

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>7 NOVEMBER 2002</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>EASTBOURNE AREA COMMITTEE</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>MEMBER SERVICES MANAGER</b>
<b>Ward(s):</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	<b>To consider making a response to the County Council's proposal to abolish the Eastbourne Area Committee.</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Mr David Robinson, Member Services Manager, telephone (01323) 415022 or internally on extension 5022.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>That Cabinet consider this matter and formulate a response to the County Council.</b>

	<b>1.0</b>	<b><u>Introduction</u></b>	
	1.1	Area Committees for both Eastbourne and Hastings were established some time ago. In Hastings since 1995 and Eastbourne since 1998. The objective was to facilitate and promote partnership working and bring local government closer to communities.	

	1.2		<p>The County Council's Governance Committee on 22 October 2002 considered a report from the County Secretary proposing that the Area Committees be wound up. This recommendation was approved with a request that both Eastbourne and Hastings Borough Councils be given an opportunity of commenting. The matter would then be considered by the County Council on 3 December 2002 when a final decision will be made.</p>
	1.3		<p>A copy of the letter from the County Secretary and the Governance Committee report giving the reasons for this proposal are appended to this report. <b>Appendices 1 and 2</b> respectively.</p>
	<b>2.0</b>		<p><b><u>Terms of Reference</u></b></p>
	2.1		<p>For the Cabinet's information the terms of reference of the Eastbourne Area Committee are as follows:-</p>
	(a)		<p>To promote co-operation and joint working between the County Council and the Borough Council in order to improve local service planning, management and monitoring.</p>
	(b)		<p>To provide an additional means of getting decision making closer to communities and heightening local focus.</p>

	(c)	To discharge any powers or duties which may be delegated by the constituent Councils.
	<b>David Robinson</b> <b>Member Services Manager</b>	
	<b>Background Papers:</b>  The Background Papers used in compiling this report were as follows:  1. Report to Borough's Policy and Resources Committee on 13 July 1998 by the County Secretary and Borough Assistant Chief Executive.  To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact officer listed above.	
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**APPENDIX 1**

Mr M Ray LLB

Chief Executive

Eastbourne Borough Council

Town Hall

EASTBOURNE

East Sussex BN21 4UG

24 October 2002

Keith Stacey

D5/MOD/KS/SJW

Direct Line 491587

Dear Mr Ray

Area Committee

As you know we have been giving consideration to the future of the Area Committees in the light of the

development of the Local Strategic Partnerships. Attached is a copy of a report which was considered by our Governance Committee earlier this week. The Committee decided to recommend the County Council to wind up the Area Committees. The Committee has asked me to inform you of this recommendation and to give your Council an opportunity to comment on it. Any views will be reported to the County Council when it considers this matter on 3 December and taken into account in reaching a decision.

The Committee supported the reasons for proposing the winding up of the Committees set out in the report. It acknowledged that the Area Committees have made a contribution to local service planning and the fostering of better working but, with the development of the LSPs, considered that now is the time to move on and concentrate resources on supporting those Partnerships, which involve a much wider range of organisations. It is important that maximum effort is focused on the LSPs and making them work.

As I have already indicated, any views which the Borough Council wishes to express will be reported to the Council on 3 December.

Yours sincerely

Director of Legal and Community Services

**APPENDIX 2**

Committee:	<b>Governance</b>
Date:	<b>22 October 2002</b>
By:	<b>Director of Legal and Community Services</b>
Title:	<b>Area Committees</b>
Purpose:	<b>To consider the future of the Eastbourne and Hastings Area Committees</b>

**RECOMMENDATION**

**To consider recommending the County Council to advise Eastbourne and Hastings Borough Councils that local partnership working needs to be taken forward through Local Strategic Partnerships and that, accordingly, it has decided that the Area Committees should be wound up, for the reasons set out in the report, and to amend the Constitution accordingly.**

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**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 The abolition of the Area Committees would not have any direct financial consequences other than savings in time, which would enable maximum effort to be focused by the Cabinet and staff on the Local Strategic Partnerships.

## **2. Supporting Information**

2.1 The Eastbourne and Hastings Area Committees were set up by the County Council some years ago as part of the development of partnership working. The aim was to promote co-operation and joint working between the County Council and the respective Borough Councils in order to improve local service planning and decision making. They have both made a significant contribution to improving understanding and fostering better working. They are advisory bodies, with no decision making powers. Delegation of a number of highway matters to both Borough Councils has improved local participation without the need for involvement of the Area Committee. More recently, most agendas have reflected reports from the County Council and, in practice, the Area Committees have been used as a means of keeping Borough members informed on local issues. As the Committees are advisory, they have passed resolutions from time to time expressing views to the relevant local authority.

2.2 Concerns have been expressed about what value the committees now bring and over the resources and time they use and whether partnership working would be better served by focusing our efforts through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and other subject specific local partnerships such as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.

2.3 LSPs have been established as part of the new responsibility local authorities have been given for community planning and to oversee the delivery of services by individual agencies as part of partnership working under the Local Strategic Partnership Plan. Accordingly, the issue needs to be addressed as to whether, in the light of the LSPs, the continuation of advisory Area Committees can be justified. It is essential that the County Council can contribute to LSPs in a proper way, and demonstrate the commitment required.

2.4 The LSPs involve partnership working across a far wider range of partner organisations, including the Police and Fire Brigade and representatives of the voluntary and business communities. A Cabinet member represents the County Council on each LSP. To support the Cabinet member each Chief Officer has recently been assigned to an LSP area. Chief Officers are to be supported in this work by a cross-departmental team at senior officer level. Given the focus which is now being placed on the LSPs there is a clear case for concentrating staff resources on supporting them in order to achieve maximum impact.

2.5 The goals of the Area Committees, which are about delivering local priorities in a joined up way, are very much encompassed in and superceded by the work of the LSPs.

2.6 In practice, Area Committees have mainly been used to brief local Borough members and there are other more effective ways in which such briefing can be provided. Ways of strengthening local members' involvement in the work of the LSPs through consultation and briefings are under active consideration.

## **3. Conclusion**

3.1 No formal soundings have been made with either Borough since it was appropriate for the Committee to consider the position as these are County Council bodies. Informal indications are that some may regret the passing of the Area Committees but many will not and believe that their contribution should be recognised but that it is now time to move on and modernise.

3.2 The Committee is recommended to consider recommending the County Council to advise Eastbourne and Hastings Borough Councils that it believes that the Area Committees should be wound up for the reasons set out in this report and to amend the Constitution accordingly. If the Committee agrees the recommendation, I can then write to both Councils and any views they express can be reported to the County Council.

**HELMUT CARTWRIGHT**

**Director of Legal and Community Services**

Contact Officer : Helmut Cartwright, Director of Legal and Community Services (Tel: 01273 481556)