

Community Forums

Constitution Working Group 23 March 2010, item 4

Committee:	CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP	Agenda Item
Date:	23 MARCH 2010	4
Title:	COMMUNITY FORUMS	
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Summary

The purpose of this report is to review the terms of reference of the Community Forums.

Recommendations

Members agree to retain the existing Terms of Reference and in addition to decide whether or not

- a) Full Council continues to be the parent committee for the community forums
- b) the Forums administer the community project grants scheme
- c) consideration should be given to strengthening the links with the Local Strategic Partnership either by having a regular feedback item at every Forum meeting, and/or
- d) the Forums should be administered by the Local Strategic Partnership rather than the District Council.

Background Papers

Previous Committee Reports.

Impact

Communication/Consultation	The public, town and parish councils, Essex Police, Essex County Council Highways Department and the Uttlesford Primary Care Trust have all contributed towards the development of the Forums
Community Safety	Police and crime and disorder reduction partnership involvement in the Forums ensures that the important issue of fear of crime can be addressed by communicating

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	actual facts relating to crime in the district which continues to be low.
Equalities	None
Finance	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	None
Sustainability	Regular communication with the community on a range of topics contributes towards effective planning of initiatives.
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

- 1 The Constitution Working Group approved the development of the Multi-agency Community Forums in 2008. Attached at Appendix 1 is a copy of the original terms of reference.
- 2 It was decided at the Council meeting in May 2009 that the Terms of Reference would be reviewed by the Constitution Working Group and reported to the Council meeting in May 2010.
- 3 Broadly, the terms of reference elements are still appropriate for the current level of operation. However, the following issues have been discussed over the year.
- 4 Reporting through the Committee Structure – there is a standard item on the Community & Housing Committee for feedback from the Community Forums and progression of any issues. Similarly, there is the facility for feeding items through the Environment Committee as well. However, the question has been raised as to whether a parent committee should now be established to take decisions relating to the operation of the community forums or whether the decision should continue to be made by the Full Council meetings.
- 5 Some of the Councillors have also requested that consideration be given to the Forums administering the Grants Scheme again as was previously the case for the original Area Panels.

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- 6 Also should consideration be given to strengthening the links with the Local Strategic Partnership either by perhaps having some regular feedback on the work of the LSP or even for the LSP to taking over responsibility for the operation of the Community Forums if the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership wished to consider this approach.
- 7 Attendance at the Forums is relatively good with 30 – 40 members of town & parish Councils and the public regularly attending each meeting. (Indeed officers are informed that there are other districts that would consider such attendance very good for a community meeting.)
- 8 Themed meetings appear to be well received by the community as is the opportunity to network with members of the various agencies.
- 9 The requirement to engage with the local community continues to be an important issue for all agencies under government legislation and the Community Forums clearly provide the opportunity to demonstrate regular community engagement.