

COMMITTEE: Scrutiny Board

DATE: 15th October 2002

SUBJECT: Research Budget

REPORT BY: Director of Scrutiny

CONTACT OFFICER: Geoff Bocutt 546073

IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL

COMMUNITY SAFETY

EQUALITIES

ENVIRONMENT

FINANCIAL ✓

CONSULTATIONS

STAFFING

OTHER ✓

WARDS AFFECTED: NONE

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to consider how the Scrutiny research budget should be deployed.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Scrutiny Board is recommended to commit the Scrutiny research budget of £15k as the Council's contribution to a piece of research on youth work and the needs of young people in Luton.

BACKGROUND

The Scrutiny budget for 2001-02 included the sum of £10k for research. This budget was repeated in 2002-03. The 2001-02 budget was not spent so I applied for permission for the whole amount to be carried forward into this year. In the event the Budget Review Group only allowed £5k to be carried forward.

In the meantime the Government Office for the Eastern Region had commissioned Dr Roger Green of Hertfordshire University to carry out a scoping study to identify any potential 'hotspots' following the summer riots last year in some northern towns and cities. Dr Green's

study focussed on Peterborough and Luton. The report was not published but officials from GoEast did share his findings with the Chief Executive and the officer team that had been formed to support the work of the Community Cohesion Scrutiny Panel. One of the findings was that his review had necessarily been superficial (because of the constraints of his remit) and he had not had the opportunity to look at the needs of young people. He flagged up to GoEast that 'this is an area which really requires a separate and more substantial piece of research in the coming months given the role of youth work and youth provision in building community cohesion'.

REPORT

Discussions have taken place with GoEast officials and with Dr. Green and agreement in principle has been reached for Dr. Green to carry out a piece of research work funded jointly by the Council and the Government to help to identify the needs of young people in Luton and how they should be addressed through the youthwork plan.(see the outline proposal attached as an appendix) GoEast have agreed in principle to make a matching contribution of up to £20k subject to developing the brief. The results of this research should be helpful not only to the Youth Service within Community Education and Development but also to the work of the Community Cohesion Panel.

Members will be aware that the budget for Community Education and Development this year is severely constrained so it is not possible for that division to identify funding for this research.

PROPOSAL/OPTION

The proposal therefore is to commit the available Scrutiny budget of £15k to this project.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If this proposal is approved it will commit the whole of the scrutiny research budget for the current year.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

This project could have significant implications for community relations and community safety in the town. Youth work is likely to have an important role in meeting the needs of young people, particularly those who become disaffected and disengaged. Failure to address this challenge could have serious adverse consequences.

APPENDIX

Outline Research Proposal

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

Correspondence with GoEast

Outline Research Proposal:

Working Together: Developing a youth service in Luton to respond to the needs of young people

Aims and Objectives of the research

1. Support the production of the Luton Borough Council Youth Service Plan and beyond.
2. Provide an overview of the 'health' of Luton Borough Council youth service and youth work activity across Luton.
3. Undertake a 'youth needs survey'. Provide baseline data on the needs, concerns, priorities and aspirations of young people and the role of the youth service. This will include marginalised young people, those 'hard to reach', those with 'special needs', and young people not currently accessing youth work provision.
4. Examine the potential and challenges of partnership working with other local agencies.
5. Include, and where possible involve, all community key stakeholders in the research process.
6. Make recommendations to support the on-going development of the youth service including, inclusive strategic objectives which support community cohesion; producing a strategy for reaching marginalised and excluded youth; creating a vision for the youth service; highlighting possible new external funding streams, such as European funding; building on examples of best practice elsewhere in the UK; and Best Value.

Research Methodology

Given the very short timescale to complete Stage 1 a 'Rapid Appraisal' (RA) mixed method approach will be used. This uses a number of methods to obtain an overall view of the selected research area that can inform the Youth Service Plan.

It includes (1) interviewing people via a purposive sample. These are individuals whom it is felt might contribute useful information and who are purposely selected and seen as 'key informants' or 'key stakeholders', such as, current youth service and related staff; young people currently accessing youth services; representatives from voluntary and community sector organisations; representatives from Luton's multi-cultural/faith and black, and minority ethnic (BME) groups and communities (2) direct observations in the community, e.g. at a youth centre/club; (3) group discussion/focus groups with 'key informants' or 'key stakeholders' as above; and (4) the construction of a youth service profile using existing locally held information/data.

The advantage of the RA. approach is that it is a fast method of obtaining information, which provides an initial overview of the issues. It is particularly useful in the first or pilot stage of a research project in getting an idea of the range of issues that are important.

Data and information from this pilot stage would inform the production of Luton Borough Council's Youth Service Plan.

Stage 2 of the research from Mid-October 2002 - August 2002 would use a combined modified RA. and community needs methodology to build on the data collected in Stage 1 by triangulating the data further using the following qualitative and quantitative methods;

- Understanding youth. Getting to know the area: Street mapping exercise using observation, social auditing, and information on needs and priorities gathered from key informants.
- Review of the existing research/literature on young people and their needs in relation to youth service provision.
- Questionnaire survey with follow up in-depth semi-structured interviews with local providers of youth provision
- Multi-level group discussions/focus groups, and follow-up interviews, if appropriate.
- In-depth interviews with a sample of informants from marginalised youth groups.
- Case studies of marginalised groups to illustrate their collective needs.

Monitoring the Research

It is proposed that consideration be given to a steering group being convened at the commencement of the research to monitor the progress of the research. This group could be comprised of key stakeholders and would meet with the researcher(s) on a regularly basis.

Such a group is particularly useful in a two-stage research process whereby the first stage produces themes, questions, and areas to cover in more depth in Stage 2.

Research Timetable

It is envisaged the research will be a two-stage process. Stage 1 commencing in September will aim to be completed by October 15th. This will enable the findings to inform the production of the Borough Youth Service Plan. Stage 2 commencing in mid-October will be completed in June/July 2003 with the final report completed by August 2003.

Stage 1 September 2nd 2002 - October 15th 2002

'Pilot' scoping study

Interim report

Stage 2 Mid October 2002 - August 2003

Main Needs Survey

Review of relevant existing literature

Analysis of data

Write up and presentation of report

Costs

£40,000 (subject to further negotiation). This is inclusive of both Stages 1 and 2, a Stage 1 interim report, a final report at the completion of the research in Stage 2, and a presentation of the research findings if required. In addition to staffing costs, travelling and subsistence costs, and the purchase of interview tapes, the cost of transcribing these tapes, and a lap top computer.

A more detailed breakdown of the costing would be available if required.

Dr Roger Green

Centre for Community Research

University of Hertfordshire

August 8th 2002