

TO: COUNCIL

ON: 16 OCTOBER 2001

Agenda Item No: 2

Title: Minutes

Author: Tony Forrow (01799) 510402

Summary

- 1 This report recommends that Minute 71 of the special Council Meeting held on 28 August 2001 be amended to reflect Members' intentions in relation to the call-in procedure.

Background

- 2 It was made apparent at the meetings of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees held respectively on 12 and 26 September 2001 that Rule 7.4 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules as presented to those Committees did not reflect the intentions of Members at the special Council Meeting on 28 August. The rule as it stands stipulates that a decision or action shall be called in at the request of the Chairman of the appropriate Scrutiny Committee plus two other Members of the Council. There appears to be a clear consensus that Members intended that the procedure should be initiated at the request of any three Members of the Council, one of whom might be the Chairman of the appropriate Scrutiny Committee. It is therefore

RECOMMENDED that Minute 71 of 28 August be amended to read as follows:

- 1 Rule 7.4 be amended so that a decision or action could be called in at the request of any three Members of the Council, one of whom may be the Chairman of the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

Background Papers: Report to special Council Meeting on 28 August 2001
Minutes of special Council Meeting on 28 August 2001
Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules

Agenda Item No: 3
Title: BUSINESS ARISING
Author: Tony Forrow (01799) 510402

Summary

- 1 This report recommends that the Council rationalises the way committee authority to establish task groups is dealt with in the Council's new constitution.

Background

- 2 Since the special Council meeting held on 28 August, it has emerged that there are inconsistencies in the way committee authority to establish task groups is dealt with in the Council's new constitution.
- 3 The power of both Policy and Overview and Scrutiny Committees to establish task groups and working parties is referred to in paragraphs h) and i) of the council's summary constitution. It is also included in the paragraph in the Council's delegation scheme setting out the overall role of policy committees. The power is not mentioned, however, in either the terms of reference or delegation of scrutiny committees.
- 4 It is considered that this anomaly needs to be rectified now rather than be referred to the Constitution Task Group and that the approach to the two types of committee should be consistent. It is therefore

RECOMMENDED that, in the Council's delegation scheme

- 1 the authority for policy committees to appoint task groups and working parties be transferred from "Policy Committees – Overall Role" to "Delegation to all Policy Committees" and
- 2 authority to appoint task groups and working parties be included in the Terms of Delegation of Scrutiny Committees.

Background papers: Council's new constitution

Agenda Item No: 5
Title: Local Strategic Partnership
Author: Elizabeth Forbes (01799) 510400

Summary

- 1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Council's endorsement of and participation in a local strategic partnership for Uttlesford. The Council is also asked to confirm representation on the partnership.

Background

- 2 The Local Government Act 2000 places on principal authorities (including both county and district councils) a duty to prepare community strategies, for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK. It also gives authorities broad new powers to improve and promote local well-being as a means of helping them to implement those strategies.
- 3 The Government has issued guidance on preparing community strategies and on the power to promote or improve economic, social or environmental well-being. Members are reminded that the purpose of the strategy is to provide a long-term vision for the district and a framework for more specific plans. It is distinctive from other plans which currently exist in its breadth and long-term nature and in the fact that it is not the plan of any one organisation, but one which should influence other more specific plans of all partners over a period of time. Because of this shared basis, one of the benefits which might arise from the strategy and associated action plans is the opportunity to share resources between major partners and undertake joint initiatives.
- 4 The Government's guidance emphasises the importance of involving local communities in the strategy. It is also seen as essential that the strategy is prepared and implemented by a broad local strategic partnership through which the local authority can work with other local bodies. It is not just a Council strategy.
- 5 These issues were considered by the Policy and Resources Committee in April 2001 and it was agreed that an exploratory meeting should be convened to progress a possible partnership for Uttlesford. Two meetings have now been held and proposals for a local strategic partnership arising from these are set out below. The Council's representatives at these meetings have been Councillor Mrs Caton, Mrs Dean and Councillor R Dean.
- 6 Work is also progressing on a consultation process to inform the development of a community strategy. A community conference is being planned for 27 November 2001 and members of the Council have been invited to this. A

consultation document will be launched at the conference and responses will be invited from individuals and organisations throughout the district over a couple of months. It is hoped that councillors will be able to play an active role in promoting discussion of the questions raised and a presentation pack with notes is being prepared to assist with this. Further briefing for members will be given at the workshop on 12 November.

Local Strategic Partnership

- 7 The Government guidance sees the establishment of a local strategic partnership as an opportunity to rationalise existing strategic planning processes. It suggests that local strategic partnerships should provide an overarching framework within which other, more specific, partnerships can operate. While such partnerships might be initiated by the local authority, the guidance emphasises that authorities need to recognise the operational autonomy of their partners. It is envisaged that such partnerships should involve the key players in an area.
- 8 The Council is involved in a number of partnerships currently, all of which have a specific focus. These include the Community Safety partnership which has a statutory basis, the Local Agenda 21 Forum and forums for arts, sports and tourism. These partnerships will continue but it is hoped that over a period of time the Community Strategy which will emerge for Uttlesford will inform their work and priorities and that there will therefore be greater consistency in the approach to these various elements.
- 9 The structure of the proposed partnership is summarised in Annex 1 which also sets out a proposed constitution and terms of reference. It will be seen that the prime function of the partnership is to oversee the development and implementation of the community strategy. It is suggested that the boundary of the partnership will coincide with that of UDC but it will need to relate to the Local Strategic Partnership being planned for Essex.
- 10 The annual conference and any potential working groups provide the opportunity for a larger number of people and organisations to become involved with the work of the partnership. This wider involvement should also be promoted by there being open communication with other partnerships. It is hoped to develop communication protocols in relation to the work of the partnership and to consider publicity, which may include a website with links to partner websites.
- 11 The core group members need to be accountable both to the conference and to parent organisations for decisions taken and for seeking ratification of decisions where appropriate. Other partner organisations are also seeking endorsement from relevant boards and committees for their participation.

RECOMMENDED THAT

- (1) The Council endorses the establishment of a local strategic partnership for Uttlesford on the basis set out in this report.
- (2) The Council confirms representatives to participate in the core group of the partnership

Background Papers:

Preparing Community Strategies – Government Guidance to Local Authorities
DETR, December 2000

Power to Promote or Improve Economic, Social or Environmental Well-being
– Draft Guidance to Local Authorities DETR, December
2000

Notes of exploratory meetings on 26 July and 11 September 2001

Local Strategic Partnership

Proposed Constitution and Terms of Reference

Name

Uttlesford Futures

Purpose

- To oversee the development and implementation of a community strategy for Uttlesford
- To bring together local plans, partnerships and initiatives
- To work with the county and district councils and other partners in developing a public service agreement for the area
- To promote the shared use of resources between organisations

Terms of Reference

1. To consult local people on key issues affecting their lives.
2. To produce a community strategy in consultation with constituent partners and local people.
3. To establish an annual community conference.
4. To monitor progress in line with action plans towards the achievement of the community strategy goals.
5. To inform and influence key agencies about issues and plans affecting the district.
6. To oversee specific partnership projects as required.
7. To develop protocols of communication with other partnerships and organisations.
8. To establish task groups for specific purposes as required.

Constitutional Matters

1. The core partnership group acts as the steering group of a wider communications network accessed through the annual conference, communication with partner organisations and consultation with local groups and individuals.
2. The core group shall normally meet four times per year.
3. The core group shall elect a chairman from among its members.
4. The role of the Chairman is to chair the meetings and the annual conference.
5. Substitutes for members are permitted to attend meetings in the absence of designated members.
6. Where a vote is required, this will be by a show of hands, with each partner organisation having one vote.
7. The quorum for meetings of the core group shall be five members.
8. Proceedings of the core group should normally be available to the public through a web site or on request.
9. The secretariat for the core group will normally be provided by Uttlesford District Council.

HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE – 6 SEPTEMBER 2001

HH3 **HOUSING STRATEGY STATEMENT 2002 – 2006 AND 30 YEAR BUSINESS PLAN**

The Housing Services Manager presented a report inviting the Committee to approve the Housing Strategy Statement 2002 – 06 and the 2001 Housing 30 Year Business Plan for submission to the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR). The version of the 30 year Business Plan circulated to Members was an abridged draft, but a full copy of the report had been placed in the Members' room. Both reports had been considered in detail by the Housing Strategy Working Group.

It was noted that copies of both draft documents had already been submitted to DTLR by the deadline date of 13 August 2001 on the basis that the final approved documents would be submitted as quickly as possible. In this context, it was noted that the new constitution required Housing Strategy documents to be referred to the Council for approval.

Members asked a number of questions about various aspects of the two documents. In response to one question, the Housing Services Manager agreed to circulate details of the Tenants' Cash Incentive Scheme and the Homebuy Scheme to all Members.

Councillor Hibbs noted that there would not be a great deal of opportunity for savings to be made in the housing budget and he drew attention in this context to the importance of key objective 6 relating to the provision of housing management services and advice to tenants and other customers. Members also discussed possible means of encouraging greater tenant participation and the Housing Services Manager advised Members that all tenants would be informed directly of this year's Tenant Panel AGMs. These matters would be addressed further in the forthcoming Best Value review.

Officers advised the Committee that a full survey of the Council's housing stock was currently intended to be undertaken during 2003.

RECOMMENDED that the Housing Strategy Statement 2002-06 and the 2001 Housing 30 Year Business Plan be approved for submission to the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions.

RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 20 SEPTEMBER 2001

RE5 POLICY PRIORITIES AND BUDGET 2002/03

Members received a report outlining proposals for budget savings, targets and committee cash limits arising from the review of priorities, which had been undertaken by the Administration. Subject to each committee's consideration and overall confirmation by the Council on 16 October 2001, it was intended that these targets, which for the Resources Committee was £247,000, and the Administration's proposals underlying them, be used by officers as the basis for preparing service plans and committee budgets for 2002/03. The Resources Committee was asked to confirm its own position.

The Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) required all principal authorities to produce Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) statements by 31 July 2001. Due to the extremely tight timetable, it had not been possible to present this IEG statement to a committee or Council meeting before the 31 July 2001 deadline. The Government was considering giving capital grants which would be doubled if partnership arrangements could be made.

Officers would use the targets from the review of priorities recently undertaken by the Administration as the basis for preparing service plans and committee budgets for the next financial year. The budget strategy report presented to committee in June had projected a potential savings figure of £465,000, for the General Fund, allowing for a target Council Tax increase of no more than 2.5%. This figure did not allow for any new growth items.

Target savings now identified for each committee totalled £635,000, which was £170,000 more than the funding gap projected in June. This sum was all that was available to meet any growth items or anything else unforeseen at this stage. It was planned that each scrutiny committee would have a budget of £10,000 next year which would be met from the £170,000 figure.

Following discussion, it was

RECOMMENDED that officers achieving start to prepare service plans and detailed budgets with a view to a saving of £247,000 subject to overall confirmation by the Council.

BUDGET STRATEGY 2002-2003

Councillor R P Chambers declared an interest as a Member of the Police Authority.

The Committee received a report updating them on the budget strategy report approved by the Policy and Resources Committee on 19 June 2001. The report summarised the policy priorities and budget reports that had been considered during this cycle by the Council's main policy committees following the Administration's review of priorities. It also provided some indications on budget variances that might arise during the current year.

Councillor Gayler drew attention to the letter that Members had received from Unison concerning staff vacancies. Staff were concerned that some posts were not being filled after employees left. Members felt that the staff replacement policy should look closely at vacant posts and not just replace like for like. The Director of Resources said that it was good management policy to examine vacant posts. Some councils had a policy of freezing posts for a period of time. The Leader assured Members that there were no proposals for compulsory redundancies. In reply to Unison's concern that the cost of temporary staffing was not shown, the Director of Resources confirmed that these figures had been included within employee costs. It was agreed that there should be a staff replacement policy.

In reply to a question from Councillor Gayler concerning the transfer of the Planning Service to Saffron Walden, officers said that investigations were under way as part of the Best Value Review, into the advantages of selling or leasing the premises in Dunmow. The Director of Resources assured Members that the CIC would provide a service as good or better than at present. It was an ideal opportunity to look at partnerships with the police and any other interested organisation.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1 the Council approve the target cash limits for each Policy Committee as considered by committees during this cycle of meeting and
- 2 Policy committees be invited to propose draft budgets at the November cycle of meetings which reflect the agreed cash limits.

It was further

RESOLVED this Committee receive an information report showing any frozen staff posts.