

CONSTITUTION TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 6.00 pm on 7 APRIL 2005

Present:- Councillor P A Wilcock – Chairman.
Councillors C M Dean, E J Godwin and A R Row.

Officers in attendance:- A Bovaird, M J Perry, M T Purkiss and T Turner.

CTG45 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor V J T Lelliott and A R Thawley and S McLagan.

CTG46 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CTG47 BUSINESS ARISING

At the last meeting it was agreed that further work would be required on definitions and layers and some case studies would need to be worked up to illustrate how decisions were taken now and how that process could be improved in the future. Alasdair Bovaird and Tracy Turner said that they would work on this project and have a paper ready which could be tested with other groups of members in mid to late May.

It was also agreed that the discussion paper circulated with the last set of minutes should be sent to all Members with a request that they consider this and submit any comments prior to the next meeting on 12 May 2005.

CTG48 COMMITTEES AND TASK GROUPS

The Task Group gave further consideration to the current and future roles of committees and task groups. It had previously been agreed that a cabinet system was not appropriate for Uttlesford and that policy committees should continue in place. The Task Group examined the current workload of the five service committees and drew attention to the imbalance of workloads between these. The overall options framework circulated at the previous meeting set out a number of options for the future committee structure including committee structures based on services, client type and policy themes. The Chairman said that his preferred option would be a system based on four committees with a balanced workload and one scrutiny committee supplemented by time limited task groups. The role of committees should continue to be to allocate resources, set policy and give strategic guidance to officers. It was also essential that all Members were involved in the decision making process and that the level of decisions made at committees was meaningful and worthwhile to Members.

Councillor Row felt that the existing committee structure worked reasonably well and said that he needed to be convinced that a structure based on four policy themes would improve the decision making process.

Consideration was then given to the role of task groups and Tracy Turner said that she considered that the current role of some task groups cut across the work of the Scrutiny Committees and suggested that in any future structure the task groups should be established through the Scrutiny Committee and should be task and finish groups which should be time limited and reviewed on an annual basis.

Following further discussion there was consensus that Council still needed to be the main strategic body with committees making policy decisions and task groups dealing with the operational and detail.

It was then agreed that officers prepare a paper on a four committee option to be considered at the next meeting of the Task Group.

The meeting ended at 7.05 pm.