

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PANELS
(Report by the Heads of Community & Environmental Health,
Administration and Policy & Strategic Services)

1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update Members on preparation of proposals on local and national initiatives in response to the Government's White Paper – Communities in Control: Real Power, Real People.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1 In July this year the Cabinet requested a report on the interdependency of Community Engagement initiatives, specifically the proposed establishment of Multi Agency Neighbourhood Panels. It was intended to acquaint members with the main provisions of the White Paper, to consider the principles and processes for developing Community Engagement in the district and to seek views on a specific proposal to develop neighbourhood panels in by November so that the Cabinet could consider options in December. However, in the face of a stream of announcements and policy initiatives coming from the Government the pace of change has meant it's not yet possible to provide members with a comprehensive picture of the various proposals and the implications for both the District Council and communities in Huntingdonshire.
- 2.2 The latest announcement relates to the processes to be adopted in relation to the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 which requires consideration of a number of issues, and particularly how they relate to other proposals.
- 2.3 Discussions with neighbouring authorities and partner organisations are continuing and it has been suggested that a coordinated and/or complementary approach might better serve local and wider interest. All of the initiatives have resource implications and a cost benefit analysis ought to form part of the consideration of proposals by Members.
- 2.4 In these circumstances it is proposed that the Democratic Structure Working Group should be invited to undertake a detailed consideration of community engagement initiatives and possible structures and that their report on this subject should be considered both by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and by the Cabinet in due course. It is anticipated that the Working Groups Report would come forward for discussion by March 2008.

3. Recommendation

Members of the Panels are requested to endorse the suggested process for the consideration and development of community engagement initiatives, by the Democratic Structure Working Group.

4. Background Papers

Local Government White Paper: Strong and Prosperous Communities, DCLG 26 October 2006:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongprosperous>

Local Government White Paper: Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power, DCLG 9 July 2008:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communitiesincontrol>

Sustainable Communities Act 2007: A Guide Department for Communities and Local Government, February 2008

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernement/doc/682894.doc>

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