

REGENERATION AND CITIZENSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17th April 2008 at 6.00 p.m.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Franks

21 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)

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

22 MINUTES (REF: 2.1)

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2008 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

23 REFERENCE FROM PERFORMANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – IMPROVING THE HEADLINE RATING FROM A 2 TO 3 ON CULTURE AT THE NEXT CPA ASSESSMENT (REF: 7.1)

The Democratic Services Officer submitted the report of the Chief Executive (Head of Local Democracy) and explained that at its meeting on 28th February 2008, the Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee had considered a report on the 2007 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Scorecard and Direction of Travel. Since the introduction of CPA in 2002 the Council had consistently scored well but had never reached the top level of performance. Once again in 2007 the Council was judged to be a '3 star' authority. It was noted by Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee that culture only received a headline rating of 2 and suggested that if this could be increased to 3 before the next inspection it would assist the Council in achieving a 4 star rating.

It was pointed out that 'culture' needed to be defined and the areas identified that had only achieved a headline rating of 2 as 'culture' could be described as the architecture of new or old buildings, or services that were now managed by the Luton Cultural Services Trust such as arts, museums and libraries.

Members enquired if the Luton Cultural Services Trust would be producing a business plan and if the plan would be submitted to this Committee.

The Scrutiny Officer replied that he understood from enquiries made that the Luton Cultural Services Trust was producing a business plan and this would be made available for Regeneration and Citizenship Scrutiny Committee at a time scale to be confirmed.

Members agreed to scrutinise why culture only received a headline rating of 2 in the CPA assessment and investigate how this rating could be improved to a headline rating of 3 at the next assessment. They instructed the Scrutiny Officer to invite the relevant officers to the meeting of the Committee on 19th June 2008 to provide information on the current situation and improvement plans they were working on.

Resolved: (i) That Regeneration and Citizenship Scrutiny Committee investigate how the headline rating for culture can be improved from a 2 to 3 by the next CPA assessment.

(ii) That the Scrutiny Officer be instructed to invite the relevant Officers to the next meeting on 19th June 2008 to provide information on the current situation and any improvement plans they may be working on.

(iii) That the findings of the investigation be reported back to Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee.

24 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY (REF: 9)

The Partnership and Funding Service Manager submitted Luton's Draft Sustainable Community Strategy 2026 which was being produced by the Luton Forum and was under consultation. The document could be downloaded by the public via the Luton Forum website. The strategy set out the issues and challenges for Luton as a whole over the next 18 years, and how all partners worked together to make Luton a better place. Luton Forum is a partnership of statutory, mainstream agencies and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The consultation period ends on 30th April 2008 after which a final version will be submitted to the Luton Forum for approval on 5th June 2008. Partners will be asked to seek approval from within their organisations. Luton Borough Council's Executive on 23rd June will be requested to recommend that the strategy is adopted by Full Council on 23rd July 2008.

A Member commented that at the present time the Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) was in the process of being re-organised. It was essential this re-organisation had taken place and that all partners were geared up to deliver the strategy by being prepared, resourced and working together before the strategy was adopted.

Resolved: (i) That the Committee recommends Luton's Sustainable Community Strategy.

(ii) That all partners that contributed to Luton's Sustainable Community Strategy were prepared, resourced and worked together before the Strategy was adopted.

25 OUR SHARED FUTURE – REPORT ON INTEGRATION AND COHESION (REF: 10)

The Director of Scrutiny submitted a report entitled Our Shared Future – Report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion. It was agreed that the consultation on the draft cohesion guidance for funders be authorised to the Director of Scrutiny to prepare a response with Councillors Singh and Neale as the deadline expired before the Committee's next meeting.

Members remarked that a lot of the Council's best practices were relayed in the document. It was considered that the provision of learning English was essential for people to get on in life. Appropriate resources should be available to learn English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), a mapping exercise should be undertaken to establish what resources were available. It was also felt that single group funding for a particular group of people as opposed to general funding could prove more problematic and could build walls rather than bridges.

In 2002 Scrutiny had undertaken a piece of work entitled "Sticking Together" that addressed many of the issues raised in the consultation report. It was felt that the conclusions that had been agreed from the "Sticking Together" report should be re-examined.

The Scrutiny Director informed the Committee that the Council's adult education provided classes that taught English for social day to day use and Barnfield College offered courses for employment and business purposes. It was pointed out that when the "Sticking Together" report was produced it had been decided that there was not enough funding provided for ESOL's. Additional facilities such as the availability of a crèche were requested.

The Director of Scrutiny proposed that the Executive be informed of the views raised by this Committee. He explained that the report was to be discussed at the next Scrutiny Board meeting who would be requested to scrutinise the change in circumstances in Luton since the "Sticking Together" report was produced, such as the migrant population from the new accession states of the European Unions.

The Committee considered the recommendations from the report "Our Shared Future" and contemplated that:-

- Recommendation 50 – Action – Consider the local application of the toolkit when it is published was weak and inadequate.
- That there an additional recommendation be included (Recommendation No 57) that Citizenship Ceremonies should be extended to reflect Lord Goldsmith's review on citizenship to encourage those who have settled here to be encouraged to become citizens and to educate young people about the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship with a ceremony at the end of school.

The Committee discussed the extra costs that would inevitably be involved in delivering the recommendations in the consultation report.

Although some of the actions were quite specific, the costs of other initiatives were not easy to define. The Director of Scrutiny commented that Cohesion could not be dealt with in isolation and was embedded in other Council policies such as equalities.

Resolved: (i) That the Executive be informed of the comments made by the Committee.

(ii) That Scrutiny Board be requested to consider scrutinising the change in circumstances in Luton since the “Sticking Together” report was produced.

(iii) That in relation to the consultation on the draft cohesion guidance for funders the Director of Scrutiny be authorised to prepare a response in consultation with Councillors Singh and Neale.

(iv) That the Director of Scrutiny be thanked for his hard work in producing a very comprehensive and thorough report.

26 MARSH FARM – THE WAY FORWARD (REF: 11)

Councillors Neale and Rutstein informed the Committee that consultation had been undertaken on the Marsh Farm Master Plan with a number of options being considered. The preferred Option 1 had been selected and adopted as the best way forward for Marsh Farm with option 4a being considered as a fall back option. A business case was being produced and once finalised would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee and they would be requested to examine option 1 with option 4a as the back up option of the Marsh Farm Master Plan.

Members remarked that over the years a great deal of tax payers money had been invested within Marsh Farm with very little return received. The new options provided an opportunity for the Committee to examine option 1 with option 4a as a back up plan. The current progress achieved provided an excellent opportunity for the residents of Marsh Farm. Once the business case had been discussed by the Committee their views would be reported to the Executive. The Head of Regeneration commented that she was in agreement with the Committee’s recommendations.

Resolved: (i) That the Marsh Farm Master Plan Option 1 and Option 4a Business Cases be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee for examination and cross examination.

(ii) That following consideration of the Business Cases for Option 1 and 4a of the Marsh Farm Master Plan the Executive be informed of the Committee’s views.

27 REGENERATION AND CITIZENSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2007/2008 (REF: 12)

The Scrutiny Officer submitted the draft Scrutiny Annual Report for 2007/08 that outlined the work carried out by the Committee.

Resolved: (i) That the draft Annual Report of the Regeneration and Citizenship Scrutiny Committee 2007-08 attached as an Appendix to the report of the Scrutiny Officer (Ref: 12) be approved for submission to the Scrutiny Board.

(ii) That the Director of Scrutiny, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to amend the report to include information about this meeting.

28 WORK PROGRAMME (REF: 13)

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

- The topic of tackling criminal damage would be postponed until the Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) had been restructured.
- At the request of Members, the Committee agreed to call for a report from the appropriate officers from Environment and Regeneration to outline what progress had been achieved within the major regeneration projects being undertaken in Luton such as East Luton Corridor, Luton Dunstable Busway and the Station Gateway Project. The joining up of these regeneration projects and the facilitating of the works was a major subject for the town.

The Head of Local Democracy to be instructed to report the progress on the restructure of the Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) to a future meeting of Regeneration and Citizenship Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved: That the Scrutiny Officer be requested to amend the Work Programme (Ref: 13) in accordance with the Committee's suggestions.

(Note: The meeting ended at 7.10 p.m.)