

## **REGENERATION AND CITIZENSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**13<sup>th</sup> March 2008 at 6.00 p.m.**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Singh (Chair); Councillors Foord, Raquib, Rutstein and Stewart.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Benard

### **17 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)**

An apology for absence from the meeting was received on behalf of Councillor Neale.

### **18 MINUTES (REF: 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3)**

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of the meetings held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2007, 4<sup>th</sup> February and 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008 be taken as read, approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

### **19 TACKLING CRIMINAL DAMAGE – PROGRESS REPORT (REF: 9)**

The Scrutiny Officer reported that due to the re-organisation of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) information on the progress of the criminal damage action plan was unavailable therefore he was unable to update the Committee. The action plan was not discussed at the January meeting and the February meeting of the Task Commissioning and Co-ordinating Group had been cancelled. At their last meeting the Committee had requested information on criminal damage offences that were brought to justice unfortunately this information was not readily available. Not all criminal damage offences that were the subject of a charge or summons ended up as offences brought to justice, as some cases were dropped or resulted in “not guilty” findings at court. However, related information on criminal damage convictions for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) area of Bedfordshire which included Luton, were provided.

The Committee had also requested information on what happened to cases not proceeded with, when there appeared to be good evidence, e.g. blood stains left at scene. The Scrutiny Officer could not obtain information on specific cases, but clarified how charging decisions were made by the CPS.

The Committee had also requested whether there was any information on the number of convictions for criminal damage where the offenders had previously been convicted for the same offence. The Scrutiny Officer explained that these figures were not readily obtainable, but provided related information on prolific and other priority offenders. Also in response to the Committee’s previous request, the Scrutiny Officer provided information

obtained from Bedfordshire Police on alcohol related criminal damage incidents.

The Head of Local Democracy explained that the Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) was undertaking a restructuring exercise in the early part of the financial year 2008/09 with different organisations such as the Fire Authority, PCT, Council and Police being brought together. Work was proceeding on appointing an Analyst who would record crime, antisocial behaviour and criminal damage.

A Member pointed out that there had been a lot of criminal damage in the Selbourne Road/Dunstable Road area of Luton with bricks being thrown through the windows of residents' homes. She commented that something needed to be done to stop this happening so that people were able to feel safe in their homes.

The Head of Local Democracy stated that the incidents referred to by the Member had been occurring since September 2007, these incidents had been investigated by the Police, although there had been some criticism of the speed and manner the Police had dealt with the matter. The Head of Local Democracy reported that an arrest had been made in connection with this matter and a meeting had recently taken place at the Town Hall with the African Caribbean Community. He informed the Committee and members of the public that a meeting for local residents was to be held on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2008 at the Bury Park Community Centre at 8.00 pm where these issues would be discussed. Ward Councillors from Biscot, Dallow and Saints Ward, the two MPs for Luton, officers from the Council and the Police had been invited to give feedback and listen to residents' concerns and issues. Transport would be provided for any member of the public in the Selbourne Road area who were unable to make their own way to the meeting.

A Member thanked the Scrutiny Officer for all his hard work and research into this project but considered that the Committee did not have the necessary information to produce the final report with meaningful recommendations to the Executive in April. He pointed out that there was very little information for tackling crime and figures requested by the Committee were not available. He considered that it would be beneficial to extend the project into the next cycle of meetings in order to gather further information that ensured the work of the Committee and recommendations of the Committee to the Executive were more meaningful. Members of the Committee agreed with this recommendation.

The Head of Local Democracy agreed that the final report to the Executive should be delayed until the CDRP restructure had been established and the partnership plan had been secured.

Members of the public informed the Committee that the criminal damage they were experiencing was victimisation. They requested that the Committee investigated how other authorities tackled this type of crime. They enquired if the public could be involved in the action plan to be produced when

further research was undertaken with their views and feedback being taken into account.

The Head of Local Democracy confirmed that the public would be engaged in the relevant community consultations as part of this information gathering and the outcome of such consultations would be included within the recommendations. The CDRP would examine how different crimes were linked together and where possible focus on the criminal as well as trying to deal with the issues before the crime was committed. He explained that a small percentage of prolific criminals were responsible for a great deal of crime. The Head of Local Democracy further explained that the criminal damage could not be examined in isolation and that crimes were linked. The key issues of serious violent crime, acquisitive crime, domestic abuse, anti social behaviour and criminal damage were all linked together and needed to be considered together in the partnership area.

Members of the Committee agreed to engage in relevant community consultations as part of the information gathering of 'Tackling Criminal Damage' and to incorporate the outcome of such consultations within the recommendations.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report (Ref: 9) be noted.

(ii) To extend this project "Tackling Criminal Damage" into the next cycle of meetings in order to gather further information to ensure that the recommendations of this Committee to the Executive are more meaningful.

(iii) To engage in relevant community consultations as part of this information gathering and to incorporate the outcome of such consultations within the recommendations.

(iv) As part of the project "Tackling Criminal Damage" to be examined in the context of the partnership plan, which deals with other priority crimes such as serious violent crime, acquisitive crime, domestic abuse, and anti social behaviour.

(v) That the Scrutiny Officer be thanked for his hard work in producing and researching this topic.

## **20 WORK PROGRAMME (REF: 10)**

The Scrutiny Officer updated the Committee in respect of the latest version of the Work Programme.

**Resolved:** (i) That the following items be added to the Committee's Work Programme.

- Regeneration and Citizenship Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2007-08

- Our Shared Future report on Integration and Cohesion following the Government's response to Darra Singh's report.
- Reference from Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee on improving the headline rating from a 2 to 3 on Culture at the next CPA assessment.

(ii) That the Respect Agenda – "Tackling Criminal Damage" final report be removed from the work programme on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2008 in order that the topic is extended to the next cycle of meetings.

(iii) That the Scrutiny Officer be requested to amend the Work Programme in accordance with the Committee's suggestions.

**(Note: The meeting ended at 7.05 p.m.)**