

Uttlesford Local Development Framework: Requests for Community Engagement by Area Panels

Environment Committee, Item 9

Committee:	Environment Committee	Agenda Item
Date:	19th June 2007	9
Title:	Uttlesford Local Development Framework: Requests for Community Engagement by Area Panels	
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Summary

This report asks members to decide if additional community engagement work requested by the area panels should be carried out in relation to the Core Strategy

Recommendations

That

1. Parish Councils should be given the opportunity to present their views on the capacity of their communities to accommodate development in the July round of Area Panel meetings
2. No additional workshops for residents groups, representative groups and other stakeholders are held.

Background Papers; None

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Community engagement is one of the tests of soundness
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	All interested parties are already being given the opportunity to participate in the preparation of the Core Strategy. An additional workshop is not essential to ensure equality.
Finance	There would be additional budget, costs depending on location(s) and nature of facilitation, if a further workshop were to be arranged
Human Rights	N/A

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Legal implications	N/A
Sustainability	Opportunities for residents to participate in delivering sustainable communities. Core strategy is assessed against sustainability objectives.
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	Impact on work programme for policy team

Situation

Following the Issues and Options consultation on the Core Strategy officers are currently considering to the representations with a view to preparing a Preferred Options document for approval by this Committee in September. A Member workshop has been arranged in July for officers to appraise members of the representations received and to consider how to move the Core Strategy forward to the Preferred Options stage.

Two requests have been received from area panels for additional community engagement events to gather views for the emerging Core Strategy.

At the meeting on the 6th June the East Area panel requested that at the next round of area panel meetings in July, Parish Councils should be given the opportunity to present their views on the capacity within their parishes to cope with new development. This could be facilitated relatively easily within the current work programme. A questionnaire would be sent out in advance to structure responses. All Parishes would be contacted and officers would attend all area panels to facilitate the discussion.

A second request has been received from the South West Area Panel. This request was originally made at the March meeting and reiterated at the meeting on the 7th June with a more detailed proposal. This proposal is for an externally facilitated workshop involving local residents groups, representative groups, other stakeholders, and all Local Authorities and also involving officers from Housing, Planning, Economic Development, Education, Health, Community and Transport.

Workshops are included in the Statement of Community Involvement as an appropriate way to involve local communities in the LDF process. A workshop will provide a useful opportunity for additional engagement but it is not considered at this stage that an event of this nature is essential to ensure a sound Core Strategy. An extensive programme of community engagement including workshops held in Stansted Mountfitchet, Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden has already been conducted. All key stakeholders including Town and Parish Councils were invited to participate. Workshops will be considered as part of the process of preparing site specific policies in 2008.

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Although this request has arisen solely from the South West Area Panel, there is strong emphasis within the new planning system on inclusive community engagement. In this light of this it would be inappropriate to offer this opportunity to the residents of the south west area without extending it to all parishes within the district. There would therefore be the need to run three separate workshop events, one in each of the Panel Areas. This would obviously have an impact in terms of the existing workload in the Policy Team. To give an indication of likely costs the workshops run on an area basis and facilitated by the Rural Community Council at the start of the Core Strategy process cost approximately £3,000, including materials and an initial summary of results but excluding costs of venue hire etc.

An alternative course of action could be to run one workshop possibly within the South West area but with an invitation extended to all parishes to attend. The workshop could be structured so that Parishes have an opportunity to discuss issues on an area basis. This approach would also allow Parishes from different Panel Areas the opportunity to exchange views.

It is emphasised, however, that there is insufficient funding in the Division budget to cover the costs of facilitators and insufficient staff resources to carry out the necessary preparation for the workshops and maintain progress against the published local development scheme.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Organising three additional workshops diverts staff from programmed work on the Core Strategy resulting in slippage in the programme.	Medium/High	Financial penalties through loss of PDG for missing milestones set out in LDS	Hold a single workshop if essential