

SOCIAL INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5th March 2009 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Timoney (Chair); Councillors Hinkley, Malik, Pedersen, Saleem and Simons

7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 2)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Bullock, Kiansumba and Strange.

8 MINUTES (REF: 3.1)

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2009 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

9 REFERENCE FROM CHILDRENS PANEL – REQUEST EXECUTIVE APPROVAL FOR AN INCREASE IN COUNCIL TENANCIES FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS (REF: 7.1)

The Democratic Services reported that at their meeting on 12th February 2009 Childrens Panel requested Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee sought Executive approval to increase the number of priority Council tenancies allocated to Children in Care and Care Leavers from 12 to 18 per annum.

At the Childrens Panel meeting it had been stated that since the figure of 12 priority Council tenancies had been set the number of Children in Care and Care Leavers had increased three fold and included a significant number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who had the same rights to be housed as the indigenous group of young people.

The Committee were informed that the Team Manager 16+ had held discussions with the officers in the Housing Needs Team who were reluctant to increase the number of priority tenancies allocated to Children in Care and Care Leavers to 18 per annum. It was explained that not all Care Leavers required Council tenancies, some attended university while others would be accommodated by other social renting such as housing associations. The allocation of the 12 priority Council tenancies per year had not increased for some years and was inadequate for the numbers of Children in Care and Care Leavers requiring priority Council tenancies.

After further discussion Members agreed to seek Executive approval to increase the number of priority tenancies allocated to Children in Care and Care Leavers from 12 to 18.

Resolved: That Executive be requested to approve the increase in the number of priority Council tenancies allocated to Children in Care and Care Leavers from 12 to 18 per annum.

10 SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS (REF: 9)

The Head of Adult Social Care informed Members that two reports were submitted annually as expected by the “No Secrets” Guidance. The Annual Safeguarding report provides information on how the department has performed in safeguarding vulnerable adults from 18+ onwards and the Data Report provides detailed information regarding Safeguarding activity. The Head of Adult Social Care explained that there were a large number of referrals received which did not meet the criteria of the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults criteria. The Department was helping people to understand the criteria for safeguarding and was offering the consultation service to assist in considering situations and whether they meet the criteria. To raise awareness of issues around safeguarding of vulnerable adults various initiatives have been implemented including the current campaign “The Abuse Hurts Even When you are An Adult”, Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults (SOVA) awareness raising also includes, workshop sessions and banners placed around the town.

The Head of Adult Social Care informed the Committee that abuse in care homes had to be reported. Action plans were in place which provided improved safeguarding in care homes. The Luton Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults Board had 3 working groups that supported the work of the board these were:-

- Service Provider Group
- Learning and Development Group
- Policy, Practice and Performance Monitoring Group (PPPM)

A number of training courses were organised by the Safeguarding Board which included all professionals that deal/manage safeguarding. Some of these training courses were compulsory.

The Service Manager pointed out that there was major legislation on the Deprivation of Liberty being introduced in April 2009. Under this new law a person cannot be deprived of their rights to leave a building. If a person needed to be deprived of their rights including safeguarding a person who had mental illness then a risk assessment had to be undertaken by a GP (General Practitioner) or psychiatrist. This law was being introduced to ensure that people with dementia or learning difficulties were protected and their interest represented to protect them from any form of abuse.

The Chair commented that the Service only received one star at the last Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) inspection. She

enquired when the next inspection would be undertaken and was the star rating likely to increase.

The Head of Adult Social Care informed the Committee that the Adult Social Care had recently had an inspection of Safeguarding and the department were currently awaiting the draft report. The judgement made by Commission for Social Care Inspection would go towards the Adult Social Care Star Rating to be determined in September/October 2009. The SOVA Board had an independent Chair. Mr Michael Preston Chute of the University of Bedfordshire. Members of the Board included the PCT, Advisory Alliance, Luton and Dunstable Service Users and other Luton Borough Council Officers, Provider of Services.

A Member enquired what work had been carried out for people with learning disabilities.

The Head of Adult Social Care replied that work had been carried out at the Bramingham Centre and a DVD had been produced on Keeping Safe.

Resolved: (i) That the Report (Ref: 9) and the following recommendations be noted.

(ii) Continue to monitor the levels of referrals progress under SOVA and those deemed not to meet the criteria. This should identify if measures put in place are effective in lowering the numbers of referrals deemed not to meet the SOVA criteria as well as provide evidence that the same criteria are effectively applied when making this judgement.

(iii) Establish links with the aims of the Dementia Strategy published in February 2009 and support this strategy locally in relation to safeguarding and protection.

(iv) Plan further strategies in addressing the variation in number of referrals relating to individuals from BME communities.

(v) Clarify the interface between serious incident management/response and SOVA relating to all hospital settings that clarifies the duties and interfaces.

(vi) Consider further improvements in recording who raised the initial concern rather than just checking who completed the AP1 form.

(vii) Continue to aggregate appropriate data to inform the SOVA board of the outcomes of investigations, compliance and effectiveness of the local policy.

(viii) That once the CSCI inspection had taken place in October/November 2009 the results of this inspection be reported back to the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee.

11 SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT (REF: 10)

The Strategic Commissioning Manager outlined the progress that had been made by the Department since May 2005 when the service was subject to an Audit Commission re-inspection and awarded one star. The re-inspection found that significant improvements had been achieved and resulted in 16 recommendations. All of these recommendations had since been achieved.

The Chair enquired how the section knew that the recommendations made were successful.

The Strategic Commissioning Manager replied that the number of complaints received and the Performance Indicators and statistics proved that the improvements had been successful.

The Chair enquired if data was being kept on the travellers was working in practice.

The Strategic Commissioning Manager asked the Committee to take the programme as it was and that the Department would be working with partners. New services would be delivered over the next 12 months. The Performance Indicators would be reported to both the Health and Well Being Board and the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved: (i) That the Committee noted the progress that had been made on the Luton Supporting People Programme (Ref: 10)

(ii) That the Performance Indicators be reported to a future meeting of the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee.

12 BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC (BME) HOUSING STRATEGY (REF: 11)

The Policy and Strategy Manager explained that the Draft Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Strategy had been produced as it supported this dedicated group of individuals. It was felt that the BME Housing Strategy enhanced cohesion and harmony through the town. The BME Strategy had 3 objectives:-

- Ensure that the specific housing needs of Black and Minority Ethnic people living in Luton are identified.
- Ensure that the Housing and Homelessness Strategies meets the needs of BME communities.

- Work towards an environment where people from diverse communities can live together in harmony.

The Chair enquired what happened once the draft BME Housing Strategy had been accepted.

The Policy and Strategy Manager replied that the Department would engage further within the community requesting commitment and comments from them. The targets would be reviewed in the next 12 months. It would highlight the needs of BME individuals. He pointed out that the Department was not required to produce a BME Housing Strategy.

The Chair commented that the Housing Advice Service was not well advertised and did overcrowding fall into homelessness.

The Policy and Strategy Manager informed the Committee that overcrowding reflected national figures, the advertising of the Housing Advice Service is in the action plan.

The Project Manager informed the Committee that the last survey of the Housing Needs of BME communities was undertaken in 2005 and suggested that the town had a higher BME population than the 2001 census suggested. A general update on the strategic housing assessment would be reported to the Authority early next year, the Housing Needs Survey was carried out on a 4/5 yearly basis.

A Member enquired why tenant satisfaction amongst BME communities was rising but was still below the satisfaction for White British tenants.

The Policy and Strategy Manager replied that this was the response received from the last Luton Borough Council Landlord Services tenant survey he could not give a reason but would make enquiries and pass a written response on to Members.

Another Member pointed out that many private sector homes were in poor condition.

The Policy and Strategy Manager informed the Committee that there was a Decent Homes Assistance grant that helped vulnerable residents funding for items such as a more efficient heating system. However the take up for this assistance had not been good.

The Chair pointed out that despite the inspection of private rented properties some were not to the appropriate standard. She requested that future reports contained targets achieved and that the Section monitored the process.

The Policy and Strategy Manager stated that private landlords were aware of the decent homes assistance.

Resolved: (i) That the report (Ref: 11) be noted and the Executive Summary of the Draft BME Housing Strategy be endorsed.

(ii) That future reports on the BME Housing Strategy report the targets achieved and that the Department continues to monitor the process in privately rented properties.

13 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION REVIEW (REF: 12)

The Policy and Strategy Manager reported that the Sheltered Accommodation Review Group (SARG) had been in operation for over a year and was drawing to a close. The needs of people with mental health issues and older people sheltered housing had been assessed with the assistance of the Peter Fletcher Association. The Peter Fletcher Association had been assessed by colleagues and the future living needs of the people of Luton had been assessed.

The Sheltered Accommodation Review Group had visited sheltered housing schemes within Luton and Oxford and assessing the future living needs of people. Within the next two months two new schemes under construction would be completed. The Betty Dodds scheme was scheduled to be opened in late May with 48 flats. The Jill Jenkins scheme in Farley Hill included 60 extra care flats was scheduled to open in the autumn. A report would be presented to the Committee.

The Chair suggested that all Members of the Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee be invited to the next Sheltered Accommodation Review Group and view the summary of the presentation made at the last review group meeting.

Resolved: (i) That all Members of the Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee be invited to the next Sheltered Accommodation Review Group (SARG).

(ii) That a report on the work of the SARG Group be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

14 REVIEW OF SCRUTINY (REF: 13)

The Scrutiny Manager informed Members of the Government's proposed legislative programme for 2008 – 2009 that would change the importance and nature of scrutiny across all local authorities and included engaging partners within the community linked to the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and scrutinising these partners alongside the

Council. He also expressed concern about the limited impact and effectiveness of the approach to Scrutiny in Luton.

The Scrutiny Manager informed the Committee that a Review of Scrutiny was being undertaken and was represented by Councillor Taylor and Timoney from the Labour group and Councillor Garrett from the Conservative Group. The Liberal Democrat Group were not represented through their own choice but supported the review. The Chief Executive was a member of the Review Group.

The IDeA would be visiting the Council to interview Members and staff on how effective they felt scrutiny was in Luton. A briefing note would be sent to Members on the type of questions the IDeA would be asking. The Scrutiny Manager stressed that the answers given by Members should be honest.

Members were of the opinion that some of the reports and appendices within scrutiny agendas were too large and contained too much detail. Members did not have the time to read lengthy reports and appendices. They suggested that a brief summary with the appropriate targets should be submitted. The summary should be available before the meeting so that it enabled Members the opportunity to read it in advance of the meeting.

The Chair suggested that Committee's should concentrate on more review type work and performance management work. She hoped that the forthcoming review improved the scrutiny process.

Resolved: (i) That Officers be instructed to produce a summary of the main points of their report and circulate to Members in advance of the meeting.

(ii) That Officers consider whether it is necessary to reproduce all the appendices and could the detail be summarised rather than producing lengthy reports.

15 ANALYSIS REPORT – QUEEN'S SPEECH 2008 (REF: 14)

The Scrutiny Manager outlined the proposed legislative programme for 2008 to 2009 that was set out in the Queen's Speech for the year ahead.

He explained that from the next Municipal Year this Committee would become the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee and would be responsible for scrutinising health issues. At the present time health was being scrutinised by Scrutiny Board and had been inundated information from the National Health Service. Once LINKS has been introduced some of this work may not have to be scrutinised. He informed the Committee that the Scrutiny Committee would need to work closely with the recently established Local Involvement Network

to avoid duplication of work, noting that the LINK can ask the Scrutiny Committee to refer matters onto the Secretary of State for Health.

Resolved: (i) That the new Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee processes are clear from the outset.

16 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (REF: 15)

The Scrutiny Manager updated the Committee on the latest version of its work programme. He explained that the next meeting would be the last meeting of the Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee. A report on Migrant Workers Support would be submitted to this meeting and the Annual Report. The Chairs of all the Scrutiny Committee's were being asked to produce an opening statement for the Annual report. It was noted that the Young People's Housing Strategy had been duplicated on the Work Programme.

The Scrutiny Manager informed the Committee that Fauzia Saeed, Scrutiny Officer would be absent from the office for the foreseeable future. In her absence Members should contact Bert Siong, Scrutiny Officer with any queries regarding the work programme.

Resolved: That the Work Programme (Ref: 15) be noted.

(Note: The meeting concluded at 7.35 pm)