

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

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The State of the District Consultation Working Group met on 12th November 2007 when Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, K J Churchill and P J Downes were present. I Leatherbarrow and A Roberts were in attendance.

1.2 No declarations of interest were received.

2. STUDY REMIT

2.1 Arising from discussion at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) on 6th November 2007, the Panel has discussed various mechanisms that might be used at each of the proposed area consultation events. Each of the mechanisms identified will be assessed as part of the trial for their ability to:

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

2.2 The Working Group previously has agreed to recommend that four area events are held in Huntingdon, St Ives, St Neots and Yaxley. Each event will commence with statements by the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition. Each Executive Councillor will then make a brief statement on their portfolio responsibilities. Following the opening statements four models will be employed, one for each area event:

- a question and answer session involving all those present;
- groups will be formed to discuss Cabinet Portfolios;
- groups will be formed to discuss topics within the remit of the Council; and
- groups will be formed to discuss broad cross-cuttings issues – members of the public will be invited to suggest the issues for discussion. Invitations may be extended to the Police and health bodies to attend.

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

2.3 In addition, the Working Group is to investigate the feasibility of employing a virtual forum to augment the information obtained via the area events. This would be on a District-wide basis.

3. ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

- 3.1 The Working Group is of the view that engagement events should take place on consecutive weeks in late September / early October 2008. Costings have been requested for this purpose.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Working Group has considered a range of options by which consultation events might take place. A number of conclusions have been reached on the format of events. Further work is yet to be done on pre and post event activity and on detailed management of the events. It is anticipated that the Working Group's final report will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's January meeting.
- 4.2 This exercise will help with the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy and also with the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy
- 4.3 The next meeting of the Working Group will be held on 29th November 2007 when Members will discuss with the Council's Communications and Marketing Manager publicising the events. It also is intended to examine the likely cost involved and potential topics for discussion.
- 4.4 Given the origins of the study and conclusions reached to date, the Working Group suggests that the Corporate Governance Panel is informed of the findings in respect of the Council's Constitution.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

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

Contact Officer: A Roberts
☎ 01480 388009