

**Committee:** Council  
**Date:** 19 October 2004  
**Agenda Item No:** 7  
**Title:** STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY GROUP  
**Author:** John Mitchell (01799) 510450 and Philip O'Dell (01799) 510670

### Summary

- 1 At its meeting of 31 August 2004 the Resources Committee made the following resolution with regard to setting up a Strategic Development Reference Group:
  - 1 The Committee endorse in outline the proposals in this report for the establishment of dedicated officer and member groups to deal with the strategic development issues facing Uttlesford.
  - 2 The Chief Executive should make the necessary arrangements for the Strategic Development Reference Group to meet and consider the best way in which to progress those proposals.
  - 3 The SDRG be asked to consult widely with members, officers and other stakeholders and bring a detailed report back either to the next meeting of the Resources Committee or to the next meeting of the Council containing detailed proposals for the implementation of the proposals in this report.
- 2 A copy of the report is appended. SDRG met on Friday 17 September in line with (2) above. This report is the result of that discussion and forms the basis of (3) above. It recommends the establishment of a Strategic Development Advisory Group (SDAG) which would operate on similar lines to the Stansted Airport Advisory Panel (STAAP) and, because it would embrace several cross cutting issues, would report directly to Full Council and give strategic guidance to all Committees.

### Background – strategic issues

- 3 The primary strategic issues confronting the District are well-known to members and comprise the implications of the forthcoming Regional Spatial Strategy together with the ODPM's Sustainable Communities Plan (which places the District within the M11 Corridor growth area) and the implications of the expansion of Stansted Airport in the light of the White Paper "The Future of Air Transport". Arising from these is the need to provide affordable housing and to take a positive approach to deliver the Government's housing requirements in a way that maintains the District's character. To this end the Council needs to develop a vision for Uttlesford in 2020, which will be a fundamental element of the new planning policy documents required by the

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The appended report to Resources Committee sets out the details.

## **The Strategic Development Advisory Group**

### 4 Purpose of the Group

SDAG is intended to demonstrate much greater commitment by the Council to the strategic dimension, given the District's location in the M11 Corridor. SDAG will need to be supported by Officers, Members and Stakeholders so as to give it the confidence to discuss *all* options of accommodating development within the District. Some of these options will be difficult for the Council to come to terms with. The Group will inform and drive preparation of the Local Development Documents, Housing Strategy and other policies and strategies, such as the Community Plan, that set out the paths to achievement of the 2020 Vision of the District, while ensuring their approval remains within the remit of the Council. It is envisaged that the Group would meet in a similar form and frequency to STAAP in that its meetings would be private but properly minuted and open to all members of the Council. Such meetings would be augmented and enhanced by seminars, conferences, workshops and other means of community engagement to ensure effective participation in the strategic process. However, the remit would extend far beyond housing and land use planning to include input into the Corporate Plan and the Community Strategy, as well as giving a steer to any consultants which may be required.

5 The Council does not yet have a vision for the District in 2020. This will need to be one of the first tasks of SDAG.

6 The proposed terms of reference are as follows

*To ensure the Council has the necessary staffing skills, competencies, information and research to enable it to fully address the strategic development agenda which faces the District over the next 20 years. This agenda includes, but is not restricted to, a rapid expansion in the number of houses in the District and the wider area beyond, proposals for the expansion of Stansted Airport and the necessary infrastructure development associated with those developments.*

*Having considered those developments and the requirements which arise from them, to identify ways in which those requirements can be addressed and the necessary resources secured so that the Council can address those developments while simultaneously promoting the objectives of the Council and its aspirations for the District as a whole*

*To meet in private but open to all Members of the Council and to report directly to full Council and to make such reports and recommendations as necessary for implementation.*

7 Political Composition

The Strategic Member Reference Group comprises the Leader of the Council, Group Leaders, the Chair of Health and Housing, the Chair of Development Control, the Chair of Environment and the Conservative Group Spokesman on airports. At its meeting of 17 September it agreed to recommend to Council that SDAG should be set up on that same basis as STAAP, in proportion to political representation on the Council and with Members nominated by Groups, as with any other Committee. The Member Reference Group would be disbanded. It is proposed that SDAG should consist of 9 members.

8 Officer Support

The Officer Support Group would comprise the Chief Executive and Executive Managers of Housing, Development and Finance, together with the EM of Strategy and Performance when appointed. The Lead Officer would be the Planning Policy and Conservation Manager, supported by the Housing Strategy Officer, a Research Officer, Public Relations and lobbyist and administrative assistant. Staff would remain part of their Service Management Teams, and the officer support group would take the form of a standing committee which would come together on a regular and programmed basis. It is envisaged that the Research Officer and Administrative Assistant would be new appointments or secondments based within the Strategy and Performance unit, but further work will need to be done to establish whether or not this will be sufficient, and the degree of need will not fully materialise until SDAG has been set up. The team would call on other areas of expertise within the Council as and when required. Much of the work is already being done: what the group would achieve is bringing it all together under the overall direction of SDAG and thus provide the co-ordinated response and input to strategic issues that is perceived to be lacking at present.

9 Uttlesford Primary Care Trust is proposing to appoint a part-time Research Officer. It is proposed in the first instance that the Research Officer be a joint appointment with costs split between the Council and Primary Care Trust. Other staff costs can be met from the savings which resulted from the corporate restructure.

10 Resources

i) Staff

There will be a need for additional staff resources to be dedicated to strategic planning (in its widest sense). The cost of additional staff would be:

<b>Proposed New Post</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>£ with on-costs</b>
Research Officer – to undertake background research for SDAG on all strategic issues, and to feed information to the forward planning process of all Services in the Council	PO 5-8	35,252 (50% (17,626) to be paid by UPCT)

Administrative Officer – to provide administrative support for the Group and for the lead officer	S4	19513
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- 11 Members will be aware that a budget prioritisation exercise is currently under way and there may be scope for staffing via that exercise. It is considered that SDAG should make recommendations on its staffing needs as its duties and responsibilities unfold. In particular the need for PR/Lobbying Resources should be an early consideration of SDAG.

ii) Other

- 12 The report to Resources Committee suggested that the Member Group would have the control of the District Character Reserve, set up during the last budget process for exactly the type of issues now being considered. The Reserve has an opening balance of £300,000. To emphasise the Group's strategic importance, draft Terms of Reference for their financial responsibilities are attached at Appendix 2 to this report.

### **Conclusion**

- 13 The strategic agenda will continue to have an increasing influence on the future of development in this District and beyond. It is considered that greater emphasis needs to be placed on the Council's ability to react swiftly to the implications of strategic development in its widest sense and that the best vehicle for achieving this is through the establishment of a Strategic Development Advisory Group, with high level and dedicated Officer support. The Group would meet in private but be open to all Members of the Council and would report to full Council, with minutes being available to the public.

### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 That the Strategic Development Advisory Group be established as set out in paragraphs 4 and 7 of the report
- 2 That the terms of reference of the Group as set out in paragraph 6 and Appendix 2 are agreed
- 3 That the Strategic Member Reference Group is discontinued following establishment of SDAG
- 4 That the Chief Executive be instructed to establish the officer structures to include new posts as identified in Paragraph 10

Background Papers: report to Resources Committee 31 August 2004.

**Committee:** Resources

**Date:** 31 August 2004

**Agenda Item No:** 6

**Title:** Creating a Forward Planning Task Group

**Author:** John Mitchell (01799) 510450 and Philip O'Dell (01799) 510670

### Summary

- 1 This report discusses the establishment of a Forward Planning Task Group of Officers to support the Member Strategic Planning Reference Group.

### Background – strategic issues

- 2 The primary strategic issues confronting the District are well-known to members and comprise the implications of the forthcoming Regional Spatial Strategy together with the ODPM's Sustainable Communities Plan (which places the District within the M11 Corridor growth area) and the implications of the expansion of Stansted Airport in the light of the White Paper "The Future of Air Transport". Arising from these is the need to provide affordable housing and to take a positive approach to deliver the Government's housing requirements in a way that maintains the District's character. To this end the Council needs to develop a vision for Uttlesford in 2020, which will be a fundamental element of the new planning policy documents required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 3 To give an idea of the timetabling of events, we will have an idea of the broad thrust of the draft Regional Spatial Strategy by October, with a view to formal reporting of the regional Planning Panel to the Regional Assembly on 5<sup>th</sup> November and an Examination in Public in Autumn 2005. This will set the housing targets for the next 20 years for the District. The planning application for maximum use of the single runway at the Airport is anticipated in Spring 2005, and the Scoping Opinions for the Environmental Impact Assessments have been prepared and will be reported to the Environment Committee in September. The application for the second runway is anticipated at the end of 2005. The workload will be concentrated, extensive and have longer term implications
- 4 The Government places great stress on the need to provide housing as a matter of urgency. It is evident that if the Council does not take a positive, albeit robust and questioning, approach to the Government's agenda, there is a strong likelihood that the Government will appoint a "delivery vehicle" to ensure implementation of its housing agenda, such as a Development Corporation, which would effectively give the Council no choice in the location and type of housing and related infrastructure in the District.

- 5 There is a perceived concern that the Council is not able to present a co-ordinated strategic overview to these issues. Thus, while the expertise is, to a substantial extent, present within the organisation to address these issues, it appears that the Council is only able to react in a piecemeal manner to issues as they arise, rather than progressing on a broad and united strategic front. Equally, the lack of a clearly articulated picture of how the council – on behalf of the community – wants Uttlesford to develop over a twenty-year horizon makes it difficult to assess the extent to which any given set of proposals contribute or obstruct the achievement of that picture.

### **The Strategic Planning Member Reference Group**

- 6 To this end the Strategic Planning Reference Group was set up at the Council meeting in April 2004 and comprises the Leader of the Council, Group Leaders, the Chair of Health and Housing, the Chair of Development Control, the Chair of Environment and the Conservative Group Spokesman on airports. It has met once.

Its terms of reference are as follows:

*To consider the requirements of the District Council in terms of staffing skills, competencies, information and research to enable it to fully address the strategic development agenda which faces the District over the next 20 years. This agenda includes, but is not restricted to, a rapid expansion in the number of houses in the District, proposals for the expansion of Stansted Airport and the necessary infrastructure development associated with those developments*

*Having considered those developments and the requirements which arise from them, to identify ways in which those requirements can be addressed and the necessary resources secured so that the Council can address those developments while simultaneously promoting the objectives of the Council and its aspirations for the District as a whole*

*Having reached its conclusions, to enable the Chief Executive to consider its conclusions and to make such reports and recommendations as necessary for implementation.*

- 7 To meet the challenges set out in paras 3 and 4 above it is considered that the Strategic Planning Reference Group needs to become permanent and to meet regularly to develop policy in these areas. To carry out its remit effectively it is now considered that an Officer Support Group needs to be set up to give permanent support to the Member Reference Group.

### **Functions**

- 8 Capacity exists within the organisation to provide expertise on strategic planning development, housing strategy, public relations, and community engagement. These are also areas of expertise that will be necessary to develop and coordinate to deliver the new Local Development Documents that are to replace the Local Plan, and on which work needs to start

immediately – indeed it has already begun. These will be tied into Housing Strategies.

- 9 It is envisaged that the Member Reference Group will need to be supported so as to give it the confidence to discuss *all* options of accommodating development within the District. The Member Group would inform and drive preparation of the Local Development Documents and other policies and strategies that would set out the paths to achievement of the 2020 Vision of the District, while ensuring their approval remains within the remit of the council. It is envisaged that the Group would meet in a similar form to STAAP in that its meetings would be private but properly minuted and open to all members of the Council. Such meetings would be augmented and enhanced by seminars, conferences, workshops and other means of community engagement to ensure effective participation in the strategic process. However, the remit would extend far beyond housing and land use planning to include input into the QOLP and the Community Strategy, as well as giving a steer to any consultants which may be required.

### **The Officer Support Group**

- 10 The Officer Support Group would comprise the Chief Executive and Executive Managers of Housing, Development and Finance. The Lead Officer would be the Planning Policy and Conservation Manager, supported by the Housing Strategy Officer, a Research Officer, Public Relations and lobbyist and administrative assistant. Staff would remain part of their Service Management Teams, and the group would take the form of a standing committee which would come together on a regular and programmed basis. It is envisaged that the Research Officer and Administrative Assistant would be new appointments or secondments. The team would call on other areas of expertise within the Council as and when required. Much of the work is already being done: what the group would achieve is bringing it all together under the overall direction of the Member Reference group and thus provide the co-ordinated response and input to strategic issues that is perceived to be lacking at present.

### **Resources**

- 11 It is suggested that the Member Group would have the control of the District Character Reserve, set up during the last budget process for exactly the type of issues now being considered. The Reserve has an opening balance of £300,000. To emphasise the Group's strategic importance, draft Terms of Reference for their financial responsibilities are attached at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 12 Staffing costs would be met from within existing budgets but a new resource would be needed for research and administrative staff. There would be considerable cross-fertilisation benefits to be gained from such appointments which would benefit the planning and housing services overall. Further work needs to be done on the cost of additional staffing, and a fully costed proposal will be brought to the meeting of this Committee on 23 September, along with ideas on funding possibilities for the sums involved.

RECOMMENDED That following consultation with the Strategic Member Reference Group a further report be brought to the next Resources Committee.

Background Papers: none



## **Appendix 2**

### **Strategic Development Advisory Group**

#### **Financial Terms of Reference/Powers/Responsibilities**

1. Control of the District Character Reserve, with power to spend without the need to consult the Resources Committee. This reserve to be planned and managed over a four year period and used to fund research, feasibility studies, consultancy fees, legal fees, public relations, consultation, other fees, seminars, training, Member expenses and other incidental expenses. Salaries of staff involved will continue to be charged to their own service. To meet the requirement of Financial Regulations, the use of the Reserve will formally be based on decisions made by the Chief Executive and the Executive Managers for Development and Finance and Asset Strategy, in consultation with Members of the Strategic Development Advisory Group
2. Ability, in conjunction with the relevant Executive Manager, the Chief Financial Officer, Committee Chairmen, Policy Committees, and Resources Committee (as appropriate under Financial Regulations and within existing limits) to request virement of revenue budgets to fund spending not within the multi-year planned use of the District Character Reserve.
3. Ability to request, via Resources Committee, and after consultation with relevant Executive Managers, Chairmen, and Policy Committees, use of other Earmarked Reserves for spending on items not within the multi-year planned use of the District Character Reserve.
4. A responsibility to identify and progress, for all strategic proposals the Group puts forward, possibilities for funding via fees and charges, partnership arrangements, Government, EU and other grants, sponsorship, Public Service Agreements etc.
5. A responsibility to make, at any appropriate time, but usually during the Service Planning and Budget process, proposals to Executive Managers and Committees for increased revenue and capital spending necessary to achieve the objectives of the Group, along with associated funding possibilities as outlined in 4 above.
6. A responsibility to identify at any appropriate time and to assist the Council's financial planning, possible increased or decreased spending needs for the Council arising not from the Group's proposals, but from strategic policies and proposals from Government and other relevant bodies.
7. A responsibility to participate in, and advise on, financial aspects of the regular review of the Council's Quality of Life Corporate Plan, so far as they are relevant to the Group's objectives.
8. Consistent with Council policy, and with appropriate financial advice, to consider strategic financial dilemmas the Council may face, such as whether to remain debt free, pursue additional, Council retained Business Rates under the Government's proposed Business Rates Retention Scheme, and increased Council Tax yield from new developments.

**Committee:** Council  
**Date:** 19 OCTOBER 2004  
**Agenda Item No:** 8  
**Title:** THE BENEFITS OF PERFORMANCE MEASURING  
**Author:** Ian Orton (01799) 510402

### Summary

- 1 This report contains details of the costs of introducing performance measuring to Uttlesford District Council from May 2003. The report also contains details of the tangible benefits to Council Tax payers and the implications of not introducing performance measuring.

### Background

- 2 At the Council Meeting on 20 July 2004 Councillor Copping asked the Chief Executive for a report on the costs since May 2003 of performance management and its tangible benefits to Council Tax payers of Uttlesford.

Performance Management was introduced to the authority at the strong request of the District Auditor in the Audit Letter of 2000/01. It was made very clear in the letter that neither Members nor officers were fully aware of the performance of the authority. In addition the pre - requirements for CPA made it very clear that an authority that did not have a robust performance management system in place would be at an immediate disadvantage. As a result of these new demands it became essential the authority established a performance culture. To meet these demands it was agreed to set up a small Performance Team consisting of one full time officer and a part time clerical assistant. In addition to Performance Management the Team would manage:

Scrutiny  
Procurement  
Corporate Policy  
Best Value  
CPA  
Consultation  
and a range of other projects such Risk Management, Capital Programme etc.

The Performance Manager was appointed in May 2003 and the Clerical Assistant in July 2003. During a full year the salaries and other costs of the Performance Team was approximately £42,000 plus on costs of between 18% and 20%. The Team estimate that they spend approximately 22% of time on Performance Management. During the period May 2003 to September 2004 the Performance Team cost approximately £58,333 plus on costs.

As approximately 22% of the Team's time was spent on Performance Management the cost of Performance Measuring during the period May 2003 to September 2004 was £12, 833.

- 3 The tangible benefits are more complicated. As a result of the introduction of Performance Members and managers now have much greater knowledge of the way the authority performs and how we perform against other authorities. During year one of the performance system the emphasis has been on gathering the data and ensuring it is accurate. As a result details of the strengths and weaknesses within the organisation have become apparent. This data has been used to support sections of the authority that are failing for example the performance of Development Control has prompted concerns by Members about meeting Government Targets but the current stage of Performance Monitoring is now making use of costs versus performance. This is particularly useful when using comparative unit costs so for example our Development Control Monitoring is not only way below the national average it is high on costs per resident. As a result of management action service delivery is improving and the next stage of management is to look at costs. These actions will result in efficiency savings to the Council Tax payers of Uttlesford.
  
- 4 Members may wish to consider the implications of **not** introducing Performance Measurement. The major impact would have:
  - A lack of knowledge of the way the authority is managed
  - The major data would have been the annual Best Value Performance Indicators which are annual and only tell Members limited detail about the authority
  - Performance data drives Service and Financial Planning
  - The District Auditor would have reduced our CPA score
  - Our CPA score was based on demonstrating improvement through the introduction of Performance Measuring. Without this process under pinning the Council we would have dropped at least 5 points, which would have placed the authority as Weak and on the ODPM at risk register. Our CPA Improvement Plan for example would require agreement from the ODPM at ministerial level.
  
- 5 Council are recommended to:

Note the report

Background Papers: Performance Management Files 2003 to Date.

**Committee:** Council Meeting  
**Date:** 19 October 2004  
**Agenda Item No:** 9  
**Title:** APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES ETC  
**Author:** Mick Purkiss (01799) 510430

### **Summary**

- 1 This report asks Members to consider whether they wish to fill the vacancies on Committees and other organisations caused by the resignation of former Councillor Copping.

### **Background**

- 2 Members will be aware that former Councillor Copping resigned from the Council in August. A by-election to fill the vacancy in the Great Dunmow South Ward will be held on 21 October 2004.
- 3 Following this resignation, vacancies now exist on the following committees and organisations:-
  - Development Control Committee
  - Scrutiny Committee 2 (Resources and Environment)
  - Risk Management Steering Group
  - Business Development Services (North West Essex)
  - National Housing and Town Planning Council (Eastern Region Council) – substitute
  - Old Manse Home Community Support Group
- 4 Members are requested to consider whether they wish to fill the above vacancies at this stage. A further report to Council may be required depending on the outcome of the forthcoming by-election.

Background Papers: Nil.

**Committee:** Council  
**Date:** 19 October 2004  
**Agenda Item No:** 10  
**Title:** REVISED COMMITTEE TIMETABLE FOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE MEETINGS  
**Author:** Maggie Cox (01799) 510369

### **Summary**

- 1 This report asks Members to approve a revised timetable of meetings to allow Development Control Committee meetings to be held on Wednesdays from January 2005.

### **Background**

- 2 The Development Control Committee at its meeting on 20 September 2004 considered a report about the operation of the Committee and the improvements that could be made to speed up decisions on planning applications so as to meet Best Value Standards by March 2007.
- 3 One aspect of the report concerned the date, time and frequency of meetings. The Committee had previously considered changing the start time of the meetings and increasing frequency as a way of handling high workload but had concluded that the present system was satisfactory. However, looking at the day of the meeting there were several disadvantages of holding the meeting on a Monday
- 4 Late information by applicants and objectors is often sent in over the weekend and officers have difficulty in assimilating the information for it to be presented to Committee. This often leads to unnecessary deferrals. Also, Officers and Members spend a substantial part of their weekend preparing for the meeting
- 5 The meeting agreed that a Wednesday meeting date would be more convenient to the press and the public as well as Members and officers. Wednesday is a convenient day, as it clashes only with Scrutiny meetings, which have a different set of Members. The Annual Council meeting might have to consider changing the day for Licensing Committee meetings as these are also currently scheduled to take place on a Wednesday
- 6 It is suggested that the change be implemented from January 2005 in order to give Members time to organise their diaries and for the new day to be publicised.

RECOMMENDED that the revised timetable of meetings be approved.

Background Papers: Nil.

## COMMITTEE TIMETABLE 2004/05

	Day	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Community and Leisure	Tues	25				7		2		4		1		
Health and Housing	Thur	27				9		4		6 25 Ex Tue		3		
Scrutiny 1	Wed		16			22		17		19		16		
Environment	Tue		8			14		9		11		8		
Transport & Highways *Held at Great Dunmow	Thur		21			16		11		13		10		
Licensing	Wed		9			15		10		12		9		
Resources	Thur		24		31 EX	23		18		27	3 Ex Thur	31		
Scrutiny 2	Wed			7			6		1		9		13	
Council	Tues	11 annual	22 Ex	20			19		14		15		26	17 annual
Development Control <b>2pm</b>	Mon/ <b>Wed</b>	17	7 28	19	<b>9</b> 31Tue	20	11	1 22	13	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b> <b>23</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b> <b>27</b>	<b>18</b>
Standards Cttee* <b>4pm</b>	Mon			12			4	15		17		21		
Stansted Airport AP	Mon		15	26			25							
Workshops	Mon		14	5		13	18	8	6		7	7	11	9

All meetings held at Saffron Walden except Transport and Highways. Meetings to start at 7.30 pm except Development Control which starts at 2.00 pm and Standards Committee which starts at 4.00 pm.

