

COMMITTEE: OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

DATE: 29th OCTOBER 2009

SUBJECT: POTENTIAL TOPICS FOR TASK AND FINISH GROUP REVIEW

REPORT BY: SCRUTINY MANAGER

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IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL	✓	COMMUNITY SAFETY
EQUALITIES	✓	ENVIRONMENT
FINANCIAL		CONSULTATIONS
STAFFING		OTHER

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

PURPOSE

1. To provide a number of suggestions on potential topics for Task and Finish Group review, for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Board

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Overview and Scrutiny Board is recommended to:
 - (i) consider the list of suggestions on potential topics for Task and Finish Group reviews and select and prioritise those which the Board wishes to include in its work programme for the remainder of the current municipal year.
 - (ii) determine the membership size and reporting timescales for each Task and Finish Groups the Board decides to establish.

BACKGROUND

3. On 15th September 2009, Full Council approved the new approach to Overview and Scrutiny at Luton, resulting from the recommendations of the recent review of Scrutiny.
4. The review identified a number of issues with the old way of developing the work programmes, that included;

- The work programme did not address issues of concern to the people of Luton;
 - It was not focused on enabling the Council and its partners to deliver their priorities;
 - It was not developed in a way that enabled Scrutiny to hold the Council and its partners to account;
 - It was not focused on policy development.
5. Under the new approach, there is now an expectation that the Overview and Scrutiny Board will be involved at the very early stages of policy development, so that it can play an effective and influential role in helping to shape or re-shape policies, to improve outcomes for the people of Luton.
 6. It is imperative that the Council's Corporate Directors, Executive Members, and the Council's partners are clear about and recognise the crucial role and purpose of Overview and Scrutiny in helping improvement in services. For that reason and in the spirit of co-operation, they are expected to share their operational plans for the year ahead with the Overview and Scrutiny Board, to help with its work programme development.
 7. The Overview and Scrutiny Board work programme will then focus on relevant policy, performance and financial issues of the Council, its partners and partnerships by having an overview, or commissioning a detailed scrutiny of any specific issue, using an appointed Task and Finish Group.

REPORT

8. This report does not seek to establish the overall Overview and Scrutiny work programme. It highlights some suggested issues that the Overview and Scrutiny Board could consider for Task and Finish Group examinations for the remaining period of the current municipal year. The criteria that it should use to make such a decision are highlighted below:
 - Priority policy area, local or central Government, e.g. as identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement or Corporate strategy;
 - General public interest identified by Members, e.g. ward surgeries and other contact with constituents;
 - Trend in poor performance, identified from performance indicators/ benchmarking;
 - Important to the community, as identified by surveys/ citizens' panels;
 - High level user/ general public dissatisfaction with service, e.g. as identified by surveys/ citizens' panels/ complaints;

- Public interest attracting local media coverage;
 - High level of budgetary commitment to the service/ policy area (as percentage of total expenditure);
 - Pattern of budgetary overspends;
 - Subject of key recommendations from external audit/ inspection reports.
9. The Scrutiny Team has prepared a list of items, that meet all or some of these criteria, for the Overview and Scrutiny Board to consider. These issues are topical and have emerged variously from Members, officers and some partners. They are shown below, with a brief rationale for the suggestion.
10. List of suggested items for Task and Finish Group reviews:
- **Day care services.** The Executive has asked that Overview and Scrutiny consider establishing a task and finish group to examine this important aspect of supporting people to live independently. This is a pressing issue of wide public interest and a task and finish group could add value by providing an opportunity to engage councillors and the public on the options.
 - **Fear of crime.** The fear of crime survey indicates that even at a time when crime levels were falling, people in Luton fear becoming victims of crime. Serious violent crime remains an issue and may feed this concern. A task and finish group could work closely with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to help establish the underlying causes of the fear of crime on Luton and how it might be addressed.
 - **Tackling obesity.** Tackling childhood obesity is a national government and a local priority. NHS Luton in its strategic plan 2009-2015 identifies tackling childhood obesity as a priority and there are a higher than average number of children in Luton that are obese. A task and finish group could add value to this agenda by examining the underlying reasons that bring children into the 'at risk' group for obesity and what could influence behaviour locally.
 - **Responding to climate change.** The Council has established a Sustainability Board alongside the Climate Change Group to help tackle this priority area. Taking the global issues with local solutions position as its starting point, a task and finish group could take a specific area to examine incentives and penalties – as was discussed recently by the Sustainability Board – to help Luton meet its Carbon Reduction Commitment.
 - **Helping to Mitigate the Effects of Unemployment.** Local Authorities are at the forefront of dealing with the impacts of the recession. This includes addressing issues relating to

unemployment, the administration of benefit support and use of land and property for regeneration. Given that this is such a wide ranging issue, it is recommended that this topic be examined towards the end of the municipal year.

11. Two areas have emerged from NHS Luton which would benefit from the involvement of the Overview and Scrutiny Board: the review of urgent care and the primary and community services strategy.
12. The Corporate Leadership Management Team has been consulted on these items, but discussions with partners are ongoing.

PROPOSAL/OPTION

13. It is proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny Board consider the list of suggested topics for Task and Finish Group review, and then select and prioritise a short list to include in its work programme for the remaining period of the current municipal year.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

14. The powers of overview and scrutiny of the Council, its partners and partnerships are based in legislation. There are otherwise no legal implications with this report. This has been agreed by Richard Stevens in Legal Services on 9th October 2009.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

15. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required on this report as it does not set or amend a policy or service. As agreed with Paul Curry, Equalities Officer, 15th October 2009.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Completed criteria form for day care opportunities.

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

- Our Luton in 2026: Luton Sustainable Community Strategy
- Luton Local Area Agreement 2008-11
- Quarterly performance report