual basis. Huntingdonshire District Council has initiated this Strategy but its implementation requires the co-operation and partnership of many people, organisations and groups in the public, voluntary and commercial sectors. It has been developed as a strategy for the district and not a service plan for the council.

vi. Sports Facilities Standards Report (2008)

A need to develop and adopt local sports facility standards was identified through national best practice. As an aid to this, Strategic Leisure Limited undertook a comprehensive review of existing sports facility provision and identified future needs based on predicted population growth using Sport England's nationally recognised model the 'Sports Facility Calculator'. Their research focused on indoor sports facilities (swimming pools, sports halls, health and fitness facilities, indoor bowls) and artificial turf pitches, and this work has helped inform the development of this strategy.

vii. Open Space, Sport and Recreation Needs Assessment (2006)

The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Needs Assessment and Audit was undertaken by PMP consultants. The study covers informal open space, outdoor recreation facilities, children's play areas, allotments and outdoor sports pitch provision. The study was produced primarily to inform the planning process. Planning Policy Guidance 17 requires local authorities to carry out a needs assessment and audit of provision to inform the development of local standards for the provision of open space. The study identifies deficiencies and surpluses of provision and their spatial distribution.

Appendix 3: Community Engagement

Sport England - Active People Survey (2005 – 2008)

Sport England have undertaken two Active People Survey's since October 2005. The purpose of this survey was to identify the percentage of adults who are very or fairly satisfied with sports provision within their local area.

The first survey undertaken between October 2005 to October 2006, showed that 73.9% of people were very or fairly satisfied with sports provision. The repeat survey undertaken in 2007 – 2008 saw this figure rise slightly to 75.3%. When these results are compared with neighbouring authorities within Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire has the highest levels of satisfaction, as demonstrated below. Furthermore, this authority is the only one which had an increase in satisfaction when comparing the second survey with the initial consultation. These figures are also higher than the national average which was calculated as 67.5%.

Local Authority	Survey 1 (2005/2006)	Survey 2 (2007/2008)
Huntingdonshire	73.9%	75.3%
South Cambridgeshire	73.9%	72.7%
Cambridge	72.7%	70.7%
Peterborough UA	70.4%	64.3%
East Cambridgeshire	69.1%	64.0%
Fenland	65.1%	62.2%

Customer Satisfaction Survey 2006/07 (Best Value General Survey)

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) requires all local authorities to undertake customer satisfaction surveys every three years. Questionnaires were sent to 2,500 addresses within the district (49% return rate), and questions focused on a range of factors that impact on the residents of Huntingdonshire. With regard to sports and leisure facilities, 67% of respondents were satisfied with sports / leisure facilities and events, with only 10% dissatisfied. The level of satisfaction has increased since the previous consultation undertaken in 2003/04, with sports/leisure facilities now having a satisfaction rate which is six percentage points higher.

Concerning usage of the districts facilities, 37% of respondents stated that they used sports / leisure facilities at least once a month, but more than 1 in 5 people (22%) had never used sports / leisure facilities.

Those who use sports / leisure facilities were generally more satisfied than those who do not. To illustrate, those classed as non-users of the sports/leisure facilities and events (those who have never used them or last used them more than a year ago) had a satisfaction level of 50%, which is almost 30% lower than the satisfaction level among those who were users (77%).

When asked whether sports / leisure facilities had improved over the last three years, 17% of respondents stated that they had improved, whilst 8% stated that they had got worse.



When asked what needs improving locally, the second most popular answer in 2006/2007 was activities for teenagers (36% of the 1227 individuals who responded). The levels of residents who thought that this aspect was among those which most needed improving in 2006/7 were also similar to the levels in 2003/4, when 39% of respondents highlighted activities for teenagers.

Planning Policy Guidance 17 Assessment – undertaken by PMP Consultants (2006)

As the part of the district-wide audit, 5000 households were given the opportunity to comment on the overall provision, quality and accessibility of open space, sport and recreation facilities within Huntingdonshire. The questionnaire was distributed according to the total population living in each analysis area ensuring that geographically representative samples of residents living in the district were able to comment. In total, 565 postal surveys were returned and supporting this postal questionnaire was a number of community drop-in sessions.

The results from this showed that one in four people (25.7%) had visited outdoor sports facilities more than once a month, with an additional 24% visiting less than once a month. One in two people (50.3%) of respondents did not use outdoor sports facilities, indicating that there is a need to seek to encourage more people to actively participate in sport.

The main mode of transport of respondents using outdoor sports facilities was via car (63%). The most frequent travel time to the facility was between five and ten minutes (37%), followed by between 11 and 14 minutes (29%). This indicates that people are willing to travel to reach their chosen facility. This was influenced by the overall type of facility, with more people expecting to drive to synthetic pitches. This information is important to consider when planning additional facility provision that will be required to meet future increases in population within Huntingdonshire.

There are mixed views regarding the overall quantity of provision in Huntingdonshire, with similar proportions feeling the quantity of provision was about right to the proportion who felt provision was not enough. This is likely to be reflective of the vast array of facilities that the outdoor sports facilities typology covers. Further analysis of the household survey response suggested that perceived shortfalls particularly relate to the provision of tennis and synthetic pitches.

Cambridgeshire Quality of Life Survey 2006 - The Cambridgeshire Joint Consultation Partnership

Postal questionnaires were sent to a random sample of 7,500 households across the county, and 3206 responses were received. These responses were weighted based on population within each of Cambridgeshire's districts.

Within Huntingdonshire, a total of 671 completed questionnaires were returned (45% response rate). With regard to facility provision, when asked to assess how easy it is to get to a sports / leisure centre, more than 2 in 3 people (69%) of Huntingdonshire residents stated that it is very / fairly easy. This figure compared favourably to the county wide response of 64%.

Huntingdonshire Leisure Centre User Surveys

User Surveys were carried out at all five of the council's leisure centres to assess usage patterns and needs. When asked whether there are any facilities/services that could be improved, the most common answers were 'changing rooms/showers' and 'equipment'.



17.4% of users at Huntingdon Leisure Centre wanted improved changing facilities, more than twice as many people than at Sawtry Leisure Centre (8.6%), and Ramsey (6.5%).

24.2% of users at St Neots wanted improved equipment; with better gym facilities and a larger pool the most commonly cited factors. In contrast, only 3% wanted improved equipment at St Ives Indoor Leisure Centre.

Huntingdonshire District Council Sports Club Survey (2005)

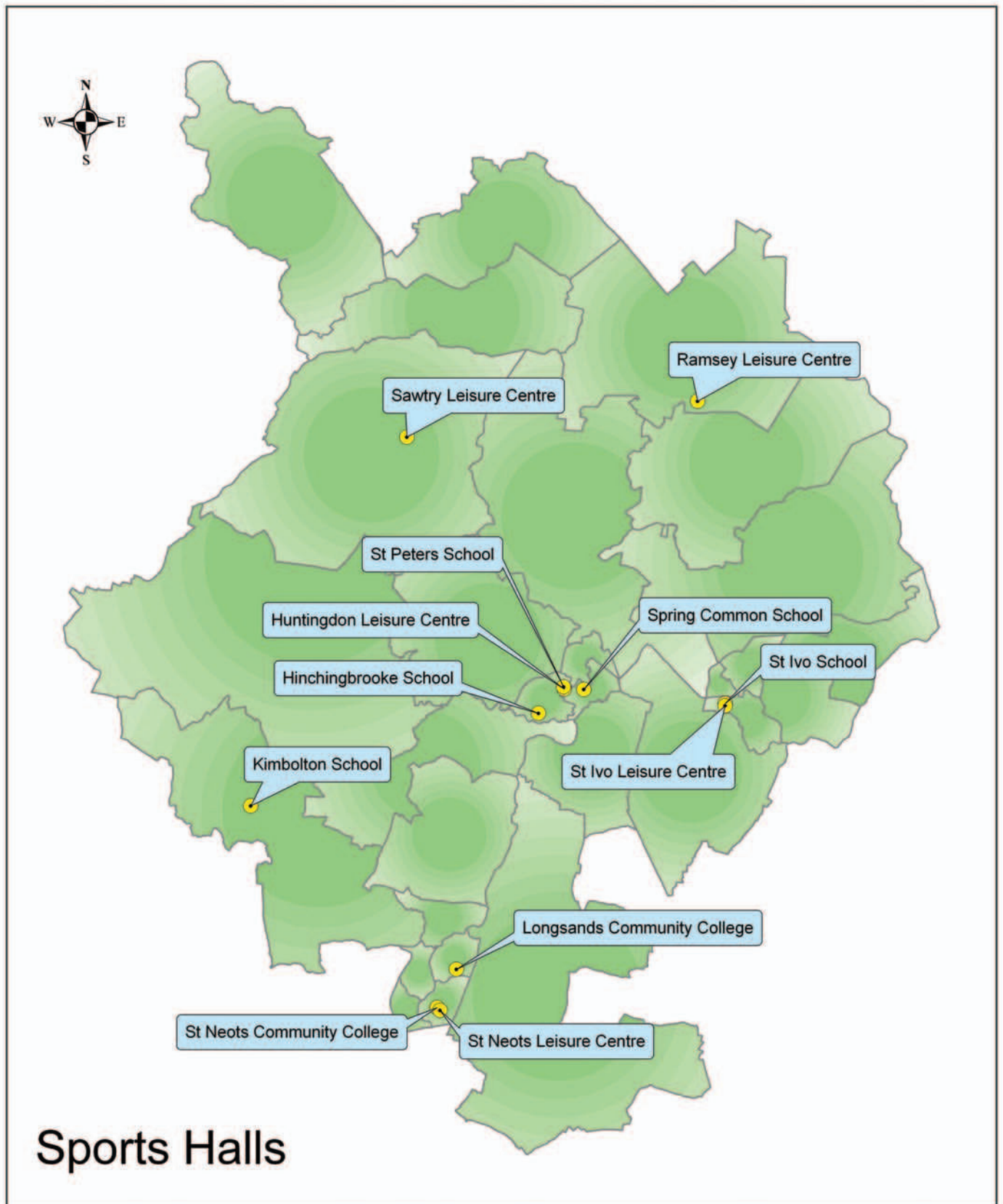
A sports club survey was undertaken by the council to all known football, cricket, rugby, hockey, tennis and bowls clubs during 2005, with a total of 62 clubs responding to this questionnaire.

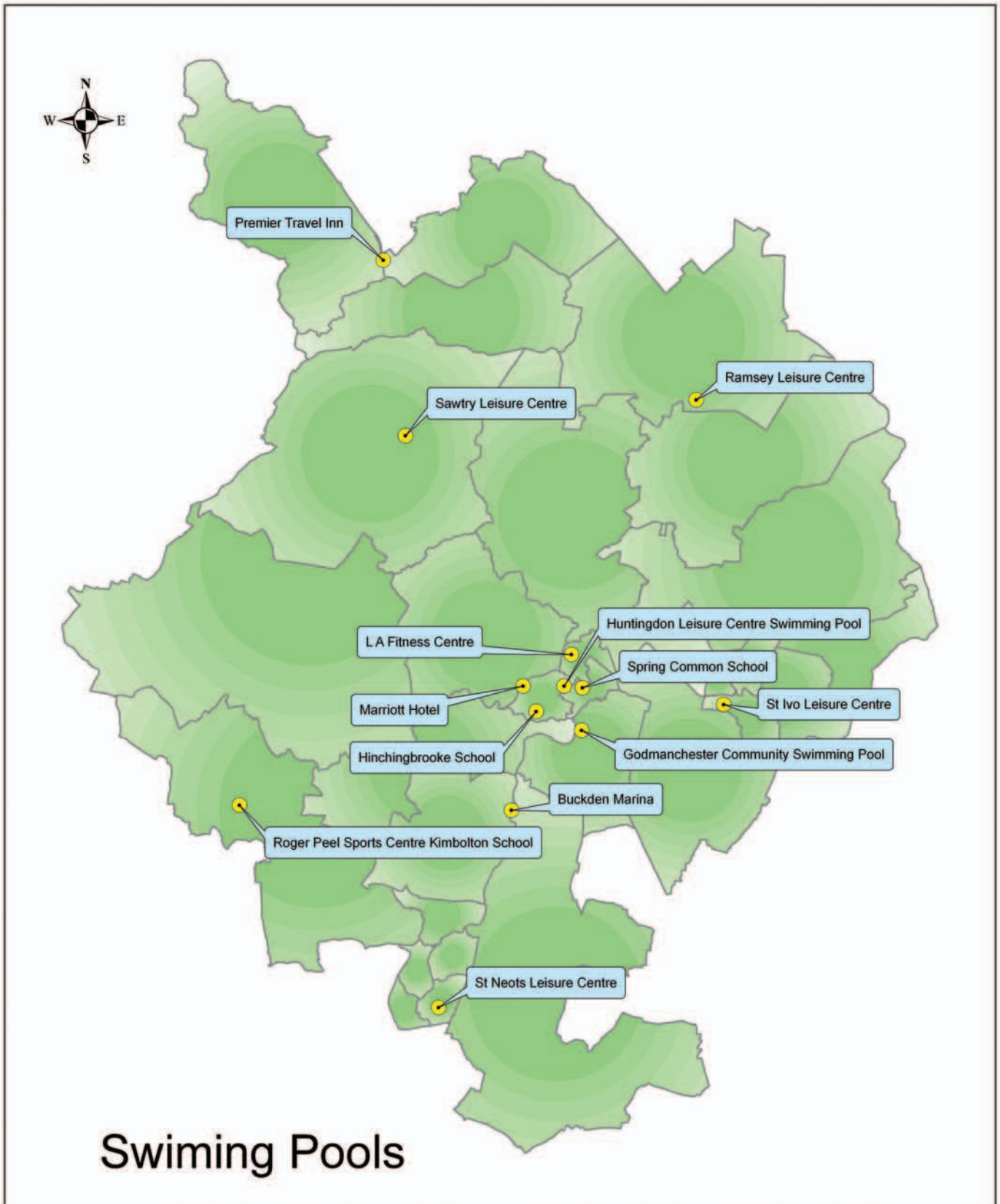
Responses indicated that 77% of the clubs felt that number and availability of pitches met the demand within the district. In line with this, 47.6% of clubs rated the availability of pitches in the district as very good or excellent. This related to an average score of 3.42 (out of 5) and a modal score of 4 (very good). 59.7% of clubs rated the accessibility of pitches as very good or excellent. This relates to an average score of 3.61 (out of 5) and a modal score of 4 (very good).

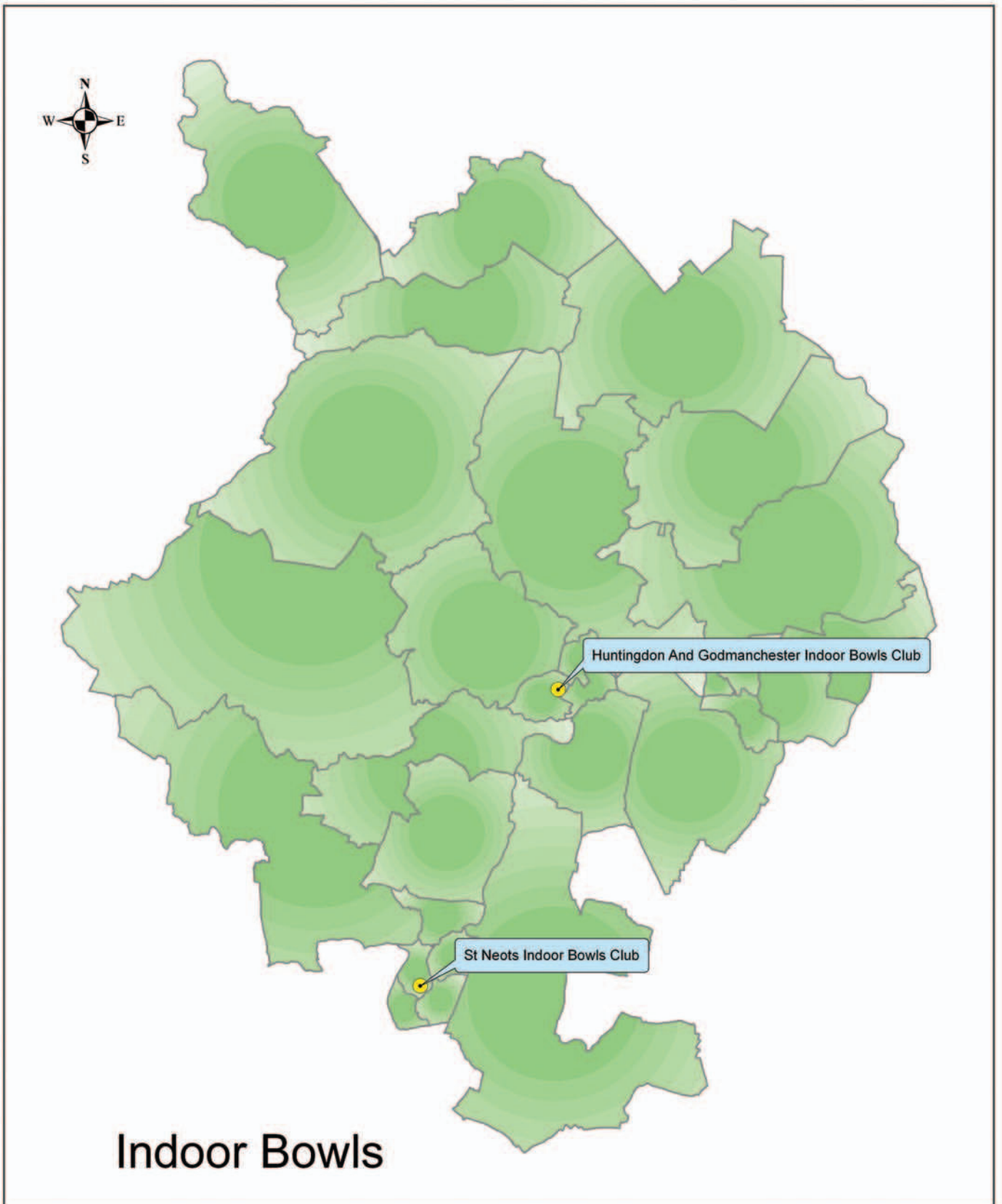
Sports clubs generally felt that the quality of pitch provision in the district was of a good standard. The only aspect that scored less than average was training area. Most clubs did not possess a training area and hence scored this as zero. Similar to the scores given for pitch quality factors, the scores given for ancillary facilities were good, with only cycle parking scoring below average. Consultation suggests that access to training facilities is a key issue, with only limited slots available at synthetic pitches for clubs wishing to train midweek. There are few floodlit training areas and teams struggle to access facilities between the peak hours of 6 and 9pm, particularly at the leisure centres where there is high demand for facilities.

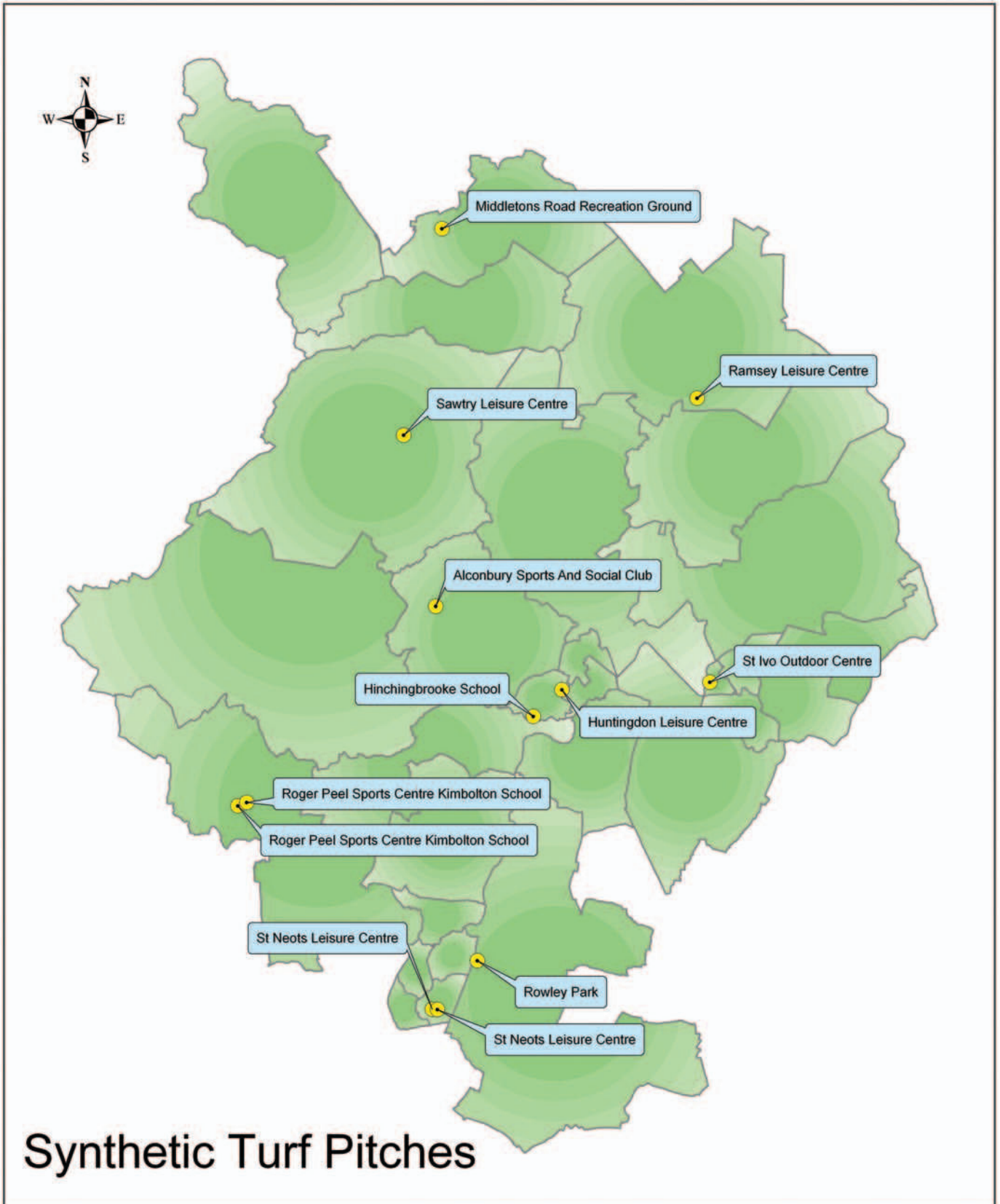


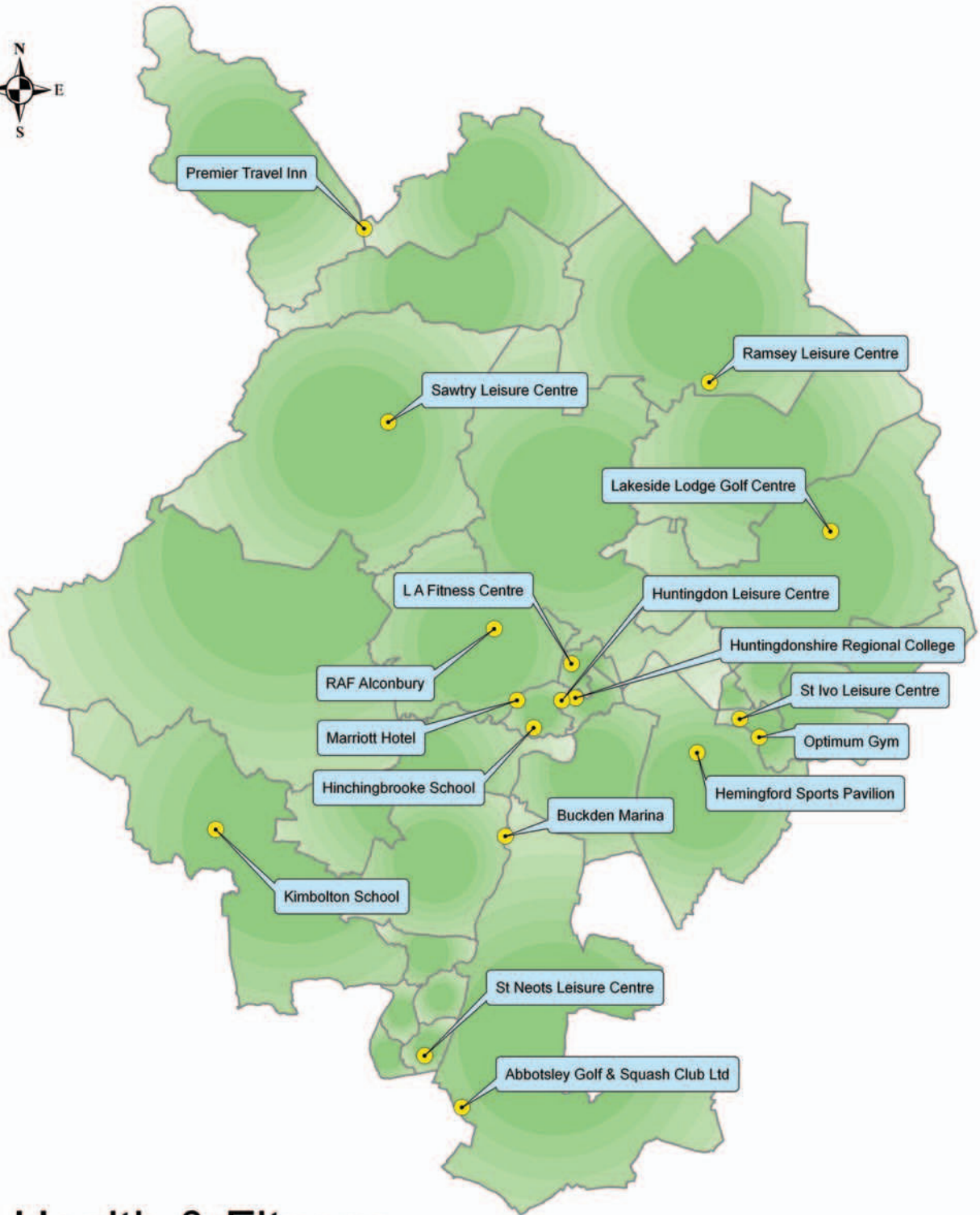
Appendix 4: Spatial distribution of headline facilities











Health & Fitness

Appendix 5: Future sports and leisure projects

Project	Type of Organisation	Project Summary	Total project cost (estimated)	Estimated Timescales	Sports Development	Ward	Indices of Deprivation	Local Strategic Need/ Priorities (3 - High/ 1 - Low)	Sustainability (3- High/ 1 - Low)	Participation (3 - High/ 1 - Low) Current & potential	Local Priority
Ramsey Football Club & Ramsey Youth Club	Sports Clubs	Clubhouse Changing facilities Ancillary Facilities May be one joint or two separate projects			Increase Participation Potential to become Community Club	Ramsey	Barriers to Housing and Services, Rural accessibility issues, Education, Skills & Training Domain, Health Deprivation & Disability Domain, Income Domain	3 colts 2 adults	2	3	High
Sawtry Football Club/Juniors	Sports Clubs	Field and Changing Rooms			Increase Participation Potential to become Community Club	Sawtry	Barriers to Housing and Services, Rural accessibility issues	2	2	3	Medium
Offords Recreation Field	Community	Develop recreation field Drainage, access, planting all required	£100,000		Community benefit as no alternative facility serving village	Gransden & the Offords	Barriers to Housing and Services, Rural accessibility issues	2	3	2	Medium
Godmanchester Town Cricket Club	Sports Clubs	Upgrade Clubhouse Install NTP Nets	£230,000		Good club with successful track record at adult and junior level	Godmanchester	Living Environment Domain	2	3	3	High
Stilton Football Club	Sports Clubs	New pitches 2 changing rooms / pavilion Drainage Muga Floodlighting	£400,000		Community benefit as no alternative facility serving village. A developing club in need of environmentally sustainable facilities - currently have to travel to Yaxley.	Stilton	None of note Rural accessibility issues	3	2	2	Medium

Project	Type of Organisation	Project Summary	Total project cost (estimated)	Estimated Timescales	Sports Development	Ward	Indices of Deprivation	Local Strategic Need/ Priorities (3 - High/ 1 - Low)	Sustainability (3 - High/ 1 - Low)	Participation (3 - High/ 1 - Low) Current & potential	Local Priority
Huntingdon Regional College	Further Education	Relocation to Hinchingbrooke with new sports facilities		2010/11	Potential to have significant effect. Defined educational need. Location - proximity to other facilities an issue			2	2	2	Medium
Huntingdon Gymnastics Club	Sports Clubs	Redevelopment of existing facilities	£4,000,000	2009/10	Centre of Excellence Track record of elite success. Will increase participation			3	2	3	High
St Neots Table Tennis Club	Sports Clubs	Redevelopment of existing facilities	£390,000	2009	Potential to be Centre of Excellence Unique facility Will increase participation			3	2	2	High
Warboys Sports Field, Forge Way	Combined	New changing facilities & ancillary facilities			Increase participation. Potential to become community club. Good site let down by poor changing and ancillary facilities. Existing high levels of participation.	Warboys & Bury	None of note Rural accessibility issues	3	1	2	Medium
Huntingdon Rugby Club	Sports Clubs	Possibly looking for dedicated home site			Club would like to have own home. Using other facilities in the town.			1	2	2	Low
Huntingdon Hockey Club	Sports Clubs	Require full size STP suitable for hockey within Huntingdon	£500,000		Club currently training and playing outside of home town.			2	2	2	Low
St Ives Golf Club	Sports Clubs	New 18 hole Golf Course being developed		2009/10		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	High

Project	Type of Organisation	Project Summary	Total project cost (estimated)	Estimated Timescales	Sports Development	Ward	Indices of Deprivation	Local Strategic Need/ Priorities (3 - High/ 1 - Low)	Sustainability (3- High/ 1 - Low)	Participation (3 - High/ 1 - Low) Current & potential	Local Priority
Eynesbury Rovers FC	Sports Clubs	Looking to relocate to new pitch site with additional training facilities and new club house/ancillary facilities	£1m-£3m		Club ability to progress through pyramid structure	Eynesbury		1	2	1	Low
Paxton Lakes Sailing Club	Sports Clubs	May be relocated due to expansion/developments at Paxton Lakes			Potential to be Centre of Excellence. Good links with Leisure Development.			3	2	2	High
St Neots Leisure Centre	Leisure Centre	Increase in provision - larger fitness studio, additional aerobics, health suite, soft play and fun zone	£1.6m	2009/10	Additional facilities - No depletion of existing stock	Eynesbury		2	3	3	High
St Ivo Leisure Centre (Outdoor)	Leisure Centre	New Synthetic Pitch (soccer only), additional changing rooms, car park, cycleway	£1.5m	2009/10	Potential for significant benefit	St Ives (West)		3	2	3	High
Huntingdon Leisure Centre	Leisure Centre	2 x 3G 5-a-side pitches, floodlit	£150,000	2008/09	Potential for significant benefit	Huntingdon (North)		1	3	2	Medium
Sawtry Cricket Club	Sports Clubs	Relocation to new site including sports facilities, clubhouse etc			Hunts CB think it would be key strategic site	Sawtry		2	2	2	Low
St Ivo Leisure Centre (indoor)	Leisure Centre	Conversion of Rifle Range, and likely improvements to reception, catering, creche, childrens product, and increased fitness provision.	£600,000	2010		St Ives (South)		1	2	2	Low
Ramsey Cricket Club	Sports Clubs	Install 2 or 4 lane indoor cricket net	£500,000-£1m			Ramsey		2	2	1	Low

Appendix 6: Sports Typology Prioritisation Matrix

Sport	Overall	Club Infrastructure	Participation		Facilities	Total	Information in support of the prioritisation
			Current (out of 5)	Potential (out of 5)			
	Priority Classification	(out of 5)	(out of 5)	(out of 5)	(out of 5)	(max 20)	
Football	1	5	4	5	4	18	County FA means resources better on the ground for ngb. Excellent supply of clubs with high participation levels. LFP and Hunts FA have development plans.
Golf	1	5	3	4	5	17	Excellent supply of facilities across the district. Some work on going with School Sports Partnership and Leisure Development holiday programmes & afterschool programmes. Private businesses and others require more support.
Swimming	1	4	4	5	4	17	5 district council swimming facilities plus Hinchingsbrooke, Godmanchester and Kimbolton. Good supply of clubs with good participation levels.
Cricket	1	5	4	4	4	17	County Cricket Association means resources better on the ground for ngb. Good supply of facilities and clubs with junior sections. Huntingdonshire Cricket Board has own development plan.
Squash	2	4	3	4	4	15	Hunts County Squash Club at Hemingford pride of place but other good facilities and clubs including Abbotsley, SIOC, St Neots etc.
Tennis	2	4	3	4	4	15	Very nearly a 1. Hunts tennis club with indoor facilities a good advantage for the district. Elite performance track record. Good supply of clubs across the district – facilities can be variable and access can be variable.

Sport	Overall	Club Infrastructure (out of 5)	Participation		Facilities (out of 5)	Total (max 20)	Information in support of the prioritisation
	Priority Classification		Current (out of 5)	Potential (out of 5)			
Athletics	2	4	3	4	3	14	St Ivo Outdoor Centre facilities & locally based club – Huntingdonshire Athletics Club & St Neots Riverside Runners
Gymnastics	2	4	3	4	3	14	Huntingdon Olympic Gym Club – ambitious club with approved development plans. Track record for elite athletes and waiting lists for grass roots participation.
Rugby Union	2	4	3	4	3	14	3 good clubs across the district although Huntingdon require a new home. High participation levels. Not higher because of ngb structure – scope for improving schools / clubs working relationship.
Netball	2	3	3	4	3	13	Lack of high quality facilities probably holds it back but good clubs in Hawks and Icons. New social club starting in St Neots. Excellent work going on in schools with High 5's.
Rowing	2	4	3	3	3	13	High participation levels at 3 clubs in the area – St Neots, St Ives & Huntingdon. St Neots track record at elite level & St Ives participation in Leisure Development holiday activity programme
Sailing	2	4	3	3	3	13	Good facilities at Grafham, Little Paxton & St Ives. Little Paxton SC participation in holiday programmes.
Martial Arts	2	4	3	4	2	13	Recognised governing body structure required.
Hockey	3	4	2	3	3	12	Adequate clubs and facilities across the district. Issue with Huntingdon and full size synthetic turf pitch access. Not as strong as some of the others but obvious potential.

Sport	Overall	Club Infrastructure (out of 5)	Participation		Facilities (out of 5)	Total (max 20)	Information in support of the prioritisation
	Priority Classification		Current (out of 5)	Potential (out of 5)			
Bowls	3	3	3	3	3	12	Good indoor facilities in the district and good supply of outdoor facilities. Need to work on junior development but a good asset to the district.
Basketball	3	2	2	4	3	11	Huntingdon Hawks seeking to expand - very keen and enthusiastic. Facilities may be a bit limited (only 1 double court venue) but there is untapped potential.
Canoeing	3	2	2	3	3	10	Good facilities across the district. Leisure Development holiday programmes with independent instructor and Huntingdon Canoe Club.
Cycling	3	2	2	4	2	10	New partnership building with British Cycling over holiday programmes. St Ives Cycling Club looking to expand junior programme.
Table Tennis	3	2	2	3	3	10	St Neots Table Tennis Club provides an opportunity for the sport in the area. Other facilities also host and there are a few clubs around. Potential but limited impact across the whole district.
Equestrian	3	2	2	2	3	9	There are facilities within the district but limited available information to rate higher
Badminton	3	2	2	3	2	9	
Angling	4	1	2	3	2	8	Angling – Countryside Services do some excellent work with angling for young people. Disabled platforms being added to the district. Good facilities at Grafham.
Archery	4	2	1	2	2	7	

Sport	Overall	Club Infrastructure (out of 5)	Participation		Facilities (out of 5)	Total (max 20)	Information in support of the prioritisation
	Priority Classification		Current (out of 5)	Potential (out of 5)			
Boxing	4	2	1	3	1	7	Boxing – couple of clubs in the district and always seem to be interest for more. Limited access to facilities though and always needing support.
Fencing	4	2	1	2	1	6	Fencing – Excellent Club at St Neots Leisure Centre. Good track record at competition level as well.
Judo	4	1	1	3	1	6	
Rugby League	4	1	1	2	2	6	1 club, no dedicated facility – limited potential but still fulfils a minority interest
Volleyball	4	1	1	2	2	6	
Triathlon	5	0	0	0	0	0	

Appendix 7: Sports Facilities Investment

a: Condition Survey Spending (2007- 2011)

Type of works	HLC	RLC	SLC	SNLC	SILC*	SIOC	Total
Exterior works	£207,185	£119,240	£64,625		£664,730	£17,050	£1,072,830
Sportshall	£4,400	£56,595	£22,990		£64,900		£148,885
Circulation routes and general areas	£108,735	£68,200	£8,360		£122,595	£233,860	£541,750
Heating, ventilation and mechanical services	£56,760	£56,100	£26,180		£258,115	£9,020	£406,175
Swimming pool including changing rooms	£37,950	£99,770	£46,970	£539,880	£111,760		£836,330
Astro/athletics track/ tennis courts	£99,000		£66,000	£156,200		£18,150	£339,350
SNLC dryside refurbishment				£339,240			£339,240
Total	£514,030	£399,905	£235,125	£1,035,320	£1,222,100	£278,080	£3,684,560

All figures correct at 30/01/2009

* Does not include Burgess Hall and Drama Studio

HLC	Huntingdon Leisure Centre
RLC	Ramsey Leisure Centre
SLC	Sawtry Leisure Centre
SNLC	St Neots Leisure Centre
SILC	St Ivo Leisure Centre
SIOC	St Ivo Outdoor Centre

b: Recent Investment Sites (>£50,000)

Site	Funding source	Completed	£ (Total cost)
Hinchingbrooke School (3G STP)	Football Foundation Partnership Funding Plus Revenue Grant	2009	600,000 140,000
Alconbury Sports & Social Club (STP)	Football Foundation	2009	280,000
St Neots Leisure Centre (Swimming Pool)	HDC	2008	500,000
St Neots Leisure Centre (Tennis/ Netball Courts)	HDC NOF Lottery	2008	330,000
Huntingdon Leisure Centre (Gym/Sports Hall)	HDC	2008/09 (Phased)	1,300,000
Priory Park, St Neots (Changing Provision)	Football Foundation	2008	500,000
Hemingford Sports Pavilion	Community Club Development Fund	2008	500,000
St Neots Town FC & Community Facilities (New Stadium & 3G STP)	Section 106	2008	
Ferndale, Yaxley (Changing Provision)	Football Foundation Section 106/PC	2008	514,000
Grafham Water Centre (Indoor Activity Hall)	HDC NOF Lottery	2007	300,000



c: Planned Investment Sites (>£50,000)

Site	Funding source	In Progress	£ (Total cost)
St Ivo Outdoor Centre (STP, Changing Provision, Leisure Room)	HDC/Section 106 Football Foundation		1,500,000
Jubilee Park, Huntingdon (Changing Provision / Stadia)	Football Foundation Partnership Funding Plus Revenue Grant		1,100,000 46,000
Hunts Olympic Gym (Extended Facilities)	HGF		500,000
St Neots Table Tennis Club	Community Club Development Fund		390,000
Grafham Water Centre (Extended Ancillary Facilities)	HGF		500,000

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
(SERVICE DELIVERY)**

7 APRIL 2009

CABINET

23 APRIL 2009

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS TO ST IVES TOWN CENTRE
(Report by Head of Environmental Management,)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 St Ives Town Centre has been identified as being an area that required improvements due to its importance as a Town Centre area. There is a MTP scheme for £1080k in the programme to carry out these works between 2008 and 2010. A previous phase carried out improvements to the Bridge Street area. Phase 2 of the work is looking to improvements in the Market Hill area of the town centre. The whole purpose of the scheme is to ensure the continued economic prosperity of the town for future years by keeping it at a high standard of appearance and increasing footfall and reducing town centre traffic.
- 1.2 This report outlines the progress to date and the process required to take the scheme forward to construction

2. SUPPORTING/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 A previous phase was carried out in 2001 following wide consultation in the Bridge Street / Crown Street area.
- 2.2 As part of the previous consultation, it was agreed that the second phase would be the Market Hill area. The district council supported this by including future monies in the capital programme.
- 2.3 Following the guidelines set by Cabinet, an Advisory Group has been set up for the scheme. This includes the local District and County Councillors, Town Council representatives, Scrutiny representatives and representatives from local consultative groups such as the Town Centre Initiative, Access Group and Civic Society. Meetings have been held since May 2006 with these groups to discuss the principle of the scheme and, more recently, detail of the design.

3. MARKET HILL ISSUES AND PROPOSALS

- 3.1 Market Hill, a large market square, regularly hosts a number of markets, including a charter market every Monday which takes over most of the space with stalls. There are safety issues with the present layout which could be improved with a new market layout.
- 3.2 Currently, the pavements are narrow for a town centre and, with stalls erected on them, this causes restrictions to pedestrian flow. Traffic surveys have shown that vehicles will often drive around market place looking for spaces rather than go direct to the off street car parks, where there is extensive parking provision.
- 3.3 The present layout of Market Hill has limited clear public open space and favours vehicles over pedestrians. Studies of semi-pedestrianisation of town centres have shown that this increase in pedestrian rights benefits both the economic vitality of towns and enhances the environment for shoppers. A St Ives specific study of the economy has not been carried out to assess the effect on varying degrees of pedestrianisation of the town. Several options were developed under the framework of the Advisory Groups over the last two years. These showed a range of options from

slight reduction in parking provision, to minimum parking with maximum pedestrianisation. Total pedestrianisation is not possible as there is one road and several accesses off the square which need to be kept available at all times.

3.4 The Advisory group agreed in autumn 2008 to take 3 options out to consultation. These options were;

Option1: a semi-pedestrianised scheme with the creation of a defined public open space outside three of the towns most notable buildings – the Free Church, Golden Lion and the Town Hall. A combination of Blue Badge / Public parking / loading is provided at the eastern end of the town centre. The scheme also proposed to move the War Memorial and Cromwell Statue into more prominent places in the open spaces.

Option 2: this has a similar road layout to Option 1 but provides extra parking for Blue Badge holders and delivery areas at the west end of Market Hill.

Option 3 is not to carry out any road layout changes, but just to enhance the existing street furniture, signage and surfacing.

3.5 The plans included in Annex A show the three options that went out for consultation.

4. BRIDGE STREET PROPOSALS

4.1 The consultation also considered the requirement for removal of loading bays from Bridge Street to allow for street cafes to be allowed. (Plan in Annex B) This consultation was required by the County council following a petition they received for Street cafes in Bridge Street. The following options were considered:-

- (1) to leave the order as it is at present;
- (2) to restrict the use of one loading bay at the south end of the street for a maximum of 8 hours to allow for street cafes
- (3) to restrict all loading bays for a maximum of 8 hours and move the disabled bay from the south end to the north end;

5. RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

5.1 The evaluation of the 638 returned questionnaires revealed the following:.

Those in favour of improvements to Market Hill 68%

The results for preference of the options are:

In favour of Option 1	36%
In favour of Option 2	13%
In favour of Option 3	34%
In favour of none of the proposals	14%

5.2 For Bridge Street:

In favour of no change	42%
In favour of reductions	53%
Of these In favour of removing 1 loading bay	59%
In favour of removing all loading bays	42%

5.3 Full results of the survey are given in Annex C.

5.4 Written responses were also received from formal consultees. These are included Annex D

- 5.5 There were three alternative schemes submitted by groups / individuals which gave variations on the original options.

6 INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

- 6.1 There is a majority of 68% in favour of improvements to the Market Hill.

The most favoured was Option 1 (36%) which will create the public square but by only a small majority. The next most popular was Option 3 (34%) – to do minimum.

The significant objection to those choosing Option 3 in particular was that they did not want the war memorial or Cromwell statue moved. However when you consider those that want Option 1, then 88% of them are happy for the memorials to be moved.

The Town Council at their planning committee in December did not support any of the options, but modified their response at their meeting of 17th March 2009.

SITI supported Option 1

Civic Society supported Option 3

Bridge Street – 53% support reduction of loading bays, with the majority of these for just one bay being removed.

- 6.2 Two meetings of the Advisory group have been held since the consultation closed, firstly to inform the groups of the results of the consultation, and then to receive their comments back on the results. These comments are included in Annex D. After consideration of the results, most groups agree that improvements are needed to the town centre but could not yet agree to a preferred layout. They have been made aware that any option needs to meet this Council's requirement to aid economic growth, the main requisite is to reduce car movements and increase pedestrianisation, and County's highways design requirements. The majority of the groups recommended that the scheme be delayed from its planned start date of January 2010 by 12 months because of the current economic climate. It is also clear that as a result of the effective nature of the consultation that there was a consensus that a design could be agreed if time was available for further considerations of economic and design aspects. Concerns were also expressed about a 2010 start due to the Towns 800 year celebrations that would be held throughout the town centre.
- 6.4 The results of the Bridge Street consultation needs to be passed to the County Council for them to take forward any amendments to the parking order regarding the loading bays and the disabled bays.

7. PROGRESSION OF THE SCHEME

- 7.1 Monies are presently available in the MTP for construction in 2009/10 and 2010/11.
- 7.2 There is no clear majority for any of the three options, with a close split existing between options 1 and 3. It should be possible to produce a compromise scheme which meets some of the concerns raised, but meets the base criteria for the scheme. This would be taken forward under the guidance of the Advisory Group, and then with the approval of the Area Joint Committee, be consulted on regarding the required traffic regulations.
- 7.3 None of the partners have yet committed joint funding to this scheme, although the Town Council have indicated that they will support the scheme financially, but have not set a budget for this yet.
- 7.4 Because of delays that been experienced with the results of the consultation, there is a now a time constraint in actually starting on site in January 2010, as there will be a problem with meeting the Area Joint Committee cycle. Also under the present economic climate and the town's 800 year celebrations, it is considered by most parties that it is not the best time to carry out work in the town centre, and that the work should be deferred by 12 months.

- 7.5 There are several options that the Cabinet need to consider:
- 1 to stop all the design work on the scheme and not carry out any work in St Ives Town Centre.
 - 2 to carry out minimum improvements to the street furniture, signage and access requirements on the pavements. Pavement and road surface repairs would be the responsibility of the County Council.
 - 3 to choose the most favoured option, No 1, and proceed to the timescales previously set
 - 4 to defer the project by 12 months (or other as yet unspecified period) to allow time for the production of a scheme which meets the majority of the requirements of the interested parties.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 St Ives town centre, like many other towns, is experiencing challenges in the retail sector. It is considered that investment in the town central area is needed to ensure its continued economic viability and also to improve the environment to make it a better shopping experience. In this Council's opinion, this requires reducing the traffic flows in the town centre and increasing the pedestrianised areas.
- 8.2 The results of the consultation show that a majority would like to see improvements to the area and that Option 1 is just the favoured option but not with any great majority. There have been objections for some areas of the business community and local residents to changes because of the economic climate and their perception that maximum car parking is required in the centre of the town.
- 8.3 Guidance is needed as to whether the scheme is taken forward, and if it is, the timescale that will now be adopted. These options are listed in para 7.5 above.

9. RECOMMENDATION

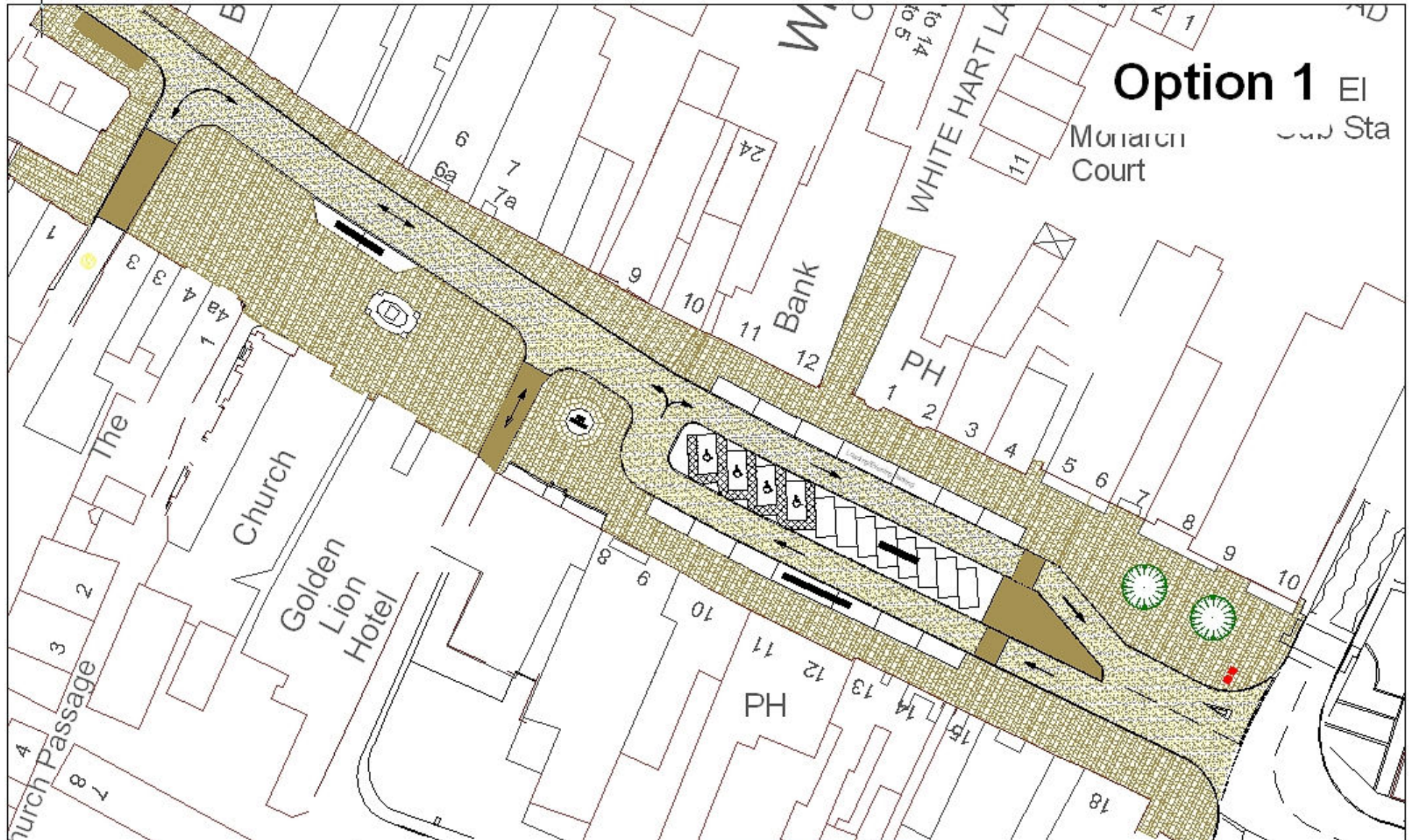
- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet–
- (1) note the progress of the scheme and the results of the consultation to date
 - (2) give guidance as to which of the options listed in para. 7.5 should be adopted to take the scheme forward.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Environmental Management Division files
Consultation documents and results

Contact Officer: Dr P Jose, Head of Environmental Management
☎ 01480 388332
C Allen – Project and Assets Manager
☎ 01480 388380

ANNEX A - MARKET HILL PROPOSALS - OPTION 1

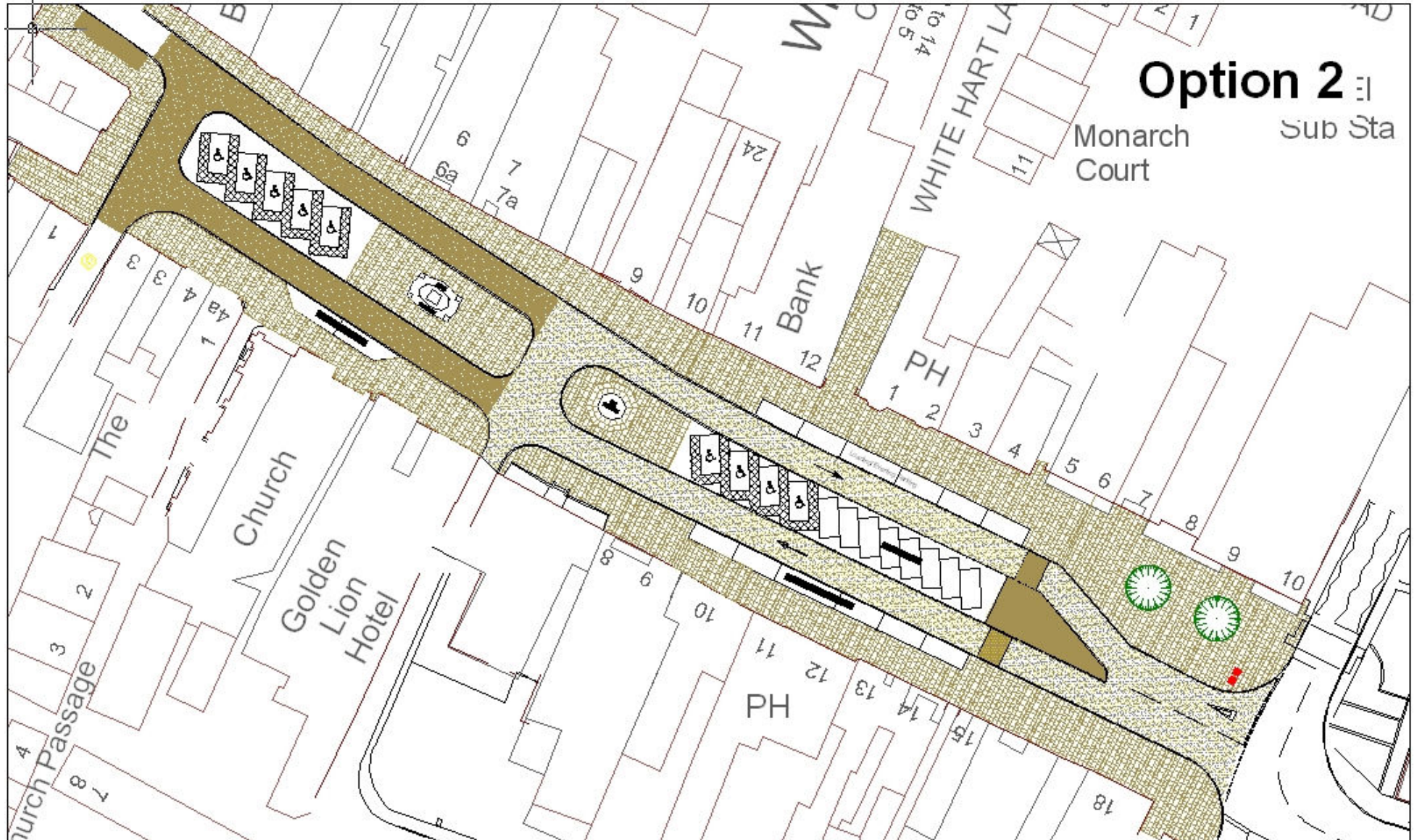


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<p>JOB Environmental Improvements Market Hill St. Ives</p>	<p>TITLE Proposed Layout</p>	 <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST. MARY'S STREET HUNTINGDON, CAMBS. PE18 6TN TELEPHONE: HUNTINGDON (01480) 388388</p>	<p>Chris Allen, B.Sc., CEng, Dip. RSA Project Manager Directorate of Operational Services</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>SCALE</td> <td>nts</td> <td>DATE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DRAWN BY</td> <td colspan="2">GWW</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DRG. No.</td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> </table>	SCALE	nts	DATE	DRAWN BY	GWW		DRG. No.		
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ANNEX A - MARKET HILL PROPOSALS - OPTION 2



Option 2

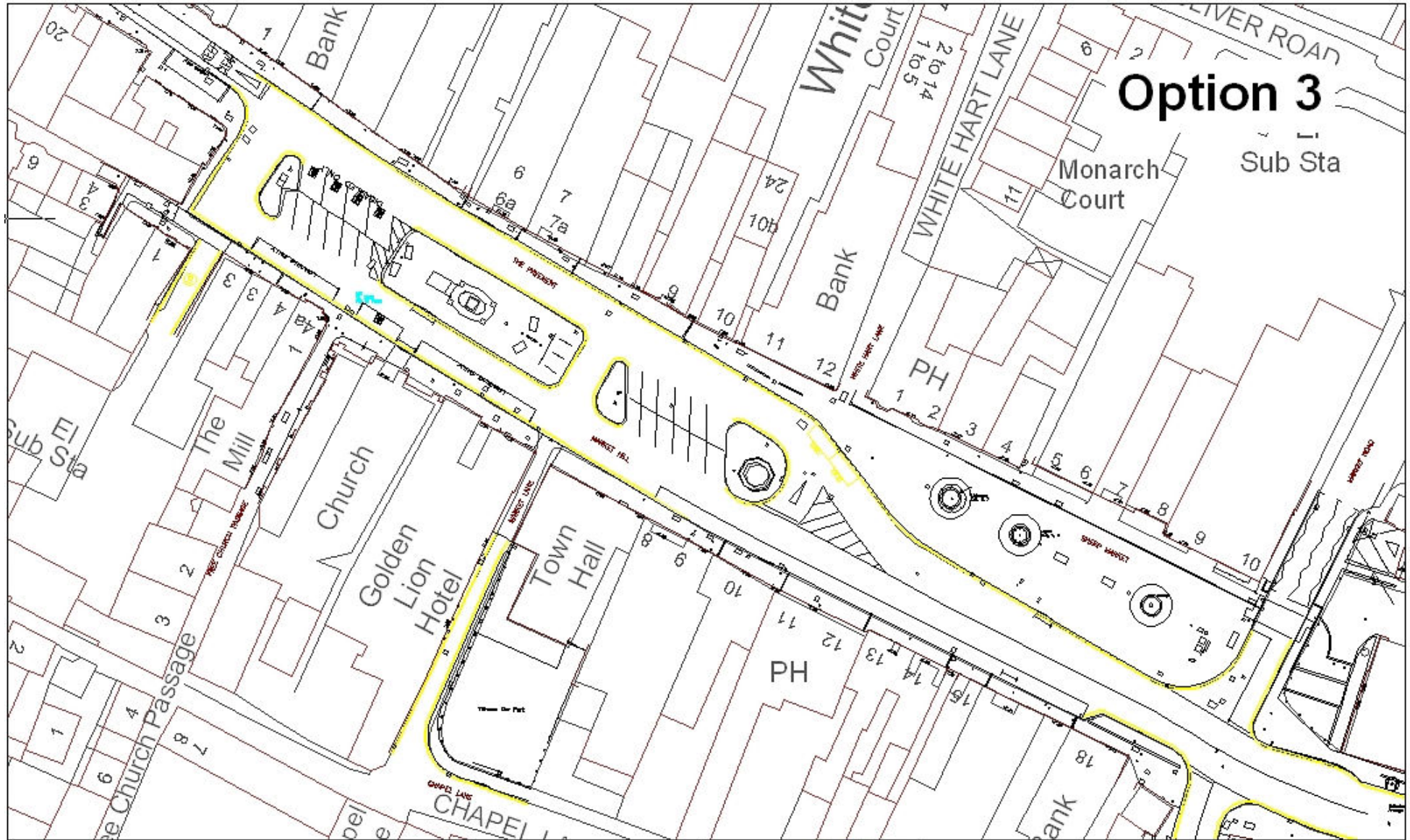
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<p>JOB Environmental Improvements Market Hill St.Ives</p>	<p>TITLE Proposed Layout</p>	 <p>PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST. MARY'S STREET HUNTINGDON, CAMBS. PE18 6TN TELEPHONE: HUNTINGDON (01480) 388388</p>	<p>Chris Allen, B.Sc., C.Eng, Dip. RSA Project Manager Directorate of Operational Services</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>SCALE nts</td> <td>DATE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DRAWN BY GW</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">DRG. No.</td> </tr> </table>	SCALE nts	DATE	DRAWN BY GW		DRG. No.	
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ANNEX A - MARKET HILL PROPOSALS - OPTION 3

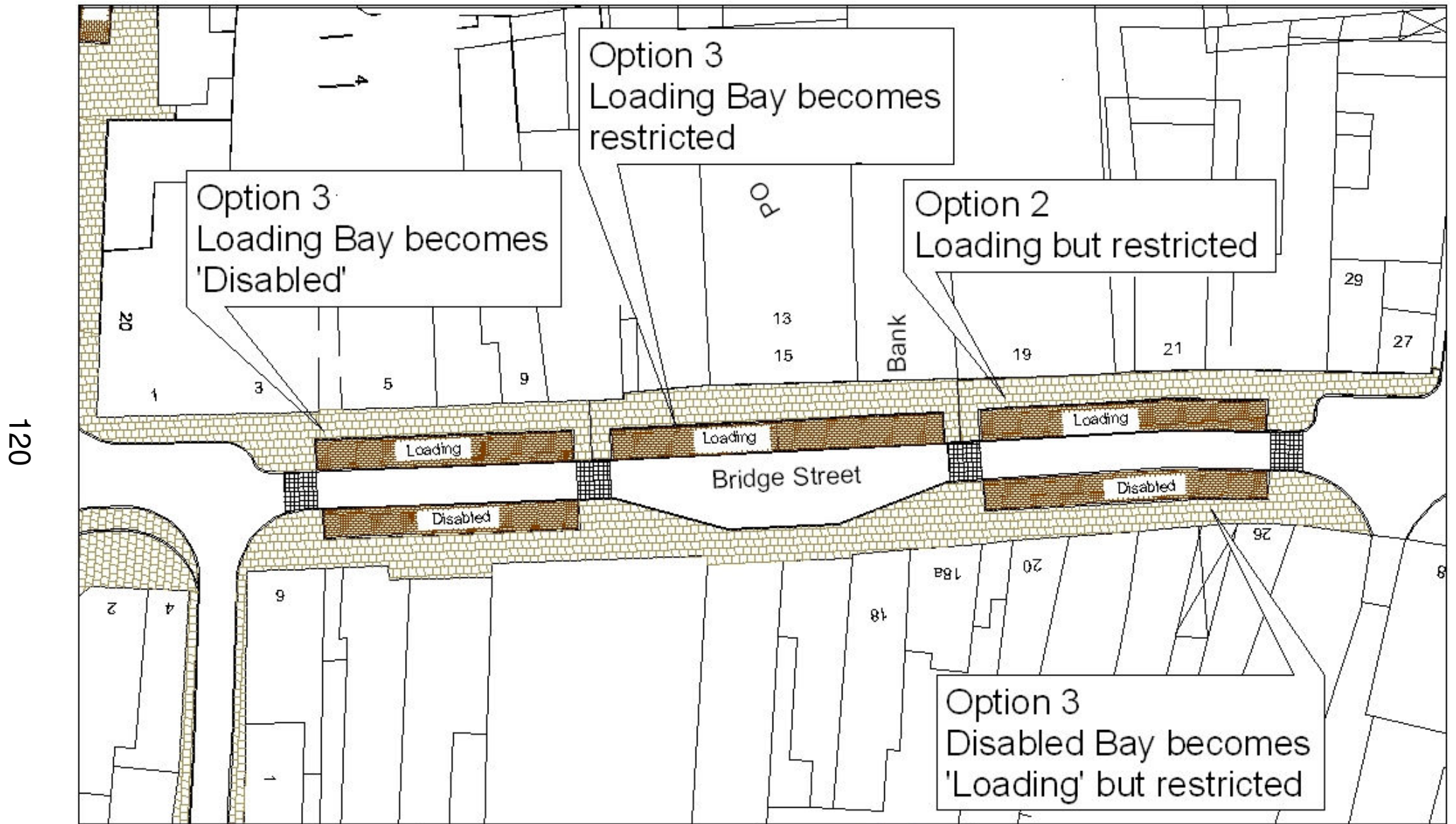


Option 3
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<p>JOB Environmental Improvements Market Hill St.Ives</p>	<p>TITLE Existing Layout</p>	 <p>PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST.MARY'S STREET HUNTINGDON, CAMBS. PE18 8TN TELEPHONE: HUNTINGDON (01455) 382388</p>	<p>Chris Allen, B.Sc., CEng, Dip. RSA Project and Assets Manager Environmental and Community Services</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>SCALE</td> <td>nts</td> <td>DATE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DRAWN BY</td> <td colspan="2">GWJ</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DRG. No.</td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> </table>	SCALE	nts	DATE	DRAWN BY	GWJ		DRG. No.		
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ANNEX B – BRIDGE STREET PROPOSALS



<p>JOB Bridge Street</p>	<p>TITLE Proposed Layout</p>	 <p>PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST. MARY'S STREET HUNTINGDON, CAMBS. PE18 6TN TELEPHONE: HUNTINGDON: (01455) 388388</p>	<p>Chris Allen, B.Sc., C.Eng. Dip. RSA Project Manager Directorate of Operational Services</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>SCALE nts</td> <td>DATE May 07</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">DRAWN BY GW</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">DRG. No.</td> </tr> </table>	SCALE nts	DATE May 07	DRAWN BY GW		DRG. No.	
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Annex C

Public Consultation – Questionnaire Responses

In total there were 638 responses

Question 1 – *Would you support further improvements in Market Hill ?*

Yes (431) – 68%

No (182) – 29%

Question 2 – *Would you like wider pavements ?*

Yes (385) – 60%

No (234) – 37%

Question 3 – *Would you agree that a public open space would enhance the Market Hill area ?*

Yes (332) – 52%

No (278) – 44%

Question 4 – *Do you feel an improved Market stall layout is required ?*

Yes (344) – 54%

No (265) – 42%

Question 5 – *Do you agree that both should be moved ?*

War Memorial **Yes (248) – 39%**

No (358) – 56%

Cromwell Statue **Yes (239) – 37%**

No (363) – 57%

Question 6 – *Which of the proposed options do you prefer ?*

Option 1 (227) – **36%**

Option 2 (84) – **13%**

Option 3 (218) – **34%**

None (93) – **14%**

Question 7 – *Do you think the balance between on-street parking is appropriate in:*

Option 1 – **Yes (194) 30%**

No (181) 28%

Option 2 – **Yes (84) 13%**

No (168) 26%

Option 3 – **Yes (228) 36%**

No (131) 21%

Question 8 – *Would you support such reductions in Bridge Street*

Yes (337) – 53%

No (266) – 42%

Of the ones that said yes

Remove one loading bay (199) **59%**

Remove all loading bays (103) **31%**

Annex D – Correspondence for Advisory group representatives



St. Ives → ACCESS GROUP

20, Willow Green
Needingworth
Cambs
PE27 4SW
Tel 01480 467091
Email sue.ferreira@virgin.net

15th March 2009.

Dr P José
Head of Environmental Management
Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House

SIAG's comments on the St Ives Environmental Improvements

We feel the questionnaire was difficult to answer impartially. For example: if the response to changing of loading bays had been to have no loading bays would this really have happened? The same applies to Blue Badge Parking Bays. There seems little point in asking these questions when their provision is a necessity

Having said that, we feel it is time to move on in a positive and constructive way. We have submitted our own plan which encapsulates our views.

- Cromwell and the War Memorial should not be moved.
- There should be adequate Blue Badge Parking bearing in mind the current designated bays and the number of Badge Holders who currently have to park on yellow lines.
- There should be provision for loading and space for wedding and funeral cars to access the Free Church.
- All street furniture should be kept to a minimum though extra seating would be welcome. Do we need two phone boxes?
- The pavements need to be maintained to a high standard with regular dropped kerbs flush with the road.
- The open space outside Boots is well placed for sunshine. Why do we need another space?
- Extending and rationalising the whole central island to include Cromwell, the War Memorial and all the central parking spaces, as suggested in our plan, seems to us a more cost-effective solution.

We do not believe there is any reason to delay the work once the plan is agreed upon. There is an argument for starting it at a time when the shops are quiet. Once the economy improves the traders will be glad of the improvements. There is probably no perfect time for everyone but if the work is completed as quickly as possible the disruption could be minimised. If there is any question of delaying the start of the scheme it would be imperative that the financing be ring fenced to protect it for use only on this project.

The recent Town Centre Survey suggests that St Ives is a currently a vibrant and popular place to shop. Let us not destroy that.

Sue Ferreira

13 March 2009

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS TO ST. IVES TOWN CENTRE.

We have now had the opportunity to go through Chris Allen's recent report, consider the figures and formulate some ideas. The report asks groups to feed back their views at the meeting on 17 March; this letter is, in effect, a pre-view of what we will be suggesting next Tuesday.

Of those who replied to the questionnaire (not very many really) 68% supported improvements to Market Hill. The question was a bit like asking "Would you like more pay?"; almost certain to elicit a 'Yes' answer. The problems, in our view, start to arise with Questions 5 and 6. The numbers in your survey are significantly against moving the war memorial and Cromwell statue and without movement Options 1 and 2 lose a lot of their effect.

In gauging electors' support, we believe we could put Options 1 and 2 together and Options 3 and 'None of the Above' together. Options 1 and 2 both go for major structural change in the same area, with variations; Option 3 proposes almost no change and is very nearly 'do nothing'. In your survey the total numbers approving Options 1 or 2 was 311; the total numbers opting for Option 3 or None was also 311. It therefore appears that there is no significant majority support for Options 1 or 2 and that we should be looking at the whole scheme afresh.

The Civic Society therefore proposes deferring the project by a year provided the time gained is used for a major re-think of the scheme involving, *inter alia*, no movement of the war memorial or Cromwell statue.

In any revised scheme the following should be considered:

- a. The balance between the needs of market traders and static retailers.
- b. To provide wider pavements where possible.
- c. Extend pedestrian (public) space round the war memorial
- d. Provide a turning circle for large delivery lorries at the western end of Market Hill.
- e. Parking balance.
- f. Make more use of the 'sunny' area of Market Hill.
- g. To leave the town centre doing what it does best: to be an unchanged, un-made-over market town centre with a street market that straggles from one end to the other.

The Society would also suggest the use of two pedestrian crossings at the war memorial, not only as crossings but also for traffic calming in Market Hill.

Regarding Bridge Street, you will be aware from previous correspondence that for several years now the Civic Society's policy on pavement cafes has been to support and encourage any traders who wish to risk the vagaries of the British climate. If Bridge Street is to be made available for pavement cafes the sensible approach would appear to be to eliminate the loading and parking bays south of the entrance to Star Court (Noble's Yard) and south of Bull Lane, thus leaving the south end of Bridge Street available for pavement cafes.

(PHW ALLAN)
Secretary
Civic Society of St. Ives



Consultation on the St Ives Town Centre Environmental Improvements.

We have carefully considered at our board meetings the three proposals brought forward to us by Huntingdonshire District Council.

Having been involved in the consultation group since its inception we believe we have positively contributed towards it with regards to this scheme.

The second part of the consultation was regarding the proposed alterations to Bridge Street. We have been instrumental in bringing these forward originally as a petition called for by a number of our members.

Our choice of scheme to support at the time of the consultation was firmly for Option 1 and continues to be so.

SITI has considered the results of the public consultation extensively and would wish to make the following observations and comments.

Whilst our preferred option, Option 1, received the highest overall level of support we do not consider this high enough to emerge as a favorite from the consultation results.

There was a clear preference for at least something to be done to Market Hill and Bridge Street.

Option 2, in our opinion, fails to gain a great level of support.

We still feel that Option 3 fails to provide any clear benefits to the town. However, a large number of people who supported this option were of the opinion that the statue of Oliver Cromwell or the Cross of Sacrifice should not be moved. In fact this is a highly emotive issue in the town.

Having considered the report in great detail at a special meeting our considered response is that we still favour Option 1 but that consideration should be given to amending this to leave the memorials in situ.

We still fully support the Bridge Street proposals and hope that this implemented in the very near future.

We therefore strongly recommend that the present program be deferred to enable the District Council to bring forward these alternatives at a suitable time.

ST IVES TOWN COUNCIL

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TWINNED WITH STADTALLENDORF



Alison Melnyczuk
TOWN CLERK

23 February 2009

Dr Paul José
Head of Environmental Management
Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House

By Email

Dear Paul

ST IVES ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

As you are aware following our recent conversation the Town Council was proposing to host a meeting of various group in the town that have a direct interest in the Environment Improvement Scheme. The purpose of the meeting was to try and identify common ground between the groups that could be presented to HDC at the next Liaison Meeting on 17th March. On Saturday 7 March that meeting took place and present were representatives from The Civic Society, SIT1, St Ives Business Forum and Members of the Town Council. Comments were also considered and taken into account from the Town Centre Residents Association and the St Ives Access Group who were unable to attend but wanted their views included.

All groups agreed that it would be impossible for everyone's requirements to be met but that change is required and those present outlined the individual views of their groups. Thereafter the various parts of the proposals were discussed in turn and the following general principals were agreed:

- Any work should be delayed for a year due to the current economic situation and to allow time for a scheme to be agreed.
- The War Memorial and Oliver Cromwell statue should remain in their current locations
- Wider pavements were desirable where existing pavements were narrow and to enable a ramp to be provided for the Town Hall.
- A new market stall layout was required to improve access to shops on market days
- Public space around the War Memorial should be increased to give this feature prominence
- It was noted that for the Monday market and other events the entire area was used as a public space
- Similar levels of parking should be provided
- Parking restrictions needed to be enforced
- The road junction at Market Hill / Station Road needed to be improved.
- Any scheme should have an impact statement on business
- Any scheme must consider and minimise disruption to traders during construction.

Other points raised during the discussion included:-

- Any improvements in St Ives Town centre would be undermined if out of town retail space and parking were allowed to expand
- The new Park & Ride site in St Ives would offer free parking, although CCC would take steps if too many St Ives shoppers used it.

- It was noted that all the proposed guided busway services would continue into St Ives bus station and onto Ramsey Road
- Improvement work was also need to the bus station area.

I have also been instructed to forward to you the comments made at the Town Council Planning Committee meeting held on 25 February at which time the results of the Consultation were considered, although please take into account some of these comments have been superseded by the points above:-

- It was felt that the results had, to some degree, been misinterpreted, particularly with regard to the re-siting of the statues and the claim that a majority had supported Option 1.
- Some concerns were expressed about inaccurate reporting in the press which intimated that local groups in the town would be required to find a solution.
- The Council might wish to reconsider its view on the number of parking bays in Bridge Street in the light of the high percentage in favour of removal of a single parking bay.
- There was some urgency in formulating a way forward. It was uncertain whether attendance at the Advisory Group meetings would be the best way and consideration ought to be given to meeting with other local groups and with the District Council officers separately.
- A basis exists to formulate a view and there are elements all the options could be used in this
- Seeing the responses from the various consultees would be useful to the Council in formulating a view.
- Postponement of the scheme for one year was an option which had been discussed at the first Advisory Group meeting and perhaps there was some validity in seeking this.
- There was some concern that the threat of losing the money for the project was once again being directed at the Council.

I trust the above is clear however, should you require clarification of any points prior to the next Advisory Group meeting please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

Alison Melnychuk
TOWN CLERK

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REVIEW OF DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE

(Report of the Structure Review Working Party)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Councillor K J Churchill, the special adviser to the Cabinet, has been invited by Cabinet to conduct a review of the Council's democratic structure, with the assistance of a working party established by Cabinet at its meeting held on 4th September 2008.
- 1.2 The working party comprised Councillors K J Churchill (Chairman), Mrs M Banerjee, W T Clough, S J Criswell, T D Sanderson, Ms M J Thomas, G S E Thorpe and R G Tuplin and met on a total of 11 occasions. The working party undertook a visit to Basingstoke and Deane District Council to discuss the constitutional arrangements of a similarly sized shire district. The Chairman attended a seminar in Birmingham presented by the Institute of Local Government Studies of Birmingham University on the role of the Council meeting.
- 1.3 The Chairman conducted an extensive series of interviews with members of the Cabinet, chairmen of panels, individual councillors, directors and heads of service. An open invitation was extended to all members to raise issues with the Chairman at the outset of the review. The comments raised in those interviews were considered as part of the review exercise.
- 1.4 The final report itself is unashamedly lengthy which reflects the length of time, range of subject areas and depth of scrutiny given to the subject by the working party. The Presentation on the findings has been given to all Members over 2 separate evenings in March. An executive summary also has been prepared which contains the working party's recommendations which is attached as Annex A.
- 1.5 The working party is grateful to the staff of the Democratic Services Section for their support in undertaking this extensive review.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's existing democratic structure that had emerged as a result of the constitutional changes introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 had been in place for some 6 years when the review began, with a trial having operated for 2 years prior to that. The new arrangements had represented a fundamental change from the committee structure that preceded it but, although annual and subsequently biennial reviews of the constitution have been undertaken, the Council had yet to commission a comprehensive review of the democratic and decision making arrangements to review their effectiveness and ensure that they are fit for purpose.
- 2.2 Since that time there has been a proliferation of partnership working which has created issues of accountability and transparency which have yet to be addressed fully. The development of Local Area Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships do not sit comfortably with a need for greater clarity in

decision making and their deliberations have yet to be held to account satisfactorily.

- 2.3 Further constitutional change was introduced by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 as a response to a Government white paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' published in October 2006. A further white paper, 'Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power' published in July 2008, contains proposals for additional change which are currently before parliament in the shape of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill. The bill will place a duty on the Council to promote understanding among local people of the authority's functions and democratic arrangements and explain how members of the public can take part in those arrangements. The working party has endeavoured, where possible, to anticipate the implications of the bill in its deliberations and recommendations.
- 2.4 In order to undertake the review, the working party has had to familiarise itself thoroughly with the legislation that determines the way in which the Council is structured in terms of its decision making. A number of briefing papers were submitted to assist the working party in its deliberations which are listed as background documents to this report. The working party's attention also was drawn to the existing terms of reference of the Cabinet, panels and committees etc. that are reproduced in the Council's constitution. Details of the democratic structures of a number of comparably sized shire districts, together those of the other districts in Cambridgeshire, were obtained and considered. The working party had intended to undertake visits to two district councils to learn from the experience of others but a number of those contacted were in the process of reorganisation as a result of the unitary authority changes introduced by the 2007 Act and felt unable to accommodate a visit. As a result, the only authority that was visited was Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, a similarly sized shire district in Hampshire.
- 2.5 Coincidentally, the Institute of Local Studies hosted a seminar at the University of Birmingham on the role of the Council in the new local government structure while the review was being undertaken. This was attended by the Chairman and the Head of Democratic and Central Services and proved particularly helpful in identifying ideas to re-invigorate Council meetings.

3. Changing Roles

- 3.1 Recurrent themes throughout the review were the need to promote community engagement and the changing role of the local authority councillor.
- 3.2 Part of the rationale for the Local Government Act 2000 was the Government's desire to modernise local democracy and encourage people to play a more active role in local decision making. Electorate turnout at local elections has been a growing cause for concern, political party membership is falling, parties struggle to interest persons in becoming candidates, councillors are not representative of their communities in terms of their age profile etc. and a relatively high proportion of councillors choose not to stand for re-election after their initial term of office comes to an end.
- 3.3 Although the 2000 Act introduced fundamental changes to the way in which local authorities are administered, concerns have remained that there is insufficient interest in local democracy, that local people do not engage sufficiently in their local communities and that there is insufficient encouragement for people to become and remain councillors.

- 3.4 In reviewing the structure of the Council, the working party was conscious of the need to address the role of the councillor in a wider context than simply attendance at meetings of the Council. Increasingly, councillors need to act as local community advocates for their wards and parishioners, respond to the new 'councillor call for action' agenda, and represent the views of their constituents with other service providers. In so doing, they have the potential to raise the profile of the authority with their constituents and encourage greater public participation and involvement in the democratic process.

4. Review Methodology

- 4.1 The working party divided the task of reviewing the structure into the following broad headings –

- Executive and scrutiny arrangements
- Council and non-executive structure
- Partnerships, joint committees and other issues
- Community engagement and neighbourhood management
- The role of the councillor

- 4.2 Some changes have been necessitated by recent legislative developments. Others have emerged from the experience of operating an executive/scrutiny structure for a number of years. To put those into context, the working party's report lists the changes that have and are taking place before explaining the reasons for its recommendations or why no change to the present arrangement is proposed.

5. Legislative Position

- 5.1 The Local Government Act 2000 was intended to modernise and expedite decision making and replace what had become to be regarded as an out-moded committee system. However it was superimposed on the 1972 Local Government Act framework rather than replacing it. A series of regulations and guidance provide a framework for the new structural arrangements. These define a fairly extensive range of functions and responsibilities that are not the responsibility of the executive, with the list being added to from time to time by ensuing legislation. By omission, those functions and responsibilities that are not included on that list are the responsibility of the executive. Failure to attribute a function to the correct decision-making element of the Council will render a decision ultra vires and subject to a potentially successful challenge in the courts.

- 5.2 The 2000 Act introduced the concept of an executive and scrutiny arrangements to hold that executive to account. The powers of executive and scrutiny are defined in the legislation and are not delegated by the Council, a significant departure from previous legislative provision where all powers rested with the Council and decision making was delegated to individual committees and officers.

- 5.3 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 has introduced further change to the way in which the Council can be structured but has not altered the fundamental split in responsibility between the executive and non-executive elements of the authority. Further change will be introduced by the Local Government, Economic Development and Construction Bill which the working party has tried to anticipate as far as is possible at this early stage of the bill's progress through parliament.

6. The Executive

Current Arrangements

- 6.1 The 2000 Act requires the Council to operate one of three types of executive – an elected mayor and cabinet, an elected mayor and council manager, or a leader and cabinet. Under the latter, the cabinet is chosen either by the leader (referred to as the ‘strong leader’ model) or by the Council (the ‘weak leader’ model). The Council operates the latter. Inclusive of the mayor or leader, a cabinet must have a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 10 councillors. Scrutiny members cannot sit on cabinet and vice versa but both can sit on other committees and panels, subject to certain restrictions as to chairmanship. The chairman and vice chairman of the Council cannot be members of the cabinet.
- 6.2 The vast majority of councils operate under the leader and cabinet model. Despite consistent Government support for directly elected mayors, there are only 12 currently throughout the country. Only one authority is currently operating the mayor and manager model but it is in the process of reverting back to a leader and cabinet. If 5% of the electorate sign a petition in favour of an elected mayor, the Council must hold a referendum to obtain the public’s reaction. If a majority vote in favour of a mayoral system, the Council must introduce that form of administration. Once a mayoral system had been introduced, it was not possible, prior to the 2007 Act, for an authority to return to a leader and cabinet system.
- 6.3 Since the implementation of the present arrangements, the Council has operated under the leader and cabinet model, with cabinet members appointed by the Council (the ‘weak’ leader model). The rules of proportionality do not apply to executives and the Council has operated a single party cabinet which has fluctuated in size between 8 and 9 members inclusive of the leader.

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

- 6.4 The 2007 Act has narrowed the choice of executive arrangements open to local authorities to
- an elected mayor and cabinet appointed by him, or
 - an executive leader appointed by the Council from amongst its membership and a cabinet executive appointed by that leader.
- 6.5 In either case the cabinet still must comprise between 2 and 10 councillors inclusive of the mayor or executive leader.
- 6.6 The Act has introduced significant changes to the current leader and cabinet system which are dealt with in the following paragraphs.
- 6.7 The executive leader must be elected at the first annual meeting of the Council following the transition to the new executive leader and cabinet executive model. He holds office until the annual meeting after his normal date of retirement as a councillor. In the case of an authority operating partial-council elections such as Huntingdonshire, that period could therefore be up to 4 years in length or such lesser period when the leader’s term of office as a councillor comes to an end. If an executive leader would normally have ceased to be a councillor when his term of office comes to an end (because he has decided not to stand again or is not elected), he nevertheless will remain as executive leader and a councillor until the ensuing annual meeting when a new executive leader is appointed.

- 6.8 The Council can resolve to remove an executive leader from office at any time and appoint a replacement either when the executive leader is removed from office or at a later meeting.
- 6.9 The executive leader must appoint one of the members of the cabinet executive to be the deputy executive leader who shall serve for the same period of office as the executive leader, unless he resigns as either deputy executive leader or as a councillor in the interim or he is removed as deputy executive leader by the executive leader. The deputy executive leader will act in place of the executive leader if the latter position is vacant or the executive leader is unable to act. If both are unable to act or both positions are vacant, the cabinet must act in the place of the executive leader or can appoint a member of the cabinet to do so.
- 6.10 The Act effectively gives the executive leader the same powers as a mayor in terms of the discharge of the executive functions of the Council. The leader can discharge any of those functions himself or can arrange for them to be discharged by the cabinet, by a member of the cabinet, by a committee of the cabinet or by an officer. That choice is his and not the Council's. The Act enables the cabinet, a committee of the cabinet or an executive member to further delegate any executive power delegated to them to an officer but gives the leader a right of veto over any such further delegation.
- 6.11 The Council must decide which form of executive it wishes to operate by the end of the transitional period specified in the Act. A resolution to change the governance arrangements must be made no later than 31st December 2010 with the new arrangements coming into effect no later than the third day after the day of elections to the Council in May 2011. If a resolution is not passed by the due date, the Council must implement the executive leader and cabinet executive arrangements. The Council's existing arrangements will remain in place until the new arrangements are implemented.
- 6.12 The Council can change governance arrangements subsequently only during a permitted resolution period which extends from the date of the annual meeting in 2014 until the end of that year and a similar period every 4 years thereafter. The change would come into effect on the third day after the day of election in 2015 and any fourth year thereafter. It is open now for an authority to move back from an elected mayor and cabinet system to an executive leader and cabinet executive system.
- 6.13 Before passing a resolution as to which new form of executive to adopt, the Council must take reasonable steps to consult the electorate and other interested parties. The Council must then draw up proposals for change in order to secure continuous improvement in the way in which the Council's functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Council has discretion to make a decision on the choice of executive the subject of approval by a referendum, If a referendum is held, the result is binding on the authority. The proposals must be published both before and after the resolution has been passed to change the governance arrangements.
- 6.14 The change introduced by the Act does not affect the opportunity for the electorate to petition for the introduction of a mayor and cabinet under the 2000 Act which would not follow the above timetable. However where a change to a mayoral system has been made as a result of a referendum, either as a result of a petition or by choice on the part of the authority, the Council cannot resolve to change governance arrangements again without another referendum being held. If a referendum is held as a result of a petition, another referendum cannot be held until a period of 10 years has elapsed.

- 6.15 Further change was heralded in the recent White Paper with the Government indicating that it wants to make it easier for people to demand a mayor through a referendum. The Government is currently consulting on allowing the use of on-line petitions to register support for a referendum, a reduction in the trigger threshold for a referendum from 5% of voters to possibly as low as 2% and a reduction in the period between referenda from 10 to 4 years.

Options

- 6.16 Fundamental therefore to the review of the Council's structure was the choice of governance arrangements in response to the 2007 Act. This must be in place by 2011 but can be implemented earlier if the Council so decides. Any changes to the Council's existing arrangements in terms of size of cabinet membership, frequency and timing of meetings etc. emerging from the review will only apply from the annual meeting in 2009 until the new governance arrangements of an executive leader or mayor apply. After that date, it will be for the executive leader or mayor to determine all matters relating to the discharge of executive functions over which the Council itself will have no jurisdiction (other than to remove the leader from office or change to the alternative form of executive). In practice, the powers of an elected mayor and an executive leader are broadly similar with the only principal difference being that the mayor is elected for a four year term of office by the electorate whereas the executive leader is appointed by the Council from amongst its membership and can be similarly removed from office.
- 6.17 The two principal issues that the working party therefore needed to address were which form of executive should be introduced in response to the 2007 Act and whether any changes to the present arrangements should be recommended to Council in the interim.

Choice of Executive

- 6.18 Addressing the long term future governance arrangements of the Council first, the working party considered whether an elected mayor or executive leader should be adopted, what consultation arrangements should be implemented with electors and interested parties and whether a referendum should be held. The Government is clear in its support for directly elected mayors. Nevertheless, nine years after the 2000 Act, there are still only 12 elected mayors in the country, excluding London itself, which reinforces the view that there is little public appetite or support for elected mayors, notwithstanding the publicity attaching to last year's London mayoral elections.
- 6.19 The new governance arrangements in 2011 will require a resolution to be passed no later than the Council meeting in December 2010. A decision to hold a referendum will clearly lengthen the timetable for implementation but the latest that the consultation itself should begin is June of that year with a referendum in November and a resolution to adopt the new governance arrangements being made within 28 days of the date of that referendum. To provide sufficient time for consideration prior to the consultation arrangements, the Council would need to begin the process not later than March 2010.
- 6.20 The working party took the view that there was no useful purpose in delaying consideration of the decision. In terms of the choice of an elected mayor or executive leader, the working party acknowledged -

- the lack of support nationally for the mayoral model,

- that the public consultation that was undertaken on the choice of executive in Huntingdonshire when the 2000 Act was implemented favoured the leader and cabinet model,
- that the County Council (which had to move to the new arrangements earlier in the statutory timescale) has adopted the executive leader model with effect from May 2009 in response to its public consultation on the choice,
- an apparent lack of enthusiasm both in Huntingdonshire and elsewhere within Cambridgeshire for an elected mayor, and
- that the Council's existing leader and cabinet arrangements are understood and have been embedded in the organisation since their initial implementation.

6.21 The working party recognised that the mayoral system enables an individual person to become elected, potentially on the basis of a populist electoral campaign or a single contentious issue of concern, without the benefit of support from one of the political parties. This has the potential to lead to tensions between the mayor and elected councillors from whom the cabinet would be chosen and to consequential operational and practical difficulties in terms of working relationships. Members felt that there was little to be gained and potentially much to be lost if a mayoral system was introduced.

6.22 The working party is of the opinion that the present executive arrangements have worked well and can see no useful purpose in moving toward a mayoral system. In view of the lack of public interest, there also seems little justification in holding a referendum on the choice, as opposed to a public consultation exercise which will give local people an opportunity to express their views. If the latter results in strong support for an elected mayor, the Council can reconsider whether to hold a referendum.

6.23 The working party therefore recommends that the Council undertakes a public consultation exercise as soon as practicable with the intention of implementing an executive leader form of executive in response to the 2007 Act. Following completion of that exercise, the Council is invited to move to the new system with effect from the annual meeting in 2010 or earlier if practicable.

Interim Arrangements

6.24 Pending the implementation of the elected mayor or executive leader arrangements, the working party reviewed the present leader and executive arrangements and addressed a series of questions about the current structure and ways of working of the cabinet. The working party found the views expressed by existing Cabinet members to the Chairman in the course of his interviews as part of the review to be particularly helpful in this context.

6.25 The working party concluded that the present range of executive functions did not appear to be evenly divided, with some executive councillors having extensive portfolios which were difficult to manage effectively. In a large and progressive authority of Huntingdonshire's size, the working party felt that the opportunity should be taken to make maximum use of the size constraint for the executive permitted by the legislation by increasing the size of the Cabinet to 10 from its current number of 9. **The working party recommends that the size of the Cabinet be increased to 10 members, inclusive of the Leader.**

6.26 The working party looked at different ways of structuring the Cabinet to provide continuity and cover in the unavoidable absence of an executive councillor through illness or holiday and to enable new executive councillors to become effective as early as possible. The idea of a two tier system of

senior and junior Cabinet members with a shared portfolio was discussed, as was the possibility of executive councillors being 'shadowed' by another councillor who could substitute for them in an emergency. For a variety of reasons, these were discounted. As cabinet membership is restricted to a maximum of 10, it was felt that combining all executive responsibilities into no more than 4 portfolios shared by a pair of executive councillors (excluding the leader and deputy leader from portfolio responsibility) would result in the portfolios themselves being too large. Confusion might arise as to who was taking the lead on individual functions within each enlarged portfolio. The working party was attracted to the idea of 'shadow' executive councillors who could step in when existing Cabinet Members were unavailable but the restriction on being a member of both the executive and scrutiny and the resources required in keeping 'shadow' executive councillors informed made this a somewhat impractical proposition and it was discounted during the working party's deliberations.

- 6.27 The working party also considered the role of the deputy leader. Currently the postholder has responsibility for a portfolio which limits his ability to deputise for the leader or for any other executive councillor who is absent. In the absence of a satisfactory alternative to provide cover for executive councillors as outlined above, the working party concluded that both the leader, as currently, and the deputy leader should not be burdened with portfolio responsibilities. It was felt that the deputy leader's primary responsibilities should be to provide the necessary support and assistance to the leader and to be able to stand in for other executive councillors who are absent thereby overcoming the issues of continuity and cover. Later in its report, the working party's views on support for Members are expressed but it was felt that this is a critical function that should also be led by the deputy leader. **The working party therefore recommends that the deputy leader should not have responsibility for a portfolio of executive functions but should be responsible for deputising and supporting the leader and other executive councillors, as necessary, and for a Member training and mentoring programme on a cross party basis.**
- 6.28 The rules of proportionality in terms of membership reflecting the political composition of the Council do not apply to local authority executives. Since the inception of the present arrangements however, the Council has operated a single party Cabinet comprising members of the majority party only. Practices vary in other authorities but some continue to operate a multi-party executive that reflects the political composition of the Council. The working party discussed whether a single party cabinet should be retained but the minority party members who sat on the working party expressed the view that if the party were to be represented in cabinet, this would constrain their ability to challenge and scrutinise cabinet decisions. They were not therefore in favour of change. **As a result, the working party recommends that the Cabinet should continue to contain members of the majority political party only.**
- 6.29 The working party considered the frequency and timing of meetings of the cabinet in an attempt to ascertain whether this was restricting membership through an inability of some members in full time employment to become executive councillors. Historically, the Cabinet has met roughly every three weeks on Thursday mornings, with a briefing meeting comprising Cabinet members only earlier that day. The new municipal year will see a move to meetings on a monthly basis on the third Thursday of each month with the timing of meetings remaining unchanged.
- 6.30 The working party came to the conclusion that the present arrangements do tend to preclude members in full time employment from becoming executive councillors. Although employment legislation entitles employees to

reasonable time off work to undertake Council business, the working party felt that this was still not sufficiently conducive to attract career minded councillors to become executive councillors, nor was the special responsibility allowance sufficient to compensate for the loss of earnings from normal employment. The working party supported the move towards monthly meetings of the cabinet but felt that the present timing of meetings was unsatisfactory on the basis that it did militate against those members in full time employment. **The working party therefore recommends that meetings of the Cabinet should be held in the late afternoon or early evening.**

- 6.31 Whilst accepting that it is a matter for the Cabinet to determine, the working party did not feel that the present briefing arrangements for Cabinet meetings are particularly helpful. There was a perception that the present system of discussing Cabinet business earlier in the morning of a meeting can create an impression for the watching public of a lack of effective debate and that decisions have been taken in advance. While a preliminary meeting to discuss procedural issues is justifiable, the working party felt that it would be more useful for Cabinet to have a briefing by appropriate officers some 2 or 3 days prior to the monthly meeting. It was also felt that that the Cabinet should introduce more informal meetings at regular intervals to discuss issues of topical or future importance with other panel chairmen, including those of the overview and scrutiny panels. In so doing, cabinet can obtain the views of others on future policy direction, with officers invited where appropriate. **The working party recommends that short briefings of Cabinet members be held prior to Cabinet meetings only with a formal briefing by officers some 2/3 days previously. In addition, regular member only 'blue sky' meetings should be convened by Cabinet at regular intervals involving, where appropriate, other non-executive members.**

7. Overview and Scrutiny

Current Arrangements

- 7.1 Overview and scrutiny as a concept was applied to local government by the Local Government Act 2000. The Act requires a local authority operating under executive arrangements to appoint one or more overview and scrutiny committees and defines the functions of that committee(s) as –
- to review or scrutinise decisions made or action taken by the executive in discharging its functions
 - to make reports and recommendations to the authority or the executive about the discharge of executive functions
 - to review or scrutinise decisions made or action taken in the discharge of non-executive functions
 - to make reports and recommendations to the authority or the executive about the discharge of non-executive functions
 - to make reports and recommendations to the authority or the executive on matters that affect the authority's area or its inhabitants
 - to conduct best value reviews if included within its terms of reference by the authority.
- 7.2 The Act prohibits an overview and scrutiny committee from discharging any other function (with the exception of a county or unitary authority which can scrutinise matters relating to the health service).
- 7.3 No member of an executive can be a member of an overview and scrutiny panel. Subsequent legislative change enables the co-option of persons who are not members of the Council to an overview and scrutiny committee in a non-voting capacity. If a scheme has been approved and advertised by the

Council in relation to co-option arrangements, a co-opted person can vote at scrutiny committee meetings.

- 7.4 Scrutiny committees are subject to the normal rules of proportionality. They can require attendance at their meetings by cabinet members, other members and officers but can only invite representatives of external organisations to attend.
- 7.5 Scrutiny has offered probably the most challenging aspect of the new governance arrangements. The concept is still relatively new to local government, although based on the parliamentary select committee model. It requires scrutiny to challenge and hold to account not only the authority's own executive and other parts of an authority's administration, but also external organisations contributing to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the District.
- 7.6 How scrutiny addresses those responsibilities is a matter for an individual authority and a range of differing structures have been adopted by authorities to suit their own circumstances. An on-going issue is the need to overcome the perception that scrutiny is an activity for backbench councillors, struggling to find a role for themselves with the demise of the committee system. In reality, scrutiny enables councillors to set their own agenda, to choose which topics they want to study in depth and to take a broader approach to the issues facing the District and their constituents. To operate successfully, it requires scrutiny councillors to take a far more pro-active approach and rely less upon the support of the officer structure.
- 7.7 Scrutiny is not merely a vehicle for challenging the executive. It can become involved in policy formulation, with topics of its own choosing or which have been referred by the executive for a more in-depth review and investigation. Recommendations that are well argued and evidence based can be constructive and difficult to refute. Scrutiny therefore should not be regarded as threatening by the remainder of the administration although, without some tension and challenge, scrutiny does not function effectively. The phrase most often used to describe effective scrutiny is a 'critical friend'.
- 7.8 Since the introduction of the new governance arrangements, the Council has appointed two overview and scrutiny panels. Although their titles have changed from time to time (currently service delivery and service support), they have effectively mirrored a split in Cabinet portfolios, each scrutinising roughly half of the Cabinet membership. Suggestions have been made from time to time by scrutiny councillors that there is a need for a third panel to be established because of workload volumes. While that has not found general support within the Council in the constitutional reviews that have taken place to date, a composite of the two panels has been established to deal with the budget, corporate framework and issues of major importance which, in the past, had tended to be submitted to both scrutiny panels.
- 7.9 The panels originally comprised 12 Members which subsequently was felt to be too small to create a sufficient pool of councillors to sit on the working groups established to undertake detailed studies and reviews. Their size was increased to a maximum of 16 councillors, although in practice only 15 have been appointed to each. The Corporate and Strategic Framework Panel also has a membership of 15 but it is drawn from the 2 existing overview and scrutiny panels, including both chairmen and vice chairmen.
- 7.10 Although the panels are proportionately balanced to reflect membership of the political parties, they tend not to be arena for political debate, the more appropriate forum for which is the Council meeting. The panels appoint their own chairmen and vice chairmen. During the two year trial prior to

implementation of the 2000 Act, one of the panels was chaired by a member of the opposition. More latterly one of the vice chairmen was a member of the opposition. All of the chairmen and vice chairmen are currently members of the majority party.

- 7.11 The panels arrange their own work programmes but do not tend to plan ahead for twelve months, as some commentators suggest is advisable. The panels' opinion is that the latter would lose flexibility, make it more difficult to respond to local circumstances and the changing content of the Forward Plan, stifle spontaneity and interest and also alert the Cabinet which might pre-empt any proposals that might be forthcoming.
- 7.12 The constitution permits non-scrutiny councillors to raise items on panel agenda and speak at panel meetings. Non-scrutiny councillors can be appointed to the ad hoc working groups established from time to time by the panels to undertake investigations and reviews but in practice this has happened rarely.
- 7.13 One of the major challenges for scrutiny is to raise the awareness of scrutiny councillors and develop their expertise with a wholly different skill set required. A scrutiny councillor is unlikely to be effective if he lacks knowledge of the Council's policy and budgetary framework, how those policies are being implemented, how effectively the Council is performing against target and the growing trend towards partnership delivery. In the wider context, this also requires a sound knowledge of the economic, environmental and social circumstances applying in the district and where local needs and priorities are not being addressed effectively.
- 7.14 Scrutiny can 'call in' executive decisions made by the executive, irrespective of whether they are made by the cabinet itself, a sub committee of the cabinet, a joint committee exercising executive responsibilities or an individual cabinet member. Key decisions made by officers also can be called in, although in practice all key decisions are dealt with by members. A minimum of three members of the relevant panel is required to trigger the call in mechanism.
- 7.15 The scrutiny panels have reviewed their working practices and terms of reference on a number of occasions since the present governance arrangements were first introduced and have produced action plans for change and improvement which has produced the present arrangements.

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

- 7.16 Both the 2007 and the earlier Police and Justice Act 2006 have enhanced the role of overview and scrutiny. The majority of the 2007 Act changes will come into force in April 2009 but those contained in the Police and Justice Act have yet to be implemented by parliament. The changes reflect the importance that Government attaches to role of scrutiny and also the need to secure effective scrutiny of partnership working in the new era of local area agreements, community safety partnerships etc.. The key developments 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; and
- power for councils responsible for crime and disorder strategies to appoint a joint crime and disorder committee to exercise scrutiny functions.

Communities in Control White Paper

7.17 The White Paper heralds the Government's intention to raise the visibility of the scrutiny function to ensure that local people are aware that this is at their disposal if they have issues of concern that they want to raise.

7.18 The Government has announced that it intends to do this by –

- encouraging a more creative involvement by the public, for example by holding 'deliberative events';
- moving meetings into the local community and considering webcasting;
- greater public involvement in suggesting and selecting topics for review;
- making information more readily available and accessible on websites and at council offices;
- further enhancing the powers of overview and scrutiny committees to require information from partners on a broader range of issues;
- if necessary providing councils in two tier areas with the power to combine resources in 'area' scrutiny committees; and
- requiring some dedicated scrutiny resource in county and unitary councils.

Some of the above are contained in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill.

Options

7.19 The working party was conscious that the existing overview and scrutiny panels have undertaken a number of reviews of their own structure and working practices since the introduction of the scrutiny principle. With the added emphasis generated by recent legislation, the working party acknowledged that scrutiny's role and significance will continue to grow. It

was felt that perhaps its function was still not appreciated fully, either within the Council or the local community, notwithstanding the efforts of the existing panels to encourage greater participation and awareness in their business. In particular it was suggested that the scrutiny panels are an underused resource that Cabinet do not always take full advantage of to assist in policy formulation.

- 7.20 The working party was aware that other authorities have found several different ways of structuring their scrutiny arrangements, some having separated the overview and scrutiny functions while others undertake pre-scrutiny of all cabinet items as opposed to post scrutiny. Of particular interest from the discussions with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council was the fact that, based upon its experience, it was proposing to change its existing arrangements of 3 overview committees and 1 scrutiny committee to a model that comprised committees that undertook both functions. On the whole, the working party concluded that the Council's existing arrangements had largely worked well since their inception.
- 7.21 In considering whether further change is required, the working party had sympathy with previous suggestions that there should be more than two panels. Although the corporate and strategic panel has provided a forum for discussion of principally budgetary and strategic issues, the working party came to the conclusion that it could at best be regarded as a compromise. The working party therefore looked at the number and size of the panels in the context of the enhanced role of scrutiny. With a current membership of 30 in the existing two panels, the working party agreed that it was impractical for additional Members to become 'scrutineers' and that if the panels' membership was too small, this would lead to insufficient numbers being available to undertake the ad hoc studies through which most of the work of the panels is undertaken.
- 7.22 In particular, the working party was conscious that scrutiny's role in holding the local strategic partnership to account had not been fully developed to reflect the significance of the recent expansion of partnership working. Currently the work of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership and the various thematic groups that have been formed are not being scrutinised. With the allocation of LPSA reward grant through Cambridgeshire Together (the County LSP), the working party was concerned that there is an absence of transparency and accountability in the process. The 2007 Act does make provision for joint county and district scrutiny of performance achievement and officers of the authorities in the county are currently exploring ways in which this can be achieved whilst safeguarding the role and independence of each authority's own scrutiny arrangements.
- 7.23 In the interim, the working party considered how best to scrutinise the LSP and its thematic groups. While it seemed clear to the working party that the thematic groups could be aligned to the terms of reference of scrutiny panels, it was less clear how best to hold the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership itself to account. The working party concluded that, as the Sustainable Community Strategy is approved by full Council, it would be more appropriate for the LSP to be held to account through the mechanism of the Council itself. This is referred to again later in the section of this report dealing with the role and business of the Council itself.
- 7.24 The working party therefore concluded that there was sufficient work to justify the creation of an additional panel to replace the corporate and strategic framework panel but with an adjusted re-alignment of responsibilities. In so doing, the working party has used the opportunity to highlight within the panels' terms of reference the corporate priorities and goals of not only the Huntingdonshire Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council's

Corporate Plan but also those of the Countywide Sustainable Community Strategy (Cambridgeshire's Vision) given the new shared responsibility for scrutinising the attainment of local improvement targets.

7.25 The working party therefore recommends that the present scrutiny arrangements be replaced by three new overview and scrutiny panels with the following titles and terms of reference -

Social Well-Being

- **District Council portfolios - housing & public health and leisure;**
- **Cambridgeshire's Vision priorities – equality & inclusion and safer & stronger communities;**
- **Huntingdonshire Sustainable Community Strategy themes - children & young people, health & well-being and inclusive, safe & cohesive communities;**
- **Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership thematic groups - children & young people, health & well-being and inclusive, cohesive & safe communities; and**
- **Council's corporate plan 'Growing Success' aims - housing that meets individuals' needs, safe, vibrant & inclusive communities and healthy living.**

Environmental Well-Being

- **District Council portfolios - planning strategy & transport, operational & countryside services and the environment aspects of finance and environment;**
- **Cambridgeshire's Vision priorities – environmental sustainability and managing growth;**
- **Huntingdonshire Sustainable Community Strategy theme – environment;**
- **Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership thematic groups - environment forum and growth & infrastructure; and**
- **Council's corporate plan 'Growing Success' aims - a clean, green & attractive place and developing sustainable communities.**

Economic Well-Being

- **District Council portfolios – resources & policy, customer services & information technology and the finance aspects of finance & environment;**
- **Cambridgeshire's Vision priorities – economic prosperity;**
- **Huntingdonshire Sustainable Community Strategy theme – economic prosperity & skills;**
- **Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership thematic groups - economic skills & prosperity; and**
- **Council's corporate plan 'Growing Success' aims - a strong local economy and improving systems & practices, learning & developing and maintaining sound finances.**

7.26 If each of the panels contains 10 members, this will not increase the existing number of scrutiny councillors. However the working party felt that the rules on co-option offer an exciting opportunity to encourage members of the public to become more directly involved in participation in Council business which will help promote an involvement in local democracy which is one of the key aims of the current Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill. The principle of independent persons on the Council's Standards Committee already works well and the working party sees this as a

valuable way of encouraging others to take part in local democracy. The working party therefore suggests that 2 persons should be co-opted to each of the panels with voting rights but without the right of call-in. This could offer practical benefits for each of the panels if co-opted persons have suitable experience in some of the functions or areas being scrutinised by each panel and also provide a useful introduction to local government for prospective election candidates. Another option might include the co-option of young people as a way of encouraging younger individuals to become more involved in local democracy. If Council is agreeable to the proposal, a co-option scheme needs to be formally adopted in accordance with the formal legislation. **The working party recommends that each of the overview and scrutiny panels comprises 10 members plus 2 co-opted persons with voting rights but without a right of call-in and that arrangements be made for a formal co-option scheme to be adopted to this effect.**

- 7.27 The working party addressed the issue of substitution which has been advocated from time to time as a means of ensuring full attendance at meetings. The practice tends to be used most in authorities with close political control to ensure that a majority party can be assured its policies are carried when a vote is required. Such circumstances tend not to apply to scrutiny where discussion is cross party and divisions on party grounds have been rare. For a variety of reasons, including the fact that the system can be open to political abuse, together with the practicalities of a lack of continuity, inexperience and repetition of debate, the working party did not support the idea of substitution for scrutiny panel membership. **The working party recommends that no change be made to the present system of no substitution on scrutiny panels.**
- 7.28 The working party considered the role of the chairmen and the vice chairmen of the overview and scrutiny panels and whether specific provision should be made for positions to be offered to members of minority political groups. It was the unanimous view of the working party, which comprised members of both parties and an independent councillor, that chairmanship and vice chairmanship should be undertaken by the best persons for the job, irrespective of party, and also that there should be no stipulation as to the length of time that a person should serve in each position. **The working party therefore recommends that no change should be made to the present arrangements in terms of the appointment and length of office of the chairmen and vice chairmen of the panels.**
- 7.29 In terms of the frequency and timing of meetings, the working party found that the present arrangement of monthly meetings (with the exception of May and August) starting at 7.00 p.m. appears to suit those councillors who sit on the panels and **it is recommended therefore that no change be made to the frequency and starting time of meetings of the panels.**
- 7.30 The working party was conscious of the need to enhance the profile of scrutiny in the context of recent legislative change but was aware that this has featured often in the deliberations of the panels themselves. Press releases, articles in Districtwide, better use of the Council's website all can play their part but the working party was less than enthusiastic of the Government's proposal that meetings should be webcast to the general public. While supporting the idea that the new civic suite to be constructed as part of the new accommodation project should contain provision for webcams in the event that the Government introduces a statutory requirement to this effect, the working party felt that there was insufficient evidence currently to suggest that the investment required to webcam meetings could be justified. **Nevertheless the working party recommends that every effort be made to highlight the importance of scrutiny and encourage both members and the wider public to play an active role in the scrutiny process.**

- 7.31 The working party considered the present call-in arrangements and whether they were thought to be working satisfactorily. Call-ins have tended to be infrequent with historically no more than 2 or 3 in total per annum. A requirement for 3 Members of the relevant panel to trigger a call-in appears to offer the right balance and the working party cannot see any reason for change. **It recommends that no change be made to the present arrangements for the call-in of executive decisions contained in the constitution.**
- 7.32 The changes proposed will create a requirement for additional scrutiny support from the officer structure. Previous suggestions for a dedicated scrutiny resource have not been accepted by the Council and support has been provided by the staff of the Democratic Services Section of the Central Services Directorate. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill makes provision for county and unitary authorities to have a dedicated 'scrutiny officer' which cannot be filled by one of the existing three statutory posts of head of paid service, monitoring officer and section 151 officer. Although this does not extend to district councils, increasingly the partnership agenda will involve scrutiny staff in maintaining close contact with the statutory scrutiny officer at county level.
- 7.33 Coincidental to the working party's review, the Director of Central Services, following his recent appointment, has undertaken a review of his directorate structure. Through a redistribution of staffing resources, it has been possible to propose the creation of a post of Scrutiny Manager. The restructuring has now been approved by the Employment Panel and the working party welcomes the creation of a dedicated post of Scrutiny Manager to support the scrutiny process.

8. The Non-Executive Structure of the Council

- 8.1 Regulations made under the 2000 Act list a range of functions that are defined as non-executive. Some are specifically reserved to Council by the regulations and other legislation but for the remainder, the Council can delegate responsibility to committees or officers under the pre-2000 Act arrangements. The functions can be grouped together under the following headings –
- functions relating to town and country planning and development control
 - licensing and registration functions
 - functions relating to health and safety at work (other than in relation to the Council as an employer)
 - functions relating to elections
 - functions relating to the name and status of areas and individuals
 - functions relating to changing governance arrangements
 - functions relating to community governance
 - power to make, etc. byelaws
 - functions relating to smoke free premises
 - power to promote or oppose local or personal Bills
 - functions relating to pensions etc.
 - functions relating to public rights of way
 - duty and power to designate certain officers
 - power to appoint staff and determine their terms and conditions
 - various other miscellaneous functions
- 8.2 In addition there are a number of other functions, referred to as local choice functions, that the Council has a choice of determining as executive or non-executive. Those that affect the Council are –

- determination of appeals against decisions made by the authority
- functions relating to contaminated land
- functions relating to the control of pollution or air quality
- functions relating to statutory nuisances
- appointment of individuals to other offices and bodies
- functions relating to local area agreements.

8.3 Some committees (standards and licensing) are statutory and must be established but, those apart, it is a matter for the Council's discretion as how it undertakes non-executive decision making. The working party looked at the remit of each of the panels and committees that have been established.

9. The Council

9.1 Article 4 of the constitution lists the powers that have been reserved to the Council which principally relate to the approval of the budget and various policies and strategies that together make up the Council's policy and budgetary framework. Once those have been approved, it is for the Cabinet to carry out their detailed implementation. Any proposed decision that is contrary to the framework requires reference to Council for determination.

9.2 The Council currently meets 6 times per annum at 2.30 p.m. This includes the statutory annual meeting in May.

9.3 Of all the parts of the democratic structure, the Council has probably changed the least as a result of the implementation of the 2000 Act and attracted the least attention from local government commentators. At the time of the Act, a leading academic of the Institute of Local Government Studies commented in an article that 'under existing structures the Council meeting has become in most authorities an unsatisfactory occasion. Its business consisted largely of reports from committees.....That business covered ground already gone over in committee. The Council meeting became in many authorities little more than a formality.'

9.4 Members will recognise that little has changed in the intervening years, despite various attempts to enliven Council meetings and encourage public attendance which has included –

- introduction of the state of the district debate;
- holding meetings at alternative venues;
- an opportunity for the public to present petitions containing more than 50 signatures;
- introduction of a period for oral questions by councillors to the executive and other chairmen and
- changing the layout of the chamber.

9.5 The Council meeting should be the main forum for debate on the policy and budgetary framework but robust debate is handicapped when policies and strategies have been the subject of prior public consultation, agreement with partners and discussion at scrutiny and cabinet en route to Council for approval. Often there is little left to discuss or time in which to do so. With cabinet being single party, scrutiny tending to be cross party and regulatory committees not the vehicles for party politics, the Council meeting should provide the principal opportunity for political debate.

9.6 The White Paper 'Communities in Control' is largely silent on the role of the Council but the proposed new duty of promoting democracy and involving local people in key decisions has been carried forward in the Local

Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill. So too has the introduction of electronic petitions to make it easier for local people to petition the Council but this latter initiative has already been implemented by the Council.

- 9.7 The working party was faced with the choice of accepting that Council meetings are a rather uninteresting necessity or proposing more radical change. It chose the latter, prompted by some thought-provoking ideas that emerged from the seminar attended by its Chairman that was organised by the Institute of Local Government Studies.
- 9.8 The 2000 Act superimposed a parliamentary model on local government with an executive (cabinet) and overview and scrutiny committees (parliamentary select committees). The working party looked at the scope for remodelling Council meetings to more closely resemble parliament with debates on the stages of policy formulation, opposition debate days (supply days), question time, early day motions and a speaker. In addition to the Council's existing terms of reference, the working party addressed a number of questions, namely –
- how does the Council hold the executive to account?
 - can the Council play a part in supporting the role of the authority in community leadership?
 - how can the relationship between the Council, the executive and scrutiny be configured so Council is both supportive and critical of those roles?
 - will policy and budgetary proposals be considered at a single meeting or through a series of events?
 - are the present arrangements for chairing meetings satisfactory?
- 9.9 The working party concluded that the Council should become a new democratic forum. While there is a place for ceremony and symbolism, the working party also found a need for flexibility and creativity to stimulate a healthy local democracy and generate debate and deliberation. The Council should be a place for representation and government, for the elected representatives of the people to conduct the politics of the locality and for the people of the locality to conduct their political activity.
- 9.10 The working party felt that the present reporting arrangements at Council meetings provide an opportunity for not only executive councillors but also scrutiny and the other committees/panels to be held to account and should not therefore be changed. Similarly it considered that the opportunity for the submission of petitions and Members' question time had worked well.
- 9.11 Conversely the working party regarded the current arrangements for the approval of major policy documents to be unsatisfactory. The statutory guidance on new constitutions envisaged a situation where new policy initiatives are debated first in Council before being the subject of consultation and then final approval by Council. As explained earlier, there is currently little opportunity for debate if the first occasion that a document is presented to Council is after its content has been agreed with partners, discussed by Cabinet and/or scrutiny and is too close to the deadline for approval. Moreover the sheer scale of some of the policy documents means that it is unrealistic for them to be the subject of meaningful debate by Members who may only be aware of the subject area on receiving the meeting agenda. The working party favoured a move towards the parliamentary approach of white and green papers whereby new policies and proposals are raised in Council on a more informal basis.
- 9.12 The working party suggests a new approach is needed whereby major policy initiatives are discussed first in Council with Members being briefed in

innovative ways to stimulate questions and debate. Meetings could comprise single issue debates on matters of topical importance to the district with external speakers/organisations invited to brief Members on issues of relevance and significance. They could also be used as a forum for local accountability involving outside bodies or partners. As part of those arrangements, the working party was attracted to the idea of the opposition being invited to choose a theme for debate at one meeting each year and for individual Members to be encouraged to make use of the current notice of motion arrangements to identify subjects for discussion either in Council or by reference to cabinet or panel. By so doing, the Council can become a forum for the community and other agencies to debate important local issues with their elected councillors. **The working party therefore recommends that major policy decisions that are reserved to Council should be the subject of debate at Council meetings before public consultation and innovative ways used to brief Members on the subjects to stimulate debate. Arrangements should be made for single issue debates (in addition to normal business), with the opposition political party invited to choose the subject for debate at one meeting per annum.**

- 9.13 Earlier in its report, the working party touched on the difficulty in effectively scrutinising and holding to account the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership. The overarching importance of the LSP and the achievement of targets through the local area agreement suggests that this is a role for the Council itself, especially as the Sustainable Community Strategy which the LSP is responsible for delivering is approved by Council. **The working party recommends that the annual refresh of the strategy and periodic reports on the performance of the LSP should be submitted to Council for consideration and approval, with any detailed scrutiny referred to the relevant panel for investigation.**
- 9.14 The success of the new format will be dependent to some degree on the skill and expertise of the person chairing the meeting, who will need to be able to exercise a degree of independence of party political control and be answerable only to the Council. The working party was attracted to the idea of meetings being chaired by a speaker along similar lines to parliament. Currently meetings are chaired by the Chairman of the Council who is elected annually but historically tends to serve in that position for two years. The choice of chairman derives largely from seniority and length of service, together with that person's ability to act as the ambassador for the Council at civic functions. An ability to chair meetings is of relatively minor significance and it is often difficult for incoming chairmen to familiarise themselves quickly with the Council's constitution, conduct meetings effectively and stimulate debate.
- 9.15 The working party accepts that the Chairman's role in undertaking civic duties should remain unaltered but suggests that, other than chairman's announcements, the chairing of meetings of the Council should be undertaken by a speaker elected by the Council and accountable only to that body as a whole. With the exception of executive councillors who will be appointed in future by the leader and therefore could have a conflict in allegiance, the working party suggests that the position of speaker should be open to all, irrespective of whether that person is holding another position within the authority. In the absence of the speaker, it is suggested that his or her place is filled by the Chairman. **The working party recommends that meetings of the Council are chaired by a speaker elected by the Council itself at its annual meeting and that the position be open to any Member irrespective of any other position already held, with the exception of membership of the Cabinet.**

- 9.16 The working party considered whether an opportunity should be provided for public question time at meetings of the Council. Currently this is limited to Members only, although organisers of petitions can present and speak to their petition at meetings. To encourage public engagement, the working party was of the view that any person who lived, worked or owned property in the district should be able to ask a question at meetings of the full Council using the same criteria as the existing Members' question time but subject to notice of the question being submitted at least one week prior to the meeting, both to ensure that the question is acceptable and to present the person to whom the question is addressed an opportunity to prepare an answer. **The working party recommends that public question time be introduced at Council meetings as set out in the procedure attached as annex B.**
- 9.17 Bearing in mind the changes proposed, the working party discussed the frequency and timing of meetings. If the new arrangements work successfully, there may be a need for additional meetings but in the first instance, **the working party recommends that the number of meetings of the Council be increased from 5 plus the annual meeting to six plus the annual meeting each year.** Meetings are currently held at 2.30 p.m. but this may present attendance problems for members in full time employment, guest speakers from partner and other organisations and members of the public. **The working party therefore recommends that meetings should commence at 6.30 p.m. for a trial period of twelve months.**
- 9.18 A suggested format for a new look Council meeting is attached as annex C.

10. Other Non-Executive Functions

- 10.1 The 2000 Act rules in terms of decision making do not apply to non-executive functions. Hence the previous 1972 Act and associated legislation remain applicable. Delegation can be to a committee and subsequently to a sub committee (as opposed to an individual member) or to an officer. Committees must be politically balanced.
- 10.2 Statutory guidance on the implementation of the 2000 Act to which the Council has to have regard states that, in the Secretary of State's view, the number of committees to which decision making is delegated should be kept to a minimum, as should the number of members on committees which should be proportionate to the size of the authority. In addition, the membership of committees should be kept under review in line with the principles of efficiency, transparency and accountability.
- 10.3 How the Council structures its non-executive decision making is a matter for local discretion. The statutory guidance refers only to development control and licensing, registration and health and safety at work functions. The working party was reminded that, if a non-executive decision is not delegated to a committee or to an officer, it must be taken by the full Council itself. While this may enhance the role of the Council as described above, there are some decisions that require detailed investigation, others that are relatively insignificant and others that are simply inappropriate for discussion in a public forum which comprises all members.
- 10.4 Some specific non-executive functions relating to licensing and standards are derived direct from the relevant legislation and different procedures therefore apply in the case of those committees.
- 10.5 Before addressing the current way in which non-executive decision making is structured, the working party discussed the issue of substitution in the event of a councillor being unable to attend a committee meeting of which he or she is a member. This has become a relatively common practice within local

government, particularly in authorities where political parties are closely balanced. It does provide an opportunity to ensure full membership of a committee, to share responsibilities and potentially to bring a fresh perspective to a debate. Substitution tends to be attractive if a party's majority is small and there is a danger of being outvoted in committee if one of its members is unable to attend. Similarly if committee membership is small and an opposition party is entitled only to a single seat, an inability of its appointee to attend would leave the party unrepresented at that meeting.

- 10.6 In discussing substitution, the working party considered the functions of the committees to which it might be applied. Cabinet has been dealt with earlier in the report with the working party concluding that this should remain single party with no opportunity for 'shadow' Cabinet members. Similarly the working party felt that substitution was inappropriate for scrutiny. Party politics should play no part in the deliberations of the regulatory committees where decisions should be free of political bias and the current format of the Standards Committee is not appropriate for substitution, containing as it does a number of independent persons and parish council representatives.
- 10.7 The working party did not find the idea of substitution attractive. It did not consider that the business and conduct of the Council has been unduly hampered by the absence of substitutes to date and felt that substitution has less relevance in the current constitutional climate. **The working party therefore recommends that substitution is not introduced for non-executive meetings of the Council.**

11. Development Control Panel

- 11.1 The Council has delegated non-executive functions relating to town and country planning, public rights of way and trees and hedgerows to the Development Control Panel. The Panel is authorised to determine applications and make orders within the local development framework approved by Council and acts as a consultee when LDF policies are being formulated by Cabinet for submission to Council for approval. Where decisions are proposed that are contrary to policy, these must be referred to Council for approval. In the case of planning applications, the Council in effect assumes the Panel's role in determining an application and procedures have been implemented to address this concept.
- 11.2 The Panel itself currently comprises 16 members, meeting monthly at 7.00 p.m.. In accordance with statutory guidance, the constitution currently provides for the relevant executive councillor to be an ex officio member of the Panel to provide a link with the policy formulators in Cabinet but there is no restriction in terms of the maximum membership of the Panel by executive councillors. The guidance also suggests that the executive councillor who sits on the Panel should not be its chairman.
- 11.3 An extensive system of delegation to the Head of Planning Services is in place (which is listed in the constitution) to help ensure that the Council meets its statutory target of determining applications within the required timescales and keep meetings to manageable proportions. Nevertheless all Members do have an opportunity within 21 days of the publication of the weekly planning list to ask for an individual application to be determined by the Panel as opposed to an officer, provided that material planning reasons are submitted by the Member to accompany the request.
- 11.4 The Panel has introduced a system of public speaking at its meetings which has proved popular without elongating meetings unduly. High levels of public attendance are the norm with over 50 people being a regular occurrence. The public speaking arrangements were reviewed last summer by the

Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) and by the Development Control Panel itself and minor changes made to a system that has been a notable success.

- 11.5 The working party looked at the size of the panel, the level and nature of representation of executive councillors, the frequency, time, length and venue of meetings, bearing in mind their popularity with the public. Evidence suggests that the level of Member attendance at panel meetings is high with usually only 2 or 3 absentees per meeting. In terms of executive councillor attendance, the working party queried whether there might be a perception that the portfolio holder might be inclined to regularly support planning officers' recommendations on development applications. However the working party did not find any evidence to this effect and felt that the presence of the executive councillor's experience of planning policy was valuable in debate. With regard to the timing etc. of meetings, the working party was satisfied that the present arrangements are working well and **it therefore recommends that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition etc. of the Development Control Panel.**

12. Licensing and Protection Panel and Licensing Committee

- 12.1 Licensing, registration and health and safety are the only other non-executive functions mentioned in the statutory guidance. In addition to those listed specifically as non-executive in the regulations, the Council has chosen to designate a number of the local choice functions as non-executive and these have been grouped together within the responsibilities of the Licensing and Protection Panel
- 12.2 Most decision making for licences, registrations and the enforcement of health and safety is delegated to officers, often after consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, as set out in the constitution. The principal function of the Panel is policy formulation and, unlike development control, most applications that require member decisions are dealt with by application sub groups.
- 12.3 The Panel therefore meets relatively infrequently on three occasions per annum, usually at 2.30 p.m. It comprises 12 members with the relevant executive councillor again being an ex officio member. The Panel must be politically balanced. Public speaking is not permitted at panel meetings but, as the determination of applications is delegated to sub groups, there are few occasions when this would be relevant
- 12.4 The Licensing Committee, on the other hand, is a statutory committee, the terms of reference of which are determined by the Licensing Act 2003 and subsequently the Gambling Act 2005. It must comprise 12 members and be politically balanced. The Committee must appoint at least one sub committee of 3 members to determine applications at hearings when representations have been received. Most decision making has been delegated to officers or is dealt with by the sub committees.
- 12.5 As a result of a quirk in the legislation, it is not possible for the Licensing Committee to incorporate the functions of the Licensing and Protection Panel and vice versa. The practical answer has been for the Committee to replicate the membership, chairmanship etc. of the Panel and for its meetings to immediately follow those of the Panel.
- 12.6 The Working Party looked at the frequency, timing and venue for meetings and the balance between executive and non-executive members of both the Committee and the Panel. It found that the current arrangements are working well and the time and frequency of meetings to be appropriate for its business

and conduct. The working party found that there was therefore little opportunity or need for any amendments and **recommends that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc. of the Licensing and Protection Panel and Licensing Committee.**

13. Standards Committee

- 13.1 The Standards Committee similarly is a statutory committee but derived from the 2000 Act with subsequent regulations defining its membership and the delegation of functions to a variety of sub committees.
- 13.2 The Committee must comprise at least 25% independent persons who are not elected members. In addition it must comprise at least one representative of parish councils who must be present when issues relating to parish councils are being discussed. Two mandatory sub committees must be appointed to deal with allegations of breaches of the Members Code of Conduct and each of the sub committees, as well as the committee itself, must be chaired by an independent person. If a sub committee is dealing with an issue relating to parish councils, a parish council member of the Committee must be present. To have sufficient numbers to appoint to and chair the sub committees, it is necessary for the Committee to comprise at least three independent persons and three representatives of town and parish councils. The Committee must include one or more executive councillors.
- 13.3 The current membership of the Committee is therefore 7 councillors, 4 independent persons and 3 parish council representatives, although it has only recently been possible to attract a full complement of parish councillors on the Committee. Meetings are held quarterly, usually at 4.00 p.m.
- 13.4 When the Committee was first established, its terms of reference included a number of other miscellaneous non-executive functions in the absence of an alternative decision making forum, e.g. complaints handling, whistleblowing procedure, constitutional matters. However it became apparent that it was inappropriate for independent persons and parish councillors to be taking decisions on matters of Council business of this nature and those functions have now been transferred to the Corporate Governance Panel. This has meant that the terms of reference of the Standards Committee are limited solely to those that specifically derive from the 2000 Act and subsequent regulations.
- 13.5 The working party found little opportunity to suggest any change to the Standards Committee whose business is heavily constrained by regulation, other than a change in the time of its meetings to an early evening which might be of assistance to the independent persons and parish council representatives who sit on the committee. **The working party recommends that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc. of the Standards Committee, other than a change in the time of its meetings to 6.30 p.m..**

14. Corporate Governance Panel

- 14.1 The Panel is a relatively recent innovation. It fulfils the role of the Council's audit committee and deals with issues relating to the Council's governance arrangements, internal and financial controls, customer feedback and whistleblowing.
- 14.2 The Panel comprises 7 members, of which at least one and no more than three should be members of the executive. In practice the Panel has contained 3 members of the Cabinet since its inception. It meets quarterly, usually at 6.00p.m.

- 14.3 The Panel recently reviewed its own effectiveness in association with the external auditors and prepared an action plan for improvement which contains two issues that were referred to the working party for consideration as part of the review. The first relates to its membership. A quorum for meetings is three Members and the Panel was concerned that this could create a possibility that on rare occasions only Cabinet Members need be present to meet the quorum requirements.
- 14.4 The second matter related to the Panel's terms of reference. In reviewing its effectiveness, the Panel considered whether these followed the CIPFA model. The Panel had concluded that they did but referred the matter to the working party for consideration as part of its wider review.
- 14.5 The Panel is not a statutory committee and is not referred to in the statutory guidance for local authority constitutions. However, the Corporate Governance Panel does represent good practice and the Council scores well in terms of its annual use of resources assessment by having invested in the establishment of a panel of this nature.
- 14.6 In terms of membership, the working party discussed the relationship between the Panel and both the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) as three members of the former and the chairman of the latter are currently members of the Panel. The working party acknowledged the separate roles of the Corporate Governance and Scrutiny Panels but did not consider that this gave rise to a conflict of interest if a Member sat on both. However the working party did think that a maximum of three executive councillors was too high in a panel size of 7. It was felt that the practice of development control and licensing should be followed with those executive councillors with responsibility for finance and corporate governance being ex officio members of the Panel. It was also felt that co-option of external persons might be beneficial on an ad hoc basis in a non-voting capacity. **The working party therefore recommends that the executive councillors whose portfolios include finance and corporate governance should become ex officio members of the Corporate Governance Panel in place of the present arrangements for a maximum of 3 Cabinet members.**
- 14.7 Having reviewed the Audit Commission's suggested terms of reference for the Panel in comparison to those approved by Council, the working party found that these largely coincided. **However for the sake of clarity, the working party recommends that the following be added to the terms of reference of the Panel –**
- **comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and ensure it gives value for money**
 - **liaise with the Audit Commission over the appointment of the Council's external auditor**
 - **commission work from internal and external audit**
 - **monitor the Council's policies on 'Raising Concerns at Work', the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and the Council's customer feedback process.**
- 14.8 With the exceptions referred to above, the only other change considered by the working party was the time of meetings and, for consistency, **it is recommended that meetings of the Corporate Governance Panel commence at 6.30 p.m.**

15. Employment Panel

- 15.1 The Council's workforce are employees of and accountable to the Council as a whole, not the executive. The functions and responsibilities regulations specifically define the appointment and terms and conditions of staff as non-executive functions which must therefore be dealt with either in full Council or by delegation to a committee or officer.
- 15.2 The Council has chosen to establish an Employment Panel, whose terms of reference also include responsibility for determining the Employees Code of Conduct, the Protocol on Member/Employee Relations and Officer Employment Procedure Rules. It is not a statutory committee, nor is there any reference in the statutory guidance as to how such matters should be dealt with in a Council's constitutional arrangements.
- 15.3 The Panel currently comprises 8 Members, including at least one member of the Cabinet, and meets quarterly, usually at 3.00 p.m.
- 15.4 Although aware of a view that the Panel's existence was unnecessary, the working party found a need for a mechanism to deal with employment issues. The working party acknowledged that it would be inappropriate for staffing matters to be discussed in full Council, nor for issues of such significance as the negotiation of the annual salary award to be delegated to officers. Some form of Member decision making forum is therefore inevitable and the working party found the present arrangements to be working satisfactorily. **The working party therefore recommends that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc. of the Employment Panel.**

16. Appointments Panel

- 16.1 The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Regulations 2000 define the following functions of the Council as not being the responsibility of the executive –
- power to appoint staff and to determine the terms and conditions on which they hold office (including procedures for their dismissal),
 - power to appoint officers for particular purposes (appointment of 'proper officers'),
 - duty to designate officer as head of the authority's paid service and to provide staff etc.
 - duty to designate an officer as the monitoring officer and to provide staff etc., and
 - duty to provide staff etc. to person nominated by the monitoring officer.
- 16.2 The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 require an authority to include in its standing orders certain procedures for the appointment and dismissal of staff.
- 16.3 The statutory guidance for the implementation of the Local Government Act 2000 also makes provision as to how the appointment and dismissal of staff must be dealt with by an authority.
- 16.4 There is a perception that the current arrangements, contained in the Officer Employment Procedure Rules in the constitution, are unwieldy in terms of the appointment of the Chief Executive, directors and heads of service. For all other employees, both the Regulations and the Rules require the appointment of employees below head of service level to be the responsibility of the Chief Executive or his nominee and this cannot be undertaken by councillors. The working party's review therefore dealt only with employees at head of service level and above.

- 16.5 In the case of the head of paid service (the Chief Executive), the Employment Procedure Rules require the full Council to approve the appointment, following a recommendation by a panel appointed by the Council which must include the relevant executive councillor. In the case of chief officers (directors) and heads of service, responsibility for their appointment is delegated to a panel (the Appointments Panel) which must include the relevant executive councillor in relation to the post to be filled.
- 16.6 The Rules stipulate that an offer of appointment by the Council or the Panel cannot take place until –
- (i) the Council or Panel has supplied the Chief Executive with details of the proposed appointment,
 - (ii) the Chief Executive has supplied members of the Cabinet with details of the proposed appointment and allowed a period for objection to the offer by the leader on behalf of the Cabinet, and
 - (iii) the leader has informed the Chief Executive that -
 - there is no objection to the offer,
 - such an objection has not been received within the requisite period, or
 - the Council or Panel is satisfied that such objection is not material or well-founded.
- 16.7 In any case, the final decision as to the offer of appointment is the respective responsibility of the Council or Panel. The same situation applies in the case of the dismissal of employees.
- 16.8 The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 define the procedure for the appointment and dismissal of the head of paid service, statutory and non-statutory chief officers and deputy chief officers. Other than the fact that the Council has delegated to the Appointments Panel responsibility for the interviewing of candidates, the Council's Officer Employment Procedure Rules exactly mirror the requirements contained in the Regulations.
- 16.9 The Appointments Panel is appointed by the Council each year at the annual meeting. Its size is not defined in the constitution and can therefore be varied at each annual meeting, subject to it always including at least one member of the Cabinet and being politically balanced. Historically, the Panel has comprised four members including the deputy leader, the relevant executive councillor in relation to the post to be filled, the chairman of the Employment Panel and a member of the majority opposition party.
- 16.10 The working party acknowledged that the only flexibility effectively available is the size of the Appointments Panel. The working party had intended to recommend that membership of the panel comprise the chairman and vice chairman of the Employment Panel, deputy leader, relevant executive councillor and one member of the opposition which would provide a balanced cross section of executive and non-executive members of both parties. However before the completion of the review, a further vacancy for a head of service position has highlighted the problem of finding dates when the existing membership are available which can slow the recruitment process. An alternative approach has been mooted whereby a pool of Members is established from which a panel of 5 is appointed on an ad hoc basis. The approach could lead to a potential imbalance in membership in comparison to the working party's original concept. The working party acknowledged the potential problem but was opposed to the idea of a pool of members for the same reasons as it had discounted substitution. The Working Party felt that a solution to this situation would be for each of the members appointed to the

Appointments Panel to be able to nominate an alternative representative who could attend a meeting on their behalf if they were unable to participate in the interview meeting. **The working party therefore recommends that membership of the Appointments Panel comprise the chairman and vice chairman of the Employment Panel, deputy leader, relevant portfolio holder and the Leader of the majority opposition party (or their respective nominees).**

17. Elections Panel

- 17.1 Finally the working party reviewed the position of the Elections Panel. Functions relating to elections, the name and status of areas and individuals, governance arrangements and community governance are defined as non-executive. The establishment of a panel to deal with such matters has been a relatively recent development that reflected the need for detailed debate on a number of electoral matters in recent years such as boundary reviews and electoral cycles. In the absence of a panel, such matters would need to be discussed in full Council.
- 17.2 The terms of reference of the Panel will require some amendment to include the new provisions introduced by the 2007 Act which will be dealt with in the biennial review of the constitution which is currently taking place.
- 17.3 The Panel comprises 7 Members and meets on an ad hoc basis as and when the need arises. The working party found that the Panel provides a practical way of dealing with electoral matters in an informal manner which aids discussion of detailed issues. **The working party therefore recommends that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc. of the Elections Panel.**

18. Other Committees, Panels and Groups

- 18.1 There remained a number of joint committees, sub and advisory groups and working parties that have been established by Cabinet or panels. These can be summarised as follows –

Cabinet

Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Liaison Group
Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee
Safety Advisory Group
Customer First and Accommodation Advisory Group
Environment Strategy Working Group
Car Parking Working Group

Overview and Scrutiny Panels

Performance Review Working Group

Development Control Panel

Development Plan Policy Advisory Group
Section 106 Agreement Advisory Group
Tree Preservation Order Sub Group

Licensing and Protection Panel/Licensing Committee

Applications Sub Groups
Licensing Sub Committees

Employment Panel

Employees Liaison Advisory Group
Appeals Sub Group

Standards Committee

Referrals (Assessment) Sub Committee
Review Sub Committee

- 18.2 Some of the sub committees are required by statute. Others have been established to undertake specific functions, either internally or jointly with external partners, by the parent Cabinet or panel. Some are time limited but they are all subject to change at the discretion of the parent body, as in the case of the recent decision to wind up the leisure centre management committees. They therefore were omitted from its review by the working party which left only the question of area committees.

19. Area Committees

- 19.1 The statutory guidance that was issued by the Secretary of State to accompany the Local Government Act 2000 recognised that area committees or forums could have an important role to play in bringing decision making closer to people and helping to give local people a say in how a local authority works. The Secretary of State therefore encourages local authorities to consider the use of such decentralised arrangements for consultation or decision making or both.

- 19.2 Area committees or forums can take many forms and undertake a variety of roles. They can include councillors or be comprised of councillors and representatives of other public, private and voluntary sector bodies in the area. They can have delegated functions and budgets or they can be purely advisory or consultative.

- 19.3 The Council previously had four area consultative committees that comprised ward councillors but these ceased to exist in the mid 1990s because of lack of business and interest. The only restriction in terms of decision making now is that if an area committee is to exercise delegated executive decision making, it must not exceed 40% of the size of the authority in terms of either area or population. In establishing the new structure in response to the 2000 Act, the Council decided not to introduce the concept of area committees at that time.

- 19.4 Since then, there has been considerable emphasis on community engagement and neighbourhood management and the question of areas committees is dealt with below.

20. Community Engagement and Neighbourhood Management

- 20.1 A brief report jointly authored by the Heads of Administration, Community and Environmental Health and Policy and Strategic Services was submitted to both Overview and Scrutiny Panels in November which referred to initial discussions into the question of community engagement and neighbourhood management. As the review of the constitution was in progress, it was agreed to refer the matter to the working party for consideration as part of its wider remit.

- 20.2 The need for closer engagement with local communities and encourage people to participate in local activities have featured strongly in recent Government white papers and legislation. Both the Strong and Prosperous Communities and Communities in Control white papers have recurrent

themes of engaging with communities and engendering a greater involvement and interest on the part of individuals in local decision making and creating a sense of place.

Local Aims and Objectives

- 20.3 The development of neighbourhood management is a key objective in both County and District sustainable community strategies and in the Council's own corporate plan.
- 20.4 'Cambridgeshire's Vision', the Cambridgeshire Sustainable Communities Strategy, contains 5 key themes –
- Managing Growth
 - Equality & Inclusion
 - Safer & Stronger Communities
 - Environmental Sustainability
 - Economic Prosperity

Effective neighbourhood engagement and management can play a significant role in delivering against the key themes.

- 20.5 One of the six strategic themes of the Huntingdonshire sustainable community strategy is inclusive, safe and cohesive communities which lists a number of outcomes, one of which is effective neighbourhood management in appropriate communities by
- implementing neighbourhood management in Ramsey, Oxmoor and Eynesbury,
 - investigating neighbourhood management in other communities, and
 - promoting the engagement of communities in the provision and running of services.
- 20.6 The Council's own corporate plan, 'Growing Success' lists empowerment as one of the Council's roles by 'helping and empowering local people and acting as their advocate and working closely with town and parish councils, communities and neighbourhoods; listening and communicating with local residents and supporting the representative role of local councillors'. The community aims include safe, vibrant and inclusive communities, one of the objectives of which is to enable residents to take an active part in their communities –
- by encouraging them to take part in representative and democratic activities, and
 - by assisting communities to resolve community issues locally and adopting a neighbourhood management approach in the neediest communities.

Current Arrangements

- 20.7 Neighbourhood police panels, formerly safer neighbourhood panels, have been operating in Cambridgeshire since 2006, concentrating on establishing priorities for community safety issues in localities. They have been serviced by the Police with the support of the Council's community safety team and are public meetings, open to county, district, town and parish councillors as well as the wider community. Sitting alongside each panel is a joint action group of officers from the Police, community safety and others to agree actions to meet the priorities set by the panel and report back. Seven panels in Huntingdonshire cover

- North and West Huntingdonshire
- Ramsey and District
- Huntingdon and District
- Oxmoor and Hartford
- St Ives and District
- Eynesbury
- St Neots and District

20.8 A recent national review of policing undertaken by Sir Ronnie Flanagan has recommended a closer link between local police forces and other partner organisations at a neighbourhood level on the basis that 'neighbourhood policing should exist within a wider context of collaboration and joint working, with police officers working in partnership with a wide range of local agencies, from councils to primary care trusts to schools'.

20.9 In addition to the police panels, there are locality groups operating in those wards with higher levels of deprivation in Huntingdonshire in Eynesbury, Oxmoor and Ramsey.

20.10 Town Centre management groups have been established in each of the four market towns in the District but while they bring together local authority representation and business interests, their principal function is to promote the economic vitality of the towns and their role should not be confused with neighbourhood management.

Developments in Cambridgeshire

20.11 The County Council's Cabinet approved recommendations contained in a report on 'Taking Forward Neighbourhood Management in Huntingdonshire' in July 2007 which facilitated the neighbourhood management initiatives being implemented in Oxmoor, Eynesbury and Ramsey.

20.12 The County Council is also working more widely across Cambridgeshire to develop neighbourhood management with the key aims of –

- improving outcomes for local people by bringing agencies together to address problems in a joined up way,
- helping citizens engage with and influence public service delivery and democratic governance, and
- supporting local communities in taking local action.

20.13 Two neighbourhood panel liaison officers have been appointed in recent months to support the County Council and its members at neighbourhood panel meetings. The officer responsible for the panels in the north of the County has given a presentation on the proposals to County and District members at a Huntingdonshire In Your Patch meeting in December 2008.

20.14 Elsewhere in the County, Fenland District Council recently agreed a proposal for enhanced neighbourhood engagement and management. Building on a pilot scheme that has been operating in Fenland and an extensive consultation exercise, the Council will be developing 5 neighbourhood management boards and 7 forums. The boards are likely to comprise councillors from Fenland, Cambridgeshire, town and parish councils, youth district councillors, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, the local PCT, a housing association and the local secondary school head teacher and will be attended by officers from the District and County Councils.

20.15 The boards will have the following key roles –

- setting local priorities for partner agencies, including safety and policing policies, linked to the Fenland sustainable community strategy and LAA,
 - engaging with the community on local planning issues (where appropriate),
 - providing grants to voluntary and community organisations,
 - seeking accountability of local service providers,
 - developing and commissioning local community initiatives such as projects to develop local skills, raise aspirations, improve quality of life etc., and
 - helping to enable town and parish plan development and integrate town and parish priorities into area action plans.
- 20.16 The neighbourhood forums will include the public, Fenland ward councillors and County Council electoral division councillors from the forum catchment area, the chairmen of town and parish councils, representatives of local tenant and residents associations, local youth councillors and the voluntary sector.
- 20.17 In East Cambs District Council, a review of its neighbourhood panel project was considered in October 2008. A pilot has been trialled in the Soham area since November 2006 and was extended to cover all parts of the District in January of last year with 5 panels currently in operation. Each panel comprises elected members from all 3 tiers of local government with up to 4 community representatives being co-opted. Parish council representatives provide a regular community viewpoint, augmented by contributions from other panel members and the public who are encouraged to attend. The panel is provided with reports on the local issues facing service providers and meets in public to prioritise the actions necessary to address the issues, taking advice from officers of the public service providers. Actions prioritised at each panel meeting are reported back to the panel and public at the next meeting. The process is supported by a neighbourhoods panel co-ordinator, funded through LPSA reward grant.

Neighbourhood Management in Huntingdonshire

- 20.18 Neighbourhood management is clearly high on the political agenda nationally and forms part of the Council's aims and objectives.
- 20.19 The Council needs to consider how best to take this forward. To be effective, it requires commitment and support with significant resource implications, both at member and officer level. There are no additional resources available currently and against a background of financial restraint with budgetary cuts required, it is unlikely that any new funding can be found, other than possibly from existing partners. It seems sensible therefore to build on existing neighbourhood management in the District by expanding the role of the police panels which are already attended by representatives of the three local government tiers, the police and the public. Membership could be expanded to include NHS, education and Luminus representation with servicing of the panels transferring from the police to the District Council.
- 20.20 The working party had a particularly lengthy debate on this subject. If neighbourhood meetings are to be meaningful, it is clear that strong leadership will be required to encourage public involvement and ensure that issues raised are dealt with by relevant bodies. Bearing in mind the developments elsewhere and the commitments expressed in the sustainable community strategy and corporate plan, the working party concluded that the District Council should take the lead in Huntingdonshire by building on the existing foundations of the police panels. Having regard to the specialist nature of the neighbourhood management initiatives in Oxmoor, Eynesbury

and Ramsey, it was felt that these should continue unchanged by any proposals for neighbourhood forums with a wider remit both geographically and in their terms of reference.

- 20.21 The working party felt that the fundamental principle for the forums should be the provision of an opportunity for members of the public to raise issues of concern with relevant authorities and public bodies. Therefore the forums should not be too remote from local people, nor should there be so many that it would be impossible for them to be serviced satisfactorily. Although a number of different scenarios were considered, the working party concluded that a total of 6 forums meeting on a quarterly basis would be manageable. Parishes have been nominally allocated to each forum area based on ward and electoral division boundaries and what are perceived to be local communities of interest. This is shown on the map attached as annex D. Some variation may be appropriate as a result of local representation or with partners and indeed initial discussions with Cambridgeshire Constabulary suggest that, for operational reasons, they favour retention of the existing neighbourhood police panels boundaries as shown on annex E, with the exception of those at Oxmoor & Hartford and Eynesbury. The working party believes that local communities of interest should be the priority, otherwise the public are unlikely to attend.
- 20.22 Although the forums will be open meetings, the working party proposes that a panel be established for each area that will comprise a 'top table' at forum meetings with the purpose of presenting information, resolving issues raised from the floor, moderating any requests for information/action that need to be referred elsewhere, monitoring, progress chasing and reporting back to ensuing meetings. As each forum area will vary in terms of its priorities and circumstances, the working party felt that it would be inappropriate to predetermine the composition of the panels, subject only to a membership not exceeding 10 and chairmanship by a district councillor from within the catchment area. Dependent on the length of the forum meeting, a separate meeting of each panel might be required either after the forum discussion or on an ensuing date to action issues raised by those attending.
- 20.23 In terms of the reporting arrangements, the working party proposes that the forums/panels feed into the appropriate thematic groups of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership with any issues of concern with regard to membership, attendance by public bodies, investigation of issues etc. being reported through the HSP itself to the LSP partners. Operational issues would be referred to and dealt with by the appropriate local authority or public sector body with the outcome reported back to the next ensuing forum meeting. A diagram showing the various proposed linkages is attached as annex F.
- 20.24 **The working party therefore recommends that 6 neighbourhood forums open to the public be established in Huntingdonshire, chaired by district councillors and serviced by the District Council for the areas of Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives, Ramsey, North Huntingdonshire and West Huntingdonshire with the catchment areas shown on the plan attached as annex D to this report and the following terms of reference –**
- **advising on the setting of local priorities for partner agencies, including safety and policing policies, linked to the Huntingdonshire sustainable community strategy and local area agreement,**
 - **engaging with the community on local planning issues (where appropriate),**
 - **seeking the accountability of local service providers,**

- **developing and commissioning local community initiatives such as projects to develop local skills, raise aspirations, improve quality of life etc.,**
- **helping to enable town and parish plan development and integrate town and parish priorities into area action plans' and**
- **expressing views in response to consultation on proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 (see below).**

20.25 **The working party recommends that a panel should be established for each forum, chaired by a district councillor and serviced by the District Council, with the composition of each panel being a matter for local determination subject to a ceiling of 10 representatives of local authorities and other public sector bodies active in the area of that forum and with the following terms of reference –**

- **presenting information at forum meetings,**
- **resolving issues raised at forum meetings,**
- **moderating any requests for information/action that need to be referred elsewhere,**
- **monitoring the performance of the forum,**
- **progress chasing requests for information/action, and**
- **reporting back to ensuing meetings.**

The panels and forums will feed into the appropriate thematic group of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership.

21. Sustainable Communities Act 2007

21.1 The principal aim of the Act is to promote the sustainability of local communities by encouraging the improvement of the social, economic and environmental well-being of an authority's area, including participation in civic and political activity. The Act requires the Secretary of State to invite local authorities to submit proposals to promote the sustainability of local communities which can include a transfer of functions between local and public authorities. Before doing so, an authority must consult with the transferor authority and a panel of representatives of local people, including, specifically, under-represented groups. Regulations on the implementation of Act were published only recently by Secretary of State in November 2008.

21.2 For the purposes of the review, the working party considered the composition of the panel required under the Act. Some authorities already have established citizens panels and there is no necessity for such to be duplicated for the purposes of the Act. Where those do not exist, an authority that wishes to submit proposals under the Act must consult a panel, including representatives of persons from under-represented groups. The latter are not defined and it is a matter for each local authority to decide upon reasonable steps to identify under-represented groups if a new panel is to be established.

21.3 The steps should include –

- identifying communities of interest in the area, and
- working with colleagues, the voluntary sector and other service providers on which communities of interest may be under-represented in civic and political activity, in particular those that are hardest to reach

and then ensuring that they are represented on the panel. Once the panel has been established, the authority must take a view as to whether those under-represented groups are sufficiently represented.

21.4 Further consideration of the implementation of the Act will be dealt with elsewhere but the working party can see no reason to establish a separate panel for consultation on proposals coming forward under the legislation. **The working party therefore recommends that any proposals under the Act should be subject to consultation with the neighbourhood forums.**

22. Exercise of Functions by Individual Councillors

22.1 Although the working party's remit related to a review of the constitution, it was conscious of recent legislative change intended to raise the profile of the ward councillor in the community and also enable councillors to take delegated decisions on an individual basis. The working party felt that it would have been remiss of them not to have therefore also addressed the role of the councillor as part of its review.

22.2 Constituency work has long been an important element of a councillor's duties. Indeed one of the aims of the Local Government Act 2000 was to free up councillors' time from committee attendance to allow them to concentrate more on working in their constituencies, previous surveys having suggested that this was what was regarded by councillors as one of their more important and valuable roles. In practice, there has been no less 'committee' work with the creation of overview and scrutiny and other non-executive decision making than was the case with the old committee system. The role of the councillor as a community leader has however increased with recent white papers and legislation. The need for better communication with members has been the subject of separate discussions involving members and officers that has been running parallel to the review which has culminated in a recently produced 'Communicating with Councillors' protocol, available on the Council's intranet site.

22.3 The white paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' acknowledged that councillors will often be able to solve a community's problem themselves. A councillor's ability to do so was strengthened in two ways in the 2007 Act. The first was the introduction of the councillor's 'call for action' which enables a councillor to raise an issue on behalf of a constituent through an authority's overview and scrutiny panel. The second, which was considered by the working party, is the ability to delegate decision making to individual councillors.

22.4 Prior to the 2000 and 2007 Acts, as referred to earlier in the report, legislation only enabled decision making to be delegated to committees, sub committees and officers. As a committee cannot comprise one person, individual councillors could not have decision making delegated to them. The 2000 Act introduced executive decision making by executive councillors if the responsibility was delegated to them by the Cabinet or leader. The 2007 Act takes this further and enables both the leader and the Council to delegate responsibility for the discharge of executive and non executive functions respectively to councillors for the wards that they represent. This will not apply where it is expressly prohibited by other legislation (e.g. a hearing to determine an application under the Licensing Act 2003 must be heard by a sub committee comprising three members of a licensing committee). The Secretary of State by order may also limit the functions that can be discharged and any such delegation, as normal, does not prevent the discharge of the function by the person or body that has authorised the delegation.

22.5 Although the discharge arrangements are not limited other than as referred to in the preceding paragraph, it is expected that authorities wishing to make use of the new power will do so to delegate a budget to local councillors for expenditure in their wards to promote social, economic and environmental

well-being. Any decisions made by an individual councillor will have to be recorded and retained for inspection for six years and a councillor can be called to account by an overview and scrutiny panel for his or her actions in this respect.

- 22.6 Some authorities have found ways of delegating small budgets to individual councillors in the past but the 2007 Act introduced a far more wide ranging ability to facilitate local decision making. Clearly this works best in single member wards where there is more transparent local accountability as in two and three member wards the views of ward members may be divergent.
- 22.7 If expenditure was to be delegated, budgetary provision would need to be made. Even allowing for a modest sum of say £2,000 per annum for each councillor, this would amount to in excess of £100,000 per annum which would be available for expenditure by individual councillors. The feasibility of this would have to be considered in the context of the Council's current financial position.
- 22.8 The other consideration is the question of resources. Although decisions would be taken by individual councillors, these would have to be recorded and retained for public inspection, advice may be required from officers on the advisability of certain proposed decisions, actions would have to be monitored etc.
- 22.9 The working party balanced the benefits of the local discharge of functions against the resource implications and budgetary considerations involved. While superficially attractive, the working party foresaw numerous problems with delegated budgets to individual councillors. The view was taken that any scheme would be difficult and time consuming to administer, it may be tempting for members to take a less than partial view of applications and the effort involved could not be justified by the relatively small amounts of money that might be made available for each member to allocate. **The working party therefore was not persuaded to the idea and recommends that no action be taken to implement delegated decision making, including delegated budgets, to ward councillors under the 2007 Act.**

23. Outside Bodies

- 23.1 Another significant role for individual councillors is representation on external organisations, the value and extent of which is often underestimated. The latter can be summarised as –
- enabling the Council to maintain close liaison with bodies helping to deliver shared aims and objectives, especially where they are in receipt of Council funding;
 - enabling the Council to influence service delivery by other public and voluntary sector organisations;
 - providing public and voluntary organisations better access to the Council; and
 - adding kudos to the management of an organisation by having an elected representative on its management committee or board.
- 23.2 The Council has historically encouraged councillors to play an active role in the wider community in this way. In certain limited cases, the representation is statutory (for example internal drainage boards) or the subject of formal agreement (for example East of England Regional Assembly or the Luminus Group). In the majority of cases however, representation is voluntary.

Reviews are undertaken periodically of organisations to which appointments are made to ensure that the Council's representation remains appropriate and adds value.

23.3 Working party members themselves sit on a number of external organisations and therefore had experience of representing the Council in this way. The working party acknowledged the value that representation can bring but did feel that insufficient support was available from the Council to assist councillors who represent it on external organisations in this way. In relatively few cases is a briefing provided of the organisation to which a Member is being appointed for the first time, nor is it often clear where guidance is available if required. There is little opportunity for a representative to report back on matters of interest, particularly when the person appointed to represent the Council is not a member of the authority. The working party was of the opinion that there was scope for a number of improvements in the way that this is handled by the Council which should have relatively minor resource implications. **The working party therefore recommends**

- **that there should be an annual review of the organisations to which representatives are appointed by the Council, prior to new or re-appointments being made;**
- **that cross party discussions should take place between a representative of each of the political parties on the Council and the independent councillors before new or re-appointments are made annually;**
- **that councillors or members of the public newly appointed to an external organisation should receive a briefing note prepared by the Democratic Services Section before attending their first meeting of that organisation, explaining the implications of representation, the aims of the organisation etc.;**
- **that external organisations to which representatives are appointed be requested to provide an induction process for those persons;**
- **that an officer be named in respect of each external organisation to which the Council makes an appointment to whom the representative can turn for advice and support about membership of that body; and**
- **that representatives be encouraged to produce a short report at regular intervals of their membership of external organisations and a page be established on the intranet to enable such reports to be posted.**

24. The Role of the Councillor

The Councillors Commission

24.1 Early in 2007 and in response to the Strong and Prosperous Communities white paper, the Secretary of State established an independent Councillors Commission to -

- encourage people who are able, qualified and representative to be candidates to serve as councillors;
- retain and develop them once they are elected (or appointed under the Local Government Act 2000); and

- enable them to secure public interest and recognition for the work they carry out for their communities.
- 24.2 The Commission's final report was published in December 2007 and can be found on <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/583990.pdf>. It contains over 60 far reaching recommendations to address the Commission's underlying principles that –
- local authorities are key to promoting local democratic engagement;
 - promoting a sense of efficacy – the feeling that an individual is able to influence the democratic process and the course of events – is key for better engagement;
 - councillors are most effective as locally elected representatives when they have similar life experiences as those of their constituents;
 - key to local effective representation is the relationship and connections between councillors and their constituents; and
 - it should be less daunting to become a councillor, better supported once elected as a councillor, and less daunting to stop being a councillor.
- 24.3 Several of the recommendations were incorporated in the subsequent Communities in Control white paper and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill will place a duty on Councils to promote an understanding of its functions and democratic arrangements and how members of the public can take part in those arrangements and what is involved in doing so. That understanding must include how to become a member of the Council, what members do and what support is available for them. The duty also extends to promoting a similar understanding of a range of other public sector organisations.
- 24.4 The working party addressed a number of recommendations that had emerged from the Commission's report which it thought were relevant to its review.

Role Descriptions

- 24.5 One of those recommendations proposed that descriptions be prepared of the role that councillors play. Political parties tend to struggle to attract people to stand for election and there are few independent candidates. Most candidates are unlikely to have much advance knowledge of what being a councillor entails, other than what is provided to them by the party for which they are standing. Once elected, there is no formal description as to the expectations and duties of councillors in their many and diverse roles. The same applies when members are elected to positions of chairmanship, membership of the Cabinet etc.
- 24.6 Examples are available of good practice elsewhere where role descriptions have been produced. The working party felt that the adoption of a similar approach would be helpful for both existing members and electoral candidates. **The working party therefore recommends that job or role descriptions should be introduced for all positions that attract a special responsibility allowance, for an individual member, mentors (see below) and political group leaders as set out in annex G and that these be updated regularly.**

Training

- 24.7 Another of the Commission's recommendations was improved member training and mentoring.
- 24.8 The training provided for councillors now is more extensive than previously with a formal induction process in place and detailed training for membership of the executive, development control, overview and scrutiny, licensing, standards, corporate governance, etc. A Members Training Programme has been prepared and councillors are consulted regularly as to the courses that they would like to see provided, the intention being to offer a minimum of three training opportunities for each councillor annually. Briefings also are given on topical subject areas and the Council's service delivery arrangements on a regular basis.
- 24.9 What has not proved possible however within existing resources, is the preparation of individual personal development plans for all councillors which is one of the objectives in the learn and develop priority of the Council's corporate plan 'Growing Success'. An earlier overview and scrutiny study that investigated support for councillors recommended that each of the parties appoint 'training champions' but this has met with limited success.
- 24.10 Nationally the Improvement and Development Agency has initiated a Member Development Charter which a number of authorities have signed up to. Further details can be found on the IDeA website at <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=773091> and a self assessment template has been produced which is attached as annex H to this report which illustrates what this entails. The working party endorsed the principles of the charter as a way of demonstrating the significance of a councillor's role and the investment and support which should be provided by an authority to help them in their work as representatives of the local community. **The working party recommends that the Council signs the IDeA Member Development Charter and arranges for its implementation.**
- 24.11 The working party sees a key place for councillors in mentoring newly elected persons. Notwithstanding the current induction arrangements, the working party is firmly of the view that ongoing support should be available throughout a new councillor's first year of office. To that end, the working party felt that 'mentors' should be nominated by each of the political groups to assist their newly elected councillors throughout their first year. **The working party therefore recommends that the political parties and independent councillors be invited to nominate one or more mentors to assist newly elected councillors to familiarise themselves with their role and to provide support and advice in their first year of office.**
- 24.12 The appointment of mentors will replace the previous role of training champions which prompted the working party to look at the growth in the number of 'champions' that have been appointed by the Council. The working party felt that this was a somewhat populist terminology for responsibilities that were already being undertaken by the relevant executive councillor or chairman and that its use added little value to the work of the Council. **The working party recommends that the use of the term champion be dispensed with and their roles absorbed in the existing responsibilities of executive councillors, chairmen and ward councillors.**
- 24.13 Additional support for councillors as proposed above will have resource implications. However the restructuring of the Central Services Directorate, referred to previously in the report, has made provision for a Members Support Officer which the working party welcomes and supports.

25. Financial Implications

25.1 Clearly there are cost implications if the working party's recommendations are accepted by Council. These comprise primarily the additional special responsibility allowances from the increase in the membership of the Cabinet and the extra overview and scrutiny panel, the additional meetings which will need to be supported and the proposals for neighbourhood engagement. Some of the working party's recommendations reflect legislative change while others implement policies approved by Council in the sustainable communities strategy and corporate plan. If the Council is to enhance its community leadership role and comply with its forthcoming statutory responsibilities to promote understanding of local democracy, some additional cost is inevitable. However it can be argued that councillors are an undervalued resource in terms of the volume of work that they undertake which is expected to increase in response to legislative change.

Special Responsibility Allowances

25.2 Any change to the nature of the allowances paid by the Council will need to have regard to the Members Independent Remuneration Panel, although such approval would not normally be required simply for an additional chairmanship or member of the Cabinet. The cost of the proposals recommended by the working party can be summarised as follows -

<i>SRA</i>	<i>£</i>
1 additional Cabinet member	8,394
1 additional Chairman of an Overview & Scrutiny Panel	6,311
1 additional Vice Chairman of an Overview & Scrutiny Panel	2,837
6 O & S co-optee's allowances @ say £224	1,344
Speaker of the Council (say)	2,000
Total	20,886

25.3 The total budget for basic and special responsibility allowances in the current year is £372,000. Budgetary provision has been made of an increase of 3% for 2009/10. The Members Allowances scheme makes provision for an annual adjustment in line with RPI which is currently less than the budgetary allowance. Depending upon the final rate, it is possible that a saving in the region of £7,500 might be achieved against the budget provision which would be transferred to the Council's contingency fund.

25.4 If costs are not to be increased, this can only be achieved by a redistribution of SRAs which would require a meeting of the Members Independent Remuneration Panel which normally carries a cost of £5,000 per review.

25.5 Depending upon the level of increase in allowances for 2009/10, **the working party recommends that the Council approves a supplementary estimate to meet the cost of the additional allowances emerging from the review.**

Resources

25.6 The additional resources required in servicing meetings can be summarised as amounting to one extra Council meeting; a standing overview and scrutiny panel as opposed to the Corporate and Strategic Framework Panel which currently meets on the same evening as the service support or service delivery panels; evening as opposed to day time meetings for Council, Cabinet and some other panels; and the proposed neighbourhood forums and panels. Additional resource will be required to provide the enhanced support and training recommended for Members.

- 25.7 Reference has been made earlier in the report to the restructuring of the Democratic Services Section of the Central Services Directorate to establish posts of Scrutiny Manager and Members Support Officer. Elsewhere the Cabinet has dispensed with the 5 leisure centre management committees which will generate some savings in staff support costs. Officers attending evening meetings will be taking time off in lieu as opposed to the payment of overtime. It should be possible therefore to absorb the costs of servicing the additional meetings internally.
- 25.8 Support for the introduction of neighbourhood forums and panels is more difficult to quantify. The concept will only succeed if it is publicised and administered well and local people can see value in attending. It should be possible to absorb the cost of servicing the meetings themselves but other costs will be incurred in terms of room hire, publicity, printing etc.. Although officers will be taking time off in lieu for attending the evening meetings, there will be a cost in terms of lost productivity. Mentioned has been made earlier in the report of the County Council's support for improved neighbourhood engagement and the resources required by the Police to service meetings of the existing Policing Panels. It is possible that those and other partners might be prepared to contribute towards the cost involved in the new forums. **The working party therefore recommends that the Cabinet explore the possibility of financial contributions from partners towards the new neighbourhood engagement process.**
- 25.9 In terms of support for Members, a training budget currently exists but this may not be sufficient to accommodate fully the steps required to achieve and maintain charter status. The additional support costs can be absorbed by the staffing changes recently approved by the Employment Panel. Any additional training costs from the adoption of the Member Development Charter that cannot be absorbed will need to be the subject of future MTP bids in the normal way.

26. Implementation Timetable

- 26.1 If the working party's recommendations are accepted in full, some of the changes can be implemented quickly. Others will involve public consultation or discussions with partners before new procedures can be introduced.
- 26.2 To assist in a better understanding of the proposals, two presentations will be given to all Members which have been scheduled for 17th and 24th March. The working party's report will be considered by Cabinet on 2nd April as the body that initially commissioned the review. It will then be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels (Service Delivery and Service Support) at their meetings on 7th and 14 April. As any changes to the constitution require previous consideration by the Corporate Governance Panel, a special meeting of that Panel will be required to which the comments of the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Panels will be submitted. Final consideration will be given to the report by the Council at its meeting on 22nd April. If approved, those internal changes will come into effect from the beginning of the new municipal year. Annex I lists the timetable proposed.

27. Conclusion

- 27.1 The working party's review has been thorough. It has looked at best practice elsewhere and at Huntingdonshire's neighbours. Its members have visited a comparable authority and observed how that is currently structured and how it is proposing to change. Its chairman has undertaken extensive interviews with councillors and senior officers to obtain their thoughts about past performance and whether change is required. An open invitation was

extended to all members to submit any comments to the chairman for consideration as part of the review. In total, 11 meetings of the working party have been held.

- 27.2 On the whole, the working party has found that the structure implemented by the Council in response to the 2000 Act has worked well. Members have played a more active role than hitherto, both in the executive and scrutiny and have enjoyed a higher profile in the local community. Although minor changes have been made from time to time in the intervening years, this is the first occasion when a fundamental review has been undertaken of the Council's democratic structure. Where parts of the structure are considered to be working satisfactorily, no change is recommended. However legislative change does require the Council to amend some of its working practices and formats and these have been accommodated as part of the review. The working party believes that its recommendations will place the Council in a position to respond well to the legislative changes and further promote its leadership role in the community and engage with local neighbourhoods and the public.
- 27.3 There are costs attached to the proposals which the working party is conscious of in the current financial climate but these are relatively minor and are considered to represent good value for money having regard to the benefits that will be achieved in terms of access to local democracy and more efficient and effective councillors. The working party believes that this is a small price to pay for a healthy local democracy.

28. Recommendations

- 28.1 The working party's recommendations are dealt with in the body of the report but are reproduced in full below. The working party commend them to the Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Panels, Corporate Governance Panel and the Council.
- (a) that the Council undertakes a public consultation exercise as soon as practicable with the intention of implementing an executive leader form of executive in response to the 2007 Act. Following completion of that exercise, the Council is invited to move to the new system with effect from the annual meeting in 2010 or earlier if practicable; (paragraph 6.23)**
 - (b) that the size of the Cabinet be increased to 10 members, inclusive of the leader; (paragraph 6.25)**
 - (c) that the deputy leader should not have responsibility for a portfolio of executive functions but should be responsible for deputising and supporting the leader and other executive councillors, as necessary, and for a Member training and mentoring programme on a cross party basis; (para. 6.27)**
 - (d) that the Cabinet should continue to contain members of the majority political party only; (para. 6.28)**
 - (e) that meetings of the Cabinet should be held in the late afternoon or early evening; (para. 6.30)**
 - (f) that short briefings of Cabinet members be held prior to Cabinet meetings only with a formal briefing by officers some 2/3 days previously. In addition, regular member only 'blue sky' meetings should be convened by Cabinet at regular intervals involving, where appropriate, other non-executive members; (para. 6.31)**

- (g) that the present scrutiny arrangements be replaced by three new scrutiny panels with the following titles and terms of reference -

Social Well-Being

- portfolios for housing and public health, leisure and operational and countryside services;
- health & well-being and inclusive, safe & cohesive communities thematic groups of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership;
- safer & stronger communities priority of Cambridgeshire Vision (the local area agreement); and
- the housing that meets individuals' needs, safe, vibrant & inclusive communities and healthy living aims of the Council's corporate plan 'Growing Success'.

Environmental Well-Being

- portfolios for resources & policy and planning strategy and transport;
- children & young people, environment, and growth & infrastructure thematic groups of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership;
- managing growth and environmental sustainability priorities of Cambridgeshire Vision; and
- a clean, green & attractive place and developing sustainable communities aims of the Council's corporate plan 'Growing Success'.

Economic Well-Being

- portfolios for customer services & information technology and finance & environment;
- economic prosperity and equality & inclusion thematic groups of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership;
- a strong local economy, improving systems & practices, learning & developing and maintaining sound finances aims of the Council's corporate plan 'Growing Success' (para. 7.25)

- (h) that each of the overview and scrutiny panels comprises 10 members plus 2 co-opted persons with voting rights but without a right of call-in and that arrangements be made for a formal co-option scheme to be adopted to this effect; (para. 7.26)
- (i) that no change be made to the present system of no substitution on overview and scrutiny panels; (para. 7.27)
- (j) that no change should be made to the present arrangements in terms of the appointment and length of office of the chairmen and vice chairmen of the overview and scrutiny panels; (para. 7.28)
- (k) that no change be made to the frequency and starting time of meetings of the overview and scrutiny panels; (para. 7.29)
- (l) that every effort be made to highlight the importance of scrutiny and encourage both members and the wider public to play an active role in the scrutiny process; (para. 7.30)
- (m) that no change be made to the present arrangements for the call-in of executive decisions contained in the constitution; (para. 7.31)

- (n) that major policy decisions that are reserved to Council should be the subject of debate at Council meetings before public consultation and innovative ways used to brief Members on the subjects to stimulate debate. Arrangements should be made for single issue debates (in addition to normal business), with the opposition political party invited to choose the subject for debate at one meeting per annum; (para. 9.12)
- (o) that the annual refresh of the sustainable community strategy and periodic reports on the performance of the LSP should be submitted to Council for consideration and approval, with any detailed scrutiny referred to the relevant panel for investigation; (para. 9.13)
- (p) that meetings of the Council are chaired by a speaker elected by the Council itself at its annual meeting, that the position be open to any Member irrespective of any other position already held with the exception of membership of the Cabinet; (para. 9.15)
- (q) that public question time be introduced at Council meetings as set out in the procedure attached as annex B; (para. 9.16)
- (r) that the number of meetings of the Council be increased from 5 plus the annual meeting to six plus the annual meeting each year; (para. 9.17)
- (s) that meetings of the Council should commence at 6.30 p.m. for a trial period of twelve months; (para. 9.17)
- (t) that substitution is not introduced for non-executive meetings of the Council; (para. 10.7)
- (u) that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition etc. of the Development Control Panel; (para. 11.5)
- (v) that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc. of the Licensing and Protection Panel and Licensing Committee; (para. 12.6)
- (w) that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc. of the Standards Committee, other than a change in the time of its meetings to 6.30 p.m.; (para. 13.5)
- (x) that the executive councillors whose portfolios include finance and corporate governance should become ex officio members of the Corporate Governance Panel in place of the present arrangements for a maximum of 3 Cabinet members; (para. 14.6)
- (y) that the following be added to the terms of reference of the Corporate Governance Panel –
- comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and ensure it gives value for money
 - liaise with the Audit Commission over the appointment of the Council's external auditor
 - commission work from internal and external audit monitor the Council's policies on 'Raising Concerns at Work', the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and the Council's complaints process; (para. 14.7)
- (z) that meetings of the Corporate Governance Panel commence at 6.30 p.m.; (para. 14.8)

- (aa) that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc. of the Employment Panel; (para. 15.4)
- (bb) that membership of the Appointments Panel comprise the chairman and vice chairman of the Employment Panel, deputy leader, relevant portfolio holder and the Leader of the majority opposition party (or their respective nominees); (para. 16.10)
- (cc) that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc. of the Elections Panel; (para. 17.3)
- (dd) that 6 neighbourhood forums open to the public be established in Huntingdonshire, chaired by district councillors and serviced by the District Council for the areas of Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives, Ramsey, North Huntingdonshire and West Huntingdonshire with the catchment areas shown on the plan attached as annex D to this report and the following terms of reference –
- advising on the setting of local priorities for partner agencies, including safety and policing policies, linked to the Huntingdonshire Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement,
 - engaging with the community on local planning issues (where appropriate),
 - seeking the accountability of local service providers,
 - developing and commissioning local community initiatives such as projects to develop local skills, raise aspirations, improve quality of life etc.,
 - helping to enable town and parish plan development and integrate town and parish priorities into area action plans' and
 - expressing views in response to consultation on proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act 2007; (para 20.24)
- (ee) that a panel should be established for each forum, chaired by a district councillor and serviced by the District Council, with the composition of each panel being a matter for local determination subject to a ceiling of 10 representatives of local authorities and other public sector bodies active in the area of that forum and with the following terms of reference –
- presenting information at forum meetings,
 - resolving issues raised at forum meetings,
 - moderating any requests for information/action that need to be referred elsewhere,
 - monitoring the performance of forum,
 - progress chasing requests for information/action, and
 - reporting back to ensuing meetings.
- The panels and forums will feed into the appropriate thematic group of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership; (para 20.25)
- (ff) that any proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act should be subject to consultation with the neighbourhood forums; (para 21.4)
- (gg) that no action be taken to implement delegated decision making, including delegated budgets, to ward councillors under the 2007 Act; (para 22.9)

- (hh) that there should be an annual review of the organisations to which representatives are appointed by the Council, prior to new or re-appointments being made; (para 23.3)
- (ii) that cross party discussions should take place between a representative of each of the political parties on the Council and the independent councillors before new or re-appointments to external organisations are made annually; (para 23.3)
- (jj) that councillors or members of the public newly appointed to an external organisation should receive a briefing note prepared by the Democratic Services Section before attending their first meeting of that organisation, explaining the implications of representation, the aims of the organisation etc.; (para 23.9)
- (kk) that external organisations to which representatives are appointed be requested to provide an induction process for those persons; (para 23.3)
- (ll) that an officer be named in respect of each external organisation to which the Council makes an appointment to whom the representative can turn for advice and support about membership of that body; (para 23.3)
- (mm) that representatives be encouraged to produce a short report at regular intervals of their membership of external organisations and a page be established on the intranet to enable such reports to be posted; (para 23.3)
- (nn) that job or role descriptions should be introduced for all positions that attract a special responsibility allowance, for an individual member, mentors and political group leaders as set out in annex G and that these be updated regularly; (para 24.6)
- (oo) that the Council signs the IDeA Member Development Charter and arranges for its implementation; (para 24.10)
- (pp) that the political parties and independent councillors be invited to nominate one or more mentors to assist newly elected councillors to familiarise themselves with their role and to provide support and advice in their first year of office; (para 24.11)
- (qq) that the use of the term champion to describe positions filled by councillors be dispensed with and their roles absorbed in the existing responsibilities of executive councillors, chairmen and ward councillors; (para 24.12)
- (rr) recommends that the Council approves a supplementary estimate to meet the cost of the additional allowances emerging from the review;(para 25.5) and
- (ss) that Cabinet explore the possibility of financial contributions from partners towards the new neighbourhood engagement process. (para. 25.8)

Contact Person

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Background Papers

The Council's Constitution

Secretary of State's guidance on implementation of new constitutions in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000

The Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

Sustainable Communities Act 2007, associated regulations and statutory guidance

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill

Strong and Prosperous Communities White Paper

Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power White Paper

DCLG consultation paper on Improving Local Accountability

DCLG consultation paper on Local Petitions and Calls for Action

Constitutions of Cambridgeshire County Council and the City and District Councils in Cambridgeshire

Council Structures of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, North Wiltshire District Council, Colchester Borough Council, Cherwell District Council and Mid Beds District Council.

Report to Cambridgeshire County Council Cabinet on 2nd July 2007 on Taking Forward Neighbourhood Management in Huntingdonshire

Progress report to Huntingdonshire In Your Patch meeting on 8th December 2008 on Neighbourhood Panels

Report to Cabinet of Fenland District Council on 20th November 2008 on Effective Three Tier Working in Cambridgeshire

Report to Community Services Committee of East Cambs District Council on Neighbourhood Panels in October 2008

Institute of Local Government Studies presentation on the Role of the Council

Report of the Councillors Commission

Improvement and Development Agency Member Development Charter

Report by Director of Central Services to Employment Panel on restructuring of Directorate.

Report on Community Engagement and Neighbourhood Panels by Heads of Community and Environmental Health, Administration and Policy & Strategic Services to Scrutiny Panels in November 2008.

REVIEW OF DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A working party chaired by Councillor K J Churchill, the special adviser to the Cabinet, has undertaken an extensive review of the Council's democratic structure. The review is the first comprehensive, formal analysis of the Council's democratic arrangements since it was implemented in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000. The review also had regard to recent and forthcoming legislative change that will necessitate some modification to the Council's executive and scrutiny arrangements.

The working party's final report is lengthy which reflects the depth of its investigations and discussions. This brief executive summary therefore accompanies the report and reproduces its recommendations.

The working party met on a total of 10 occasions, including a visit to a similarly sized shire district in Hampshire. Copious background information was obtained on the arrangements in comparable authorities, best practice, legislative requirements and Government proposals. Interviews were held with Chairmen, Members and officers to obtain their views on the current structure of the Council and how this might be improved.

The working party has found that the structure generally has performed well since its implementation. It found that Cabinet, committees and panels have been monitoring their own performance and changes and improvements have been made periodically to improve performance and effectiveness. Where further change was not thought to be necessary, the working party has said so in its report.

Elsewhere, the working party found scope for improvement, particularly in the functions and responsibilities of the executive, scrutiny, Council, partnerships, neighbourhood management and the role of the councillor. A series of recommendations have been made to propose improvements in Council effectiveness and promote the role of the Council as a community leader and enhance local democratic engagement.

The working party commends its recommendations to Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Panels, Corporate Governance Panel and Council as follows –

- (a) that the Council undertakes a public consultation exercise as soon as practicable with the intention of implementing an executive leader form of executive in response to the 2007 Act. Following completion of that exercise, the Council is invited to move to the new system with effect from the annual meeting in 2010 or earlier if practicable; (paragraph 6.23)
- (b) that the size of the Cabinet be increased to 10 members, inclusive of the leader; (paragraph 6.25)
- (c) that the deputy leader should not have responsibility for a portfolio of executive functions but should be responsible for deputising and supporting the leader and other executive councillors, as necessary, and for a Member training and mentoring programme on a cross party basis; (para. 6.27)

- (d) that the Cabinet should continue to contain members of the majority political party only; (para. 6.28)
- (e) that meetings of the Cabinet should be held in the late afternoon or early evening; (para. 6.30)
- (f) that short briefings of Cabinet members be held prior to Cabinet meetings only with a formal briefing by officers some 2/3 days previously. In addition, regular member only 'blue sky' meetings should be convened by Cabinet at regular intervals involving, where appropriate, other non-executive members; (para. 6.31)
- (g) that the present scrutiny arrangements be replaced by three new scrutiny panels with the following titles and terms of reference -

Social Well-Being

- portfolios for housing and public health, leisure and operational and countryside services;
- health & well-being and inclusive, safe & cohesive communities thematic groups of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership;
- safer & stronger communities priority of Cambridgeshire Vision (the local area agreement); and
- the housing that meets individuals' needs, safe, vibrant & inclusive communities and healthy living aims of the Council's corporate plan 'Growing Success'.

Environmental Well-Being

- portfolios for resources & policy and planning strategy and transport;
- children & young people, environment, and growth & infrastructure thematic groups of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership;
- managing growth and environmental sustainability priorities of Cambridgeshire Vision; and
- a clean, green & attractive place and developing sustainable communities aims of the Council's corporate plan 'Growing Success'.

Economic Well-Being

- portfolios for customer services & information technology and finance & environment;
- economic prosperity and equality & inclusion thematic groups of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership;
- a strong local economy, improving systems & practices, learning & developing and maintaining sound finances aims of the Council's corporate plan 'Growing Success' (para. 7.25)

- (h) that each of the overview and scrutiny panels comprises 10 members plus 2 co-opted persons with voting rights but without a right of call-in and that arrangements be made for a formal co-option scheme to be adopted to this effect; (para. 7.26)
- (i) that no change be made to the present system of no substitution on overview and scrutiny panels; (para. 7.27)

- (j) that no change should be made to the present arrangements in terms of the appointment and length of office of the chairmen and vice chairmen of the overview and scrutiny panels; (para. 7.28)
- (k) that no change be made to the frequency and starting time of meetings of the overview and scrutiny panels; (para. 7.29)
- (l) that every effort be made to highlight the importance of scrutiny and encourage both members and the wider public to play an active role in the scrutiny process; (para. 7.30)
- (m) that no change be made to the present arrangements for the call-in of executive decisions contained in the constitution; (para. 7.31)
- (n) that major policy decisions that are reserved to Council should be the subject of debate at Council meetings before public consultation and innovative ways used to brief Members on the subjects to stimulate debate. Arrangements should be made for single issue debates (in addition to normal business), with the opposition political party invited to choose the subject for debate at one meeting per annum; (para. 9.12)
- (o) that the annual refresh of the sustainable community strategy and periodic reports on the performance of the LSP should be submitted to Council for consideration and approval, with any detailed scrutiny referred to the relevant panel for investigation; (para. 9.13)
- (p) that meetings of the Council are chaired by a speaker elected by the Council itself at its annual meeting, that the position be open to any Member irrespective of any other position already held with the exception of membership of the Cabinet; (para. 9.15)
- (q) that public question time be introduced at Council meetings as set out in the procedure attached as annex B; (para. 9.16)
- (r) that the number of meetings of the Council be increased from 5 plus the annual meeting to six plus the annual meeting each year; (para. 9.17)
- (s) that meetings of the Council should commence at 6.30 p.m. for a trial period of twelve months; (para. 9.17)
- (t) that substitution is not introduced for non-executive meetings of the Council; (para. 10.7)
- (u) that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition etc. of the Development Control Panel; (para. 11.5)
- (v) that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc. of the Licensing and Protection Panel and Licensing Committee; (para. 12.6)
- (w) that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc. of the Standards Committee, other than a change in the time of its meetings to 6.30 p.m.; (para. 13.5)

- (x) that the executive councillors whose portfolios include finance and corporate governance should become ex officio members of the Corporate Governance Panel in place of the present arrangements for a maximum of 3 Cabinet members; (para. 14.6)
- (y) that the following be added to the terms of reference of the Corporate Governance Panel –
- comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and ensure it gives value for money
 - liaise with the Audit Commission over the appointment of the Council's external auditor
 - commission work from internal and external audit
monitor the Council's policies on 'Raising Concerns at Work', the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and the Council's complaints process; (para. 14.7)
- (z) that meetings of the Corporate Governance Panel commence at 6.30 p.m.; (para. 14.8)
- (aa) that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc. of the Employment Panel; (para. 15.4)
- (bb) that membership of the Appointments Panel comprise the chairman and vice chairman of the Employment Panel, deputy leader, relevant portfolio holder and a member of the majority opposition party; (para. 16.10)
- (cc) that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc. of the Elections Panel; (para. 17.3)
- (dd) that 6 neighbourhood forums open to the public be established in Huntingdonshire, chaired by district councillors and serviced by the District Council for the areas of Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives, Ramsey, North Huntingdonshire and West Huntingdonshire with the catchment areas shown on the plan attached as annex D to this report and the following terms of reference –
- advising on the setting of local priorities for partner agencies, including safety and policing policies, linked to the Huntingdonshire Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement,
 - engaging with the community on local planning issues (where appropriate),
 - seeking the accountability of local service providers,
 - developing and commissioning local community initiatives such as projects to develop local skills, raise aspirations, improve quality of life etc.,
 - helping to enable town and parish plan development and integrate town and parish priorities into area action plans' and
 - expressing views in response to consultation on proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act 2007; (para 20.24)
- (ee) that a panel should be established for each forum, chaired by a district councillor and serviced by the District Council, with the composition of each panel being a matter for local determination subject to a ceiling of 10

representatives of local authorities and other public sector bodies active in the area of that forum and with the following terms of reference –

- presenting information at forum meetings,
- resolving issues raised at forum meetings,
- moderating any requests for information/action that need to be referred elsewhere,
- monitoring the performance of forum,
- progress chasing requests for information/action, and
- reporting back to ensuing meetings.

The panels and forums will feed into the appropriate thematic group of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership; (para 20.25)

- (ff) that any proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act should be subject to consultation with the neighbourhood forums; (para 21.4)
- (gg) that no action be taken to implement delegated decision making, including delegated budgets, to ward councillors under the 2007 Act; (para 22.9)
- (hh) that there should be an annual review of the organisations to which representatives are appointed by the Council, prior to new or re-appointments being made; (para 23.3)
- (ii) that cross party discussions should take place between a representative of each of the political parties on the Council and the independent councillors before new or re-appointments to external organisations are made annually; (para 23.3)
- (jj) that councillors or members of the public newly appointed to an external organisation should receive a briefing note prepared by the Democratic Services Section before attending their first meeting of that organisation, explaining the implications of representation, the aims of the organisation etc.; (para 23.9)
- (kk) that external organisations to which representatives are appointed be requested to provide an induction process for those persons; (para 23.3)
- (ll) that an officer be named in respect of each external organisation to which the Council makes an appointment to whom the representative can turn for advice and support about membership of that body; (para 23.3)
- (mm) that representatives be encouraged to produce a short report at regular intervals of their membership of external organisations and a page be established on the intranet to enable such reports to be posted; (para 23.3)
- (nn) that job or role descriptions should be introduced for all positions that attract a special responsibility allowance, for an individual member, mentors and political group leaders as set out in annex G and that these be updated regularly; (para 24.6)
- (oo) that the Council signs the IDeA Member Development Charter and arranges for its implementation; (para 24.10)

- (pp) that the political parties and independent councillors be invited to nominate one or more mentors to assist newly elected councillors to familiarise themselves with their role and to provide support and advice in their first year of office; (para 24.11)
- (qq) that the use of the term champion to describe positions filled by councillors be dispensed with and their roles absorbed in the existing responsibilities of executive councillors, chairmen and ward councillors; (para 24.12)
- (rr) recommends that the Council approves a supplementary estimate to meet the cost of the additional allowances emerging from the review;(para 25.5) and
- (ss) that Cabinet investigates the possibility of additional funding from the LPSA reward grant to support the neighbourhood engagement process. (para. 25.8)



Your right to **speak** at meetings of the District Council



This leaflet explains how you can speak directly to Councillors at meetings of the District Council.

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on ☎ **01480 388388** and we will try to accommodate your needs.

If you wish to take part by speaking at meetings and you have special needs and requirements, please let us know beforehand.

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This leaflet explains how you can address meetings of the District Council. It outlines the Council's public participation policy and answers some questions you may have about procedures, and what to expect at the meeting itself. It is based on some simple rules formulated by the Council to make the system as fair and as easy to operate as possible.

What issues can I refer to?

So long as you live, work or own property in the District you may ask a question on any topic if there is no suspicion that the question is improper (*i.e. offensive, slanderous or might lead to disclosure of exempt or confidential information*). Furthermore, they should be capable of being adequately answered in 5 minutes.

When does Council meet?

Full Council meet on Wednesdays. There are 6 meetings each year plus the annual meeting in May. The meetings are held in various venues around the District, starting at 6.30 pm. The Agenda is published a week before the meetings, and can be viewed on the Council's website www.huntsdc.gov.uk.

What do I do if I wish to raise a question or make a statement to Council?

Members of the public wishing to ask a question at Council should provide the following details to the Council's Democratic Services Section by **no later than 7 days before the meeting** -

- ◆ Name and address and contact details of the person asking the question.
- ◆ The name of the organisation if the question is being asked on their behalf.
- ◆ Details of the question to be asked.
- ◆ The name or the position of the Member of the Council to whom it is to be put.
- ◆ Brief information about how the subject of the question relates to the person asking the question (*e.g. as a resident of the area, as a recipient of a service, the owner of a property affected by a proposal*).

Only one question may be asked by each member of the public or organisation and the question must relate to a single topic.



To whom may I address the question to

Questions may only be asked of the following:

- ◆ The Leader of the Council.
- ◆ A portfolio holder (*Cabinet Member*).
- ◆ The Chairman of a Scrutiny Committee.
- ◆ The Chairman of another Committee or Panel.

NB You cannot ask a question about an individual planning or licensing application or case or an investigation into a Member or Officer Code of Conduct issue.



What will happen at the meeting?

The following process will apply at the meeting:

- ◆ The Chairman will invite questions to be asked at the meeting in the order in which they are received by Democratic Services.
- ◆ The Chairman of the Council will invite the member of the public to put his/her question from the floor using the microphone provided.
- ◆ The member of the public will then ask their question. Up to a maximum of 2 minutes will be allowed in which to ask the question.
- ◆ The named Member will respond to the question which may take the form of –
 - (a) a direct oral response of up to a maximum of 2 minutes;
 - (b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
 - (c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written response circulated later to the questioner and made available to all Members of the Council and to the public.
- ◆ After the response has been given, the questioner has up to a further minute in which to put 1 supplementary question or seek clarification of the response to the original question. The supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply and must not introduce new material.
- ◆ The recipient of the original question then has up to a further 2 minutes in which to reply to the supplementary question.
- ◆ The Chairman of the Council may, in exceptional circumstances, extend the time either for a question or its response. The timing of questions and responses is controlled by the system of lights in the room.

Public speaking at full Council

- ◆ Any question which cannot be dealt with during public question time, either because of lack of time or because of the non-attendance of the member to whom it was to be put, will be dealt with by a written response.
- ◆ No debate will be allowed on any question or the response.

Will I receive a transcript of the response?

Yes, a transcript of Public Question Time will be made available to all Members of the Council and to the public following the meeting.

For further information please contact –

The Democratic Services Section
Central Services Directorate
Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon, PE29 3TN

For a location map of the District Council Offices please see the back page of this leaflet.

A NEW LOOK COUNCIL MEETING

Programme Meeting

- Frequency: 6 meetings per annum in the intervening months between Council meetings.
- Attendees: Speaker of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council, Leaders of opposition parties and independent councillors, appropriate officers.
- Purpose: To devise a forward plan of business for meetings of the Council on a rolling twelve months basis for approval by the Council.

The Council Meeting

- Frequency: 6 meetings per annum plus the annual meeting of the Council
- Time: Commencing at 6.30 p.m.
- Expected duration: No longer than 3.5 hours
- Venue: The Civic Suite, Pathfinder House

The Council Agenda

1. Opened by the Chairman of the Council, accompanied by any guests. 6.30 p.m.
2. Prayers 5 minutes
3. Chairman's Announcements 5 minutes
4. Hand over to Speaker of the Council to lead the remainder of the business.
5. Presentation of Petitions (if any). 10 minutes
6. Public Question Time to the Council. Questions to be answered by appropriate Member at invitation of Speaker. 15 minutes
7. Debate on choice of subject included in Council forward plan/Opposition debate day. 1 hour
8. White Paper proposals by the Executive/launch of policy initiative prior to consultation. 30 minutes
9. Any other business reserved to Council. 15 minutes
10. Monitoring of performance against local area agreement targets (half yearly) 15 minutes
11. Notices of Motion by Members 10 minutes
12. Reports and recommendations (if any) by Cabinet, committees, etc., providing opportunity to hold executive and other committees etc. to account. 30 minutes
13. Member Question Time (written or oral) 15 minutes
14. Close 10.00 p.m.

POSSIBLE SUBJECTS FOR DEBATE

Healthy Living

The future of hospital services in Huntingdonshire (guest speaker from NHS)
NHS proposals for 'super clinics' in Huntingdonshire (guest speaker from NHS)
How can we promote active lifestyles

A Clean, Green and Attractive Place

How do we deal with waste in Huntingdonshire
The impact of climate change in Huntingdonshire

Developing Communities Sustainably

What are the implications for growth in Huntingdonshire
How can we tackle highway congestion in Huntingdonshire
The impact of the guided bus in Huntingdonshire
The future of RAF Alconbury
The future of RAF Wyton

Housing That Meets Individuals' Needs

How can we tackle the problem of affordable housing

Safe, Vibrant and Inclusive Communities

Fear of crime in Huntingdonshire (guest speaker from Cambridgeshire Constabulary)
Anti-social behaviour in Huntingdonshire (guest speaker from Cambridgeshire Constabulary)

A Strong Local Economy

Employment opportunities in Huntingdonshire
Retail opportunities in Huntingdonshire (guest speaker from major retailer)
Improving the skills base of Huntingdonshire residents (guest speaker from Huntingdon Regional College)

Improving Systems and Practices

How can we promote local democracy
How can we promote community engagement
The role and effectiveness of the voluntary sector in Huntingdonshire (guest speaker from the voluntary sector)

Maintaining Sound Finances

The Council's financial strategy

Opposition Debate Day

Subject of choice by the Opposition party



Neighbourhood Panel Boundaries

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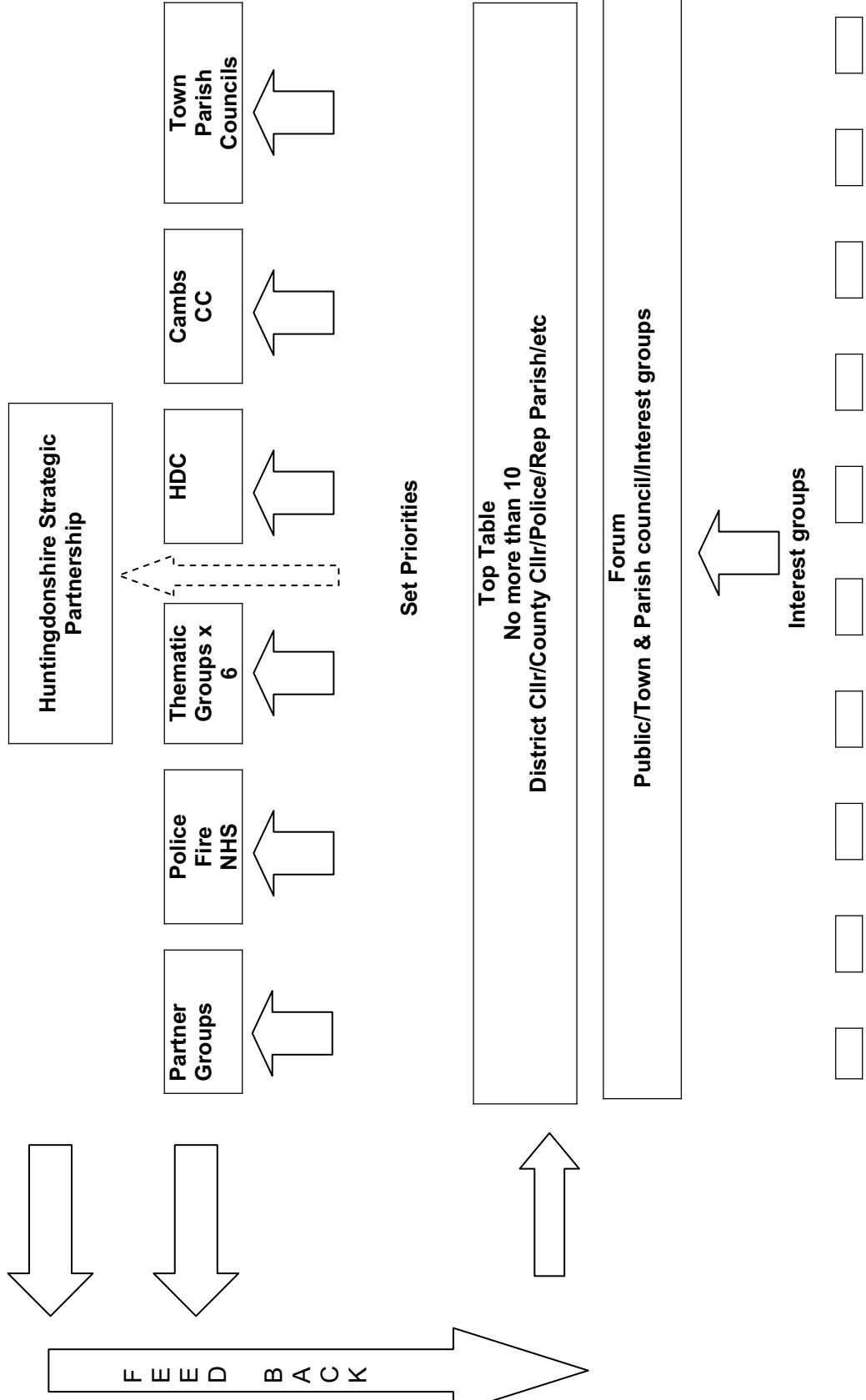


Neighbourhood Policing Panel Boundaries

-  Parishes
-  Wards

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COUNCILLORS

All Councillors, during the course of their term of office, will aim to acquire the following knowledge and skills which they will develop as their experience grows:

Knowledge – General

Huntingdonshire District Council

- An introduction to the Council, its democratic and directorate structures and relevant strategies and plans.

Code of Conduct

- The current Members Code of Conduct and the role of the Standards Committee in ensuring that the Code is adhered to.

The Constitution

- The Council's rule book of protocols and procedures.

Scrutiny

- The scrutiny procedure and the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

Partnerships

The local area agreement and partnership working through local strategic partnerships.

The Forward Plan

- The Cabinet's agenda for the ensuing four months.

Equalities, Customer Care and Risk Management

- Policies implemented by the Council.

Knowledge – Specific

Budgets and Finances

- Members should have a working knowledge of the Council's finances as they collectively have responsibility for approving the budget.

Planning

- Members should have a working knowledge of planning legislation, policies and procedures with Development Control Panel members having a more extensive and detailed knowledge.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Licensing

- Members should have a working knowledge of licensing legislation, policies and procedures and a knowledge of the various licensing functions that the Council is responsible for.

SKILLS

ICT – Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Email and Internet

- All Members should be able to make full use of technology, not only as a tool for preparing reports, researching topics of interest or making presentations but also for contacting their constituents, colleagues and officers.

Communication – Presentational Skills, Questioning Skills and Listening Skills

- Communication is used in every aspect of Members' roles and they should have the skills necessary to put across their point of view, the wishes of their constituents and information generally in a clear, concise and well planned manner that will make it easy to understand.

Written – Report Writing

- All Members should be able to prepare reports in a clear, concise and well planned format.

Media

- The ability to make use of the various forms of media, how to react to approaches from the media and when to encourage or discourage media interest.

Officers within the Democratic Services Section will assist Members to develop their abilities to meet the demands of their individual roles.

Desirable Skills and Abilities

Members should have the necessary attributes and skills -

- to represent the District Council and explain the policies and decisions affecting the individuals and communities in their ward,
- to represent their ward and the District Council on a range of external bodies,
- to communicate effectively with the local community, other councillors and Council officers,
- to be aware of the nature, scale and scope of the District Council and to develop and maintain a knowledge of its services, management arrangements, powers, duties and constraints,
- to develop good working relationships with other councillors and relevant officers of the Council,

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- to participate in meetings of the Council and committees/panels as required, so ensuring the effective and efficient operation of the Council,
- to act as ward representative and advocate for people resident in the ward and to undertake a councillor's call for action to bring forward issues on behalf of their constituents,
- to undertake casework for ward residents,
- to contribute to policy and strategy review and development,
- to act as a community leader,
- to support local partnerships and organisations,
- to campaign on local issues,
- to work in collaboration with officers to achieve solutions to local issues, and
- to use ICT effectively to communicate with officers and others.

Profile

A Member should:

- ensure that constituents have access to him/her by way of surgeries, use of modern technology, letter and telephone,
- develop and maintain links as required with the local MP, MEPs, county councillors and the towns or parishes situated in his/her electoral ward,
- participate in any political group to which he/she belongs, and
- devote as much time as is necessary and reasonable to fulfil the requirements of the role effectively.

A Member should have:

- an ability to manage and prioritise workloads effectively,
- an ability to work to deadlines,
- effective communication skills including written, spoken and ICT, and
- an ability to network and develop relationships within the Council, ward and wider community.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council will be appointed by the District Council in accordance with its Constitution and current legislation.

The Leader of the Council will represent the Council at all levels and will be an ambassador and its principal spokesman, representing the views of the Council at local, regional and Government forums.

Responsibilities

- chairing meetings of the Cabinet,
- creating and amending portfolios of executive responsibilities,
- allocating portfolios to executive councillors,
- acting as lead member on the Council's overall strategy,
- having overall responsibility for:
 - policy development,
 - the Council's budget and its expenditure,
 - effective and efficient delivery of the Council's corporate plan,
- promoting corporate membership of any appropriate body or organisation whose objectives are considered to be beneficial to the pursuit of the Council's own priorities,
- ensuring the work of the Cabinet is co-ordinated and progressed effectively,
- reporting on the work of the Cabinet to Council and responding to questions by Members in that forum,
- maintaining a cordial, effective and efficient working relationship with leaders of opposition groups, other Members and Council officers,
- ensuring that the Executive responds to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels,
- chairing the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership,
- representing the Council at partnership meetings as appropriate, and
- carrying out the duties set out in the job description of a councillor.

Profile

The Leader of the Council should:

- lead by example in accordance with the highest standards of probity in public life in all matters relating to the Council's Code of Conduct, related protocols and supporting guidance,

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- comply with any relative legislative provisions, best practice and good governance arrangements with regard to local government,
- be aware of any personal training needs and of other executive councillors and liaise with the relevant officers to ensure those needs are addressed,
- keep abreast of national best practice and new initiatives relating to local government so ensuring the continuous improvement of Council services, and
- devote as much time as is necessary and reasonable to fulfil the requirements of the role effectively.

The Leader of the Council should have:

- an ability to manage and prioritise workloads effectively,
- an ability to work to deadlines,
- effective communication skills, including listening, written, spoken and ICT,
- effective leadership skills,
- effective chairmanship skills,
- an ability to engage with the media including television, radio and press to promote the Council's profile,
- an ability to act as a mentor to other executive councillors,
- an ability to think analytically and make effective decisions, and
- an ability to read and assimilate copious amounts of information.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Each member of the Executive shall be referred to as an executive councillor and shall be allocated by the Leader a specific area of responsibility known as his portfolio.

The executive councillor will take the leading role in the development and implementation of the policies covered by his/her portfolio.

Shared Responsibility as a Member of the Cabinet

Each executive councillor has shared responsibility for:

- the co-ordination, promotion and implementation of the Council's statutory plans and strategies and for the setting of the Council's objectives, and priorities,
- the oversight, development, monitoring and promotion of all services provided by the Council within the appropriate performance management framework,
- ensuring that suitable and proper arrangements are made for the procurement, development, monitoring and promotion of all services relating to executive functions which are provided by or under contract to the Council,
- the promotion of the economic, social and environmental well-being of Huntingdonshire, its residents, businesses and other organisations,
- promoting the Council as a community leader within the public, voluntary and business sectors, including the development of good and effective working links and partnerships with all sectors,
- the promotion and implementation of an effective equal opportunity policy in relation both to the Council's employees and the delivery of services by the Council and other agencies,
- the promotion of services which:
 - improve the safety and well being of the community,
 - secure a sustainable and attractive environment,
 - create a prosperous local economy,
 - raise corporate standards and efficiency, and
- improving arrangements for communicating, consulting and maintaining a dialogue with residents and service users.

Responsibilities as an Executive Councillor

- to represent the Council or arrange for it to be represented in all national, regional and local forums relevant to the duties of the portfolio,
- to liaise with other executive councillors as required,
- advising the Council, Cabinet or Overview and Scrutiny Panels on matters concerning the implementation, monitoring and performance of services, initiatives and projects relating to the executive councillor's portfolio,

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- to bring forward revenue and capital budget proposals relevant to the responsibilities of the portfolio,
- to monitor the performance of portfolio functions and activities to ensure corporate objectives and targets are achieved,
- to represent the Council's views relating to the executive councillor's portfolio to other agencies, community interests and local media,
- to attend and answer questions at meetings of the Overview and Security Panel relevant to the executive councillor's portfolio,
- liaising with other Members and officers on strategic matters to ensure proper co-ordination, consistency and seamless delivery of services within Council policy,
- to chair, when required, meetings of Members and officers and Council partners,
- to assist in the development of work programmes, forward plans and the setting of agenda,
- to be consulted as part of any decision-making processes within the portfolio which have been delegated to Officers,
- reporting on the portfolio responsibilities to Council and responding to questions by Members in that forum,
- to be aware of the best practice of other leading authorities and to promote best practice and best value in the areas covered by the portfolio, and
- to carry out the duties set out in the job description for a Councillor.

Profile

An executive councillor should:

- comply with any legislative provisions, best practice and good governance arrangements with regard to his portfolio,
- Keep abreast of national best practice and new initiatives relating to the executive councillor's portfolio, and
- devote as much time as is necessary and reasonable to fulfil the requirements of the role effectively.

An executive councillor should have:

- an ability to prioritise workloads effectively,
- an ability to work to deadlines,

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- effective communication skills including listening, spoken, written and ICT,
- a keen knowledge and interest in the areas of his own portfolio,
- effective chairmanship skills,
- an ability to read and assimilate information quickly and effectively,
- an ability to discuss financial matters and the Council's budget with confidence, and
- an ability to engage effectively with the media.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Responsibilities

In addition to his shared responsibility as an executive councillor, the Deputy Leader shall have the following specific responsibilities

- to deputise for the Leader of the Council in the latter's absence,
- to undertake the individual responsibilities of any executive councillor in his/her absence,
- to monitor on behalf of the Leader the corporate performance of the Cabinet and executive councillors;
- to organise the appointment of representatives to external organisations and bodies within the remit of the Cabinet,
- to liaise with the Leaders of opposition parties on the choice of representatives to external organisations and bodies,
- to liaise with the Speaker of the Council on the business to be conducted at Council meetings,
- to be a member of the Appointments Panel for the appointment of directors and heads of service, and
- to ensure that a Member mentoring and training programme is provided for all Members of the District Council.

The Deputy Leader shall not have individual responsibility for a portfolio, other than by way of undertaking the responsibilities for an executive councillor who is absent.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

The role of the Chairman is to act as the leading citizen in Huntingdonshire and to represent the Council at the various functions which the Council might host or to which it might be represented of a civic nature.

The main areas of duty are:

- Ceremonial
- Procedural

Ceremonial

- to act as the Council's civic head and represent the Council during the Chairman's term of office,
- to promote public involvement in the Council's activities,
- to act as an ambassador for the Council and for Huntingdonshire both inside and outside the District and to attend such civic and ceremonial functions as the Council and he determines appropriate.
- to promote the Council and Huntingdonshire in a positive manner,
- to act as a link between the Council and various groups and organisations,
- to fund raise for a charity or charities of his/her choice during his/her term of office,
- to attend civic functions as the Council's representative,
- to liaise with the Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff on visits by members of the Royal Family to the District, and
- to perform opening ceremonies as appropriate.

Procedural

- to open meetings of the Council and to make civic announcements,
- to deputise for the Speaker of the Council in his absence by chairing meetings of the Council, and
- to exercise a casting vote at meetings of the Council where there is otherwise an equality of votes.

Profile

The Chairman of the Council should:

- have excellent speaking skills to enable him/her to make speeches at formal and public ceremonies, and

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- devote as much time as is necessary and reasonable to fulfil the requirements of the role effectively.

The **Chairman of the Council** should have:

- an ability to chair meetings effectively,
- an ability to assimilate information swiftly and effectively,
- excellent interpersonal skills and an ability to deliver speeches effectively,
- an ability to take an active part in functions managed by other authorities, organisations and individuals and to host those run by the Council,
- effective communication skills including listening, written, spoken and ICT,
- a keen knowledge of and interest in the District and its people, and
- a willingness to mentor the Vice-Chairman as his successor.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

SPEAKER OF THE COUNCIL

The role of the Speaker of the Council is to encourage and promote high standards of debate in meetings of the Council and to promote the role of the Council as the forum for local democracy in Huntingdonshire.

Responsibilities

- to promote meetings of the Council as the focus for local democracy in Huntingdonshire,
- to liaise with the Deputy Leader of the Council and the leaders of opposition groups and the independent councillors on the business to be conducted at Council meetings,
- to manage the agenda for meetings of the Council in a flexible and creative manner to stimulate healthy debate and encourage public attendance,
- to encourage the public to deliver and speak to petitions submitted to the Council,
- to encourage and promote public question time at meetings of the Council,
- to act as an independent and impartial arbiter of discussion at meetings of the Council, irrespective of political affiliation,
- interpret and apply the Council Procedure Rules at meetings of the Council,
- to be accountable to the Council as a whole,
- to work effectively with the Leader, Chairman, Members and officers of the District Council,
- to attend briefings for meetings convened by appropriate officers supporting the Council, and
- to carry out the duties set out in the job description for a councillor.

Profile

The Speaker of the Council should:

- thoroughly familiarise him/herself with the Council's constitution and in particular the Council Procedure Rules,
- have excellent chairmanship skills,
- have an ability to encourage participation to promote high standards of debate, and
- devote as much time as is necessary and reasonable to fulfil the requirements of the role effectively.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Speaker of the Council should have:

- effective leadership skills,
- effective chairmanship skills,
- an ability to assimilate information swiftly and effectively,
- excellent presentational and motivational skills, and
- effective communication skills including listening, written, spoken and ICT.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chairman of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel is responsible for the effective management and running of the Panel's business which is:

- to hold the executive to account,
- to make a pro-active and positive contribution to policy development, and
- to monitor the performance of the Council and other partners contributing to the sustainable community strategy.

Responsibilities

- to effectively chair meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, ensuring effective management of the Panel's deliberations,
- to direct the Panel's work programme,
- to present to the Cabinet reports of individual scrutiny reviews,
- to present and monitor progress in respect of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's work programme,
- to consider decisions and relevant reports from the Cabinet,
- In conjunction with the Scrutiny Manager, to lead the Panel in the drawing up of terms of reference for individual scrutiny reviews,
- to encourage involvement from all Members of the Panel and to promote participation in scrutiny reviews.
- to facilitate access to the necessary information for any review, namely:
 - research facilities
 - expert witnesses
 - specialist advice
 - comment and representation from the public
 - officer support,
- to ensure that Panel Members benefit from appropriate training and development to deal effectively with the Panel's business,
- to meet at pre-arranged intervals with Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of other Scrutiny Panels to ensure that work programmes are properly co-ordinated, cross-panel working is facilitated and that there is no duplication of topic matter at review level,
- to ensure that reports are drafted to a high standard, focused, relevant and timely and presented to Cabinet, the public, other stakeholders and the media,

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- reporting on the work of the Panel to Council and responding to questions by Members in that forum,
- to attend briefings for meetings convened by appropriate officers supporting the panel,
- to develop and maintain effective links with his/her Vice Chairman, the executive, the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of other Scrutiny Panels, other Members of the Council, the Council's officers, the public and stakeholders, and
- to carry out the duties set out in the job description for a Councillor.

Profile

The Chairman of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel should:

- keep abreast of the Council's policies, plans and strategies within the remit of his/her Panel,
- be aware of any personal training needs and those of other members of the Panel and ensure that appropriate training is provided and taken up by Overview and Scrutiny Panel members,
- encourage use of the councillor's call for action to raise awareness of issues of local concern, and
- devote as much time as is necessary and reasonable to fulfil the requirements of the role effectively.

The Chairman of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel should have:

- an ability to prioritise workloads effectively,
- an ability to work to deadlines,
- an ability to judge when to close down an issue or inquiry and move on to the next,
- effective communication skills, including listening, written, spoken and ICT,
- a keen knowledge and interest in the areas of his/her own Panel's remit,
- an ability to challenge constructively and an inquiring mind, and
- chairmanship skills specifically relevant to Scrutiny Panels.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN OF THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PANEL

The Chairman of the Development Control Panel will be appointed to chair, lead and co-ordinate the Panel in an effective, open and transparent way. He/she will be expected to structure the business of the Panel and determine priorities in the light of the volume of work presented to the Panel.

Responsibilities

- to effectively chair meetings of the Development Control Panel,
- to understand the national, regional and local planning perspectives,
- to develop a thorough understanding of the:
 - development process
 - transportation issues
 - sustainability issues
 - legal and probity framework relating to planning and development,
- to encourage consultation with the public and special interest groups within the context of the Council's planning policies,
- to communicate constructively with Members of the Council with regard to development proposals that impact on their area,
- to work effectively with the Leader, relevant executive councillor, Members and officers of the District Council,
- reporting on the work of the Panel to Council and responding to questions by Members in that forum,
- to attend briefings for meetings convened by appropriate officers supporting the Panel,
- to be consulted as part of any decision-making processes within the remit of the Panel which have been delegated to officers,
- to ensure that planning matters are dealt with in a positive, constructive and non-partisan manner which enhances the image and reputation of the Council, and
- To carry out the duties set out in the job description for a Councillor.

Profile

The Chairman of the Development Control Panel should:

- keep abreast of and promote compliance with current legislation,
- be aware of any personal training needs and those of other members of the Panel and ensure that appropriate training is provided and taken up by Development Control Panel members, and

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- devote as much time as is necessary and reasonable to fulfil the requirements of the role effectively.

The Chairman of the Development Control Panel should have:

- effective leadership skills,
- effective chairmanship skills,
- an ability to assimilate information swiftly and effectively,
- effective decision making skills,
- an ability to engage with and manage the public during meetings of the Development Control Panel, and
- effective communication skills including listening, written, spoken and ICT.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN OF LICENSING COMMITTEE/LICENSING AND PROTECTION PANEL

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee and Licensing and Protection Panel will be appointed to chair, lead and co-ordinate the Committee and Panel in an effective, open and transparent way. He/she will be expected to structure the business of the Committee and Panel and to determine priorities in the light of the volume of work presented to those bodies.

Responsibilities

- to effectively chair the Licensing Committee and Licensing and Protection Panel,
- to effectively structure the business of the Committee and Panel,
- to determine priorities in the light of the volume of work presented to the Committee and Panel,
- to understand the context and legislative framework in relation to the Council's responsibilities for licensing, including alcohol licensing, gambling, taxis, public charitable collections, animal welfare and food,
- to understand the context and legislative framework in relation to statutory nuisances, air quality and contaminated land;
- to encourage consultation with the public and special interest groups within the context of the Council's policies,
- to determine, through the medium of sub committees and sub groups, applications for licences,
- to ensure that licensing matters are dealt with in a positive, constructive and non-partisan manner which enhances the image and reputation of the Council,
- to attend briefings for meetings convened by appropriate officers supporting the Committee or Panel,
- reporting on the work of the Committee and Panel to Council and responding to questions by Members in that forum,
- to be consulted as part of any decision-making processes within the remit of the Committee and Panel which have been delegated to officers,
- To work effectively with the Leader, relevant executive councillor, other Members and officers of the District Council, and
- To carry out the duties set out in the job description for a Councillor.

Profile

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee and Licensing and Protection Panel should:

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- keep abreast of and promote compliance with current legislation,
- be aware of any personal training needs and those of other members of the Committee and Panel and ensure that appropriate training is provided and taken up by Committee and Panel members, and
- devote as much time as is necessary and reasonable to fulfil the requirements of the role effectively.

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee and Licensing and Protection Panel should have:

- effective leadership skills,
- effective chairmanship skills,
- an ability to assimilate information swiftly and effectively,
- effective decision making skills,
- an ability to engage with and manage applicants and the public during meetings of sub committees and sub groups, and
- effective communication skills including listening, written, spoken and ICT.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN OF THE EMPLOYMENT PANEL

The Chairman of the Employment Panel will be appointed to chair, lead and co-ordinate the Panel in an effective, open and transparent way. He/she will be expected to structure the business of the Panel and determine priorities in the light of the volume of work presented to the Panel.

Responsibilities

- to effectively chair meetings of the Employment Panel,
- to represent the Council as the employer at meetings of the Employment Liaison Advisory Group and to chair meetings of that body as appropriate,
- to have an understanding of employment legislation,
- to promote effective communications and joint consultation between the Council as an employer and its employees,
- to assist in the resolution of differences between the Council and its employees,
- to promote the training, development and welfare requirement of the Council's employees,
- to promote high standards of conduct by the Council's employees and compliance with the Employees Code of Conduct,
- to work effectively with the Leader, Members and officers of the District Council,
- reporting on the work of the Panel to Council and responding to questions by Members in that forum,
- to attend briefings for meetings convened by appropriate officers supporting the Panel,
- to be consulted as part of any decision-making processes within the remit of the Panel which have been delegated to officers,
- to be a member of the Appointments Panel for the appointment of directors and heads of service,
- to ensure that employment matters are dealt with in a positive, constructive and non-partisan manner which enhances the image and reputation of the Council, and
- to carry out the duties set out in the job description for a councillor.

Profile

The Chairman of the Employment Panel should:

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- keep abreast of and promote compliance with current legislation,
- be aware of any personal training needs and those of other members of the Panel and ensure that appropriate training is provided and taken up by Employment Panel members, and
- devote as much time as is necessary and reasonable to fulfil the requirements of the role effectively.

The Chairman of the Employment Panel should have:

- effective leadership skills,
- effective chairmanship skills,
- an ability to assimilate information swiftly and effectively,
- effective decision making skills,
- an ability to engage with employees during meetings of the Employees Liaison Advisory Group, and
- effective communication skills including listening, written, spoken and ICT.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL

The Chairman of the Corporate Governance Panel will be appointed to chair, lead and co-ordinate the Panel in an effective, open and transparent way. He/she will be expected to structure the business of the Panel and determine priorities in the light of the volume of work presented to the Panel.

Responsibilities

- to effectively chair meetings of the Corporate Governance Panel,
- to ensure that the financial management of the Council is adequate and effective,
- to ensure that the Council has a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the management of risk,
- to consider the Council's code of corporate governance and approve the annual statement and statement of accounts,
- to monitor the internal and external audit plans and liaise with the external auditors on the Council's internal controls and corporate governance arrangements,
- to monitor compliance with the Council's customer feedback procedure and consider reports emerging either through the feedback system or the Local Government Ombudsman,
- to monitor the effectiveness of and compliance with the Council's whistleblowing policy,
- to oversee the Council's constitutional arrangements,.
- to work effectively with the Leader, Members and officers of the District Council,
- to attend briefings for meetings convened by appropriate officers supporting the Panel,
- reporting on the work of the Panel to Council and responding to questions by Members in that forum,
- to be consulted as part of any decision-making processes within the remit of the Panel which have been delegated to officers, and
- to carry out the duties set out in the job description for a councillor.

Profile

The Chairman of the Corporate Governance Panel should:

- keep abreast of and promote compliance with current legislation,

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- be aware of any personal training needs and those of other members of the Panel and ensure that appropriate training is provided and taken up by Corporate Governance Panel members, and
- devote as much time as is necessary and reasonable to fulfil the requirements of the role effectively.

The Chairman of the Corporate Governance Panel should have:

- effective leadership skills,
- effective chairmanship skills,
- an ability to assimilate information swiftly and effectively,
- effective decision making skills,
- an ability to engage with internal and external auditors, and
- effective communication skills including listening, written, spoken and ICT.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Standards Committee will be an independent person who is not an elected Member of the District Council, nor a member or employee of another local authority. He/she will be expected to structure the business of the Panel and determine priorities in the light of the volume of work presented to the Panel.

Responsibilities

- effective chairing of meetings of the Standards Committee.
- effective chairing of hearings into cases of alleged breaches of the Members Code of Conduct,
- ensuring high standards of behaviour by District Council Members and members of town and parish councils in Huntingdonshire,
- maintaining effective and proper links with the Leader of the Council, leaders of opposition groups, all Members, other Independent Members and parish council representatives of the Standards Committee, the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer,
- liaising with the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer as appropriate,
- to attend briefings for meetings convened by appropriate officers supporting the Committee,
- reporting on the work of the Committee to Council and responding to questions by Members in that forum,

Profile

The Chairman of the Standards Committee should lead by example in accordance with the highest standards of probity in public life in all matters relating to the Council's Members Code of Conduct, related protocols and supporting guidance. In particular he should -

- have accurate and current knowledge of legislation relating to Members and the Code of Conduct,
- have accurate and current knowledge of the policies covering gifts and hospitality and notification of financial and other interests, and
- devote as much time as is necessary and reasonable to fulfil the requirements of the role effectively.

The Chairman of the Standards Committee should have:

- an ability to prioritise workloads effectively,

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- the flexibility to make provision for unplanned issues,
- effective communication skills including listening, written, spoken and ICT,
- effective chairmanship skills,
- an understanding of the relevant legislation and how to carry out investigations and determinations in relation to breaches of the Members Code of Conduct,
- effective leadership skills,
- an ability to think analytically, and
- effective decision-making skills.

The Chairman of the Standards Committee needs to undertake the following functions of the Committee -

- interview witnesses and others,
- ensure the production of appropriate recommendations to the Council,
- ensure changes in legislation are considered by the Committee and necessary arrangements are put in place,
- be aware of any personal training needs and those of other members of the Committee and ensure that appropriate training is provided and taken up by Standards Committee members,
- promote the highest standards of behaviour of the elected Members of the District Council and all town and parish councils in Huntingdonshire, and
- encourage and assist in the provision of training in the Members Code of Conduct for all elected councillors of the District Council and town and parish councillors in Huntingdonshire.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN OF THE ELECTIONS PANEL

The Chairman of the Elections Panel will be appointed to chair, lead and co-ordinate the Panel in an effective, open and transparent way. He/she will be expected to structure the business of the Panel and determine priorities in the light of the volume of work presented to the Panel.

Responsibilities

- to effectively chair meetings of the Elections Panel,
- to monitor the electoral arrangements of the District Council and the town and parish councils in Huntingdonshire,
- to ensure the promotion of high standards of electoral probity at elections in Huntingdonshire,
- to encourage high levels of turnout at elections in Huntingdonshire,
- to liaise with the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer on the efficient conduct of elections in Huntingdonshire,
- to work effectively with the Leader, Members and officers of the District Council,
- to attend briefings for meetings convened by appropriate officers supporting the Panel,
- reporting on the work of the Panel to Council and responding to questions by Members in that forum,
- to be consulted as part of any decision-making processes within the remit of the Panel which have been delegated to officers, and
- to carry out the duties set out in the job description for a councillor.

Profile

The Chairman of the Elections Panel should:

- keep abreast of and promote compliance with current legislation,
- be aware of any personal training needs and those of other members of the Panel and ensure that appropriate training is provided and taken up by Elections Panel members, and
- devote as much time as is necessary and reasonable to fulfil the requirements of the role effectively.

The Chairman of the Elections Panel should have:

- effective leadership skills,

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- effective chairmanship skills,
- an ability to assimilate information swiftly and effectively,
- effective decision making skills,
- an ability to engage with internal and external auditors, and
- effective communication skills including listening, written, spoken and ICT.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

VICE CHAIRMEN

A Vice Chairman shall be appointed by the Council and by each of the Council's committees and panels, with the exception of the Cabinet in which case the Vice Chairman shall be the Deputy Leader who shall be appointed by the Council. The Vice Chairman of the Standards Committee shall be a member of the Council.

Responsibilities

In addition to his shared responsibility as a member of the Council and the appropriate committee or panel, the Vice Chairman shall have the following specific responsibilities -

- to deputise for the Chairman of the Council, committee or panel in the latter's absence,
- to undertake the individual responsibilities of the Chairman of the Council, committee or panel in the latter's absence, and
- to attend briefings for meetings convened by appropriate officers supporting the Council, committee or panel.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

GROUP LEADERS

The Council recognises the key leadership role played by the leaders of all political groups on the Council and the importance of their commitment to cross-party working.

Responsibilities

- to provide leadership in their own party group,
- to act as principal political spokesman for their group,
- to nominate Members of their group to serve on committees and panels in accordance with proportionality rules.
- To take part in cross party discussion on the appointment of representative to outside bodies,
- to consult with other group leaders as required,
- to ensure high standards of probity and conduct by members of their group and levels of attendance are maintained,
- to encourage healthy debate at meetings of the Council and in committees and panels,
- to promote compliance with the Code of Recommended Local Authority Publicity by members of their group,
- to ensure that mentors are nominated by their group to assist newly elected councillors in their first year of office, and
- to carry out duties set out in the job description of a councillor.

Profile

The Group Leader should:

- keep abreast of and comply with current legislation,
- be aware of any training needs of himself/herself and other members of the Group and ensure that appropriate training is provided and taken up, and
- devote as much time as is necessary and reasonable to fulfil the requirements of the role effectively

The Group Leader should have:

- effective leadership skills, and
- good communication skills.

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MEMBER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER SELF ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

This template aims to help councils that sign up to aspire to the principles of the Charter for Member Development. It provides a guide for self assessment and for drawing up the action plan that must accompany the statement of commitment. Councils wanting to use their own action planning format should do so.

Whichever style of action plan is used it should identify:

- future planned action
- when action is expected to be completed
- who is responsible for the action
- who is responsible for monitoring implementation of the action plan

Councils may find it useful to have a team of people responsible for pulling the action plan together, such as the all party member development group with officer support.

Those responsible for drawing up the action plan should look at each point on the 'Guidelines' and 'What this means in practice' and ask

1. 'What evidence do we have that suggests we are following good practice?'
2. What action do we need to take, if any, to follow good practice or continuously improve? (Taking account of any resource implications and constraints)
3. When will this action be taken by?
4. Who will be responsible for the action?

A named person should be identified as being responsible for monitoring the action plan.

The 'Examples of Evidence' given in the Good Practice Guidance may help in identifying action to take, however the examples are not a requirement and councils must decide on action that best fits their particular circumstances.

SELF ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

1. Commitment to member development

GUIDELINES	WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE	EVIDENCE / ACTION	BY WHEN	BY WHO
<p>Top political and managerial leadership commitment to development of elected members</p>	<p>The political and managerial leadership can describe strategies put into place to develop elected members in order to improve the council's performance.</p>	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p><i>Action:</i></p>		
<p>Policy statement</p>	<p>The council has a written statement, issued to all members, specifying its policy on member development in terms of equality of opportunity, priority development areas and named member and officers responsible.</p>	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p><i>Action:</i></p>		
<p>Equality of opportunity and access to learning and development</p>	<p>The political and managerial leadership can describe specific actions that they take to ensure equality of opportunity, and access to learning, in the development of elected members.</p>	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p><i>Action:</i></p>		
<p>Budget</p>	<p>The council has allocated a budget for member development which is adequate to address priority and other development needs.</p>	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p><i>Action:</i></p>		

GUIDELINES	WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE	EVIDENCE / ACTION	BY WHEN	BY WHO
Officer resource support	An officer of the council has responsibility, which is time resourced and in their job description, for co-ordinating member development.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p><i>Action</i></p>		
Dissemination of learning	The political and managerial leadership can provide examples of learning among elected members, and of promoting exchange of information, as part of encouraging a learning organisation culture.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p><i>Action</i></p>		

2. Strategic approach to member development

GUIDELINES	WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE	EVIDENCE / ACTION	BY WHEN	BY WHO
2.1 Member led strategy	Representative members are involved in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of member development strategies, possibly through an established all party task group or other all party committee.	<i>Evidence:</i> <i>Action</i>		
2.2 Linkage to council corporate plan	Political and managerial leadership are actively involved in identifying priority organisational development needs which link council's aims and objectives to the development of elected members.	<i>Evidence:</i> <i>Action</i>		
2.3 Member roles clearly set out	The various representative roles of elected members are clearly specified and members are able to describe how they contribute to achieving the council's objectives.	<i>Evidence:</i> <i>Action</i>		
2.4 Process for identification of needs at individual and Council wide level	The council has a structured process for regularly assessing elected member development needs at the individual and council wide levels.	<i>Evidence:</i> <i>Action</i>		

GUIDELINES	WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE	EVIDENCE / ACTION	BY WHEN	BY WHO
2.5 Structured and timely approach to promoting development opportunities	Members confirm that they receive appropriate and adequate notice of development opportunities to allow them to plan in advance.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p><i>Action</i></p>		
2.6 Appropriately learn with external partners	Political and managerial leadership can provide examples of action taken to encourage joint development opportunities for elected members and external partner organisations.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p><i>Action</i></p>		
2.7 Strategy for Induction	Elected members who are new to the council, and those new to a particular role, confirm that they received a structured and effective induction.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p><i>Action</i></p>		
2.8 Addresses political leadership and team development	Top political leadership are actively involved in defining the council's approach both to effective political leadership (for current and prospective leaders) and to team development.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p><i>Action</i></p>		

GUIDELINES	WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE	EVIDENCE / ACTION	BY WHEN	BY WHO
2.9 Mechanisms for evaluation, and informing future plans, identified.	The council has systems in place that effectively evaluate the benefits from elected member development and identify areas for improvement.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p><i>Action</i></p>		

3. Member learning and development plan in place

GUIDELINES	WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE	EVIDENCE / ACTION	BY WHEN	BY WHO
3.1 Addresses development priorities	The council draws up plans to meet, training and development needs identified as a priority in helping it to achieve corporate aims and objectives.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Action</p>		
3.2 Identify what development activities should achieve	The council can demonstrate that elected member training and development activities have well defined and focused objectives.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Action</p>		
3.3 Sets out how, when, where and who is responsible	The elected member training and development plan follows a developed planning process including who is responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the plan.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Action</p>		

GUIDELINES	WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE	EVIDENCE / ACTION	BY WHEN	BY WHO
3.4 Takes account of access to development opportunities	The council organises events at various times, to allow for access by those with work or family commitments, and utilises a range of methods to meet learning needs.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Action</p>		
3.5 Linkage between Individual plans and the council's corporate and other plans	Individual elected members can describe their learning needs and how these link into function and corporate aims and objectives.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Action</p>		
3.6 Representative elected members consulted	The council has an open and constructive relationship on elected member development with representatives from the various political / non-political groups.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Action</p>		

4. Learning and development is effective in building capacity

GUIDELINES	WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE	EVIDENCE / ACTION	BY WHEN	BY WHO
4.1 Members learn and develop effectively	The top political and managerial leadership can consistently give tangible examples of how development of elected members has improved the performance of the council, functions and individuals.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Action</p>		
4.2 Learning is shared with other elected members and where appropriate with officers and stakeholders.	Elected members can give examples of how they have been encouraged to learn, and to share the learning with others, so as to improve their own performance and that of others.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Action</p>		
4.3 Investment in learning and development is evaluated in terms of benefits and impact	The council can demonstrate that it periodically evaluates the cost and benefits of member training and development and the impact it has had on performance.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Action</p>		

<p>4.4 Identifies (and implements) improvements to learning and development activities</p>	<p>People confirm that the council is genuinely committed to the continuous development of elected members and can give examples of relevant and timely improvements that have been made to development activities.</p>	<p><i>Evidence:</i> Action</p>	
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5. Elected Member Development promotes work life balance and citizenship

GUIDELINES	WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE	EVIDENCE / ACTION	BY WHEN	BY WHO
5.1 Assists those with family responsibilities.	The council regularly assesses how it can assist those with family responsibilities in terms of suitable allowances and support.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Action</p>		
5.2 Reviews how council business is conducted to allow for equality of access to key political decision making mechanisms	The council regularly reviews how it conducts its business, in terms of when meetings are held and access based on a clear understanding of diversity, so that elected members or potential members, are able to take part in the democratic process.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Action</p>		
5.3 Holds events for the community to encourage people to become community leaders.	The council actively encourages citizenship, and publicises the role of elected members as community leaders, as part of promoting local democracy and encouraging under represented groups to take up office.	<p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Action</p>		

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DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE REVIEW

Timetable for Implementation

Despatch of draft report to all Members	6 th March 2009
Member seminars on contents of report	17 th & 24 th March 2009
Cabinet	2 nd April 2009
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery)	7 th April 2009
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support)	14 th April 2009
Corporate Governance Panel	To be arranged
Council	22 nd April 2009
Implementation of changes with the exception of –	13 th May 2009
Start of consultation process on choice of elected mayor/executive leader (Commencement in April with final decision in September.)	
Adoption of proposals for the co-option of independent persons to the Overview & Scrutiny Panels (Commencement in April with adoption and implementation in September.)	
Adoption of Member Development Charter (July)	
Consultation on proposals for neighbourhood engagement (Commencement in April with final proposals in September.)	

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
(SERVICE DELIVERY)**

7TH APRIL 2009

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

14TH APRIL 2009

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007
– IMPLICATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
(Report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to acquaint Members with details of recent legislative changes affecting overview and scrutiny.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Secretary of State has finally made an Order bringing into force those aspects of the Local Government and Public involvement in Health Act 2007 that affect Overview and Scrutiny. The changes are summarised below.

3. CHANGES

The Councillor Call for Action

- 3.1 In future, any Member of a council will be able to refer to an overview and scrutiny committee any local government matter which is relevant to the functions of that committee. In addition, any Member may request that a local government matter relating to his Ward shall be included in the agenda for, and discussed at, a meeting of any of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panels. In considering whether or not to exercise any of its powers, the committee must have regard to whether it is an excluded matter under the legislation or as defined by the Secretary of State. The committee must provide the member with a copy of any resulting report or recommendations either to the Council or the Cabinet on the CCFA and if the committee decides not to exercise its powers in relation to the matter, it must notify the Member of its decision and the reasons for it.
- 3.2 The changes will require alterations to both the Council Procedure Rules and the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules which currently enable any Member to raise an item on a committee agenda. As both Rules are contained in the Constitution, the Corporate Governance Panel and the Council will be required to approve the changes. Annex A contains the changes proposed.
- 3.3 Under the legislation, an Overview and Scrutiny Panel can decide not to include a CCFA on an agenda. It is recommended that authority to reject a CCFA be delegated to the Head of Democratic and Central Services after consultation with the appropriate Panel Chairman.
- 3.4 A guide to the use of the Councillor Call for Action has also been prepared which is reproduced at Annex B which the Panel are invited to approve.

- 3.5 The Councillor Call for Action for crime and disorder matters under the Police and Justice Act 2006 has yet to be implemented.

Delegated Decision-Making

- 3.6 Councils will be able to delegate decision making to individual councillors in relation to their ward. An overview and scrutiny committee may require a Member who has had functions delegated to him / her to attend before it to answer questions relating to the exercise of that function. This issue has been considered by a Working Party established by the Cabinet to undertake a review of the Council's democratic structure. The Working Party's report appears elsewhere on the Agenda in which it is being recommended that functions are not delegated to individual Ward Councillors.

Power to Require Information

- 3.7 The Secretary of State can make regulations as to which information can be requested from partner authorities and which cannot be disclosed but the regulations have yet to be made. Specific provision is made for district council overview and scrutiny committees to request information from the relevant county council and partner authorities of that county council, other than a police authority, or a chief officer of police. Overview and scrutiny committees can require partner authorities to have regard to their reports or recommendations.

Reports and Recommendations

- 3.8 Where an overview and scrutiny committee makes a report or recommendations to the authority or the executive, the committee may decide to publish the report or recommendations and, by notice in writing, require the authority or executive to consider the report or recommendations and to respond to the overview and scrutiny committee indicating what (if any) action the authority or the executive proposes to take. If the overview and scrutiny committee has published the report or recommendations, the authority or executive must publish the response within two months beginning with the date on which the authority or executive received the report or recommendations or (if later) the notice.
- 3.9 An overview and scrutiny committee may by notice in writing to a relevant partner authority, require the partner authority to have regard to a report or recommendation in exercising their functions. Where the report or recommendations relate to a local improvement target which is specified in a local area agreement, it is the duty of the relevant partner authority to comply with the requirement. This does not apply if the relevant partner authority is a health service body or the Police.
- 3.10 The overview and scrutiny committee or the local authority, in publishing a document or providing a copy of a document to a relevant partner authority must exclude any confidential information, and may exclude any relevant exempt information.

- 3.11 The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision under which a district council may confer on an overview and scrutiny committee the power to make reports and recommendations to the related county council or that council's executive on any local improvement target which relates to that county council and which is specified in a local area agreement. Again, this also applies to any other authority which is a partner of that county council, other than the police.
- 3.12 Discussions are taking place between officers of the County and District Councils in the County on the preparation of a scrutiny protocol and this will be brought to the attention of the Panels when it has been drafted.

Joint Overview and Scrutiny

- 3.13 County and District Council can now make arrangements for joint overview and scrutiny committees, again subject to regulations to be made by the Secretary of State. Again, discussions are taking place on how the changes will affect the Joint Accountability Committee which currently scrutinises achievement of the local area agreement in Cambridgeshire.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The new powers have been promised for some eighteen months since the 2007 Act was passed. Although they come into effect in April 2009, the specific powers in relation to crime and disorder scrutiny have yet to be enacted. The regulations in relation to requiring information from others and on joint scrutiny have still to be issued, as has the guidance on the Councillor Call for Action.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 The Panels are

RECOMMENDED

- (a) to note the changes outlined in this report that take effect from 1st April 2009;
- (b) to authorise the Head of Democratic and Central Services, after consultation with the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairman to determine whether a Councillor Call for Action shall be included on a Panel Agenda and which Panel is the most appropriate;
- (c) to recommend the Corporate Governance Panel and Council to approve the changes to the Council Procedure Rules and Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules as set out in Annex A; and
- (d) to approve the guide for the Councillor Call for Action in Annex B attached.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Statutory Instrument 2008 No. 3110 (C.134).

Councillor Call for Action Best Practice Guidance issued by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the Improvement and Development Agency.

Contact Officer: A Roberts, Democratic Services Officer 01480 388015

IMPLICATIONS OF THE COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION PROCEDURE

Council Procedure Rules

Item 24 deals with items on committee agenda. It enables any member to place an item on the agenda for any meeting by giving notice to the Chief Executive or Director of Central Services. The officers' decision is also final as to whether an item should be included on an agenda.

The Councillor Call for Action contains statutory exclusions as to what items can be raised. Of necessity it must be dealt with differently.

It is therefore **recommended that -**

in the second and penultimate lines of paragraph 24 of the Council Procedure Rules, the words 'Overview and Scrutiny Panel' be deleted; and

a second paragraph be added to Item 24 to read 'Any member wishing to have an item placed on an agenda for a meeting of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel will comply with the Councillor Call for Action procedure, a guide to which is attached at Annex (iv).'

Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules

A number of changes are required to the Rules to reflect the changes introduced by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

Item 7 deals with agenda items. The references to the ability of a member to raise an item are no longer relevant.

It is recommended that the first and second paragraphs of Item 7 be deleted and replaced by the following –

'A member may raise an item on an Overview and Scrutiny Panel agenda in accordance with the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) procedure. A member of a Panel may raise an item on an agenda for a meeting of that Panel which relates to the functions of that Panel. Any Member may raise an item on an agenda of a meeting of a relevant Panel if it relates to the discharge of any of the Council's functions or it affects that member's ward or any person who lives or works there. In certain circumstances a CCfA may be omitted from an agenda if it is an excluded matter. A guide to CCfA is attached to the Council Procedure Rules as annex (iv).'

Item 9 deals with reports from Overview and Scrutiny Panels. The 2007 Act has introduced a requirement for the Council and the Cabinet to respond to a report and recommendations by a Panel.

It is recommended that the third paragraph of Item 9 be deleted and replaced by the following –

'An Overview and Scrutiny Panel may choose to publish a report and recommendations.

‘An Overview and Scrutiny Panel must, by notice in writing, require the Council or Cabinet to consider the report and recommendations and respond indicating what action (if any) they propose to take. If the Overview and Scrutiny Panel has published its report and recommendations, the Council or Cabinet must publish their response within two months of receiving the Panel’s report or the notice (if later).’

Item 10 deals with the consideration of Overview and Scrutiny Panel reports. As a statutory timescale of two months for a response has been introduced, amendments are required to the text.

It is recommended that the last sentence of the first paragraph of Item 10 be deleted and replaced by the following –

‘The Council or the Cabinet shall respond to a report and recommendations of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel within 2 months of receiving the report or a written notice from the Panel requiring them to consider the report (if later).’

In the penultimate sentence of the third paragraph, the following words should be added ‘or the written notice (if later)’.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

A GUIDE TO THE COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

1. What is the Councillor Call for Action?

- 1.1 The Councillor's Call for Action (CCfA) provides an opportunity for a councillor to raise an issue at a meeting of one of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels when it has not proved possible to resolve the matter in any other forum. It provides an opportunity for a matter to be discussed in a public forum and will augment the Council's overview and scrutiny role.
- 1.2 The guide has been prepared to offer assistance to a councillor who is thinking of pursuing a CCfA and has had regard to a best practice guidance booklet published by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the Improvement and Development Agency. Statutory guidance may be issued by the Secretary of State which may necessitate change to this guide.

2. What is CCfA designed to achieve?

- 2.1 CCfA should be seen in the context of wider changes introduced to provide overview and scrutiny with greater powers to work more closely with partners and across organisational boundaries. It will enable councillors as the democratic representatives of their communities to raise issues that it has not been possible to resolve by other means.
- 2.2 CCfA should not be seen in isolation. It is part of a range of measures available to a ward councillor in support of his or her representative role, including the internal feedback process, petitions, call-in etc.

3. Who can raise a CCfA?

- 3.1 It is open to any councillor to raise a CCfA at a meeting of one of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels. The councillor does not have to be a member of the relevant panel.
- 3.2 A councillor whose CCfA is listed on an agenda for a panel meeting will be invited and expected to attend that meeting to speak to the item.

4. What can be raised through a CCfA?

- 4.1 A councillor who is a member of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel can raise any matter that is within the terms of reference of that Panel. Any councillor can raise a local government matter with any of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels. A local government matter can relate to the discharge of any function of the Council and, more locally, all or part of the councillor's ward or any person who lives or works in it. The latter is not restricted to the functions and responsibilities of the District Council. In line with the area focus of Comprehensive Area Assessment and the fact that the Council's duties increasingly impact on other organisations and involve partners within and outside the Local Strategic Partnership, a councillor can raise any issue

that relates to the economic, social and environmental well-being of his or her ward.

5. Is any matter excluded from a CCfA?

5.1 Yes. There are certain statutory exclusions from CCfA –

- any licensing or enforcement decision in relation to the sale or supply of alcohol, regulated entertainment or late night entertainment or any review of a decision;
- any planning or enforcement decision under the planning legislation;
- any matter relating to an individual or entity who has a right of recourse to a review or appeal under any enactment (excluding a right to make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman);
- a local crime and disorder matter (which is dealt with under different provisions); and
- any matter which is vexatious, discriminatory or not reasonable* for inclusion on an agenda or for discussion at a meeting of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

5.2 However a CCfA can be raised about licensing and planning decisions and where there is a right to review or appeal if the CCfA consists of an allegation that the authority responsible has failed to discharge the function or is failing on a systematic basis.

6. What other avenues are available to resolve an issue?

6.1 There is a wide range of both formal and informal avenues available that a councillor can use to influence change and resolve problems. These include –

- Motions on the agenda at full Council
- Written and oral questions at full Council
- Exercising the right to ask for items to be included on an agenda
- Organising a petition
- Organising a public meeting
- Informal discussions with officers or other councillors
- Liaison and discussions with councillors of other authorities, such as the County Council or relevant town or parish council
- Raising the issue at a neighbourhood forum
- Writing or e-mailing an officer or an officer of another authority on behalf of a constituent.

6.2 It is important to recognise CCfA as a last resort rather than the primary route to getting constituency issues resolved. It would be an unnecessary waste of resources if a councillor tried to deal with all constituency issues or matters of concern by raising them on an Overview and Scrutiny Panel agenda. A councillor should try to resolve matters informally or at a local level before considering whether to pursue a CCfA. Advice can be sought from the Scrutiny Manager on appropriate courses of action.

6.3 Care should be taken by a councillor not to offer definitive advice to a constituent about a particular issue which may lead to action or expenditure on the part of that constituent. Councillors are not insured to do so and any subsequent claim by a constituent that the advice was flawed could lead to embarrassment and costs.

7. How will the process work?

7.1 A councillor wishing to raise a CCfA should contact the Scrutiny Manager with the appropriate details not less than ten working days prior to the despatch of an agenda for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on which the item is to be included. He or she should explain –

- The background to the CCfA
- What action the councillor has already taken to try to resolve the issue informally
- If the issue is being raised on behalf of a constituent, what action the constituent has taken to try to resolve the matter
- What resolution the councillor (or constituent) is seeking to achieve.

7.2 It is important to recognise that CCfA is not appropriate for an individual complaint, e.g. a complaint by an individual resident about a failure to collect refuse or about an incident in a leisure centre. Avenues for complaint already exist to deal with such matters through the Council's feedback procedure if a matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant. However scrutiny can become involved where it is felt that a series of complaints demonstrates a systematic failure in a particular service.

7.3 On receipt of the request, the Scrutiny Manager will obtain any further information thought to be necessary from the councillor, including any documentation that may be available, and his or her availability to attend the Panel meeting when the CCfA is to be raised. The Scrutiny Manager will consult with the Chairman of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel as to whether the CCfA can be accepted or whether it should be excluded under the statutory criteria.

7.4 In considering whether to include the CCfA on an agenda, regard will be had to any representations made by the councillor in support of his or her request. The Head of Democratic and Central Services, after consultation with the appropriate Chairman has been authorised to determine whether a CCfA can be accepted and which Panel it should be considered by. If the CCfA is rejected, the councillor will be notified of the decision and the reasons for it.

7.5 The relevant executive councillor will be invited to attend the Panel meeting at which the CCfA is to be raised, together with a senior officer from the appropriate directorate or division.

7.6 When an item is raised at a Panel meeting, the councillor bringing the CCfA will be invited to speak to the Panel about the issue and what outcome is being sought. The Panel may –

- Challenge the expected outcome if it feels that this is unreasonable or inappropriate

- Seek further information from the councillor bringing the CCfA
 - Invite the executive councillor or senior officer to respond to the issues raised by the councillor
 - Decide to ask the executive councillor or senior officer to report back to a future meeting with further information, after investigating the issue raised
 - Decide whether to invite a representative of a partner or other organisation to attend a future meeting if the CCfA relates to an issue that is the responsibility of that organisation and not the District Council
 - Appoint a sub group to investigate the issue further and report back with recommendations
 - Recommend the executive councillor or Cabinet to pursue a particular resolution to the CCfA
 - Decide that it would be inappropriate to pursue the matter any further.
- 7.7 If the Panel decides to submit a report and/or recommendations either to the authority or the Cabinet, it will provide the councillor with a copy.

7.8 The decision of the Panel on the CCfA shall be final.

8. *Definitions

8.1 Any matter which is vexatious, discriminatory or not reasonable is excluded from CCfA.

8.2 **‘Vexatious’** is defined in guidance to the Freedom of Information Act as ‘Deciding whether a request is vexatious is a flexible balancing exercise, taking into account all the circumstances of the case. There is no rigid test or definition, and it will often be easy to recognise. The key question is whether the request is likely to cause distress, disruption or irritation, without any proper or justified cause’.

8.3 Issues around persistency are also implied in this definition. However a persistent request may be entirely valid where it relates to a systematic problem. A request which some councillors may regard as vexatious for political reasons may be entirely reasonable.

8.4 **‘Discriminatory’** is defined in the Equality Act as ‘A person (“A”) discriminates against another person (“B”) for the purposes of this Part if on the grounds of the religion or belief of B or of any other person except A (whether or not it is also A’s religion or belief) A treats B less favourably than he treats or would treat others (in cases where there is no material, difference in the relevant circumstances’. The definition can be applied to other forms of discrimination for reasons of sex and/or race.

8.5 **‘Not reasonable’** does not mean the same as unreasonable. It is best considered as a qualifier to the word ‘vexatious’ i.e. a vexatious request is likely to be not reasonable and vice versa.

Our plan for your health **Have we got it right?**

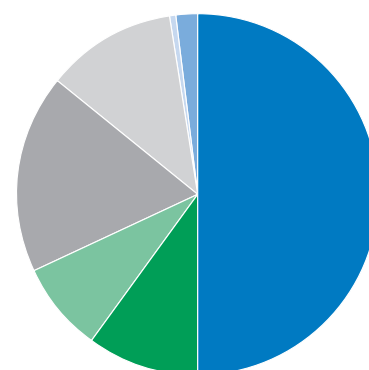


This document provides a summary of our Strategic Plan
To see the full report visit: www.cambridgeshire.nhs.uk
To receive a copy by post call **0800 279 2535**



NHS Cambridgeshire spends around £750 million of your money every year to buy healthcare services for everyone in Cambridgeshire. This includes services from hospitals, GPs, dentists, opticians and community services. There are just under 606,000 people in Cambridgeshire and we want to make sure that they can access the same high quality treatment wherever they live in the county.

How we currently spend your money:



- NHS Hospital & Specialist Services (£342.2m)
 - Community Health Services (£68.3m)
 - Mental Illness (£55.5m)
 - Primary Care (£120.9m)
 - Prescribing Costs (£80.2m)
 - Revenue Grants (£2.3m)
 - Other Health Related Contracts (£13m)
- 2008/09

In our plan for the next five years, we have made the following areas our four priorities:

1. Promoting health and preventing disease
2. Older people's health and care
3. Safe, sustainable and affordable health services
4. Patient experience and customer care

The plan will begin to change the way health care is provided - closer to home rather than in hospitals. We would like to focus on preventing illness and helping people stay healthy.

Do you think this is right?

1. Promoting health and preventing disease

We want to make it easier for people to take care of their own health and to make choices about living more healthily. This is just as important for the very young as it is for those people approaching the end of their life. There are a wide range of initiatives that we're looking at. Here are just a few examples:

Example 1. Smoking is one of the main causes of deaths we can stop. We have been working together with our partners to help people be more aware of the harm smoking can do to health and guarantee to invest a further £14,000 over the next five years. We plan to continue our work in this area and help smokers to stop through CAMQUIT our local free NHS service. We are also going out to local schools. By speaking about the health risks to schoolchildren it has helped to cut down smoking in years eight and ten.

Example 2. Childhood obesity is increasing in our area and in England as a whole. We are planning to support the Government to stop children who might become obese and then to stop it happening again. We guarantee to invest an extra £65,000 over the next five years. In partnership with other organisations, all schools will take part in the healthy Schools Lunch Box Challenge. We will also put into action the under Five's Feeding Guidance which helps families to understand the importance of nutrition in our food.

Example 3. We are looking to invest an additional £1,145,000 to see improvement in health and lifestyle behaviour in 20% of the most deprived areas of Cambridgeshire over the next five years. We shall provide training to local GPs, nurses and other people who provide care, so they can help these groups to change the way they look at their health. We are also looking at ways to support families and work with communities.



2. Older people's health and care

We plan to focus on older people's care, including access to mental health services. Here are just a few examples:

Example 1. We want to see older people and their carers get more involved in their health care and to be actively involved in how their services are chosen and delivered. We will provide information to ensure people can make decisions about their care. By 2009/10 we would like to start to provide elderly people with a personalised health care plan.

Example 2. We will invest £930,000 over the next five years into dual frailty/intermediate care mental health services and falls prevention for older people. We are investing £1,600,000 over the next five years to ensure people who are approaching their end of life receive the best possible care and support to meet their needs. We also want to ensure carers and family are supported.

Example 3. We plan to support more people to stay, where possible, at home for longer. We will review all community hospitals and Cambridgeshire Community Services to ensure that services are meeting the needs of its people. We believe that older people should be able to get mental health services that are, at least, as good as that available to adults of working age. Our goal is to increase our primary care mental health teams to include older people, we will invest £550,000 over the next five years.

For more examples see the full Strategic Plan. Visit: www.cambridgeshire.nhs.uk. To receive a copy by post call **0800 279 2535**



3. Safe, sustainable and affordable health services

We want to make sure we have safe, long lasting and cost effective health services within Cambridgeshire.



Example 1. We want to ensure that we provide safe, sustainable and affordable clinical services at Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust and in the surrounding community and primary care services. We will be reviewing the community hospitals in East Cambridgeshire and Fenland so that they remain a thriving part of the health system in these areas. We plan to invest £700,000 in the South Fenland review.

Example 2. Patient safety is paramount and over the next five years we will continue to develop safety programmes including identifying the top six clinical risks and the actions needed to prevent them. We will reduce Healthcare Acquired infections such as MRSA infection through best practice and Department of Health Guidelines and by ensuring that hospital services are constantly improved and measured through their contract with us.

Example 3. The number of people living in Cambridgeshire is expected to rise significantly. We want to plan ahead for the impact this growth in population will have on our communities. We are working closely with local partners to plan the essential requirements needed to house the new population and generate the jobs and services needed. For example, we shall be planning services for the new town of Northstowe.

4. Improving patient experience and customer care

We want a plan that improves patient experience. We rely on what patients say about our services to help us improve them.

Example 1. We want to give better life chances for children and will invest £510,000 over the next five years. We want to reduce speech therapy waiting lists to a maximum of 18 weeks waiting time by April 2010. We want to work with the Office of Children and Young People Services (OCYPS) to bring about a core service for special schools that meet assessed requirements.

Example 2. Over the next five years we want to improve access to a wide range of services and provide a staged development plan for each of these, including: adult podiatry, adult physiotherapy, orthotic, orthodontics, wheelchair services and mental health services. By April 2010 we want to ensure that no one waits for more than 18 weeks from referral to treatment for all non-consultant led services.

Example 3. A further £1-1.5 million is to be invested in dental services in 2009/10. We want to improve access to dental services including the March area. We will provide more information about dental services through the Yours Cambridgeshire newsletter to all residents and by actively promoting our PALS service that provides advice and support to all residents about NHS services.

For more examples see the full Strategic Plan. Visit: www.cambridgeshire.nhs.uk. To receive a copy by post call **0800 279 2535**

Do you think this is right?

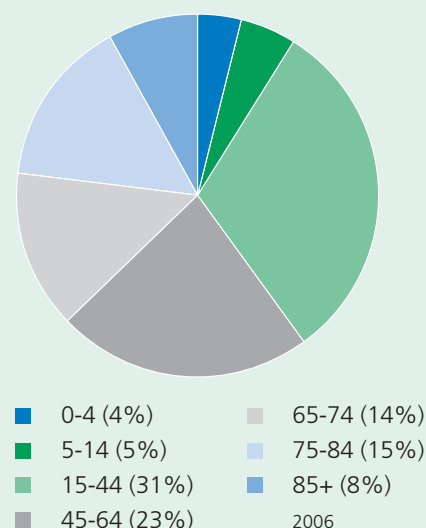


Some facts



- **By 2021, we estimate that there will be a further 90,000 people living in Cambridgeshire.** We want to be able to meet the health needs of all our residents.
- **Nearly 40% of our total spend is on the over 65s.** We want to spend money wisely and to enable people to get the care they need to remain in their home, if at all possible.
- **The total number of people in Cambridgeshire with diabetes in 2008 was 24,500.** We expect that to increase to 26,000 by 2010. We want to help people live healthier lifestyles to prevent or better manage diabetes.
- **We estimate 76,000 people in Cambridgeshire binge drink.** We want to help people understand the health risks of alcohol and make support services easier to access.
- **We spend £286 million on hospital care every year.** That's £23 million more than other counties of the same size. We want to spend resources wisely and be able to help people get the same level of treatment from their local GP, nurse or minor injuries unit as well as hospitals.

Spend per age category £'000:



Our plan for your health Have we got it right?

NHS resources are limited and demands on them will increase. We would like your help in looking at the best ways to use our limited resources over the next five years.

Please fill in our questionnaire overleaf ►►►

How might we spend NHS resources wisely...

This is our plan for your health, tell us what you think - have we got it right, are we spending resources wisely?

We would like to hear your views from 2 March until 29 May. Then from July 2009 onwards we'll let you know how we got on and how we're going to develop our services.

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with NHS Cambridgeshire's plans for additional funding in the following key areas?

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Promoting Health and Preventing Disease	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Older People's Health and Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensuring that Cambridgeshire has sustainable and affordable health services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patient experience and customer care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Bearing in mind that the local NHS has a limited budget, are there any other areas you think there should be more investment, or which should be a higher priority than the ones we have identified?

No other areas for more investment

3. Are there any areas that you think should be less of a priority for the NHS?

None

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
NHS Cambridgeshire has enough to spend on health services?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
NHS Cambridgeshire should look at different ways of spending their resources?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We should provide more services closer to home in the community and use hospitals less where it makes sense to do so?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People should try and keep themselves healthy if they can?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We all have a responsibility to use NHS resources wisely?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. To what extent do you support or oppose NHS Cambridgeshire's overall approach over the next five years?

	Strongly support	Tend to support	Neither support nor oppose	Tend to oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Would you be happy to receive treatment in primary care services (GPs, pharmacists, dentists, minor injuries units and Out of Hours services) rather than in a hospital setting?

(this would be clinically safe and appropriate). Hospitals would still provide emergency care, care for serious illnesses and major operations.

7. Would you like more help and support to take care of your own health and wellbeing?

	Yes	No	Don't know
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. If so, how?

Please return your completed survey (no stamp needed) to:

Our plans for your health, FREEPOST ANG10772, Fulbourn, Cambridge CB1 5YB

To find out more and have your say or to complete the form online visit: www.cambridgeshire.nhs.uk

If you would like to talk to someone or get involved in having your say please provide your details below and we'll get in touch as soon as we can. NHS Cambridgeshire will not pass any of your details to a third party.

Name: _____

Email or telephone: _____

Address: _____



Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
6/01/09	<p><u>Disability Access</u></p> <p>Final report endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.</p>	Submitted to Cabinet on 29/01/09.	Recommendations endorsed by Cabinet. Members requested a progress report to be submitted to the Panel in six months time.	1/09/09
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.	
5/06/07	Report deferred to next meeting.	Meeting to be arranged.	Representative of the Anglian Water to be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss the study.	
3/07/07	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. Working Group held meeting with the Principal Building Control		First meeting held on 22/10/07.	

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
	<u>Adoption of Roads and Sewers (Cont.)</u>			
4/12/07	Officer. Further meeting to be held with Head of Planning Services, Projects and Assets Manager and representatives Highway authority.	Meeting arranged.		
5/02/08	Councillor Mrs P A Jordan appointed onto the Working Group in place of the late Councillor Mrs C A Godley.	Meeting held on 11/04/08.		
4/03/08	Owing to their interests in the study, Councillors M F Shellen and J S Watt were appointed on to the Working Group.	Meetings held on 24/07/08 and 16/12/08.		
03/02/09	Preliminary report summarising the progress of the Working Group's findings to date submitted to the Panel for information. Working Group met with the Head of Planning Services and a representative from the County Council's Highway Development Control Team.	Meeting held on 29/01/09.		
03/03/09	Information sought from the Head of Legal and Estates and the District Council's Communications and Marketing Manager. Further update report submitted to Panel. Working Group have taken up a	Meeting held on 24/02/09.		

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
	<p><u>Adoption of Roads and Sewers (Cont.)</u></p> <p>suggestion to speak to a representative of the local branch of the Law Society to clarify best practice and to establish whether there are any steps that can be taken to ensure the status of roads and sewers is thoroughly followed up during conveyancing.</p>	<p>Meeting arranged.</p> <p>being</p>		
<p>5/12/06</p>	<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> <p>Review of Small Scale Environmental Improvement Schemes to be undertaken.</p>	<p>Information requested.</p>	<p>Meeting held on 24/10/07 to plan further study work.</p>	
<p>3/4/07</p>	<p>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>		

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
4/12/07	<p><u>Grant Aid (Cont.)</u></p> <p>Review of Small Scale Environmental Improvements Scheme completed.</p> <p>Working Group awaiting further information on other grant schemes administered by the Council.</p> <p>Details of grant schemes circulated. Meetings to be held with various Heads of Service to discuss capital and revenue grant schemes falling within their remits. Investigations nearing completion.</p>	<p>Meeting held on 1/02/08.</p> <p>Meetings held on 20/03/08, 26/03/08, 7/05/08, 24/07/08 and 24/10/08.</p>	<p>The Cabinet deferred consideration of this item, subject to further investigations being undertaken with the relevant Executive Councillors. Councillor P G Mitchell undertook to pursue this matter directly. Update to be received at Panel meeting.</p>	
2/09/08	<p><u>Call Centre Monitoring</u></p> <p>Following recent changes to the Panel's remit (with effect from 1st September 2008), Call Centre Monitoring has now been transferred over from the Service Support Panel to the Service Delivery Panel. Quarterly performance reports to be circulated informally to Members of</p>			

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
	<p><u>Call Centre Monitoring (Cont.)</u></p> <p>the Panel (June and November of each year) and an item included on the Agenda every 6 months in future (February and September of each year). Since the formation of the Customer Service Team in February 2008, quarterly performance reports for the Customer Service Team are now produced, incorporating Call Centre statistics.</p> <p>Requests made for future performance reports to incorporate additional information relating to the number of unanswered telephone calls received by the Call Centre and the number of enquiries that were not the responsibility of the District Council.</p>	<p>Informal report to be circulated electronically to Members in June 2009.</p>		<p>2/06/09</p>
<p>2/12/08</p>	<p><u>Future Governance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital: Consultation Arrangements</u></p> <p>Subject was drawn to the attention of the Panel by the Chairman who requested that the subject should be raised at the Panel meeting, in preparation for the forthcoming consultation on the future governance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital.</p>			

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
6/01/09	<p><u>Future Governance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital: Consultation Arrangements (Cont.)</u></p> <p>Dr Stephen Dunn, Hinchingsbrooke Next Steps Project Co-ordinator and Ms Jessica Bawden, NHS Cambridgeshire attended the Panel's January meeting to provide background to the consultation. Advised the Panel that the consultation was likely to commence at some point in the middle of the current calendar year.</p>	Panel to partake in the consultation when it emerges. Matter to be raised at a future Panel meeting.		
2/12/08	<p><u>Care Quality Commission</u></p> <p>The Panel submitted a response to the Commission's Enforcement Policy. Requested that a representative should be invited to attend a future Panel meeting to deliver a presentation on the work of the Commission and how the document fits into the wider health service framework. Advised that the Commission will not begin operating until 1st April 2009.</p>	Invitation to be extended to the Commission in June 2009.		
14/05/08	<p><u>Corporate Plan – Growing Success</u></p> <p>Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, S J Criswell and P G Mitchell appointed to Corporate</p>	Meetings held in June and July to review the		

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
02/09/08	<p><u>Corporate Plan – Growing Success (Cont.)</u></p> <p>Plan Working Group.</p> <p>In considering the Review of Growing Success the Corporate and Strategic Framework Panel decided to extend the Corporate Plan Working Group's remit by requesting it to investigate the cost implications of each priority area identified within the Corporate Plan. A suggestion has been made to invite Heads of Service to a future meeting to discuss their contributions in achieving the Council's objectives.</p>	<p>Corporate Plan.</p> <p>Bi-annual reports to be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Panels.</p> <p>Financial information to be considered at future Working Group meetings.</p>		
6/12/08	<p><u>Provision of Leisure Facilities for Young People</u></p> <p>Identified as a potential area for study by the Panel. Particular interest expressed on how these facilities are managed and insured and if they were maintained by the District Council.</p>	<p>Request submitted to the Heads of Operations and Environmental Community Health Services.</p> <p>Meeting being arranged.</p>	<p>This item appears elsewhere on the Agenda.</p>	03/03/09
03/03/09	<p>Report submitted to Panel. Working Group established comprising Councillors J D Ablewhite and P G Mitchell to meet with the Executive Councillor for</p>			

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
	<p><u>Provision of Leisure Facilities for Young People (Cont.)</u></p> <p>Operational and Countryside Services to investigate the provision of leisure facilities, with a view to making recommendations on achieving an even distribution of youth facilities across the District and on meeting the ongoing revenue costs associated with such facilities.</p>			
2/12/08	<p><u>Recycled Materials</u></p> <p>Requested for a scoping report to be submitted on trends in the value of recycled materials.</p>	Request submitted with the Head of Operations.	The matter has been acknowledged by the Head of Operations. Update to be received to Panel at their April meeting.	7/04/09
4/11/08	<p><u>Forward Plan</u></p> <p>Older Persons Housing Strategy Update</p> <p>Requested that the report should be considered at a future Panel meeting.</p>		Due to appear before the Panel at their June / July 2009 meeting.	2/06/09 / 7/07/09
6/01/09	<p>Review of Democratic Structure</p> <p>Requested that the report should be considered at a future Panel meeting.</p>		This item appears elsewhere on the Agenda.	7/04/09

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
	<p><u>Forward Plan (Cont.)</u></p> <p>Sports Facilities Strategy</p> <p>Requested that the report should be considered at a future Panel meeting.</p> <p>Environmental Improvements to St Ives Town Centre</p> <p>For continuity, this item will be appearing before the Panel at a future meeting.</p> <p>Review of the Home-Link Scheme and the Council's Lettings Policy</p> <p>Councillor Mrs M Banerjee undertook to investigate the background to this item with a view to deciding whether it should be considered by the Panel at a future meeting.</p> <p>St Ivo and St Neots Leisure Centres – Proposals for Development</p> <p>Requested that the report should be considered at a future Panel meeting.</p>		<p>This item appears elsewhere on the Agenda.</p> <p>This item appears elsewhere on the Agenda.</p> <p>This item appears elsewhere on the Agenda.</p> <p>Due to appear before the Panel at their June 2009 meeting.</p>	<p>7/04/09</p> <p>7/04/09</p> <p>7/04/09</p> <p>2/06/09</p>

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Decision Digest

Edition 93

Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 2nd - 27th March 2009.

PROVISION OF LEISURE FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) has received information on the leisure facilities owned and maintained by the District Council, together with details of facilities which the Council helps to maintain. The information presented excluded those facilities under the direct control of the District's Town and Parish Councils.

The efforts of independent community groups in raising funds for youth facilities within villages and the provision of funding through Section 106 Agreements for the construction and maintenance of facilities was discussed. Attention was drawn to the disparity of facilities between towns and villages. The Panel considered that there should be more consistency in the provision of facilities across the District and has appointed a Working Group, comprising Councillors J D Ablewhite and P G Mitchell, to meet with the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services to discuss the matter further, with a view to making recommendations on achieving an even distribution of youth facilities across the District and meeting the

ongoing revenue costs associated with such facilities.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Panels have considered the performance of the authority against the priority objectives identified in "Growing Success", the Corporate Plan, in the quarter to 31st December 2008.

The Service Delivery Panel has endorsed the views of the Corporate Plan Working Group and noted the Working Group's request for a report on the private housing retrofit project for submission to the Panel's June meeting. It was requested that a representative of the Carbon Trust be invited to attend a subsequent meeting, with a view to examining the retrofit project's principles in the context of the Trust's work. It was also suggested that environmental efficiency data be compiled to determine the energy efficiency levels of homes before and after completion of refurbishment works.

Members also concurred with a suggestion that the disabled facilities available at Sawtry Leisure Centre should be promoted.

Having regard to the key measure relating to the number of

households living in temporary accommodation, it was noted that the performance achieved represented an increase in the number of households prevented from becoming homeless during the reporting period.

Finally, the Panel has reiterated their concern at the potential risk to the Council should the bid for funding to re-model Coneygear Court not be successful.

The Service Support Panel was pleased to note that all of the indicators where statistics were available were positive with one exception. The Panel was satisfied with the explanation given as to why this was not completed on time.

ADOPTION OF ROADS AND SEWERS

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) has received a further update from the Adoption of Roads and Sewers Working Group. At a recent meeting, the Head of Legal, Property and Governance advised that there was adequate legal provision in existence to ensure that the adoption of roads and sewers could be brought to a completion. Additionally, it was established that during the purchasing process, purchasers and mortgage providers were made fully aware of the status of the roads and sewers servicing properties and of the associated financial liabilities should either not be adopted. This matter will further be explored at the next meeting of the Working Group.

The Panel noted that new legislation to be introduced by the Government

in 2010/11 would ensure that sewers were adopted and that this would expedite the road adoption process.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) - PROGRESS

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) has received updates on developments relating to the Panel's final report on grant aid and on the future governance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. With regard to the latter, the Panel was advised that the Department of Health had approved the Strategic Health Authority's proposal but that formal approval had yet to be obtained from Her Majesty's Treasury.

LOCAL INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

The Cabinet has considered the content of the Local Investment Framework which has been compiled to determine the level of local and strategic infrastructure required to meet the target of new homes identified for Huntingdonshire up to 2026.

In discussing future initiatives, Executive Councillors supported the proposed creation of a St Neots Delivery Board, similar to the boards set up to deliver growth in the Cambridge area. The new board will consider social infrastructure requirements and where delivery options associated with potential housing development can be located based on existing facilities and accessibility levels.

ST NEOTS MARKET TOWN STRATEGY

The St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy has been approved by the Cabinet. The strategy forms part of the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan 2006 – 2011.

In discussing the Strategy, the Cabinet has raised concerns over the lack of any reference to a bus layover space or to the impact of congestion generally in terms of air quality. Although initial discussions have been held with local bus operators to discuss known problems, specifically the absence of any link between bus and train timetables, the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy recorded his concern that the Strategy does not address future transport needs given the predicted population levels for the area. The Cabinet is encouraged that the strategy will be reviewed between now and 2011 to take into account emerging pressures and possible development scenarios around St Neots.

PROPOSED SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS – TRANSFORMATION FROM DEVELOPMENT CONTROL TO DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

A proposal to formalise the transformation of the development control function to one of development management has been endorsed by the Cabinet. The change has been brought about because planning is focussing on the importance of sustainable and deliverable development in the

District. Whilst discussing the change, Executive Councillors have referred to the issue of targeted funding and have requested the Head of Planning Services to investigate the possibility of introducing charges for pre-application discussions. Given the need to ensure all stakeholders understand and sign up to the new approach, the Cabinet has requested that Town and Parish Councils be invited to a series of planned workshops on the new arrangements.

REVIEW OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS

The findings of a study by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) on the Council's Section 106 process which included reference to a proposed Community Infrastructure Levy and variable infrastructure tariff both expected to be implemented in the near future. The Cabinet has been informed that the introduction of the levy will empower local authorities to place a new charge on most types of developments in their area with the proceeds being spent on local and sub-regional infrastructure to offset the impact of the development. Having been advised that the new legislation will allow for draft heads of terms for Section 106 Agreements to be requested as part of the application validation process, the Cabinet has –

- ◆ requested that a guidance note be prepared and drawn to the attention of Members to illustrate how they can comment

- on applications and the potential heads of terms for Section 106 Agreements by reference to the weekly planning list notification;
- ◆ agreed to give clear guidance to Town and Parish Councils on how to comment on the potential content of agreements for development in their areas as part of the normal consultation arrangements and speaking at Development Management Panel meetings;
 - ◆ requested that Parish Councils be advised of the introduction of a marker on the planning weekly list and reminded to review these on a regular basis with a view to making comments on the potential heads of terms of Section 106 Agreements in their areas;
 - ◆ suggested that copies of the quarterly report prepared by the People, Performance and Partnership Division detailing income and expenditure from the Section 106 money be provided to all Members and changes to the content of the report implemented at the earliest opportunity;
 - ◆ approved the expansion of the remit and terms of reference of the Section 106 Advisory Group to include monitoring of agreements and meetings convened on a more regular basis with dates reserved in the Council's calendar one week prior to each Development Management Panel;
 - ◆ agreed to submit copies of the monitoring report to the Section 106 Advisory Group on a quarterly basis and also to the Development Management Panel with any comments from the Advisory Group;
 - ◆ agreed to award the Executive Councillor for Finance and the Environment the responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of processes for securing payments and the expenditure of receipts under Section 106 Agreements, with individual Executive Councillors remaining accountable for the delivery of benefits and projects relevant to their portfolios; and
 - ◆ invited the Section 106 Working Group to

consider the likely effects of the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy and to make recommendations on processes to implement the system.

CONSULTATION ON CODE OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY PUBLICITY

The Cabinet and The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) has endorsed the contents of a suggested response to a consultation paper issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government on proposed changes to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. The Code was first issued in 1988 to cover the content, style, distribution and cost of local authority publicity, from public meetings to council publications, advertising and the website. In reviewing the Code, Members have recorded their concern that it offers no specific guidance in relation to individual Ward Members who may not hold a particular responsibility with the Council, but whose work with their constituents is of significant importance, nor addresses the growth in electronic communication.

The Service Support Panel expressed the view that there is a greater need for awareness and compliance with the Code, since failure to have regard to the Code is a potential breach of the Members' Code of Conduct. Members also noted that it was the County

Council's practice when issuing press releases to include the contact details of a spokesperson of the opposition political party. The Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy undertook to consider this suggestion in the case of press releases issued by the District Council.

MONITORING OF SECTION 106 (PLANNING OBLIGATIONS)

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) have considered the receipt and expenditure of money negotiated under Section 106 Agreements by the Council. The Panel have been informed that a number of developers have requested the re-negotiation of trigger points due to the economic climate.

FEES AND CHARGES

The Licensing and Protection Panel has noted the revised fees and charges for those licences etc. issued by the Central Services Directorate. The licences have been increased by 3% for the period 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010. The initial issue and subsequent renewal of hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licences will also increase by an additional £9 in line with an increased charge by the vehicle testing centre.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT CONSULTATION ON IMPROVING ACCESS TO TAXIS

The Licensing Manager has been authorised, following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Licensing Panel to

respond to a consultation paper on improving access to taxis, which has been issued by the Department of Transport in relation to the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act.

HACKNEY CARRIAGE LICENCES

The Licensing and Protection Panel has decided to discontinue restricting the number of hackney carriage licences in line with the findings of a consultation exercise on the possible de-limitation of licensed hackney carriages.

Following the implementation date, which has yet to be decided, any new licences issued will be restricted to wheelchair accessible vehicles only, in line with the Governments' vision of seamless travel for wheelchair users.

The Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee will consider, if as a consequence of the de-limitation, there is a need for additional taxi ranks.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE (PREVENTION AND REMEDIATION) REGULATIONS 2009

The Licensing and Protection Panel has authorised Officers to enforce the provisions of the Environmental Damage (Prevention and Remediation) Regulations 2009 on behalf of the Council. They also have endorsed a memorandum of understanding on partnership working drawn up to assist the implementation of the Regulations. The Regulations place a liability on operators of activities that cause environmental damage to land,

water and biodiversity (ie. protected species, natural habitats etc). Although the events covered by the Regulations are likely to be rare there will be a need for environmental health staff to be trained to ensure they are able to respond in the event of an incident.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT 1990

The Licensing and Protection Panel has authorised the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services to declare two areas of land in the District as contaminated.

S106 AGREEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

The Development Control Panel has appointed Councillor J S Watt to replace Councillor A N Gilbert in the membership of the S106 Agreement Advisory Group.

ENFORCEMENT ACTION

The Head of Legal, Property and Governance has been authorised by the Development Control Panel to secure the cessation of the unauthorised use of land by travellers at Harpers Drove, Ramsey Heights and the removal of caravans and a mobile home from the site.

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

At its March meeting, the Development Control Panel determined eight applications of which five were approved, two refused and one delegated to the Head of Planning Services to

determine, having regard to a decision by Cambridgeshire County Council relating to an archaeological investigation.

STANDARDS (CONSIDERATION AND HEARING) SUB-COMMITTEE

The Standards Committee has appointed its Chairman, Mr D L Hall, Councillors J D Ablewhite and Mrs B E Boddington, Parish Councillor M J Reece and Mr P Boothman to comprise a Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committee which will consider investigation reports and hold determination hearings arising from complaints of misconduct under the Members' Code of Conduct.

MONITORING - STANDARDS ISSUES

The Standards Committee has noted that five cases involving complaints of misconduct have been considered recently by its Referrals (Assessment) Sub-Committee but that no action was required to be taken by the Monitoring Officer in each case.

The Committee continues to monitor the enquiries dealt with by the Monitoring Officer under the Code. The areas of the Code which appear to raise most interest will help form the basis of future training sessions for Parish Councils. Informal training of the Standards Committee has continued with Members discussing current Standards Board guidance on personal and prejudicial interests.

CASE TRIBUNALS (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2008

The Standards Committee has noted the effect of the Case Tribunals (England) Regulations 2008 which principally refer to the sanctions available to the Adjudication Panel for England where it has determined that a local authority Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct.

ETHICAL STANDARDS REGIME NATIONALLY AND LOCALLY

The Standards Committee has enjoyed a wide ranging debate on standards issues prompted by an address to them from Councillor P J Downes. Councillor I C Bates will similarly be invited to present to a future meeting.

QUALITY STATUS FOR PARISH COUNCILS

Although pleased to note that adoption of the code of conduct formed one of the standards required by local councils if they were to acquire quality status under the Quality Parish and Town Council scheme, the Standards Committee were disappointed that there was no subsequent requirement for refresher training or any way in which they could influence the introduction of this continuing commitment.

EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT: USE OF RESOURCES 2007/08

The External Auditor's Report on the Council's Use of Resources for 2007/08 has been presented to the Corporate Governance Panel

together with the associated action plan. The report concluded that the Council's overall performance was satisfactory.

INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE: INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT

The Corporate Governance Panel has noted progress by the Internal Audit Service against the Audit Plan for 2008/09 and the performance standards achieved.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL AUDIT

The outcome of a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal audit has been presented to the Corporate Governance Panel. Details of the review will be included within the Annual Governance Statement Assurance Framework. The next review of the Internal Audit Service against CIPFA's Code of Audit Practice will be conducted in 2011.

RISK REGISTER

The Corporate Governance Panel has noted the changes made to the Risk Register between the period 1st September 2008 to 28th February 2009 inclusive.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE: ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Progress made to date in respect of the achievement of the action plan supporting the Annual Governance Statement has been noted by the Corporate Governance Panel.

REVIEW OF COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

The Corporate Governance Panel has undertaken its biennial review of the Constitution and recommended a series of changes for submission to the Council.

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL

A special meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel has been scheduled for 16th April 2009 to consider the outcome of the review of the Council's democratic structure by the Structure Review Working Group.

ELECTORAL CYCLE IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

The Elections Panel has considered the outcome of an internal consultation exercise on the Council's future electoral arrangements. Following discussion on the way forward, Members agreed to make no change to the existing arrangements, although this was not a unanimous view. Members also requested an investigation be undertaken via the Department for Communities and Local Government as to whether elections for the multi member wards could be held on the same day every four years.

PARISH ELECTORAL REVIEW - UPDATE

The Council are still awaiting confirmation from the Department for Communities and Local Government on the effective date of

the Huntingdonshire (Parishes) Order 2009 which proposes the abolition of one parish, five new parishes and other changes to parish boundaries that resulted from the parish electoral review of the District.

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