COMMITTEE: **SOCIAL INCLUSION SCRUTINY**

DATE: **8 MARCH 2007**

SUBJECT: **TOPIC SELECTION FOR SCRUTINY**

REPORT BY: **SCRUTINY OFFICER**

CONTACT OFFICER: **FAUZIA SAEED (CONTACT NO: 546780)**

IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL   **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

EQUALITIES   **ENVIRONMENT**

FINANCIAL   **CONSULTATIONS**

STAFFING   **OTHER**

WARDS AFFECTED: NONE

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PURPOSE

1.   Each year Members are given the opportunity to suggest topics for future scrutiny reviews. Reviews should add value, lead to service improvement and meet local and national priorities. Where possible topics should also be aligned with local and national priorities.

2.   The aim of this report is: -

      1   To assist Members in selecting a range of topics for scrutiny by this Committee;

      2   To priorities the list so that it can be built into the Committee's work programme for 07-08;

      3   To introduced an initial topic familiarisation stage[1] for each Topic;

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4   to agree that the scrutiny officer makes preparations for scoping and project planning the selected topics; and

5   to explore and prepare for the possibility of setting up Scrutiny way forward groups in relation to the selected topics. Where possible that apart from the citizens of Luton these groups can be representative of the users of the service and its partner organisations. Experience and positive comments by the various inspectors bears out the fact that the work of these groups contributes enormously to service redesigning and cost effective improvements for local people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3.   **Social inclusion scrutiny is recommended to:**

   (i)   Agree a range of topics for scrutiny to set a work programme for the Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee.

   (ii)   Agree an initial topic familiarisation stage[2] in scrutiny process.

   (iii) Indicate the first topic that the committee would like to scrutinise.

   (iv)   Agree to use the methodology for selecting authorities to explore best practice.

   (v)   Authorise the preparation for the setting up of scrutiny way forward groups in relation to the selected topics.

BACKGROUND

4.   This Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference were changed last year. The remit in relation to children and young people was transferred to the former Life Long Learning Scrutiny Committee to bring all matters related to children and young people under the umbrella of a single Scrutiny Committee. This change will help in focusing on all matters related to Housing and Community Living under the remit of this committee. The two Directorates have been renamed as the Children and Learning Directorate and the Housing and Community Living Directorate. Many other Local Authorities have adopted the same approach.

REPORT

5.   This Committee will meet again in June 07.This gives officers a lead in period of 2 months to make preparations for scrutinies to be held in 07-08.

The preparatory work could include: Literature research, finding best practice authorities to visit, setting up way forward groups, identifying officers responsible for achieving improvements etc. In order to do this work Members are requested to make a selection of topics so that some initial work can be done. The Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee on the 20 February 07 agreed a similar approach.

TOPIC SELECTION

6.   Topic selection is of crucial importance to the success of a scrutiny. A considered choice of topics will benefit the users of the service, extend the democratic base, and motivate those involved in the provision of the service to aspire to excellence. Poor selection of topics on the other hand can waste Member and Officer time, result in unconstructive outcomes, de-motivate those involved, and is a lost opportunity to receive feedback from users, good practice authorities, members, and other experts and practitioners to improve services.

7.   The selection of topics can also be influenced and informed by sources such as:

- The views of the people of Luton
- Corporate Priorities outlined in 2011 Plan
- New legislation
- Member suggestions
- Officer suggestions
- Area Committee Referrals.
- Suggestions from Partners.
- Internal or External Review of Services e.g. Annual performance Assessments, Commission for Social Care Inspections, Audit Commission and Benefit Fraud Inspectors.
- References from the Executive.
- Government or other watch bodies.
- Suggestions from Partnership Boards and other Partners in Luton.
- Suggestions from the Equality Forums.

A SELECTION OF TOPICS PLANNED/OR COMPLETED BY OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

8.   Some of the topics currently being scrutinised by other local authorities are listed as Appendix 1. This list will give the Committee an idea of the nature of scrutinies being held across the country and highlights common areas of concerns. A desk bound research has shown a trend in that a number of authorities have chosen to monitor the performance of areas that have been assessed as needing improvements.

9.   The Committee is requested to set a work programme by selecting and prioritising a range of topics bearing in mind the service priorities so that the committee's work will be of added value to the work that is already being done to improve performance.

10.   **TOPICS SUGGESTED BY THE DIRECTOR AND HER SENIOR MANAGERS TEAM (To be Tabled)**

11.   **LUTON'S PRIORITIES FOR THE COMMUNITY LIVING AND HOUSING DIRECTORATE(To be Tabled)**

TOPIC SELECTION PITFALLS

12.   Some of the pitfalls in selecting a topic are outlined below. Members can reject a topic keeping the following considerations in mind:

   a.   The topic selected is too broad
   b.   The rationale for the scrutiny is unclear
   c.   The topic is of low public concern
   d.   The topic does not address aims and priorities
   e.   The topic could be adequately addressed by other means and procedures
   f.   The topic is already being addressed
   g.   The Scrutiny is unlikely to result in service improvements
   h.   The objectives cannot be achieved within given timescales

13.   Preparatory work can commence after the meeting has prioritised a list of topics and agreed the first topic that they would like this committee to scrutinize.

METHODOLOGY FOR SELECTING AUTHORITIES TO EXPLORE BEST PRACTICE

14.   The Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee agreed the following methodology for selecting authorities to visit and explore best Practice. This Committee in deciding the authorities that they would like to visit can use this methodology.

15.   Select the topic or performance issue to be explored.

16.   Rank authorities latest performance using the appropriate performance indicator(s) relating to the topic. Consider top 10-15 ranked authorities (if numerator/denominator available, be mindful of statistical significance in looking at actual performance).

17.   Of those, select those that have had APA judgements as being a 'good' or better authority. Identify which are comparator or most similar Authorities.

18.   Conduct initial exploration of reasons for good performance and willingness for further approach.

19.   The result should be a list of a small number of authorities, perhaps no more than 3 authorities to explore further with visits and to get process and practice information and further performance analysis.

SCRUTINY WAY FORWARD WORKING GROUPS

20.   A scrutiny without any input from its Users is against the grain of inclusion and involvement. Scrutiny experience of working with representative groups of older people and people with Learning difficulties by this authority has not only been acknowledged locally but also by some of the external performance assessment organisations. The Groups have been able to provide feedback from Service Users at a short notice. Every effort will be made to set up such groups where it is considered appropriate.

SCRUTINY PROCESS

21.   The Scrutiny six stage process is attached to this report as Appendix 2 and is also available on the council's website. This report recommends an additional stage of familiarization of the topic to the existing 6 stages.

22.   This stage will provide Members with background information on the topic and assists in establishing a common understanding. At this stage Members will also be informed of any external inspections that are conducted, Service Audits, equality impact assessments. In authorities where this stage has been built in, it has helped in establishing the key lines of enquiry and in scoping the projects. This stage could also be used to identify comparable authorities to Luton that have been assessed as having better ratings than Luton in the areas selected for scrutiny. This stage could help in adopting a more aligned approach in the selection of topics and time framing the commencement of the scrutiny.

23.   To assist with the scoping of a scrutiny topic a number of questions that can be asked in relation to a topic have also been appended to this report as a guide (See Appendix 3). This list does not preclude any additional questions.

24.   Members are requested to choose and prioritise a selection of topics and the top performing authorities they would like to visit and/or receive evidence from at their committee.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

25. There are no legal implications to this report and this has been agreed with the relevant solicitor in Legal Services on 2 March 2007.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

26. The subject of this report and the remit of this committee mainly applies to those who fall in the socially excluded category. This report is about ensuring that they get the best possible services and their concerns are addressed. Scrutiny provides an opportunity for users of the services provided by the Council to have a say in the delivery of those services.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1   The Six-Stage Scrutiny Process
APPENDIX 2   List of topics being considered by other local authorities
APPENDIX 3   A checklist of scoping questions

APPENDIX 4   Topic Selection Matrix (To be Tabled)

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D
None

APPENDIX 1

THE SIX-STAGE SCRUTINY PROCESS[3]

	STAGE	DETAILS
1	**PLANNING** Scoping, planning, method, evidence, witnesses, stakeholders, publicity	• Define the scope of the topic; identify all the aspects, which need to be considered but exclude those which should not. • Plan how the study is going to be carried out, decide what information is required and who should be called as witnesses to give evidence. • Identify people and organisations who have an interest in the topic and should be invited/involved/consulted. • Decide whether and how the work of the panel should be publicised. • Plan the process for collecting evidence and interviewing witnesses (e.g. whole panel, individual Members etc.)
2	**EVIDENCE** Evidence and information gathering	• Carry out the plan, site visits if appropriate, • consult stakeholders to find out their views, • collect information
3	**REVIEWING** Analyse the evidence/information	• Identify any gaps in the evidence or information, follow up to fill the gaps, • check any information or evidence which conflicts, Identify common threads.
4	**CONCLUDING** Reach conclusions and formulate recommendations	• Conclusions should be based on the evidence and information. • Consult stakeholders about the recommendations.
5	**REPORTING** Report preparation	• Prepare and agree a report to the Executive/Council. The report should describe the work that has been done, summarise the evidence and information about the topic, justify the conclusions based on the evidence and argue the case for any recommendations.
6	MONITORING & REVIEW Monitoring the outcomes from the review	• Decide how and when to follow up on the recommendations. • Call for an action plan to be developed if considered appropriate. • Set a date or frequency for follow up that is realistic (base the frequency or interval on the timescales in the action plan so that some actions have been implemented by the first review). • If the results of the review are unsatisfactory make further recommendations for consideration.

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3. Subject to Members agreeing the familiarisation stage and recommending it to the scrutiny Board for approval this will then be added as the 7 stage.

Appendix 2

LIST OF SOME OF THE TOPICS BEING CONSIDERED BY OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

a.   Parking facilities for Older people
b.   Housing
c.   Service Charges for Tenants
d.   Joint commissioning for older people
e.   Housing Allocation System
f.   Homelessness
g.   Unified Assessments
h.   Performance and risk Monitoring
i.   Evaluation of Social Services
j.   Examination of Business Units in Social Services
k.   Council owned Land & Properties
l.   Social Model of disabilities

EXTERNAL & PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINIES

1.   'Never too Old' – Partnership Board
2.   Health Social Care and Well Being – Partnership Board

AREAS THAT CAN BE CONSIDERED FOR SCRUTINY IN LUTON[4]

a.   Poverty
b.   Handy person Services Public toilets
c.   Lack of Social Housing
d.   Social Care –Investigate the possibilities of adopting a coherent approach to Older People and their Social Inclusion
e.   Planning for whole of Life Span
f.   Migrant Workers and how their needs are being met
g.   Adult Social Care – Plans for achieving a three star status
h.   The delay in producing the Older people's Strategy
i.   Older people and affordability & accessibility of services that exist for older people in Luton.
j.   Crime Levels against vulnerable people
k.   Transport
l.   Supporting people Strategy Action Plan

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[4] Performance data is available such as: Social Care Indicators
CSCI Performance Assessment Data and Information (PADI) tool showing data for each year (latest: 2005/6)

APPENDIX 3

STAGE ONE OF THE SCRUTINY PROCESS - PLANNING THE SCRUTINY
A CHECKLIST OF SCOPING QUESTIONS

1.	What is the purpose and objective of the scrutiny?
2.	What is the scope of the topic – what is included/excluded?
3.	What evidence and information would be useful?
4.	Who is interested in or affected by this topic/service?
5.	Who are the main players in this service?
6.	Who should be consulted about this topic/service?
7.	Who should be asked to give evidence to the Committee?
8.	How is the scrutiny to be conducted?
9.	Should individual Members be nominated to deal with specific aspects?
10.	What should the timescale be?
11.	What level of publicity is appropriate for this topic?
12.	What are the resource implications of carrying out this Scrutiny?

APPENDIX 4

TOPIC SELECTION MATRIX
2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES
Key strengths and areas for improvement
(Information awaited and will be tabled on the day)