

CONSTITUTION TASK GROUP

DISTRICT OPEN MEETINGS

- 1 The venues should be in the four areas of the District (ie the four county electoral divisions) but preferably not in the main centre of population.
- 2 It is suggested that the most appropriate time would be May/June.
- 3 They should be Member led but, in order for them to have some official standing, there should be a minute taker and 2 or 3 senior officers to give advice where necessary.
- 4 The meetings should be chaired by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Council. Attendance at the meetings should not be limited to residents from the relevant County Council division.
- 5 The Chairman will need to ensure that the meetings are not dominated by one subject to the detriment of others. The Chairman must retain a politically neutral position and if a contentious issue arises must give equal opportunity to both points of view.
- 6 These meetings are primarily for local people and therefore they and Local Members must be the main players. However, other Members may have a legitimate interest in what is discussed at the meetings, even if only in a listening capacity.
- 7 A county council officer should be asked to be present to deal with highways queries in particular. In addition to following up specific queries for individual members of the public, general feedback should be given through press releases and/or the Council Page.
- 8 Parish Councils should be invited to identify any major topics in advance; there may or may not be a lead topic for each meeting. Residents could also raise matters on the night.
- 9 It is considered that it would be helpful if representatives of Essex County Council were invited. In particular the appropriate local County Councillor should be invited to the relevant local forum.
- 10 It could be that in future years the process should be linked more closely to the community planning process. If community planning was included, the Council's partners should also be invited (PCT, etc).
- 11 The meeting should be given widespread publicity, including approaches through local members and using parish magazines.