

Committee: COMMUNITY AND HOUSING COMMITTEE **Agenda Item**
Date: 17 MARCH 2010 **7**
Title: COMMUNITY FORUMS
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Summary

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the implementation of the Community Forums.

Recommendations

- 2 Members note the report.

Background Papers

- 3 Previous Committee Reports.

Impact

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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 actual facts relating to crime in the district which continues to be low.
Equalities	None
Finance	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/ 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

- 5 Previously the Council operated Area Committees for two years. This was a very important development in encouraging local people to voice their opinions on a range of matters affecting the community.
- 6 Subsequent Government legislation i.e. “Safer Stronger Communities” placed pressure on local authorities and other agencies (in particular the Police) to ensure that methods of engagement for effective community consultation are further explored and implemented. The Government Office for the East of England promoted Community Empowerment through the Local Strategic Partnerships. Uttlesford Futures, the Local Strategic Partnership, has the responsibility to ensure that communication with the local community is ongoing and feeds into a system that achieves suitable outcomes for the community.
- 7 A Working Group met with partner agencies and recommended that, in order to comply with legislation and guidelines, also with regard to the topics the community is mainly interested in discussing (apart from planning and Stansted Airport) i.e. policing/community safety, road safety and highways issues it would be beneficial to develop multi-agency meetings. Representatives would then be present to provide accurate up to date feedback.
- 8 The proposal to establish a North and a South Uttlesford Community Forum was approved and the meetings have been held three times per annum (with provision for a fourth meeting in each year) for the last two years.
- 9 Attendees were consulted on the format of the meetings (the results were previously reported to Members) and the preference was expressed for short presentations from the agencies with the opportunity to have workshop sessions with representatives from the agencies.
- 10 Recently the meetings have been organised to concentrate on specific themes rather than a wide range of discussions and this seems to have been well received. The last meeting concentrated on Highways matters and attendees have requested that the next round of meetings concentrate on crime and disorder reduction.

- 11 The Forums have proved to be a very useful vehicle for the District Council and the Local Strategic Partnership to undertake consultation on a range of topics i.e. Budget planning, the Local Development Framework, the Strategic Assessment, Health Developments and the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 12 Attendance at the Forums is from the town and parish councils and the public with numbers regularly being around 30 to 40 people. All attendees are added to an email list so that they can be provided with feedback on questions raised during the meetings.
- 13 Given the continuing requirement for all agencies to demonstrate regular community engagement the Community Forums are an important part of that process for the District Council and Uttlesford Futures.
- 14 There is a requirement for the Terms of Reference for the Forums to be reviewed prior to the Full Council meeting in May 2010 (the parent committee) and a Constitution Working Group meeting is currently being arranged to undertake the review.

Risk Analysis

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Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
If the Community Forums were disbanded it would be difficult for the agencies to demonstrate the required level of community engagement.	1	2	Continue to operate and further develop the role of the Community Forums in line with changing requirements.

- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.