

**AGENDA ITEM**

**COMMITTEE:** SCRUTINY BOARD  
**DATE:** 8TH MARCH 2005  
**SUBJECT:** DIRECTOR'S REPORT  
**REPORT BY:** DIRECTOR OF SCRUTINY  
**CONTACT OFFICER:** GEOFF BOCUTT 01582 546073

**IMPLICATIONS:**

LEGAL		COMMUNITY SAFETY
EQUALITIES		ENVIRONMENT
FINANCIAL		CONSULTATIONS
STAFFING	✓	OTHER

**WARDS AFFECTED: NONE**

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**PURPOSE**

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Board generally about the progress on various aspects of scrutiny

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2. Scrutiny Board is recommended to note the report.

**BACKGROUND**

3. A number of matters reported at the last meeting have progressed in the intervening period.

## **REPORT**

### **Training and Development**

4. At the previous meeting of the Board I was asked to write to all Members to assess their interest in and availability for an away half day on 2<sup>nd</sup> April to discuss ways of improving the effectiveness of scrutiny. Unfortunately the level of availability was very low as a result of which I have decided that an alternative date, probably after the annual meeting of the Council will need to be identified when more Members are able to attend.
5. At the last meeting members confirmed that they were happy with in-house training so work is going on to prepare for the 28<sup>th</sup> June which is the first date scheduled for scrutiny training for Members in the diary for the new municipal year.
6. Officer training on scrutiny is also being refreshed so that a course can be run before the summer break.

### **Scrutiny Team Staffing – update**

7. At the last meeting I reported that the temporary vacancy resulting from Michelle's career break would be advertised externally with a closing date of 18<sup>th</sup> February. Ten applications were received of which three have been selected for interview. I hope to be able to report an appointment to the Board at the meeting.

### **Work Programmes**

8. The work programmes of the five committees are being developed for the next municipal year now that the timetable of meetings has been approved by the Council. Some of the committees have a list of topics that will keep them occupied for some time (e.g. Environment and Non-Executive Functions); however some committees are approaching the end of their work programmes. The present selection of topics was generated from a substantial exercise that involved Member, officer and public consultation and consideration of issues arising from Luton 2010 (as it was then). In view of the fact that some committees still have a programme of topics derived from that consultation I am not proposing to repeat it at this stage but to ask those committees that need to select a further topic or topics having regard to the results of that exercise. The work programmes for the next year will be reported to the Board at the next meeting.

### **Executive Forward Plan – Scrutiny Members Checklist**

9. One of the outcomes of the discussion of the CfPS self evaluation considered at the last meeting was the need for a checklist for scrutiny

members to use when considering the Executive Forward Plan. Attached as an appendix is a first draft checklist for consideration by the Board.

#### Publicity Protocol for Scrutiny

10. Also arising from the consideration of the CfPS self evaluation was the identification of the need for a protocol on publicising the work of Scrutiny. Subsequently there has been some difficulty relating to the style and content of a news release to publicise the scrutiny of the report by the Audit Commission on their Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the Council. Work is underway to develop a protocol relating to news releases and it is intended that this will lay the foundation for a broader protocol to cover publicity for the work of scrutiny.

#### Summing up Meetings

11. The Board also decided at the last meeting that the previous practice of 'wash up' sessions at the end of scrutiny committee meetings should be re-instituted. This has taken place informally at one committee meeting and it is intended to continue with this approach until the end of this municipal year and then review its effectiveness to see whether, for example, it needs to be formalised.

#### LGIU Seminar – Scrutiny of Community Cohesion

12. Attached is a policy briefing from the Local Government Information Unit drawing attention to the recent publication of a new guide to the scrutiny of community cohesion issues. The guide mentions Luton as an example of good practice. The LGIU is running a seminar on 7<sup>th</sup> April and Hafsha Ali who undertook the scrutiny of community cohesion in Luton when she was a member of the Scrutiny team here is to be one of the speakers.

#### Centre for Public Scrutiny – Scrutiny Champions Network bulletin

13. Attached as an appendix is the February 2005 bulletin from the CfPS. (There was no bulletin in January). The bulletin refers to a workshop in April on 'scrutinising the new agenda for children's services' and I will report on this at the meeting.

#### **PROPOSAL/OPTION**

14. This report is submitted for the Board's information and consideration.

#### **STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

15. If the outcome of the interviews for a temporary member of staff is successful the allocation of work within the team will be revised; otherwise

the post will be re-advertised and the pace of some work will continue to be slower than would otherwise have been the case.

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Executive forward Plan - Checklist for Scrutiny Members (draft)

Appendix B: Local Government Information Unit Policy Briefing Ref: PB 034/05

Appendix C: Centre for Public Scrutiny - Scrutiny Champions Network - February 2005 Bulletin

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

'Roles and Responsibilities for Committee Services and Scrutiny' – appended to Report Ref: SB/1/05/8.4