

**Appointment of Task Groups and Working Groups
Council, May 22, 2007, Item 17**

Committee: Council

Date: 22 May 2007

Title: Appointment of Task Groups and Working Groups

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Agenda Item

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Item for decision

Summary

This report invites Council to review the current Task Groups and Working Groups and make appointments as necessary to those groups.

Recommendation

1. That the actions in tables 1 and 2 be agreed and where re-appointment is required, those groups be re-appointed with the number of Members identified in the respective tables.
2. That in respect of the proposal for a Housing Board:

EITHER

That no action be taken

OR

That a Housing Board be appointed with [INSERT REQUIRED NUMBER HERE] members. Its terms of reference to be as set out in the Appendix to this report and that a representative of the Tenants' Forum [SHOULD/SHOULD NOT] be invited to attend meetings of the Board.

Background Papers

- Council constitution
- Report considered at Item 8 of Council meeting, 17 April 2007.
- Report considered at Item 16 of Annual Council meeting, 16 May 2006.

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Roles and work of task groups to be clearly established.
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Finance	The reduction in the number of meetings will have a marginal beneficial effect on the council's costs. No attempt to quantify this cost has been made.
Human Rights	N/A

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Legal implications	To comply with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Sustainability	Reduction in number of groups will reduce extent of travel and energy use to a degree.
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

1. The Council's constitution requires that all task groups have an expiry date and that if they are to continue in existence beyond that date, there needs to be a decision of Council to continue with them.
2. Table 1 in this report lists all currently existing task groups, their size, their purpose and/or terms of reference and their date of expiry. It also identifies the lead officer for the task group, and the recommendation of officers on whether or not the group should be re-appointed and its proposed date of expiry.
3. For most groups, the options are straightforward:
 - agree to wind up the group
 - re-appoint with an agreed expiry date
 - re-appoint until the next annual meeting (13 May 2008)
4. Some groups require more detailed consideration, and these are discussed further below.

Housing Board

5. At its final meeting the outgoing Council agreed to recommend to the incoming Council that a Housing Board be established. This would take the form of a task group reporting to the Community Committee. For ease of reference the part of the relevant report which was considered at that meeting is attached as an Appendix to this report.
6. If Members wish to proceed with this proposal they need to consider:
 - are the terms of reference set out in the Appendix adequate?
 - how many Members should be appointed to the Board?
 - should a representative of the Tenants' Forum also be invited to attend meetings of the Board?
 - what should the expiry date of the Board be? (If no date is set the existence of the Board will be subject to review at the next annual meeting).
7. The intention was that the Housing Board would remove the need to continue with the existing Housing Strategy Group. If Members do not wish

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to proceed with the appointment of a Board, they would need to consider whether the Housing Strategy Group should continue.

Rationalisation of Groups

8. A number of informal discussions with Members since the election indicates that there is an appetite to reduce the number of groups which exist. Table 1 sets out where, in the view of officers, groups can be wound up, but there also exists the opportunity to combine groups where purposes are similar or where the expertise and knowledge required overlaps.

9. It is suggested that the following such pairs exist:

- the Airport Policy Task Group and the Stansted Airport Advisory Panel;
- the Local Development Framework and Masterplanning Task Groups;
- the Museum Management Task Group and the Museum Resource Centre Project Team;

Table 2 sets out the proposed approach to each of these pairings.

Conclusion

10. There is an inevitable tendency for the number of task groups and the like to proliferate and the purpose of this annual review is to ensure that this process does not mean that the issue is no longer of any concern, but rather that the immediate task for which the group was created has been completed. It is not intended that the remit of a task group should extend to keeping a matter under review – the permanent machinery of the Council is designed for that purpose.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That groups continue in existence without clear purpose	Low	Medium	Annual (at least) review of their purpose ensures that groups are wound up when they no longer are required.

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Table 1: Proposals for each group

Name of group	Purpose/Remit	Proposed action	Comments	Members	Committee responsible	Lead officer
Airport Policy Task Group	Steering the development of Council policy in relation to the airport and aviation as a whole	See Table 2		7 (inc. Group Leaders or nominees, chairs of DC, Environment, STAAP)	Council	Alasdair Bovaird
Bridge End Gardens Task Group	To oversee the implementation of the restoration of Bridge End Gardens	Abolish	The latest phase of the restoration is now well under way. Members can be kept apprised of developments without the need of a task group. Issues can be resolved at the Community Committee.	5	Community	
Community Achievement Panel	To oversee the organization of the Community Achievement Awards scheme and make recommendations on the recipients of those awards	Reappoint – review/expiry date 13 May 2008		6	Community	Gaynor Bradley

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Name of group	Purpose/Remit	Proposed action	Comments	Members	Committee responsible	Lead officer
Constitution Task Group	To keep the working of the council's constitution under review and make recommendations from time to time to the council on potential improvements.	Reappoint – review/expiry date 13 May 2008		6	Council	Alasdair Bovaird
Corporate Procurement Group	To develop council policy on procurement of goods and services	Abolish	The group has met only irregularly over recent years, and its work can be more effectively performed by the full Operations Committee.	3	Operations	Simon Martin
Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement Task Group	To oversee the implementation of decriminalised enforcement of parking regulations	Abolish	The work of this group is now complete.	6	Environment	Ron Pridham
Housing Strategy Group	To advise officers on the development and implementation of the council's housing strategy, etc.	Abolish	See paras 5-7	4	Community	Roger Harborough
IT Working Group	To advise officers on the development of the council's IT practice and strategy.	Reappoint – review/expiry date 13 May 2008		5	Operations	Mike Brean

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Name of group	Purpose/Remit	Proposed action	Comments	Members	Committee responsible	Lead officer
Local Development Framework Group	To give advice and guidance to officers in progressing the Local Development Framework	See Table 2		5	Environment	Roger Harborough
Local Joint Committee	To meet jointly with trade union representatives on matters of employment relations.	Reappoint – review/expiry date 13 May 2008		3	Council	Bronwen Stacey
Masterplanning Task Group	To consider and establish policies for the development of specific sites within the district as part of the Local Development Framework.	See Table 2	This group has never met.	5	Environment	Roger Harborough
Museum Management Task Group	To oversee the management of the Saffron Walden Museum in conjunction with the Museum Society	See Table 2		4 (inc. Chair and Vice Chair of Community)	Community	Carolyn Wingfield
Museum Resource Centre Project Team	To oversee the project for the creation of the Heritage Quest Centre as a resource centre for the Saffron Walden Musuem	See Table 2		6	Community	Carolyn Wingfield
Olympics 2012 working group	To consider and, as appropriate, recommend to the Council action to be taken on potential opportunities and developments associated with the Olympics 2012 in order to maximise the benefit for the district of Uttlesford. To act as ambassadors during the run up to the Olympics 2012.	Reappoint – review/expiry date 13 May 2008	This group was appointed only in February and has not yet fully commenced operating.	5	Community	Gaynor Bradley

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Name of group	Purpose/Remit	Proposed action	Comments	Members	Committee responsible	Lead officer
Risk Management Group	To support the development of the council's approach to the management of risk.	Reappoint – review/expiry date 13 May 2008		2	Performance Select	Michael Perry
Saffron Walden Town Centre Working Group	To encourage and sustain the environmental quality, vitality, and safety of Saffron Walden Town Centre	Reappoint – review/expiry date 13 May 2008		6	North Area Panel	Sarah Seward/ Pamela Kennedy
Stansted Airport Advisory Panel	Development of council policy in relation to the airport; Monitoring the activities of the airport in the interests of the people of the district Monitoring the implementation of Section 106 agreements and related undertakings by BAA and others; Reviewing and anticipating future developments at the airport and in aviation policy.	See Table 2		12	Council	Roger Harborough

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Name of group	Purpose/Remit	Proposed action	Comments	Members	Committee responsible	Lead officer
Strategic Partnerships Reference Group	To oversee Member involvement in the Essex Partnership, Uttlesford Futures and related partnership bodies. To monitor the progress of partnership working in general and on the work surrounding the LSP and the Local Area Agreement in particular.	Reappoint – review/expiry date 13 May 2008	The members of the SPRG also form the council's delegation to Uttlesford Futures Local Strategic Partnership.	6	Council	Tracy Turner
Uttlesford Transport Forum	To bring together operators and delivery agencies to achieve practical service improvements in public transport within Uttlesford.	Reappoint – review/expiry date 13 May 2008	It is the officers' view that this group has somewhat lost its focus in recent years. However, the issues it seeks to address are still salient so the opportunity exists to re-focus their efforts on the original remit.	4	Environment	Jeremy Pine

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Name of group	Purpose/Remit	Proposed action	Comments	Members	Committee responsible	Lead officer
Waste Strategy Project Team	To oversee the joint arrangements between collection and disposal authorities. It also oversees the delivery of Uttlesford's Recycling Strategy and will also undertake the review of Street Cleansing.	Suggest expiry date 31 December 2007		6	Environment	Diane Burridge

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Table 2: Proposals for mergers of existing groups

Name of new group	Merger of ...	Terms of reference of new group	Date of review/ expiry	Number of members	Comments	Lead Officer
Airport Policy Advisory Group	Airport Policy Task Group Stansted Airport Advisory Panel	Steering the development of Council policy in relation to the airport and aviation as a whole Monitoring the activities of the airport in the interests of the people of the district Specifically, monitoring the implementation of Section 106 agreements and related undertakings by BAA and others; Reviewing and anticipating future developments and identifying likely impacts on the local community and wider stakeholders.	13 May 2008	12	The roles of these two groups overlap significantly and there has often been confusion as to their respective roles.	John Mitchell
Local Development Framework Task Group	Local Development Framework Group Masterplanning Task Group	To give advice and guidance to officers in progressing the Local Development Framework including consideration and establishment of policies for the development of specific sites within the district as part of that framework.	13 May 2008	7	The work of these two groups is inextricably intertwined and cannot in reality be considered separately.	Roger Harborough

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Table 2: Proposals for mergers of existing groups

Name of new group	Merger of ...	Terms of reference of new group	Date of review/ expiry	Number of members	Comments	Lead Officer
Museum Management Group	Museum Management Task Group Museum Resource Centre Project Team	To oversee the management of the Saffron Walden Museum in conjunction with the museum society, including oversight of specific projects to develop the museum service.	13 May 2008	6 (inc. Chair and Vice Chair of Community)	The work of these two groups overlaps to a significant extent, but the membership of both extends beyond councillors and is determined by agreements with the Museum Society and others. It is proposed therefore that members agree in principle to the merger of these two groups subject to further discussion with the other parties and that, meanwhile, a common group of members be appointed to the panels to allow an easy transition at an appropriate point.	Carolyn Wingfield

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Appendix: Extract from report considered by council in April 2007 (Item 8, 'Constitution Task Group')

Housing Board

5. The Constitution Task Group noted the consideration given in the report tabled for the February 15 meeting to the issue of the creation of a Housing Board.
6. The CTG took the view that it was clearly necessary that there should be an increased opportunity for member oversight of the strategic issues affecting the development of the council's housing stock. However, it also noted that there were a number of restrictions on the way that should be carried out:
 - The setting of rents and the budget for the Housing Revenue Account were matters reserved by law to full council. CTG took the view that there was no advantage to those issues being considered by the Housing Board, then by Community Committee and finally by council.
 - It was important that day to day management of the housing service be the responsibility of the Head of Housing Management and their officers. However, it was recognised that more needed to be done to ensure that local members were made aware of developments in relation to the housing stock within their own wards.
 - It was recognised that there were statutory restrictions on the role of councillors in, for example, housing allocations but that these restrictions should not have the effect of inhibiting the ability of councillors to develop and agree policy in relation to these aspects of the management of the housing stock.
7. It was therefore agreed that a Housing Board be established as a Working Group (as described in Article 12.2 of the constitution) with the following remit:
 - Development of the Council's Housing Strategy (including stock and asset development, homelessness, allocations policy)
 - Liaison with Tenants Forum
 - Co-ordination of local development framework with housing policy.
8. The Lead Officer for the Housing Board would be the Head of Housing Management. The Housing Board would report and make recommendations directly to any of the council's main policy committees, or to full council, according to the nature of the issue being dealt with.
9. In addition to the agreed number of elected members, a tenant representative will be invited to join the Board as a non-voting member.
10. In addition it was agreed that there should be an additional provision be added to the Member/Officer protocol which would require officers to inform the local member or members of any non-routine decisions in relation to the management of the housing stock within their ward.