

**PARTNERSHIPS AND CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLIES**

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To identify the role of Partnerships and Consultative Assemblies in the new democratic arrangements.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 The Council's existing relationships with Partnerships and Consultative Assemblies needs to be revised in the light of the new political management arrangements.

**3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 That the Council continues its commitment to and relationships with Partnerships and Consultative Assemblies; and where the Council has a right to nominate Members; that:
- (a) the Executive shall nominate a lead Member from amongst the Executive, appropriate to the Executive portfolios, for each Partnership and Consultative Assembly;
  - (b) where there is more than one nominated Member on a Partnership, the Executive will nominate the other Members;
  - (c) in the case of locally based Partnerships, where there is more than 1 Member represented, priority should go to local Members; and
  - (d) in the case of Consultative Assemblies, all Members should be asked which Consultative Assemblies they wish to be regularly invited to.

#### 4. **Background**

- 4.1 Milton Keynes Council has a history of working in partnership with external organisations to fulfil its community leadership role. Indeed many of the issues which the public believe the Council should be tackling as a priority (see **Annex A**) are the responsibility of a variety of local organisations (see **Annex B**).
- 4.2 For example, Youth Crime is being tackled by the Youth Offending Team a multi-agency team drawn from Council, Police, Probation and Health Staff and resources. Care and support for older people requires collaboration between the Council, Health and voluntary organisations.
- 4.3 The Council has also placed importance on consulting on service plans, policies and strategies with a whole variety of external organisations.
- 4.4 At the start of the Unitary Authority, the Council adopted two categories of external relationships; Partnerships and Consultative Assemblies.
- 4.5 Partnerships were deemed to be formalised relationships between a specified group of member organisations with a defined purpose. Examples of existing partnerships include the Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire Economic Partnership and the Crime and Community Safety Partnership.
- 4.6 Consultative Assemblies were those relating to defined sectors or subject matters which were open to any organisation in that sector or sharing an interest in the subject. Examples would be the Voluntary Sector Consultative Assembly or the Community Safety Forum.
- 4.7 Partnerships and Consultative Assemblies are important to the Council in tackling key issues. The recently revised Council objectives are shown at **Annex B** alongside the Partnerships and Consultative Assemblies that relate to them and any plans or strategies that codify the nature of the relationship.
- 4.8 This matter was considered by the Democratic Structures Working Group on 2 March 2000 (Minute DS58/00 refers), when the recommendations as set out in Paragraph 3 of this report were supported. The Working Group also made the following comments:
- (a) that, although any Members should be able to attend a meeting of a Consultative Assembly as an observer, there needed to be Members designated as the Council's representative(s);
  - (b) that Partnerships/Consultative Assemblies should have a right of recommendation to an appropriate Council body;
  - (c) that, in the context of Partnerships/Consultative Assemblies, the workload for individual Executive Members appeared to be high;
  - (d) there was a need to identify the key Partnerships/Consultative Assemblies;

- (e) that, where possible, a Scrutiny/Opposition Member should be appointed to each of the bodies, in addition to the Executive Member(s) (which may require the Council making a request to the bodies concerned); and
- (f) that each body needed to have clear Terms of Reference.

## 5. **Issues and Choices**

- 5.1 The key questions that arise in relation to the new political management structures are:
  - (a) Are Partnerships and Consultative Assemblies still necessary under the new arrangements?
  - (b) If so, how would they relate to the new structures?
  - (c) How should Member representation on Partnerships and Consultative Assemblies be determined?
- 5.2 Since Partnerships are critical to tackling the key objectives and strategies of the Council, it is suggested that they are essential and should be closely linked to Executive Decision making. A clear link is needed between the services the Council directly provides and those it provides in Partnership with other organisations.
- 5.3 It is therefore recommended that each major Partnership becomes the responsibility of one of the Executive Members, so that portfolio and Partnership responsibilities are aligned.
- 5.4 Although Consultative Assemblies are not essential to the Council's service provision, they represent valuable consultation mechanisms that are effective and efficient means of testing views and ensuring that the Council is responsive to communities. Generally, these are open bodies without limitations on membership.
- 5.5 Consultative Assemblies should also have appropriate links with Executive Members responsible for relevant services.
- 5.6 Depending upon how Executive portfolios are constructed, Members could adopt responsibilities for the Council objectives or subsets of objectives (as shown at Annex B) which would then suggest the obvious Partnership and Consultative Assembly links.
- 5.7 Where the Council has a representative on a Partnership or Assembly, that representative should be the appropriate Executive Member. It is suggested that if the principles above are adopted, they should be tested in relation to each Partnership or Assembly to test the practicality of the proposals. Where the Council nominates more than one Member to a Partnership, the Executive should nominate the additional Members.

5.8 On the Scrutiny side, depending on how Scrutiny Committee responsibilities are determined, that will identify which of the Partnerships and Consultative Assemblies relate to which Scrutiny Committee.

5.9 Locality based Partnerships, such as the Single Regeneration Budget Partnerships, create the opportunity to strengthen local Member representational roles.

## 6. **Implications**

### 6.1 Environmental

The Local Agenda 21 Steering Committee acts as a sounding board for environmental issues.

### 6.2 Equalities

Equalities issues are frequently the subject of consultation through individual organisations or Consultative Assemblies.

### 6.3 Financial

None.

### 6.4 Legal

None.

### 6.5 Staff and Accommodation

None.

## 7. **Conclusions**

7.1 That the Council's existing relationships with Partnerships and Consultative Assemblies are important to this Council's service delivery and, therefore, need to be revised in the light of the new political management arrangements.

Background Papers:           None