

A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT)** will be held in the **COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK, BRAMPTON ROAD, HUNTINGDON PE29 6DB** on **TUESDAY, 14 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 held on 10th March 2009.

**Mrs J Walker
387049**

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

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

In accordance with agreed procedure, Members are invited to note the plan and comment as appropriate on any items contained therein. A copy of the current forward plan is attached.

**Mrs J Walker
387049**

4. PROPOSALS FOR RIVERSIDE PARK (Pages 11 - 20)

To consider a joint report by the Heads of Planning Services, Operations and Environmental Management Services on consultation responses received on a master plan for improvements to the Riverside Park.

**R Probyn
388430**

5. MASTER PLAN FOR LAND EAST OF SAPLEY SQUARE, OXMOOR (Pages 21 - 32)

To consider a report by the Heads of Planning and Financial Services on consultation responses received in respect of the draft master plan for land east of Sapley Square, Oxmoor.

**R Probyn
388430**

(A copy of the Master Plan has been enclosed separately)

6. HUNTINGDON WEST AREA ACTION PLAN (Pages 33 - 40)

To consider a report by the Head of Planning Services on a preferred approach for taking forward the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan.

**R Probyn
388430**

(A copy of the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan has been enclosed separately)

7. THE RSS REVIEW - THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE DEVELOPMENT STUDY (Pages 41 - 58)

To consider a report by the Head of Planning Services on the Regional Spatial Strategy Review – The Cambridgeshire Development Study.

**S Ingram
388400**

8. REVIEW OF DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE (Pages 59 - 168)

To consider a report by the Structure Review Working Party summarising the findings of a review of the Council's democratic structure.

**R Reeves
388003**

9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT - IMPLICATIONS FOR OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (Pages 169 - 178)

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**

10. LOCAL PROCUREMENT REVIEW (Pages 179 - 182)

To consider a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services on the outcome of a meeting held between the District Council and representatives of the local business community.

**Mrs A Jerrom
388009**

11. WORK PLAN STUDIES (Pages 183 - 186)

To consider, with the aid of a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services, the programme of studies.

**Mrs J Walker
387049**

12. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (SERVICE SUPPORT) (Pages 187 - 194)

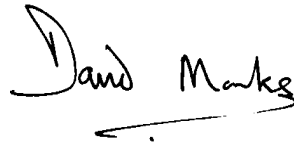
To consider a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services on decisions taken by the Panel.

**Mrs J Walker
387049**

13. SCRUTINY (Pages 195 - 204)

To scrutinise decisions since the last meeting. A copy of the relevant Decision Digest is attached.

Dated this 2 day of April 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 Mrs J Walker, Trainee Democratic Services Officer, Tel No 01480 387049/e-mail: Jessica.Walker@huntsdc.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.

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

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

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

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

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

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Agenda Item 1

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT) held in Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Brampton Road, Huntingdon PE29 6DB on Tuesday, 10 March 2009.

- PRESENT: Councillor J A Gray – Chairman.
- Councillors M G Baker, K M Baker,
P H Dakers, J W Davies, P J Downes,
P M D Godfrey, D Harty, Ms S Kemp,
L W McGuire, M F Newman, R G Tuplin and
R J West.
- APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J T Bell and A N Gilbert.
- IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor A Hansard

84. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 10th February 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the substitution of the word "policy" in place of the words "introduce unnecessary complications to the present arrangements" at the end of the second paragraph of Minute No. 08/81.

85. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

86. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 - FORWARD PLAN

The Panel considered and noted the current forward plan of key decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) scheduled for consideration by the Cabinet, which had been prepared by the Leader of the Council.

In so doing, the Panel were advised that St. Ives environmental improvements scheme would be considered by the Service Delivery Panel, following agreement with the Chairman.

In response to a question, the Head of Democratic and Central Services explained that the findings of the Structure Review Working Group would be presented to Cabinet before the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, as it had been Cabinet that had commissioned the report. However presentations had been arranged for all Members on the report and both Panels would be consulted before it was considered by the Corporate Governance Panel and at the Council meeting on 22nd April 2009.

87. CONSULTATION ON CODE OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY PUBLICITY

(Councillor A Hansard, Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy was in attendance for this Item).

The Chairman welcomed the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy, together with the Acting Head of People, Performance and Partnerships, and the Communications and Marketing Manager to discuss the proposed response to a consultation exercise on the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

The Panel was advised that the White Paper - Communities in Control had committed the Government to consulting on potential changes to the publicity code. In considering a report by the Communities and Marketing Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel suggested that the growth in electronic communication had not been adequately reflected in the code and that there was a greater need for Member awareness and compliance with the Code both arising from the development of electronic personal communication and since failure to have regard to the Code was a potential breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

The Panel's attention was drawn by a Member to the County Council's practice when issuing press releases of including the contact details of a spokesperson of the opposition political party, which the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy undertook to consider in the case of press releases issued by the District Council.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Panel supports the proposed responses to the questions raised in the consultation paper as set out in the report now submitted; and
- (ii) that the Cabinet be invited to consider the comments of the Panel referred to above as part of its deliberations on the report.

88. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel considered the performance of the authority against the priority objectives identified in "Growing Success", the Corporate Plan approved by the Council in September 2008.

The Panel was pleased to note that all of the indicators where statistics were available were positive with the exception of the preparation of the external funding strategy. In the case of the latter which had been scheduled for completion by March 2009, Members were advised that the External Funding Officer had been asked to concentrate on a major application for an external source of funding, and that completion of the strategy had been delayed slightly.

89. MONITORING OF SECTION 106 (PLANNING OBLIGATIONS)

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was updated on the receipt and expenditure of money negotiated

under Section 106 Agreements by the Council. In so doing, the Panel was informed that a number of developers had requested the re-negotiation of trigger points due to the economic climate.

The Panel also was advised that subject to the Cabinet's approval of the recommendations in a recent review of section 106 Agreements by a working group of the panel, monitoring reports would be presented in future to the Section 106 Advisory Group.

90. WORKPLAN STUDIES

The Panel considered and noted a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reviewing the Panel's programme of studies.

91. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (SERVICE SUPPORT) - PROGRESS REPORT

The Panel considered and noted a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reviewing the Panel's progress on issues that had been discussed previously.

Councillor J W Davies reported that problems with the foul sewerage system in the St. Audrey's Lane area of St. Ives were ongoing. Members were reminded that further information was due from Anglian Water reviewing the situation following action that they had taken and that this would be presented to the Panel shortly.

With respect to the petition concerning commuter parking in the Longsands area of St. Neots, Members were informed that this was to be discussed by the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee in April. Members also sought clarification as to whether planning permission had been granted for the car park being constructed at the train station in Huntingdon, which the Head of Democratic and Central Services undertook to investigate.

With regard to attendance at meetings of the Joint Accountability Committee, the Chairman indicated that he would be considering alternative arrangements for the appointment of a representative from the District Council who might be better able to attend.

92. SCRUTINY

The Panel considered and noted the latest edition of the Council's Decision Digest, summarising the Council's decisions since the previous meeting.

Having regard to the report on homelessness and the housing market, the Panel suggested that it would be helpful if all Members were reminded as to who to refer constituents to when contacted about housing queries.

In response to a request for further information on the transformation of development control to development management, Members were informed that the relevant report would be circulated to Panel Members.

Chairman

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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 AND SCRUTINY PANEL
CABINET**

**14 APRIL 2009
23 APRIL 2009**

**IMPROVEMENTS TO RIVERSIDE PARK HUNTINGDON
(Report by Head of Planning, Operations and Environmental
Management Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is for the Cabinet to consider the comments from the public and other bodies on the ideas for improving the Riverside Park and to make a decision on what proposals will be supported and their timescale.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Cabinet at its meeting on the 21st February 2008 agreed that the Council should engage with the public and others to obtain their views on a masterplan for the improvements to the Riverside Park. The estimated cost was £614,000 (see Annex 1 for breakdown) and money was included in the capital programme for this purpose.

- 2.2 The masterplan drawn up by officers of the Council had been adapted from the preferred option of the Consultants to suit the budget for this project but still addresses many of the issues set out by the consultants namely :-

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

3.0 THE COUNCIL'S MASTERPLAN

- 3.1 For Area 1 (the formal park from the Bridge to Barracks Brook) the following improvements were suggested:

- Make the two entrance areas opposite the Bridge Hotel and along the ring road more welcoming
- In association with the Bridge Hotel entrance investigate the greening of the traffic island crossing
- Create a new footpath/cycleway parallel to the ring road inside the park
- Create a focal point with a shelter and seating in the centre of the park
- Improve the mooring facility and the paved area adjacent to Bridge Foot offices
- Remove certain trees and carry out new and more appropriate tree planting

- Clear river bank in certain locations to encourage easier access and improved and extra moorings
- Erect standardised signs inside and through the park together with interpretation boards

3.2 For Area 2 (the activity area from Barracks Brook to the north eastern edge of the playing field) the following improvements were suggested:

- Reconfigure the equipment in the play area and reduce the area in size to enable a wider landscaped walkway footpath to be created on the southern side of the car park
- Retain tarmac path but remove chain link fence on the southern side of the playing field
- Relocate one football pitch to Sapley Park and retain one adult sized pitch that would be sufficient to convert to 3 mini soccer pitches if necessary
- Create an area of reinforced grass on part of the playing field closest to the Pavilion to accommodate the fair or circus and other events at times without losing the long stay car parking area
- Create a Multi Use Games Area or youth equipment area on the playing field
- De-formalise the playing field with additional planting and a less rigid management regime
- Clear the river bank in certain locations to encourage easier access and improved and extra moorings. Improve the access to the slipway
- Remove clutter at car park entrance by relocating recycling area and electricity pylon, removing fencing and creating a more attractive area around the pavilion and the entrance to the playing field
- Encourage the redevelopment of the boat yard in accordance with the brief
- Erect standardised signs and interpretation boards

3.3 For Area 3 (the Wildlife Area)

- Implement management plan to enhance the biodiversity and attractiveness of the area
- Provide better signage to the car park in Church Lane and pedestrian signposts to the entrance to the Riverside Park at the Hartford end
- Erect standardised signs and interpretation boards
- Consider the development of a new car park opposite the end of American Lane

4. THE CONSULTATION

4.1 The consultation took place over a 2 month period from October to December 2008. It consisted of an exhibition in the High street on a Wednesday (market day) and a Saturday adjacent to Sainsburys. At the same time a questionnaire was distributed explaining the proposals to local residents and to interested parties.

4.2 In addition officers explained the proposals at 4 meetings they attended during this period. Officers felt it was important that young people were involved in the process to obtain their views on the type of facility that they would like to see in the park. This involved workshops with the holiday play scheme in Huntingdon and a day's workshop in the Technology Department at Hinchingsbrooke School.

5. THE RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The details of the consultation results are given in Annex 2.
- 5.2 There was a general feeling that many people did not want to see very much change in the park. There was a strong feeling against reinforced grass which would enable an activity area to be created on which the fair could be located. Their main objection being that it was a considerable amount of money to spend on something that would only be used on a relatively small number of occasions a year and could become overspill car parking. Immediate neighbours were also concerned that it would result in more noise disturbance closer to their homes. The creation of a focus in the formal park by providing a shelter and seating raised concerns as they quoted the experience of 'undesirables' gathering in such places. There was support for improving moorings and whilst there was some support for a wider offer of play equipment particularly for teenagers, its location had to be carefully considered to avoid nuisance to local residents.
- 5.3 During discussions on the scheme, it became apparent that the park lacked a central entrance / meeting area. It is considered that a meeting area between the pavilion and the car park would make a major improvement to the use of the park. This has now been included in the proposals.
- 5.4 What people felt was also important was that the Park could be better maintained. This was particularly relevant to the wildlife area where it was pointed out that the paths were getting overgrown by vegetation and the area was not being managed in the most sympathetic way. Issue of flooding were mentioned and the need to raise the footpath in some areas by means of a boardwalk where water tends to hang about after a flood. People who regularly used this part of the park felt that the small car park was unnecessary as better signs to the existing car park at the Hartford end would be a cheaper solution. There were many general and specific comments made in the returned questionnaires. Many of these are reflected in the voting for the options and these have been used to make some of the changes to the scheme.
- 5.5 The consultation with the youth groups showed that rather than a formal MUGA/MUSA, they would prefer exciting equipment which gives a wider range of play activity and appeals to girls as well as boys. One group of local residents suggested that the youth play equipment be moved off the park to another site, but this does not fit in with the play strategy of incorporating this equipment in the wider park setting.
- 5.6 The Football Association have been contacted about the reduction of the number of football pitches to one and verbally have agreed to this. However they have not confirmed this in writing. They have also indicated that they would like to have the facility for junior football using smaller pitches.

6. THE WAY FORWARD

- 6.1 The MTP shows an expenditure profile of:

2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	Total
55	510	50	615 (£000s)

- 6.2 The consultation shows that the majority of respondents are in favour of many of the proposed improvements to the park. The areas which are not supported are the reinforced grass, the structure in the formal park and the car park for the wild area. None of these are critical to the overall development of the park and if removed make a major saving to the scheme. A significant number of respondents to the consultation did request that the project include additional footpath improvements and these are now costed in Annex 1.
- 6.3 A Management Plan designed to improve the wildlife area of the park had been developed as requested in the consultation. The plan will require significantly increase levels of management and maintenance to this area on an ongoing basis and will require revenue funding. This additional cost is identified as £20k per annum. It is accepted that if this funding is not available, then this part of the project will not proceed. Extra greening of areas may also incur extra revenue costs which have not been included at this stage.
- 6.4 Because of the financial climate, it is considered that it would not be economically advantageous to carry out all the proposed work in the current financial year. Due to nature of the scheme, the work can be carried out over a period of time.
- 6.5 Annex 1 shows the proposed elements which could be carried out in 2009/10 and the remainder which will be carried out at a later date. Funding can also be sought for the future works from section 106 monies or grants.

6.6 The proposed profile is now

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Total
Capital	10	249	0	248	484 (£000s)
Revenue(extra)			20	20	Continuing (£000s)

6.7 There are still ongoing discussions with the owners of Purvis Marine as to the future of this site. Since there is an existing leaseholder on the site, this area was not included in the consultation. Cabinet will be updated at a later date on this matter.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Annex 1 sets out the original breakdown in costs of the project and illustrates the changes that could be made as a result of the consultation exercise. Savings have been made by removing some items from the scheme but others have been added in to meet the needs of the future scheme
- 7.2 To reflect the financial climate, it is possible to split the work into phases. Annex 1 suggests that £249,000 be spent in 2009/10 and the remaining £248,000 at a later date, perhaps 2011/12
- 7.2 Extra revenue budget is requested to improve the maintenance of the park as the new management schedule. If the revenue budget is not increased, then the extra maintenance of this are cannot take place.
- 7.2 A total saving of £117,000 could be achieved by responding to people's views.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that Cabinet–

(1) note the progress of the scheme and consultation to date

(2) approve the proposed new scheme as outlined in Annex 1 and the Conclusions, with the new cost profile for capital and revenue.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Environmental Management files
Consultation documents.
Riverside Park Masterplan, Gillespies

Contact Officer:

Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager

☎ 01480 388430

Robert Ward, Head of Operations

☎ 01480 388635

Chris Allen, Project and Assets Manager

☎ 01480 388380

ANNEX 1

SCHEME COSTINGS - CAPITAL

AREA 1 – THE FORMAL PARK	Original		Proposed	
			Phase 1	Phase 2
		timings		
Greening Traffic Island	15,000			15,000
Bridge Foot Moorings	75,000	rev		85,000
Reconstruct exist footpath	37,000		22,000	15,000
New Footpath	46,000		46,000	
Decorative paved areas	14,000			14,000
Focal Point Shelter	30,000	delete	0	
Seating and Information Boards	22,000		8,000	14,000
Planting scheme	72,000		30,000	32,000
Moorings		add	10,000	
Total Area 1	311,000		116,000	175,000
AREA 2 – THE ACTIVITY AREA				
Alterations to existing car park	6,000		6,000	
Create entrance area		add	25,000	
New car parking	25,000	delete	0	
Revision to play area	5,000		5,000	
Multi Activity area	34,000	delete	0	
Youth play area			34,000	
Reinforced grass area	114,000	delete	0	
Activity trail	10,000			10,000
Planting scheme	21,000		21,000	
Widen walkway through the area		add		20,000
Turning for slipway			7,000	
Total Area 2	215,000		98,000	30,000
AREA 3 – THE WILDLIFE AREA				
Seating and Information Boards	12,000		12,000	
Hartford road car park	20,000	delete	0	
Additional pathways		add		20,000
Total Area 3	32,000		12,000	20,000
BUILD COST ALL AREAS	£558,000		226,000	225,000
DESIGN COSTS	£ 56,000		23,000	23,000
TOTAL COSTS	£614,000		249,000	248,000

SCHEME COSTINGS – REVENUE

Extra revenue for Wildlife Area maintenance - £20k per year.

ANNEX 2 – RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

		Percentages			
1	Do you agree that improvements are needed to the Riverside Park?	Yes	No	Unanswered	
	Yes	67	28	8	
	No				
2	Were you aware of the park's size and the opportunities that exist within it?	Yes	No	Unanswered	
	Yes	85	9	9	
	No				
	FORMAL AREA				
F1	Better entrance features	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	46	32	17	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
F2	More notice boards, signs and interpretation	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	52	33	9	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
F3	Green the traffic island by Bridge Hotel	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	51	29	16	6
	Oppose				
	No Views				
F4	Improve moorings	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	67	9	19	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
F5	Improve area around bridge	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	74	9	11	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
F6	Tree management & new planting	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	74	14	6	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
F7	Create a central focus such as a gazebo	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	31	54	12	6
	Oppose				
	No Views				
	ACTIVITY AREA				
A1	Provide improved entrances	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	51	21	21	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				

		Percentages			
A2	Better linkages between parts of the park	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	53	25	16	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
A3	Provide short stay parking area	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	59	20	15	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
A4	Create "collecting point"/ entrance near the pavilion	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	39	25	26	12
	Oppose				
	No Views				
A5	More notice boards, signs, interpretation	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	48	32	15	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
A6	Retain one football pitch	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	62	21	9	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
A7	Relocate recycling facilities	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	38	25	30	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
A8	Create cycle facility from Bridge to wildlife area	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	61	26	9	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
A9	Create area of fibre reinforced grass for events	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	34	50	9	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
A10	Create area for youth play activities	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	50	34	9	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
A11	Redesign play area	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	47	28	18	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				

		Percentages			
A12	Provide turning area for the slipway	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	50	16	30	7
	Oppose				
	No Views				
A13	Management of existing trees + new landscaping	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	73	15	8	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
A14	Create fishing areas and better quality moorings	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	67	12	17	7
	Oppose				
	No Views				
	WILDLIFE AREA				
W1	Improve the management of the wildlife area	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	84	11	2	6
	Oppose				
	No Views				
W2	Encourage access into this area	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	67	17	8	11
	Oppose				
	No Views				
W3	More notice boards, signs, interpretation	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	45	41	9	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
W4	Create fishing areas and better quality moorings	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	59	21	13	10
	Oppose				
	No Views				
W5	Extra car parking off Hartford Rd	Support	Oppose	No Views	Unanswered
	Support	27	52	12	11
	Oppose				
	No Views				

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17 MARCH 2009
23 APRIL 2009

SAPLEY EAST PREFERRED OPTIONS PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE CENTRE

(Heads of Planning and Financial Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council has been working with local people and stakeholders to prepare a master plan on land mainly to the east of Sapley Square including the legal and funding arrangements for a Community Enterprise Centre. Members are asked to note the work that has taken place over the last 6 months in working towards a masterplan and to consider its approval as informal planning guidance

2. SUPPORTING/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The master plan area covers open land at Oak Drive adjacent to the Oak Tree Centre, and land bounded by Nene Road, Coneygear Road and the Medway Centre. The area comprises managed green space, footpaths, under-developed land and six buildings: the Medway Christian Centre; Kingdom Hall; Golden Knight PH; Medway Court; St Barnabas Church and the Medway Centre.
- 2.2 The Council has undertaken two rounds of consultation: 'Issues and Options' and a 'Preferred Option'. On 18th December 2008, Cabinet received a report on the 'Issues and Options' consultation and a proposal by EEDA to part fund a Community Enterprise Centre within the area.

3. PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS Issues and Options stage

- 3.1 Under the 'Issues and Options' consultation, the Council presented a plan of the area as it stands together with three alternative development options, all of which offered the potential to develop:
- ❖ up to 60 homes, including the upgrading and reconfiguration of housing for the elderly;
 - ❖ new faith buildings;
 - ❖ a Community Enterprise Centre for small scale employment, skills development and learning opportunities to meet community needs such as long term unemployment;
 - ❖ safer routes through the area;
 - ❖ more usable open space.

- 3.2 Through the 'Issues and Options' consultation held at various locations between 9th September and 21st October 2008, over 300 local people gave their general support for the principle of development but raised concerns about proposals which could directly affect their homes and interests, most notably in relation to faith buildings.
- 3.3 These messages from local people and stakeholders informed and shaped the design of the 'Preferred Option' in the following ways:
- i) Faith Buildings:
 - St Barnabas Church: shows the retention of the church with the opportunity for expansion of faith facilities and or residential use
 - Kingdom Hall: identifies a possible relocation site in Medway Road
 - Medway Christian Centre: identifies possible relocation sites – one as an extension of the Medway Centre, the other on the site of the St Barnabas Learning Centre
 - ii) Community Enterprise Centre:
 - identifies a site for the centre in two phases, and including the possible relocation of the St Barnabas Learning Centre
 - iii) Family and Supported Housing:
 - identifies housing with one group having access off Nene Road and a second housing group with access off Medway Road
 - iv) Access and Car Parking:
 - removes the proposal to link Medway Road with Nene Road; and
 - retains the footbridge across Nene Road.
 - v) Oak Drive:
 - proposes improved landscaping and footpath linkages
 - vi) Open Space and Play Area:
 - proposes a linear park to provide safer routes through the area to Medway Road and the 'Courts' and
 - designs out a former play area adjacent to Medway Court
 - vii) Pub: proposes the removal of the existing pub with no site for its relocation.
- Preferred option stage**
- 3.4 The consultation on the 'Preferred Option' involved over 140 local people and stakeholders held at various locations between 3rd February and 4th March 2009. The programme, which included events dedicated for those most affected by the proposals, is listed in Annex A. The comments of those who wrote in at this stage are listed in Annex B.
- 3.5 Overall there was strong support for investment in improving the area, providing more work and community opportunities and making better use of the open spaces. The following arose from the exercise to inform the masterplan.
- i) Faith Buildings:
 - St Barnabas Church: the local church authorities have confirmed they wishes to remain in-situ.

- Kingdom Hall: the principle of the relocation site was endorsed with the main concerns raised about the siting and access of the building to maximise security and the amount and location of any car parking
- Medway Christian Centre: the church is concerned about the tenure of any new building and the availability of car parking but has undertaken to review the available options

ii) Community Enterprise Centre:

Consultees raised questions about

- the final size, use and look of the building, and how much car parking would be needed, and
- whether the St Barnabas Learning Centre needed to move

iii) Family and Supported Housing:

Consultees raised questions about:

- the number of houses and the mix of these houses by size and tenure as this will influence the demands for access, car parking, open space and the overall cohesiveness and integration of the area
- the quality of the design of the houses and their environmental performance
- the impact of the phasing of development on residents of Medway Court,
 - the timetable for delivery including risks arising from the private housing market and public funding

iv) Access and Car Parking:

Consultees raised questions about:

- the impact of the phasing of development on car parking and access for emergency vehicles

v) Oak Drive:

Consultees were happy about:

- no further traffic generation uses being allowed off Oak Drive

vi) Open Space and Play Area:

Consultees raised the need for:

- the routes through the linear park to be short, safe and manageable with good lighting and overlooking
- the need to design defensible space between the public realm and private gardens with fencing designed to enable overlooking and contribute to the area's environmental amenity

vii) Pub:

Consultees had contradictory views over whether the pub should stay or go.

4. THE MASTERPLAN

4.1 In response to comments made by local people and stakeholders, the following amendments to the design and layout of the 'Preferred Option' are proposed for the masterplan:

i) Faith Buildings:

- St Barnabas Centre: to note the variety of options available to the church authorities including remaining in-situ and/or the possibility of

the existing learning centre being used as a faith building and/or possible residential use of the site

- Kingdom Hall: to explore with Huntingdon Town Council the possibility of sharing the existing access and expanding the car park to the north of the Medway Centre to enable the early development of the new Kingdom Hall

ii) Community Enterprise Centre:

- to confirm the location of the first phase of the centre up to 600 sq m with provision for a second phase of approximately 200 sq m, and to clarify the general location for the area of current car parking that would be lost to the development

iii) Family and Supported Housing:

- Nene Road: to identify this area for mostly two storey family housing with some two and three storey flats
- Medway Road: to treat this areas as a self contained housing scheme that through its size, tenure mix, design, layout and landscaping combines to protect the residential amenity of the existing residents at Medway Court

iv) Access and Car Parking:

- expand the existing car park to the north of the Medway Centre, see (i) above, as part of the new Kingdom Hall scheme
- retain 18 car parking spaces at Nene Road
- allocate further car parking provision in accordance with the Council's approved car parking standards

v) Open Space and Play Area:

To incorporate within the design of the linear park:

- a footway and cycle path linking the Coneygear Road foot bridge with Nene Road and Humber Road via pocket parks
- lighting and CCTV
- fencing to allow for overlooking as well as security and visual amenity
- the closure of the alley at the rear of 22 – 28 Nene Road and provision of car parking spaces for these houses via the access from Nene Road

5. IMPLEMENTATION

Finance

- 5.1 The principles set out in the Oxmoor Action plan, whereby the receipts from the sale of the land in the ownership of the District Council were pooled together with the planning obligations arising from the betterment of land and together ringed fenced for the benefit of the Oxmoor community, will be applied in the implementation of this master plan.
- 5.2 In these circumstances it would be appropriate to seek a tariff from each new house as the total planning obligation as described in the Local Investment Framework. The tariff (between £10k-£15k) will be required for the improved walkway (transportation contribution) and open space (recreation and open space contribution). Affordable housing will be provided as part of the scheme. Discussions with the

appropriate service provider will be needed as to whether an education and health contribution will be required.

- 5.3 Additionally the Council will be seeking grants towards the cost of the community enterprise centre from EEDA and other bodies. To support the applications a business case is being prepared to demonstrate its viability.

Phasing of development

- 5.4 It is proposed to bring forward the comprehensive development of the area in four phases as follows:

1) Community Enterprise Centre: to establish the business case, put together the funding and prepare a scheme together with a timetable for EEDA grant funding, a planning application and construction

2) Faith Buildings: to progress the relocation of the Kingdom Hall and Christian Medway Centre

3) Nene Road Housing: to negotiate a mixed tenure predominantly family housing scheme

4 A) Medway Road Housing and Linear Park

- to progress the acquisition of the Golden Knight PH by private treaty and failing that the possible use of the Council's Compulsory Purchase Powers

- adjacent to Coneygear Road: to provide for family houses and apartments

- adjacent to Medway Court: to provide for housing which protects the environmental amenity of Medway Court

- develop the linear park

4 B) Medway Road Housing and Linear Park

- to progress most of the above housing and linear park should it not be possible to acquire the Golden Knight PH

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is recommended that cabinet

(i) Note the progress through various stage of consultation and endorse the proposed amendments to the 'Preferred Option' for the Master Plan as set out in section 3 above in response to comments made by local people and stakeholders during the consultation held during February and March 2009;

(ii) approve the master plan document, attached Annex C, as informal planning guidance for the comprehensive development of the land mostly to the east of Sapley Square;

(iii) endorse the principles of implementation set out in section 5

ANNEX A

Time and Date	Group	Venue
3 rd February	Oxmoor Community Action group	St Barnabas Learning Centre
4 th February	Huntingdon Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses	Kingdom Hall
8 th February	Medway Christian Fellowship	Medway Centre
8 th February	Huntingdonshire Community Group	Medway Centre
11 th February	Norfolk and Essex Road Residents Association	Maple Centre
12 th February	Medway Court residents	Medway Court
12 th February	Open event	Maple Centre
4 th March	Oxmoor Community Action Group	Maple Centre

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Oxmoor Action Plan
Consultation documents on Issues and Options stages

Contact Officer: Richard Probyn
 01480 388430

Annex B
Land around Sapley Square, Huntingdon
 precis of written comments

The table below details the comments received in general letters and from comments or attachments from the public questionnaires.

Comment by:	Nature of Comment
Huntingdon Town Council	<p>The plan does not adequately address the need for suitable and sufficient parking facilities in an area which is already recognised as having a shortfall of parking availability.</p> <p>Consideration must be given to the need for suitable access for construction machinery at the time when the new Kingdom Hall is being built.</p> <p>What assurance is there that the capital investment necessary to further an extension of the Medway Centre or the St Barnabas Centre will be available?</p> <p>The current proposals show the removal of existing footpaths allowing access for users with disability between the bus stops on Coneygear Road and the Medway Centre/Medway Court and no suitable replacement for this loss of amenity.</p> <p>The Council is of the view that the proposals overall will result in a substantially improved use of the land in the area.</p> <p>There is a strong local preference for the retention of a public house and therefore a suitable site should be identified if the existing one is to be removed.</p> <p>There is concern that plans to accommodate specific user groups in an extension to the Medway Community Centre will limit the opportunity of the Town Council as tenant to extend or develop the Centre, should this be a user requirement.</p> <p>Location of the Kingdom Hall next to the BRJ Club and opposite the Health Centre is preferred to the current</p>

Comment by:	Nature of Comment
	<p>location between Medway Court and the Medway Centre, as existing parking facilities at the BRJ Club would be available for users.</p> <p>In the event that the Kingdom Hall is relocated as suggested, then the proposed Kingdom Hall site in the Preferred Options Plan could be used to site a public house for the Community.</p>
Questionnaire 1	<p>Why is that green spaces and well maintained buildings are always the ones to be altered or demolished.</p> <p>The St Barnabas Learning Centre has only just been built and should not be interfered with.</p>
Questionnaire 2	<p>St Barnabas Learning Centre has been built for the community.</p> <p>It would be totally immoral and unethical to use these facilities for anything else.</p> <p>Grant received would not have been given for a no conformist church.</p> <p>The congregation would be against any extension which would take away their green space.</p>
Questionnaire 3	<p>Would prefer to see improvements to existing buildings, eg Medway Court and Medway Centre, an the pathway between Nene Road and Medway centre needs resurfacing.</p> <p>Any housing built should bring with it 'infrastructure charges'.</p>
Questionnaire 4	<p>Thinks that the Golden Knight should be given a face lift, not taken away.</p>
Questionnaire 5	<p>There should be more parking facilities for the shops and the Maple Centre. Parking for any of the new proposed buildings does not seem to have been considered.</p>

Comment by:	Nature of Comment
Questionnaire 6	In favour of re-siting the public house. There is already too much drinking on the streets.
Questionnaire 7	The learning centre should stay where it is. The Medway Christian Centre, the Golden Knight and the Medway Court flats should no be moved.
Questionnaire 8	Concern over removal of wing to Medway Court. No great amount of additional housing, just different housing. Fears that the business enterprise building will be a white elephant. Supports changed footpaths, but need to look at levels.
Questionnaire 9	Too many houses in a small space. Not enough provision for childrens' play.
Questionnaire 10	Parking?
Questionnaire 11	Should have a discussion for leaving learning centre where it is.
Questionnaire 12	Needs clarification between Medway Centre and Christian Fellowship. Vehicular access to Kingdom Hall – surely the gradient is too steep from Medway Road. Would access from Nene Road end be better.
Questionnaire 13	Concerned that the learning centre stays where it is.
Questionnaire 14	Will the new footpaths be will lit with the new down facing street lamps? Also parking on a Sunday morning when both Kingdom Hall and Christian Fellowship services are on, even now in Nene Road when the Kingdom Hall is in use there is a lack of parking with the cars from the people worshipping parking all round the Kingdom Hall and parking area of the Golden Knight?

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24 MARCH 2009
14 APRIL 2009
23 APRIL 2009

**DRAFT HUNTINGDON WEST AREA ACTION PLAN
PREFERRED APPROACH
(Report by HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES)**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Following consultations on an Issues and Options document in June 2007 and Land Use Options in May 2008, a suggested Preferred Approach for taking forward the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan has been prepared. An earlier draft was presented to the Development Plan Policy Advisory Group on 17 February. A presentation for Members took place on the evening of 31 March. Members are asked to support the content of the Action Plan and agree to it being the subject of further consultation.

2 CONTENT OF THE PREFERRED APPROACH

- 2.1 The Area Action Plan seeks to set the planning and development framework for the area west of Huntingdon town centre to help deliver planned growth and regeneration. The format involves description followed by establishing the vision and five objectives. The five objectives in turn create headings within which there are 12 policies as follows.
- Sustainable Travel:
 - 1: New and enhanced road links;
 - 2: Pedestrian and cycle links;
 - 3: The Railway Station;
 - 4: Public car parking
 - A Vibrant New Quarter:
 - 5: George St / Ermine St;
 - 6: Development West of the Railway and Hinchingsbrooke
 - Healthy and Green:
 - 7: Hinchingsbrooke Country Park;
 - 8: Views Common;
 - 9: Other Open Space and Play Areas
 - A High Quality Environment:
 - 10: Design Guidance
 - Infrastructure, Phasing and Implementation:
 - 11: Infrastructure;
 - 12: Phasing and Implementation

- 2.2 The policies have been derived by analysing how each matter was considered and addressed in the previous documents, the results of the sustainability appraisals, the consultation responses and further research. All of this information is presented in the document in order to form an 'audit trail' with regard to the evolution of this policy document.
- 2.3 Sustainable travel is considered first because new local road infrastructure is key to delivering potential change in this area. This involves the removal of the railway viaduct and replacement routes as proposed by the Highways Agency, as well as the Council's proposed West of Town Centre Link Road, and an indication that a further potential route could be investigated between Hinchingbrooke Park Road and the anticipated de-trunked A14 in the vicinity of the hospital and Views Common. In addition to the roads, enhanced pedestrian and cycle linkages are set out and there is discussion on the importance of the railway station. There is also provision for a potential new public long stay car park to the west of the proposed new Link Road.
- 2.4 The potential for regeneration is set out under the second objective. The land to be allocated has been derived from the highlighted alternatives in the options leaflet. A series of diagrams show how the area could be redeveloped and regenerated. Provision is made: for mixed use development in the George St / Ermine St area including new retail floorspace which will be complementary to the existing town centre; for new training and economic development land (at least 4ha mostly west of the railway line and on hospital and constabulary land), and; for residential development (providing for approximately 200-300 homes). Alternative activities such as restaurants, a hotel, a leisure facility, and a health centre are also mentioned as possible appropriate uses in this sustainable location.
- 2.5 Improved open spaces are envisaged. The potential to extend as well as improve Hinchingbrooke Country Park is specifically highlighted. Land no longer needed for the A14 railway viaduct (post the potential new A14 and local road improvements) should become open space (it is envisaged that this will return as part of a reconfigured Views Common). Additional open space is also expected in the George St / Ermine St area in three areas (as a public square at the George St end associated with potential retail development, and the others at the northern end as green linkages associated with Barracks Brook, a reinstated Handcroft Lane and pedestrian routes linking with the town centre).
- 2.6 To achieve a high quality environment Draft Policy 10 sets out specific local design requirements. This policy will stand alongside Conservation Area policies and other general policies such as those in the emerging

Development Management DPD. Mention is made of the need to investigate sustainable energy sources although a specific requirement is not set due to the feasibility of this not being known at this stage.

- 2.7 The infrastructure requirements and potential phasing identifying development before and after the A14 viaduct removal are set out in the appendices to the plan.

3 NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 A sustainability appraisal is being finalised, together with a record of the consultation process that has taken place. Discussions are ongoing with owners of land identified to be allocated in the document. A draft list of the key sources noted throughout the document with their website references is set out in an appendix to this report.
- 3.2 Once approved by Cabinet, the Preferred Approach will be subject to further engagement with the public and interested parties. A draft of the final Area Action Plan will then be prepared and approved by Cabinet and Council, followed by a statutory consultation process before its submission to the Secretary of State.

4. CABINET RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That Cabinet agree that the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan - Preferred Approach be the subject of further consultation. That Cabinet delegates to the Head of Planning Services after consultation with the Executive Member for Planning Strategy the making of any minor amendments, and approval of the Sustainability Appraisal.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Issues and Options document June 2007

Options Leaflet May 2008

Various key sources as noted throughout the document (see appendix)

Contact Officer: Richard Probyn, Development Plans & Implementation Manager
 **01480 388 430**

APPENDIX

DOCUMENT LIBRARY

(These are all the documents listed in the Preferred Approach – in alphabetical order)

A14 Announcements (Highways Agency 2007-2008)
<http://www.highways.gov.uk/roads/projects/4211.aspx>

Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study (EERA 2001)
http://www.gos.gov.uk/goeast/transport/regional_transport_strategy/multi_modal_studies/

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework (CCC and PCC – current stage is Preferred Options, Additional Sites 2008)
<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/planning/mineralswasteplan/>

Cambridgeshire County Council Strategic Open Space Study (CCC 2004)
(Not on web)

Cambridgeshire Green Vision Newsletter (CCC 2008)
<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/6900C285-4B2A-4487-B885-A4B9FEBE95A3/0/GreenVisionNewsMarch2008.pdf>

Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (CCC 2006)
http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/strategies/local/ltp_2006.htm

Cambridgeshire's Vision 2007-2021 Countrywide Sustainable Community Strategy (Cambridgeshire Together 2008)
<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/8707CA50-DEC9-4A7F-87E4-C8C108452C5D/0/CambsVision20072021.pdf>

Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan 2008-2011 (HDC 2008)
http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/EB05ABC1-544D-4AEC-9DC2-C43F668F5B71/0/final_action_plan_080131.pdf

Code for Sustainable Homes (DCLG 2008)
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/codesustainhomesstandard.pdf>

Development Management DPD: Development of Options 2009 (HDC 2009)
<http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/E63B981E-7AE2-4EE8-AD71-4BA3EC68F7FF/0/DevelopmentManagementDPDFINALcomp.pdf>

East of England Regional Plan (Go-East 2008)
<http://www.eera.gov.uk/category.asp?cat=120&id=SXA419-A77F5420>

Employment Land Review (Warwick Business Management for HDC 2007)
http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/CB711A78-A583-4DC0-940F-2ED8725E3D8F/0/employment_land_review_lores1_final_for_web.pdf

Environmental Ground Investigation and Risk Assessment (QDS Environmental, 2001)
(Not on web)

Green Infrastructure Strategy (Cambridgeshire Horizons 2006)
http://www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/doclib/260873_GREEN_INFRAS_T_BRO_2.pdf
http://www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/doclib/260873_400X574_MAP.pdf

Green Spaces, Better Places (DCLG 2002)
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/154953.pdf>

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<http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/CA2FDAC1-5E5E-4BC5-8206-E4B6A455B7A6/0/HuntingdonReportSection5.pdf>
<http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/4F560CFE-BBD8-43BC-98DC-E7187999D61E/0/HuntingdonReportSection6.pdf>

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<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/ppsclimatechange>

PPS 3 – Housing (DCLG 2006)
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing>

PPS 4 Consultation Draft – Planning for Sustainable Economic Development (DCLG 2007)
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/614685.pdf>

PPS 6 – Planning for Town Centres (DCLG 2005) and Proposed Changes to PPS6 (DCLG 2008)
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps6>

PPS 9 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (DCLG 2005)
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps9>

PPG 17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (DCLG 2002)
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/ppg17.pdf>

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http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/publications/uk-strategy/documents/SecFut_complete.pdf

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<http://www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/doclib/SustainableConstruction.pdf>

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<http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk/Environment+and+Planning/Planning/Planning+Policy/Strategic+Housing+Land+Availability+Assessment.htm>

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<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/communityinfrastructurelevy.pdf>

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COMT
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
CABINET

14th APRIL 2009
14th APRIL 2009
23rd APRIL 2009

THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY REVIEW – THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE DEVELOPMENT STUDY (Report by Head of Planning Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet that effective joint-working, between all of the Cambridgeshire authorities, has now resulted in a situation whereby the County Council will in the near future be in a position to submit its advice to EERA (as the initial county-wide response to their request for appropriate information to inform the RSS Review).

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The current strategic planning policy position is that the approved Regional Spatial Strategy, the East of England Plan, which was issued in May 2008, sets out growth requirements for the period up to 2021. The current Plan envisages that Huntingdonshire will deliver a minimum of 11,200 new dwellings, associated employment and other development during that time period.

2.2 Because of the need for the Council to effectively plan for the delivery of a 15 year housing land supply HDC's Submitted Core Strategy extends that plan period up to 2026. Our Core Strategy proposes that Huntingdonshire will deliver a minimum of 14,000 new dwellings (a figure which is made up of the committed 11,200 homes + an applied annual growth rate) and associated employment and other related development during that period.

2.3 The Government now requires EERA to review the East of England Plan in order to extend its life up till 2031 and to potentially plan to accommodate further substantial amounts of residential and employment growth within the region. In accordance with the Governments requirements EERA have now commenced upon that 'early review' with the whole process being proposed to be completed, in what is acknowledged to be a very short and challenging timescale, by 2011.

3. THE REVIEW OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

3.1 EERA requires its constituent 4/4 authorities – that is the applicable County Council's and Unitary Authorities – to provide strategic planning 'advice' to them specifically commenting upon ;

- How they consider that the various potential levels of future growth (as suggested by the NHPAU – the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit) could be accommodated within their areas. These suggested NHPAU scenario's for future growth indicate that Huntingdonshire may need to plan to accommodate somewhere between 3,000 and 17,000 additional new homes in the period to 2021 to 2031.

- The potential appropriateness of 'Development Proposals' submitted by various private sector landowner and developer interests in response to EERA's request for such submissions. 'Developer' proposals have been submitted in respect of several potential development sites all across Cambridgeshire and two such proposals were submitted in respect of proposals in Huntingdonshire – in respect of Alconbury Airfield and St Neots East.
- To support the review process EERA has also commissioned consultants (Arups) to prepare a Regional Scale Settlement Study in order to inform the possible growth strategy. That study proposes that various existing larger settlements, including Cambridge, may well be subject to further 'regional scale growth' and that 'new regional scale growth locations' (Regional Scale Settlements) may also be an appropriate policy option. It is proposed that new Regional Scale Settlements could deliver a minimum of 20,000 homes and have the 'potential' to accommodate far more up to an eventual long-term capacity of 250,000 people. Members will be aware that 'North Huntingdon/Alconbury' has been identified as a potential strong option for such a development by that study. HDC is in the process of commissioning additional targeted studies to help us evaluate the potential environmental capacity and implications of further growth for Huntingdonshire. It is considered that these studies will be fundamental in respect of refining HDC's views in order to inform the next stages of this work and to put us in a position whereby we can more readily respond to EERA's future options consultation.

3.2 In response to this request to provide advice to EERA with regard to these three issues Cambridgeshire County Council, working in partnership with all of the district authorities, commissioned their own consultancy team (made up of WSP and SQW et al) to prepare the 'Cambridgeshire Development Study' in order to establish how sustainable different levels of further growth could potentially be accommodated within Cambridgeshire. That Cambridgeshire wide process is being directed by the Joint Cambridgeshire Regional Spatial Strategy Review Panel (CReSSP).

4. THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE DEVELOPMENT STUDY- DRAFT ADVICE TO EERA FROM THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE AUTHORITIES

4.1 It is intended that CReSSP will consider and endorse the suggested 'draft advice' to EERA at its next meeting on the 7th April 2009 (and a copy of the applicable report is attached for Members information). Due to the respective deadlines this report obviously had to be prepared in advance of that meeting and the finalisation of the study. Therefore it is my intention that appropriate verbal updates will supplement this report as applicable.

4.2 The suggested Draft Advice to EERA considers and comments upon the applicable processes that have been undertaken and the options considered in its various sections;

- Section 2 outlines the Consultation Process that has been undertaken to date.
- Section 3 outlines the suggested responses to EERA's Call for Development Proposals. Paragraph's 3.3 to 3.8 of the

CReSSP report comments upon the basis of the submitted developer proposals and it is considered that the suggested responses, to the two proposals in Huntingdonshire, are appropriate at this point in time. Further work needs to be done with regard to the perceived acceptability of some of the other options.

- ❖ An option of further highly sustainable growth to the East of St Neots accords with the suggested directions of strategic growth as set out in our Submitted Core Strategy. Therefore it is considered that the suggested response, that the proposal may have some potential, can be supported.
 - ❖ It is widely acknowledged that Alconbury Airfield is a resource, and a potential development option, that may need to be appropriately considered in respect of any future growth strategy for the district. Accordingly it is appropriate that it is considered to be worthy of further consideration at this early stage of the review process.
 - ❖ Whilst many of the options outlined in Paragraphs 3.3 to 3.7 are logical initial responses to the potential appropriateness of the submitted proposals I think it should be questioned as to why previously 'highly' regarded and supposedly sustainable locations, such as Northstowe and Camborne, are now considered to be less acceptable alternatives.
- Section 4 comments upon the Regional Scale Settlement Study both in general and with particular regard to the identified 'North Huntingdon/Alconbury' large scale new settlement option. Whilst many of the comments can be supported, certainly in terms of the very limited overall robustness of the report and the clear concerns as to whether Cambridge City could actually deliver additional sustainable growth, it is considered that some of the suggested wording needs to be deleted. Whilst it is considered that the content of sub-paragraph's 4.2 h), j) and k) can be endorsed it is suggested that the comments in sub-paragraph i) are far too positive in their tone and therefore should be deleted.
 - Section 5 comments upon the testing to be applied to the housing and job scenarios. It is considered that positive support should be given to the view, as set out in Paragraphs 5.4 to 5.8, that the 'higher' level scenarios are totally unrealistic and that testing should therefore be limited to the more appropriate lower level growth scenarios.
 - Section 6 comments upon the suggested District distribution of houses and jobs and the related Sub-Regional policy. It is considered that the comments set out in Paragraphs 6.3 to 6.6 should be endorsed with particular emphasis being given to the statements as set out in Paragraph 6.6. It is clear that the existing, and committed, sub-regional strategy needs to be successfully delivered prior to any consideration of potential alternative approaches.

- Section 7 comments upon the proposed rolling forward of existing RSS and extended Structure Plan policies. It is considered that the suggested approach can be supported.
- Section 8 comments upon Sub-Regional, Regional and Inter-Regional Issues and clearly because of Huntingdonshire's location, at the north-western periphery of the region, these issues, particularly in terms of the relationship with Peterborough, will be of significant importance.
- Section 9 comments upon Infrastructure requirements and 'show-stoppers' and emphasises that the significant challenges that would come from any proposals to increase delivery above current growth levels.
- Section 10 comments upon the shared 'vision' of sustainable growth that has underpinned this work.

4.3 Further to the CReSSP meeting on the 7th April it is intended that the 'Cambridgeshire Development Study' will be considered by the County Council's Cabinet on 5th May 2009. The views of the County Council will then be submitted to EERA as the initial aspect of Cambridgeshire's response to the request for 4/4 Authority advice to inform the RSS Review. However, it is important to note that this is obviously an initial position that will be subject to further public and statutory consultation, and far greater scrutiny, when EERA, after they have considered the advice they will have received from all of its constituent 4/4 authorities, publish their proposed 'options' for growth later in the year.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Therefore it is recommended that Cabinet:

- a. Notes the positive partnership working that has taken place between all of the Cambridgeshire Authorities with regard to developing a co-ordinated response to these fundamentally important strategic planning issues.
- b. Endorses the on-going assessment work that is being commissioned to consider in more detail the potential environmental capacity and implications of further strategic growth in Huntingdonshire.
- c. Requests that the County Council Cabinet takes appropriate account of HDC's statements of support and its stated concerns as set out in Paragraph 4.2 of this report and that it accordingly amends the basis of its suggested advice to EERA.
- d. Supports the submission of a suitably amended Cambridgeshire position to EERA in response to their request for initial strategic planning advice from the 4/4 Authorities.

Background Papers:

Joint Cambridgeshire Regional Spatial Strategy Review Panel – Applicable RSS Review Papers and in particular the relevant agenda items from the 7th April 2009 meeting.

The Cambridgeshire Development Study – April 2009

EERA – Regional Scale Settlement Study – Final Report – January 2009

CONTACT OFFICER - enquiries about this report to Steve Ingram, Head of Planning Services, on 01480 388400.

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**DRAFT ADVICE TO EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY (EERA) FROM
CAMBRIDGESHIRE AUTHORITIES**

To: **Joint Cambridgeshire RSS Review Panel (CReSSP)**

Date: **7th April 2009**

From: **RSS Review Study Group**

Purpose **To consider the key elements of the formal advice on the Review of the RSS in Cambridgeshire which it is proposed to be submitted to EERA by the County Council as a Section 4(4) Authority.**

Recommendation: **That CReSSP supports the proposed outline response as set out in this report, together with any further comments agreed by members for inclusion (and noting that the response will need further amendment once the findings of the Cambridgeshire Development Study are available).**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The studies and consultations that will feed into the Cambridgeshire advice on the RSS Review are drawing to a close.
- 1.2 This report suggests the main points of the advice that can be made emerging from the joint work undertaken so far. It is in outline only as EERA will also be provided with the detailed studies underpinning the conclusions.
- 1.3 It should be noted that some technical work is still ongoing and will be reported at the CReSSP meeting. Therefore further additions and amendment to some aspects of this report will be required.
- 1.4 The final advice will be agreed by the County Council's Cabinet on 5th May 2009.
- 1.5 The Structure of this report is based the headings in EERA's request, although not necessarily in the same order.

2.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 2.1 EERA has requested an auditable account of consultation and facilitation with all relevant authorities, sub-regions and stakeholders.

Proposed Response:

Reference is made to the following:

- RSS Study Group (joint officer working group)
- 4 Joint Cambridgeshire RSS Review Panel meetings, held in public, with cross party membership
- Events held as part of the preparation of the Cambridgeshire Development Study including two stakeholder workshops and a stakeholder's economy seminar.
- A range of communication activity undertaken (October 2008 – April 2009) including information made available to the public and the provision made to receive representations via on-line forms on the County Council's web-pages relating to RSS Review.

The advice provided is based upon the following evidence:

- Feedback from workshops and RSS Study Group members as outlined above and any other representations received
- Cambridgeshire Development Study and related appendices (to be finalised in April 2009) and Interim Report (March 2009)
- Validation of Growth Scenarios for the Review of the RSS for the East of England Cambridgeshire - technical study & interim findings December 2008
- A Technical Note including topic papers prepared by the Study Group prior to the Cambridgeshire Development Study
- Initial Assessment of Call for Proposals

- Assessment of Regional Scale Settlement Study
- Schedule of evidence provided to Consultant team who prepared the Cambridgeshire Development Study

3.0 EERA's Call for Development Proposals.

3.1 EERA have asked for assessment and advice on the developer proposals submitted in the autumn of 2008. 12 of these were in Cambridgeshire.

3.2 This assessment is based on:

- i) an initial review of evidence put together by the joint study group
- ii) the testing of new settlement options in the Cambridgeshire Development Study

3.3 The initial review by the study group indicates that:

a) All of the proposals have been brought forward in some form before and have been the subject of previous assessments – the call for proposals has revealed nothing new.

b) On the basis of the evidence assessed, the proposals may be grouped by level of acceptability:

- i. With potential subject to resolution of some issues
 - North Ely CP36
 - Wintringham Park (St Neots East) CP80
- ii. Worthy of further consideration
 - Alconbury Airfield CP71
 - Waterbeach (Denny St Francis) CP88
- iii. Conflicting views in the evidence base
 - Cambourne East (Bourne Airfield) CP27
 - Cambourne West (Swansley Farm) CP76
 - Cambourne North CP51
- iv. Most serious planning challenges
 - South east Cambridge CP8
 - West of Shelford Road, Cambridge CP64
 - Mereham CP111
 - Northstowe Extension CP17
 - Hanley Grange, Hinxton CP23

c) Across all the proposals the evidence base identifies a range of common issues that give cause for concern, including: flood risk; transport implications; relationship to existing settlements; self containment, especially in employment; and landscape/Green Belt impacts.

3.4 Officer opinion amongst the local planning authorities indicates that there is little enthusiasm for new settlements. There is some acceptance of urban expansion, particularly in the market towns, although with a number of significant caveats, especially relating to infrastructure.

- East Cambridgeshire consider that a substantial increase in the size of Ely could help in delivering more infrastructure, community facilities

and jobs. East Cambridgeshire's total opposition to the Mereham proposal is well known.

- Cambridge City are concerned about further expansion of the City beyond that already planned because of the impact on the amenity of the City, limited capacity in the congested centre and effects on the Green Belt
- Huntingdonshire would support the principle of a new eco-quarter at St Neots but there are a range of difficult issues at other locations in the District
- South Cambridgeshire do not support higher levels of growth or further new settlements or expansions of new settlements, but they do support the current strategy for urban expansion of Cambridge and the development of Northstowe.

Call for Development Proposals - Conclusions

- 3.5 The assessment so far suggests that there is a much stronger case for future investment in existing towns, rather than committing resources to the creation further new settlements. Growing urban populations, within reason, may help some places reach a critical mass allowing them to support better infrastructure, services and job prospects. On this basis Ely North (2,700 + dwellings) and St Neot's East (4,000 dwellings) appear to have the greatest potential within known environmental limits. There may be other towns, not included in the developer proposals, for example in Fenland, which also have potential. *(Paragraph to be reviewed following completion of option testing in the Cambridgeshire Development Study).*
- 3.6 It is possible, at some point, that housing growth outside the capacity of expanding existing towns may need to be considered. Of the new settlements resulting from the call for proposals, those at Waterbeach (up to 12,750 dwellings) and Alconbury (5 - 6,000 dwellings) may be worthy of further consideration. (But see separately under Section 4 below, the assessment of the ARUP conclusions concerning a much larger proposal at Alconbury.) It is important though that such developments should support the high level of infrastructure improvements required and that they should not undermine the delivery of existing or planned growth projects in nearby areas. They are therefore likely be suitable only as options for the longer term. *(Paragraph to be reviewed following completion of option testing in the Cambridgeshire Development Study).*
- 3.7 The developer proposals with the greatest impacts are those suggested for large-scale extension into the Cambridge Green Belt (South East Cambridge and West of Shelford Road) and for new settlements at Hanley Grange, Mereham and the extension of Northstowe. In relation to Cambridge it should be noted that none of the peripheral urban extensions provided for in the current RSS have yet been started on the ground and the same holds true for Northstowe. An application at Mereham has been comprehensively rejected at a recent planning appeal. The Mereham location was also strongly discounted during the preparation of the 2003 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan. *(Paragraph to be reviewed following completion of option testing in the Cambridgeshire Development Study).*

3.8 The results of testing from the Cambridgeshire Development Study are not yet available and will be reported at the meeting.

4.0 Regional Scale Settlement Study (ARUP)

4.1 EERA have requested a response on the findings of the ARUP study as they affect Cambridgeshire. The study includes suggestions for a major development of 20,000 homes at Alconbury Airfield near Huntingdon and indicates the Cambridge area as the focus for continued regional scale growth in the long term.

4.2 A review of this study has been carried out for the joint Cambridgeshire Study Group by Brian Human. Key findings of this review can be summarised as follows:

General

a) The Study is not convincing in demonstrating that regional size settlements or expanded key centres are the answer to problems of sustainable growth.

b) The major growth strategy proposed by Arup could undermine the delivery of the existing strategy, especially around Cambridge.

c) The study is, however, fair in drawing attention to the difficulty of promoting a spatial strategy based on diverting growth pressures from the south of the County to the north and the market towns.

d) There is no compelling justification given for the need to compete with or complement centres elsewhere in the Region such as Milton Keynes, Luton, Thurrock or Southend or to show why growth is the best way to achieve this.

Cambridge

e) The study report is contradictory and lacks internal consistency about the suitability of the Cambridge area for further expansion.

f) The definition of the extent of the Cambridge area, which is set a target of 300,000 to 400,000 population is unclear especially as the Cambridge Sub-Region, including surrounding market towns, already had a population of 409,000 in 1999.

g) While the study identifies the congestion pressures affecting Cambridge and the radial routes to it, it does not consider sufficiently the limited physical capacity of the City centre to accommodate additional public transport movements and pressure on services, e.g. shopping and leisure.

Alconbury

h) There is limited technical evidence to support the choice of locations for major new settlements, no overall comparison of the benefits of the locations and no clarity about what options were considered and how the conclusions were reached.

i) The proposal for a regional scale settlement at Alconbury is both interesting and challenging.

j) The Ouse Valley offers considerable potential for development – excellent communications, a good environment and a solid core of economic activity, but this does not mean Alconbury is the right place for a major new settlement, let alone one of this size.

k) Key issues which would need to be addressed include

- impact on regeneration of the Huntingdonshire market towns
- meeting local needs
- attracting economic activity and jobs
- strategic and local transport suitability
- relevance of existing infrastructure and USAF housing on site
- fit with rural character of the area.

4.3 The survey of local planning authority officer views in Cambridgeshire indicates broad agreement with this analysis. Therefore EERA can be informed that it is the view of Cambridgeshire Authorities that there are significant flaws in the Arup study. It does not adequately justify the case for large free-standing new settlements such as Alconbury or consider alternative locations on a comparable basis. Nor does it explain with any clarity its conclusions about the scope for Cambridge centred expansion. While there are aspects which merit further investigation, the Study itself does not provide an adequate foundation for strategic options in Cambridgeshire.

5.0 Testing the housing and jobs scenarios

5.1 EERA is asking for the range of housing and jobs scenarios provided to be tested by the Strategic Authorities.

5.2 Cambridgeshire County Council commissioned SQW Consulting to assess the validity and appropriateness of the scenarios as a basis for developing strategic options for the County. The results of this assessment were reported to CReSSP on 9th January 2009.

5.3 Key points from the SQW findings can be summarised as follows:

- Modelling appears to be overstating current population and employment growth leading to overstatement in future years;
- The building rates in the highest scenarios would be extremely challenging. The highest scenario requires 37% higher housing growth than the current RSS rate.
- Modelled job growth outstrips the increase in employed residents by at least 30,000 in each scenario resulting in significant net in-commuting, especially for Cambridge City.
- A significant level of net immigration to Cambridgeshire from outside the Region is modelled in all scenarios from 5,000 to 8,200 per annum.

- The employment forecasts do not seem realistic, especially in the context of the current recession.
- *SQW Consulting* recommend that there should be a revised set of scenario runs for Cambridgeshire and the Region.
- It is likely in the view of *SQW Consulting* that house-building rates will be at a significantly reduced rate for at least two years.
- Even if building returns to 2007/8 rates, the achievement of any scenarios with household rates significantly higher than targets in the current RSS must be very uncertain.
- Further work is recommended on the viability of developments affecting contributions to infrastructure and affordable housing. (ES 18)

5.4 The initial response to EERA from Cambridgeshire therefore indicated that:

"The Council and its partner authorities have serious concerns that the high levels of jobs and housing growth we have been asked to test are unrealistic, even before taking into account the current adverse economic climate. The recession appears likely to add a further delay of at least two years in meeting any suggested targets. Moreover, the scale and concentration of job growth projected for the Cambridge area does not seem sustainable and could lead to very high levels of in-commuting." (Progress Report - 6th January 2009)

5.5 Further work by SQW Consulting and Cambridge Econometrics (CE) since January has confirmed that the higher growth scenarios are not realistic and are therefore unsuitable for testing. Moreover the employment projections they have produced, taking account of the current recession, cast doubt on the achievability of rates of jobs growth included in the current RSS as follows:

- RSS job growth in Cambridgeshire 2001 to 2021 = 75,000 (3,750 pa)
- CE trend based job growth in Cambs 2007 to 2031 = 47,300 (1,990 pa)
- CE policy based job growth in Cambs 2007 to 2031 = 38,600 (1,608 pa)

5.6 It can be noted that the preponderance of this job growth is projected to be in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire with relatively little job growth in the remaining Districts of Fenland, East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire.

5.7 The housing scenarios provided by EERA would require substantial additional numbers of housing growth by 2031, beyond what has already been committed in existing planning permissions and in existing/emerging Local Development Documents. The current commitments provide for 75,400 homes. The additions required to meet the four scenarios highlighted by EERA for testing have been calculated by Pegasus Planning as follows (overall annual rate in brackets):

- 1. RSS rate 75,000 + 23,000 homes (3,916 p.a.)
- 3. NHPAU lower 75,000 + 31,900 homes (4,291 p.a.)
- 4. NHPAU upper 75,000 + 54,000 homes (5,174 p.a.)

5. GVA based 75,000 + 44,100 homes (4,783 p.a.)

5.8 In view of the lack of realism now apparent in any of the upper scenarios, WSP have advised that they will be testing development strategies at the following much lower levels:

Base case at 75,000 commitments only (3,000 p.a.)

Low case at 75,000 + 15,000 homes (3,600 p.a.)

High case at 75,000 + 35,000 homes (4,400 p.a.)

6.0 District distribution of housing and jobs figures and sub-regional policy

6.1 EERA have requested advice on the District distribution of housing and job figures up to 2031, with determination of whether this provision is district wide or tied to the Key Centres of Development and Change (KCDCs) as defined in the RSS. (In Cambridgeshire, Cambridge is the only designated KCDC.) The advice is to include a consideration of spatial patterns and forms of development. EERA has also requested that advice should be provided on possible changes in sub-regional policy or boundaries or any new growth designation.

Housing and jobs - spatial patterns

6.2 It will not be possible to indicate a preferred distribution of housing and jobs until after the completion of option testing in the Cambridgeshire Development Study (to be reported at the meeting). This testing may not identify a single preferred option but it will be possible to indicate to EERA the distribution of homes and jobs in each option and the degree to which they are associated with the growth of Cambridge or other centres in the County. The initial options have been selected with very clear themes to demonstrate the consequences of different approaches and to allow outcomes to be distinguishable. The outline of the options selected for testing are as follows (housing totals only):

1. Base case of commitments only growth (+ 75,000 homes)

- assumes the current strategy will not be completed until 2031

2. Low market towns growth (+ 90,000 homes)

- includes a further 15,000 homes, in addition to current commitments, to be located in the market towns

3. High market towns growth (+ 110,000 homes)

- includes a further 35,000 homes in addition to current commitments, to be located in the market towns and other corridor locations

4. Low Cambridge growth (+ 90,000 homes)

- includes a further 15,000 homes, in addition to current commitments, to be located in the Green Belt close to Cambridge

5. High Cambridge growth (+ 110,000)

- includes a further 35,000 homes in addition to current commitments, to be located in the Green Belt close to Cambridge or as an extension to Northstowe

6. Low New Settlements growth (+ 90,000)

- assumes a further 15,000 homes, in addition to current commitments, to be located in new settlements at Waterbeach and Alconbury

7. High New Settlements growth (+ 110,000)

- includes a further 35,000 homes, in addition to current commitments, to be located in new settlements at Waterbeach, Alconbury, Hanley Grange and an extension to Cambourne.

- 6.3 It is possible that no particular option may emerge as preferred at this stage. The purpose of testing is to assess the impacts of different forms of development. This will help the authorities to form advice to EERA and to consider if other development strategies should be tested, perhaps combining elements from those above. *(Paragraph to be reviewed following completion of option testing in the Cambridgeshire Development Study).*

Sub-Regional policy and the framework for infrastructure investment

- 6.4 During the RSS stakeholder events and the previous meetings of CReSSP, it has been made clear that there are very strong views about the distribution of growth within the County and a desire that any strategy should benefit existing communities, including those in Fenland and other northern areas of the County. It is recognised that the RSS will guide future investment in facilities and infrastructure as well as setting the framework for the creation of new employment opportunities.

- 6.5 If any agreed strategy for the County is to take effect in the statutory development plan, it will need to be incorporated in the RSS. This will only be possible if there is an appropriate Sub-Regional chapter in the RSS document. Therefore it should be considered whether the Cambridgeshire Authorities should press EERA to change the boundaries of the existing Cambridge Sub-Region (as defined in RSS policies CSR1 - CSR4) to include the whole of Cambridgeshire. It is essential that specific strategic policies for the County should be included in the RSS.

- 6.6 However, it is emphasised that the current growth strategy for the existing Cambridge Sub Region is strongly supported. This will take development up to 2021 and beyond as set out in policies CSR1 - CSR4. The completion of development on the urban periphery of Cambridge, at Northstowe and in the market towns would therefore take precedence within any longer term RSS strategy arising from the review.

7.0 Rolling forward of existing RSS policies and extended Structure Plan policies

- 7.1 EERA have asked for views on RSS policies which should be retained or considered for amendment. A letter from the Head of Strategic Planning (on behalf of the joint study group) to EERA on this topic was reported to the March 9th meeting of CReSSP. This included a request for a review of Policy SS4 on "Towns other than key centres and Rural Areas". This is to ensure that the potential role of market towns is given significant emphasis in the

RSS.

- 7.2 Officers have also indicated to EERA that the continuation of "saved" Structure Plan policies also needs to be given consideration.
- 7.3 A number of Policies in the 2003 Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Structure Plan have been carried forward and are not subsumed within the 2008 RSS. These relate to specific issues which would not be appropriate within the RSS but had not yet incorporated in approved Local Development Documents e.g.

- Strategic Employment Locations (P2/3)
- Distribution, Warehousing and Manufacturing (P2/5)
- Transport Investment Priorities (P8/10)
- Cambridge Green Belt (P9/2b and P9/2c)
- Economic Regeneration of Chatteris (P9/5)
- Infrastructure Provision (P9/8)
- Cambridge Sub-Region Transport Strategy (P9/9)

(List not exhaustive.)

- 7.4 It is suggested that the joint study group are requested to consider the continued relevance of these Structure Plan policies and make recommendations to any future meeting of CReSSP. There is no need to provide EERA with immediate advice on this topic.

8.0 Sub-Regional, Regional and Inter-Regional Issues

- 8.1 EERA has asked the Strategic Planning authorities to take a lead where appropriate in tasks relating to Sub-Regional, Regional and Inter-Regional issues.

- 8.2 While the main focus of the RSS review work has been on Cambridgeshire, attention has been given to vital cross boundary matters as follows:

- joint working with Peterborough City Council and involvement on CReSSP
- involvement of neighbouring authorities in stakeholder events
- consultants on the Cambridgeshire Development Study have included consideration of adjoining areas. including discussion of relevant topics
- external linkages are included in the modelling work in the Study
- continued joint officer working at regional level including both County and District representation.

9.0 Infrastructure requirements and show stoppers

- 9.0 Advice on infrastructure requirements and "show-stoppers" cannot be finalised until the completion of the Cambridge Development study. However the work to date has indicate significant challenges in delivering any significant growth beyond the current strategy in most locations.

10.0 Vision and Objectives

- 10.1 EERA has not requested any specific advice on the vision of the authorities for the future development of the County or on the specific objectives we may

wish to set. However it has been a view strongly expressed through CReSSP that a clear vision should be central to our work.

- 10.2 A Spatial Planning Vision has been drafted through CReSSP which expresses aspirations for people, for the economy, for transport and accessibility, for sustainability, for the environment and for climate change. This will be further refined as studies progress. An associated set of Objectives has also been produced and these documents will both be included in the evidence provided to EERA.

Source Documents	Location
East of England Plan CReSSP reports for 9th January 2009 CReSSP reports for 6th March 2009 Other CReSSP reports for 7th April 2009	2nd Floor Park House Shire Hall Cambridge

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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 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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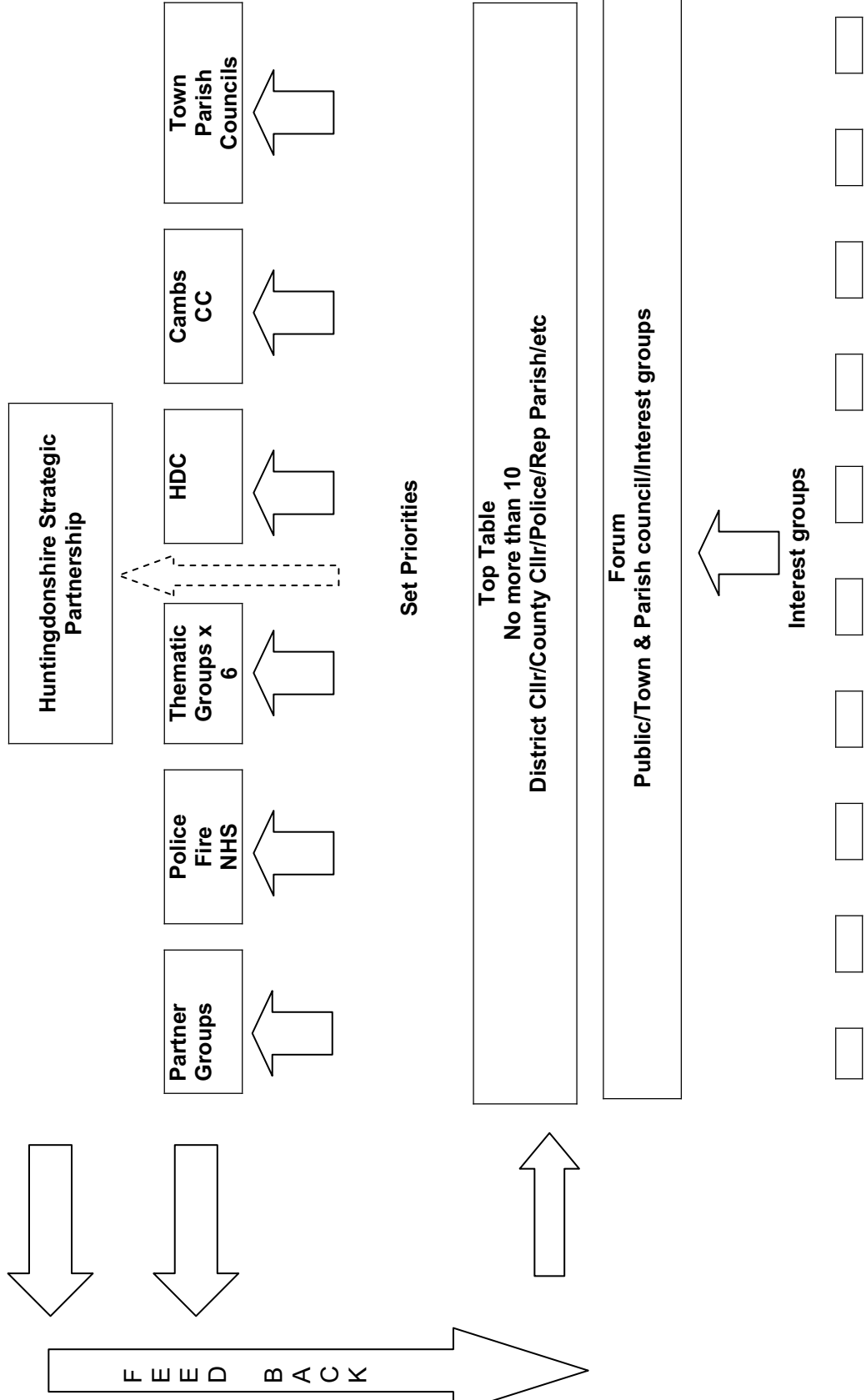


Neighbourhood Policing Panel Boundaries

-  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.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT)

14th April 2009

LOCAL PROCUREMENT REVIEW (Report by the Head Democratic and Central Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 11th July 2006, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) considered the question of local procurement by the Council and its potential impact in promoting the local economy in Huntingdonshire. The Panel appointed a Working Group comprising Councillors D B Dew, P J Downes and R J West whose report and recommendations were endorsed by the Panel in January 2007.
- 1.2 Further reports were submitted to the Panel in March and December 2007 and October 2008 on the outcome of further meetings between Members of the Panel and representatives of the local business community.
- 1.3 It was agreed in September that a further meeting would be held in March and the purpose of this report is to acquaint Members with the discussions that took place at that meeting.

2. REVIEW OF PROCUREMENT

- 2.1 The meeting held on the 12th March 2009 was chaired by Councillor M G Baker and attended by Councillors K M Baker and R J West with representatives from the Huntingdonshire Business Network (Mr T Downing) and the Huntingdonshire Federation of Small Business (Mr M Mealing). Executive Councillors C R Hyams and T V Rogers were also in attendance.
- 2.2 The District Council's Procurement Manager informed the Group of the increase in local spend by the District Council, the figure having risen from 11% to 18%. The majority had been incurred on construction. It was noted that the average payment time for invoices by the Council was 17 working days, well ahead of the target of 30 days. The Group was updated on the ongoing work to standardise the terms and conditions of procurement with other district councils. It was requested that the Council would be adopting a procedure of sending out a standardised regional questionnaire, tailored to the District Council's requirements, with every tender. The Procurement Manager had recently attended an Olympic procurement breakfast meeting locally where he had been able to give advice to local businesses.
- 2.3 The Acting Sustainable Economic Development Manager reported on recent initiatives by the economic development service since the last meeting. The meeting was informed that the Food Festival had attracted 2500 visitors, with

47 exhibitors attending and 5 new supply chains having been created locally. The list of initiatives also included a 'Buyer Meets Supplier' event which 70 businesses had attended, an Olympic procurement breakfast meeting and a Christmas 'Shop Local' promotion. The team was about to embark on a retail study marketing market towns, and was looking at working with local coach companies to promote St Ives following the introduction of the Guided Busway later in the year. Work had also been undertaken to produce visitor guides supporting the market towns and smaller Visit Huntingdonshire guides, promoting the town centres as well as embarking on a street scene project. The issue of the poor turn out at the traditional market was raised and it was explained that this was a traditionally quiet time for stallholders. However a bid had been made for funds for a local food project, which if successful would enable the further promotion of local farmers and food markets.

- 2.4 The District Council's Head of Environmental Management acquainted the Group with the details of the recent purchase of 2 properties, in St Ives and St Neots which were to be used by the District Council as demonstration properties to showcase renewable technologies and energy efficiency as part of its low carbon agenda. The Environmental Management team would be working with local tradesmen and suppliers to equip the properties where possible. Councillor M G Baker raised the possibility of using the properties to make the visiting public aware of local companies therefore helping to create business opportunities.
- 2.5 The Group was also made aware of business energy grants that were now available to those businesses that were able to commit to energy efficiency, and the launch of 'Green Champions' within the services of the District Council, which it was felt could also be encouraged in the private sector.
- 2.6 In discussing local issues, the business representatives highlighted the need for continued promotion of local companies and the local economy through the District Council's online business directory and other media and also stressed the need to present a positive picture. Whilst pleased with the aforementioned local procurement figure of 18% it was suggested that a target be set for the District Council to aim towards in the future.
- 2.7 In acknowledging the comments made by Mr G Buck at the HSP Executive meeting concerning the perceived lack of opportunities for local businesses to pursue procurement opportunities with the District Council, it was agreed that the meeting had dealt with the issues raised.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Following a positive and constructive discussion it was agreed that it would be useful to meet again in September 2009 to review progress. With this in mind it was agreed that the Panel be

RECOMMENDED

to authorise a future meeting with business representatives in September 2009.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Minutes and Reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support)

CONTACT OFFICER:

Mrs Amanda Jerrom - ☎ (01480) 388009.

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

14th April 2009

**WORK PLAN: STUDIES
(Report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to allow Members of the Panel to review their programme of studies.

2. STUDIES

2.1 The Council has a duty to improve the social, environmental and economic well-being of the District. This gives the Overview and Scrutiny Panels a wide remit to examine any issues that affect the District by conducting in-depth studies.

2.2 Studies are allocated according to the current Executive responsibilities. These were advised in agreement with the Panel Chairmen with effect from September 2008.

Service Delivery:

Customer Services &
Information Technology
Leisure
Housing & Public Health
Operational & Countryside Services

Service Support:

Finance & Environment
Resources & Policy
Planning Strategy /Transportation
Special Advisor to the Cabinet

2.3 Ongoing studies have been allocated between the Panels accordingly –

STUDY	PANEL	STATUS
Process and Procedures involved with the adoption of roads and sewers.	Service Delivery	Meeting held with the Head of Law, Property and Governance and Communications and Marketing Manager. Further meeting being arranged with representatives from the Law Society.
The Processes involved in Applying for Community Grant Aid and the Effectiveness of Grant Schemes.	Service Delivery	Final report considered by the Cabinet on 29 th January 2009. Further investigations being undertaken by the relevant portfolio holders.
Section 106	Service Support	Final report considered by Cabinet on 12 th March 2009. Recommendations endorsed.
Maximising Council Income	Service Support	Suggestion made by Working Group to subsume this study into the Overview and Scrutiny Budget Working Group. Recommendation endorsed by Budget Working Group at their

		19 th March meeting.
Provision of Leisure Facilities for Young People.	Service Delivery	Working Group established to pursue this matter further. Meeting being arranged with the Head of Operations.

- 2.4 The Service Support Panel have also identified the following as possible future studies:-

Review of the incentives of the Council's Travel Plan.	Service Support
The Council's Future Borrowing Arrangements.	Service Support

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Panel is requested to note the progress of the studies selected.

Contact Officer: Mrs Jessica Walker - ☎ (01480) 387049.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Minutes and Reports from previous meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

AREA OF REVIEW	DETAILS/COMMENTS
Title of Study (name of Working Group)	Maximising Income Generation
Appointing Panel	Overview and Scrutiny (Service Support)
Members Assigned (including date Working Group appointed)	Councillors P J Downes, L W McGuire and R J West. Appointed 9 th September 2008.
Possible Co-Options to the Group	N/A
Interests Declared	None declared.
Rapporteur	Councillor L W McGuire
Officer Support	Mr Roy Reeves, Head of Administration Mrs Jessica Walker, Trainee Democratic Services Officer Mr S Couper, Head of Financial Services Mr D Harwood, Audit & Risk Manager Mr H Thackray, Policy & Strategic Services Manager Ms K Shaw, External Funding Officer Mrs E Smith, Accountancy Manager
Purpose of Study / Objective (specify exactly what the study should achieve)	To investigate ways in which the Council could maximise its income opportunities and grant availability.
Rationale (key issues and/or reason for conducting a study)	Study suggested by Councillor P J Downes.
Terms of Reference	
Links to Council Policies/Strategies	Links to Council Aim: To maintain sound finances To maximise external funding to support & promote our objectives.

ACTION BY WORKING GROUP	
Methodology / Approach (what types of enquiries will be used to gather evidence)	Information from Head of Financial Services Information from Internal Audit Service Information from Policy & Strategic Services Manager & External Funding Officer.
External/Specialist Support	N/A
Existing Documentation	Charging for Council Services – Draft Report by the Internal Audit Service Income Generation – External Grant Funding – Draft Report by the Internal Audit Service External Funding Prospects – Report by the External Funding Officer Maximising External Funding – Report by the Head of Policy & Strategic Services. Proposed Changes to the Code of Financial Management – Report by the Head of Financial Services

Evidence to be Obtained (e.g. witnesses, documents, site visits, consultation, research, etc)	Further discussion with Head of Financial Services Further discussion with External Funding Officer. Progress on actions within Internal Audit reports.
Reference Sites	N/A
Investigations	As outlined above. Decision made to subsume the Working Group into the Overview and Scrutiny Budget Working Group.
Witnesses	Mr S Couper, Head of Financial Services Mr D Harwood, Audit & Risk Manager Mr H Thackray, Policy & Strategic Services Manager Ms K Shaw, External Funding Officer Mrs E Smith, Accountancy Manager
Site Visits (if necessary) (where and when)	None currently identified.
Meetings of the Working Group	1 st December 2008 11 th March 2009.
Costs (resource requirements, additional expenditure, time)	Officer time – both to provide support and conduct research
Possible Barriers to the Study (potential weaknesses)	None currently identified
Projected Timescale (Start and end times)	Start: September 2008 End: 11 th March 2009.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT)

14TH APRIL 2009

PROGRESS TO DATE (Report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Panel have asked for the submission of a brief progress report to their monthly meetings to monitor action taken and the response to any recommendations which they have made.

2. PROGRESS REPORT


- 2.1 The monthly progress report therefore is attached which covers all outstanding items. Actions previously reported upon as having been completed have been deleted from the report as the process rolls forward. The report is in tabular form and comprises a brief synopsis of the Panel's decisions and the subsequent action taken.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The Panel are requested to note the contents of the attached report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Minutes and Reports of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance/ Service Support)

Contact Officer: Mrs J Walker –Trainee Democratic Services Officer
 (01480) 387049

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date
	<p>HEAVY GOODS VEHICLE PARKING IN THE DISTRICT</p> <p>10/06/08 Endorsed the Working Group's report and recommendations for submission of the Cabinet.</p> <p>09/09/08 Head of Administration was asked to establish the current position with regard to the Panel's recommendations following their referral to the Freight Quality Partnership.</p> <p>13/01/09 The outcome of discussions at the first meeting of the three county group to be reported.</p>	<p>Recommendations endorsed by the Cabinet at their meeting on 26th June 2008.</p> <p>Freight Quality Partnership has now met.</p> <p>Information on Alconbury Site provided to February meeting. Further information on the outcome of 3 county group still awaited.</p>	<p>Agreed with Chairman / Vice Chairman that issue be taken forward by the Freight Quality Partnership.</p> <p>Matter included for discussion on agenda for LAA Reference Group.</p> <p>Update to be circulated at January meeting. Three County Group established to pool information and develop a strategy for future provision post 2015.</p> <p>The Transport Team Leader has reported that although nothing has come forward from the 3 county group, the County are developing a County advisory route network for HCV's, which they will be consulting with HDC on.</p>	<p>Jan 09</p>
<p>08/07/08</p>	<p>PETITION BY ST AUDREY LANE AREA RESIDENTS, ST IVES</p> <p>Representatives from Anglian Water in attendance at Panel's July meeting. Requested that an update be provided in 6 months time and that residents be</p>	<p>Email requesting update sent – 21/10/08</p>	<p>CCTV survey of St Audrey Lane and Pig Lane Surface Water sewer completed.</p>	

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date
10/02/09	<p>informed of the outcome of their investigations.</p> <p>Panel made aware of further problems in recent weather. Agreed to seek further update as to what work has and hasn't been completed.</p>	Response to be sought from Anglian Water for April meeting.	<p>Funding now available to Jet Sewer – will be carried out shortly.</p> <p>Update received from Anglian Water and circulated by email to all Panel Members.</p>	
14/10/08	<p>PETITION TO CONTROL COMMUTER PARKING IN THE LONGSANDS AREA OF ST NEOTS AND DISCUSSION ON HUNTINGDON TRAIN STATION</p> <p>Chairman to write to the Chairman of Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee outlining the Panel's concerns and requesting that the matter be progressed at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>A representative from First Capital Connect to be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss their expansion plans for the car parks at Huntingdon and St Neots.</p>	<p>Update provided to February meeting. Further investigative work being undertaken by the County Council in advance of April Area Joint Committee. Further update expected in April 2009.</p> <p>Letter sent 21/10/08</p>	<p>Item deferred until a later date. TBC. District Council still awaiting a response from the Minister on the issue of permitted development.</p>	<p>April 2009</p> <p>Spring 2009</p>
10/03/09	Members questioned whether planning permission had been granted for the car parking being constructed at Huntingdon Train Station.	Clarification sought from the Development Control Manager as to the status of the construction.	The development does not have permission although it is understood that an application is to be submitted shortly. The use of the land for car parking for up to 28 days in a calendar year would be permitted development.	

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date
12/02/08	<p>CYCLING IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE Endorsed the Working Group's report and recommendations for submission of the Cabinet and requested that the study recommendations be placed on the progress report for future monitoring.</p> <p><i>[Recommendations are appended to this report].</i></p>	<p>Considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 12th February 2008. Cabinet noted the recommendations and requested a further report by officers addressing the wider issue of Section 106 funding and partnership working. Agreed that discussions should be held with Cambridgeshire County Council regarding their offer to update the Huntingdonshire Cycling Strategy and the issue of partnership working on cycling provision.</p>	<p>Report updating the Panel on the current position the review of the Cycling Strategy and the provision for funding for Huntingdonshire in the LTP included on Agenda for the meeting for June 08 meeting.</p>	<p>June 08</p>
10/06/08	<p>Asked the Transportation Team Leader to email all Members of the Council asking about any specific issues with regard to cycle routes in their wards. Requested sight of the draft report on the prioritisation of cycle schemes before any consideration by the AJC.</p>	<p>Since the June Panel meeting, it has come to light that the list of potential cycle routes have already been scored and prioritised. A report will be considered by the AJC at their meeting on 7th July 2008, seeking ratification of the cycle routes as scored. Requests have been made for reviews to be undertaken annually, with the first review with Members to start in the autumn.</p>	<p>Priority List endorsed by the AJC. District Council members will be contacted before the next review in Summer 2009 to ask about specific issues within their ward.</p>	<p>Spring 2009</p>
09/09/08	<p>MAXIMISING COUNCIL INCOME Appointed Councillors P J Downes, L W McGuire and R J West to a Working Group for the purpose of undertaking the above review.</p>	<p>First meeting held on 1st December 2008 to discuss recent reviews by the Internal Audit Service on income generation and discretionary charging.</p>	<p>Meeting held on 11th March 2009 with External Funding Officer and Accountancy Manager.</p>	<p>Mar 09</p>

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date
	It was agreed by the Working Group to subsume this Working Group in with the Overview & Scrutiny Budget Working Group given the fact that it is already investigating income generation for the Council.	Matter discussed at Overview and Scrutiny Budget Working Group meeting held on 19 th March 2009.	Overview and Scrutiny Budget Working Group agreed to subsume the Maximising Income Working Group. Panel to note that this Working Group will no longer exist.	
14/05/08	<p>CORPORATE PLAN – GROWING SUCCESS</p> <p>Councillors M G Baker, J A Gray and R G Tuplin appointed to Corporate Plan Working Group.</p>	Quarterly reports submitted to Overview & Scrutiny.	Quarterly meeting held on 26 th February 2009.	
15/01/08	<p>LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS</p> <p>Minutes of future meetings of the Cambridgeshire Together Joint Accountability Committee should be circulated to all Panel Members.</p>	Meeting held on 24 th February 2009. Minutes to be circulated when available.		Feb 09
14/05/08	Councillor J A Gray appointed to Joint Accountability Committee. Substitute members to be appointed in consultation with Head of Administration.			
14/10/08	<p>REVIEW OF LOCAL PROCUREMENT</p> <p>Agreed to hold further meeting with business representatives in the New Year.</p>	Meeting held on 12 th March 2009 at 4pm. Further meeting arranged for 14 th September 2009 at 4pm. Councillor M G Baker to chair.	This item appears elsewhere on the Agenda.	April 09

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date
13/01/09	<p>LICENSING ACT – IMPACT ON NIGHTTIME ECONOMY</p> <p>Subject to an amendment to one of the recommendations, the Panel endorsed the final report for consideration by the Cabinet at their meeting on 29th January 2009.</p> <p>Agreed to re-visit the study towards the end of the year to review progress made towards achievement of the countywide action plan, the night watch project and the availability of statistics from Hinchingsbrooke Hospital on alcohol related accidents and emergency treatment.</p>	Report endorsed by the Cabinet at their meeting on 29 th January 2009.		Nov 09
14/04/05 10/02/09	<p>MONITORING OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS</p> <p>Quarterly reports to be submitted to the Panel.</p> <p>Subject to minor amendments endorsed the Final report for consideration by the Cabinet.</p>	Report considered by the cabinet at their meeting on 12 th March 2009.	The Cabinet endorsed the recommendations and resolved that the Section 106 working group be invited to consider the likely effects of the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy and make recommendations on processes to implement the system.	Mar 09 Feb 09

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date
10/02/09	REGIONAL SCALE SETTLEMENT STUDY Head of Planning Services to report back on outcome of Cambridgeshire Development Study and HDC response to Regional Scale Settlement Study,	Report to be received from the Head of Planning Services.	This item appears elsewhere on the Agenda.	April 09
10/03/09	HOMELESSNESS The Panel requested a reminder on who to refer constituents to when contacted about housing queries.	Report to be received from the Head of Housing Services and circulated to all Panel Members.		
13/11/07	FORWARD PLAN Parish Plans and Local Plan Policy Circulate report when this becomes available.			TBA
08/07/08	Developer Contributions SPD Requested that report should be considered at a future meeting of the Panel.			June 09
14/10/08	A14 Statutory Orders – Consultations Requested that the report should be considered at a future meeting of the Panel.			June 09
13/01/09	Great Fen Masterplan			

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date
	Requested that the report should be considered at a future meeting of the Panel.	Presentation to be given to all Members in April.		TBA
08/07/08	GREAT FEN PROJECT Director of Environmental & Community Services to make presentation to future meeting. All Scrutiny Members to be invited.	Comments submitted to Cabinet meeting on 20 th November 2008.		
11/11/08	Report on the content of the collaboration agreement to be submitted to a future Panel meeting before its consideration by Cabinet.	Presentation to be given to all Members in April.		TBA

RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM CYCLING IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

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



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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