



Overview & Scrutiny

Luton Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny Board

Job Creation and Economic Growth Task and Finish Group Report

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Introduction

Foreword by the Chair

“In 2010 the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Board organised a workshop to develop topics for review by Task and Finish Groups. This was followed with public consultation to find out which issues were of most concern to the people of Luton. A good number suggested the economic problems faced by the town and the lack of opportunity to find secure employment, and so this Overview and Scrutiny review on Job Creation and Economic Growth was born.

The current downturn in the economy had been ongoing since the late summer of 2008 and most aspects of industry, construction and the services sector have at some time been badly affected by this recession. It was therefore timely to discover what was being done in Luton to counter the issues of rising unemployment (especially among those looking for their first job) and how the borough could attract new business and hold on to firms that are currently located here.

This review could have looked at a range of issues, from the failure of the financial sector, to the stagnation in the housing market, to the virtual devaluation of sterling but these are really topics for national bodies and in all honesty Luton Borough Council has little influence in these matters. Whilst they have great effect on both workers and employers in Luton we determined to look at the local issues of training, transport, planning, town promotion, airport growth and skills required. It is how these issues are tackled by educationalists, planners, developers and employers (working in collaboration) that will determine how Luton becomes more attractive for enterprise and business.

A number of people that we have met have commented on the need for Luton to be welcoming, attractive and safe. Whilst this may seem to some superficial against the need for big investments, top tier businesses and a working infrastructure it was often the small things like walking through the town centre after 7pm, the need for a bit of refurbishment in the public areas and how to enjoy yourself after working hours that make people want to work and live in Luton.

I would like to thank all the Officers and staff of Luton Borough Council who have assisted in our enquiries and in particular the efforts of Rebecca May with whom we could not have put this report together. We are also grateful to those who gave evidence to our committee and hope that their words of wisdom will influence others to take forward the recommendations and make some improvements that will secure high quality employment and help both the town and its businesses grow and bring wealth to all those who live and work in Luton. “



Cllr Lawrence Patterson

Membership of the Group:

Cllr Lawrence Patterson (Chair)
Cllr Gilbert Campbell
Cllr Martin Pantling
Cllr Lynda Ireland
Cllr Don Worlding

Project Lead: Rebecca May
Overview and Scrutiny Manager: Mark Farmer

Scope

To advise/ make recommendations to the Executive and Council, to inform decision-making and generate ideas to:

- Encourage investment in Luton – take advantage of companies looking to move out of London to cheaper premises
- Maximise the creation of good quality jobs for the people of Luton
- Maximise take-up of existing jobs by local people
- Examine barriers to work for local people (Transport and Skills focus)

Not in Scope:

- Discussion of a “Living Wage”
- Discussion of current cuts experienced by the Council due to reduction in government grant

Summary

The Task and Finish Group formed a future vision of Luton concentrating on two themes of “Attracting Business to Luton” and “Quality of Jobs”. In an ideal world, Luton would be competitive, trading on its cheap land values and strategic transport links to draw businesses from London and abroad. Companies providing good quality jobs for local people would be encouraged to remain and expand, whilst the education providers in the town would train local people for a variety of skilled, professional and management work, using their links with local businesses to make sure people can take up the jobs locally without having to commute to London.

Throughout their evidence gathering, the Task and Finish Group found that good, strategically valuable work is being done in the town by Barnfield College, Adult Community Learning and the University, by the Council's Regeneration department and partners along with Job Centre Plus.

The Task and Finish Group is aware that the public sector cuts will bite deeply in Luton, with a reduction in government grant amounting to over 5% of spending power in the next year. There are also limitations caused by the lack of available building sites in the town, and planning restrictions placed around Junction 10a of the M1 by the Highways Agency.

Against this backdrop, the Task and Finish Group have presented some recommendations to Executive which they feel would put Luton in a good strategic position to support its residents and businesses to thrive in the years ahead.

Recommendations are based around partnership working, negotiation, and intelligent dissemination of existing information in order to create positive outcomes within a financially restricted environment.

Background and Research

In the November 2010 bulletin from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) the proportion of the population claiming Job Seekers' Allowance in Luton was 4.2%, significantly higher than the regional percentage of 2.8% in the East of England, and a national percentage of 3.5%.

	Number Unemployed	Unemployment Rate	% Change since Nov 2009	% Aged 24 and under	% Claiming for 12 months +
Luton	5,335	4.2%	-10.5%	23.4%	17.0%
Central Bedfordshire	3,780	2.3%	-18.4%	26.1%	14.5%
Joint Planning Area ¹	7,546	na	-11.0%	na	na

	Male Unemployment		Female Unemployment		% Female
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	
Luton	3,566	5.4%	1,767	2.9%	33%
Central Bedfordshire	2,561	3.1%	1,219	1.5%	32%
Joint Planning Area ¹	5,072	na	2,474	na	33%

JSA claimant figures for November 2010

Luton has a population of 194400 (2009 ONS Midyear estimate - this number may be as high as 205,000 due to migration into the town) of which 63% is estimated to be of working age. 16% of these are assumed to have no qualifications, but 20% have qualifications at Level 4 (degree) or higher.

Nearly two fifths of the people who work in Luton live outside the town – this has not changed significantly since 2001. Two in five people who live in Luton, work outside Luton, and this trend is set to continue. At least 7% of Luton residents travel to London to work.

Luton has a great many positive attributes to recommend it such as the airport, a direct train line to London, Butterfield Hi Tech Industrial Park, an enhanced shopping centre and the University of Bedfordshire. The Group will be looking into ways of building on these existing strengths.

Luton suffers from a high perception of crime, although in actual fact serious acquisitive crime (i.e. theft and burglary) has dropped from 7.35 crimes per 1000 population in the first quarter of 2008/9 down to 4.65 crimes per 1000 population in Quarter 1 of 2010/11.

Luton's rate of Serious Violent Crime has risen fractionally from 0.20 crimes per 1000 population in the first quarter of 2008/9 to 0.31 crimes per 1000 population in Quarter 1 of 2010/11.

Summary

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Throughout their evidence gathering, the Task and Finish Group found that good, strategically valuable work is being done in the town by Barnfield College, Adult Community Learning and the University, by the Council's Regeneration department and partners along with Job Centre Plus.

The Task and Finish Group is aware that the public sector cuts will bite deeply in Luton, with a reduction in government grant amounting to over 5% of spending power in the next year. There are also limitations caused by the lack of available building sites in the town, and planning restrictions placed around Junction 10a of the M1 by the Highways Agency.

Against this backdrop, the Task and Finish Group have presented some recommendations to Executive which they feel would put Luton in a good strategic position to support its residents and businesses to thrive in the years ahead.

Recommendations are based around partnership working, negotiation, and intelligent dissemination of existing information in order to create positive outcomes within a financially restricted environment.

Recommendations

Summary of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1 - that the Executive works with the Members of Parliament for Luton and surrounding areas lobby the Highways Agency to clarify the position with regard to junction 10a and lift planning restrictions on new developments.

RECOMMENDATION 2 – that the Executive:

- works with local bus services and businesses to update routes and times to optimise access to community and work hubs in the town and airport around the clock.
- uses the leverage gained through the guided Busway scheme to encourage all local bus operators to sign up to a single universal “Luton Travelcard” scheme.
- considers use of the Council’s transport fleet to run certain routes.
- looks into offering a central car sharing website.

RECOMMENDATION 3 - that the Executive considers the use of temporary targeted business rate cuts to encourage new good quality long term employers to establish themselves in Luton.

RECOMMENDATION 4: that the Executive:

- explores ways in which Luton is promoted through cooperation and partnership with employers in the town such as the airport, the owners and operators of Luton’s railway stations, and other business partners, by advertising and promoting the town and its vibrant community.
- invites local businesses to contribute, advertise jobs and participate in events organised by the Council, for example the Neighbourhood Governance “Your Say Your Way” local area events.

RECOMMENDATION 5: that the Executive, as current part landowner of the site, invites other developers with a more acceptable development vision to buy the land at Power Court from the existing landowners.

RECOMMENDATION 6: that the Executive:

- in its community leader role uses its influence to call First Capital Connect and Network Rail to account and agree a short term development plan to improve the state of the company’s holdings at Luton Central Station.
- encourages local businesses to sponsor further improvements to the station and surrounding area.
- appoints the Overview and Scrutiny Board to conduct a review into the short and long term improvement of Luton’s railway stations, transport links and environs which form prominent gateways into the town.

RECOMMENDATION 7: that Luton Borough Council and stakeholders work with local businesses to physically improve the town centre, and employ a town centre manager whose primary task would be to secure funding from other sources to implement continuous town centre improvement.

RECOMMENDATION 8: that the Executive should ensure that all available licensing and planning powers are used, in order to prevent the town centre being overloaded with the same type of businesses, such as licensed fast food outlets, which damage the nature and appearance of the area and contribute to anti social behaviour.

RECOMMENDATION 9: that the Executive must not waver from the commitment to establish a balanced range of job-creating units in the Napier Park development.

RECOMMENDATION 10: that priority is given to renovating old housing stock, using all powers to bring empty homes into use, and continuing with the established new build programmes.

RECOMMENDATION 11: that the Executive focuses on playing a strong strategic & political role in the development of South Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and uses this role to attract inward investment into the town.

RECOMMENDATION 12: that the Local Strategic Partnership works with companies related to the airport to advertise all of their non-specialist jobs centrally in Luton, perhaps through the job centre or Luton Borough Council's jobs website.

RECOMMENDATION 13: that the Regeneration department should work with the airport and associated companies to make sure that every opportunity is taken to promote Luton internationally as a business location.

RECOMMENDATION 14: that the Executive works with all training providers to provide one central place such as the council website or a local paper where all free courses and apprenticeships (including adult apprenticeships) are regularly advertised together with simple application criteria.

RECOMMENDATION 15: that the Executive, Job Centre Plus and local educators map their education activities to make sure that all groups have fair access to training (i.e. cheap/free training opportunities are not focussed solely on certain age groups or locations)

RECOMMENDATION 16: that the Executive advertises all positions, including interim, temporary and high profile, on its website. Where this is not practical because of agency contracts, that it publicises which agencies it uses and those agencies are asked to particularly consider applications from local residents.

RECOMMENDATION 17: that the Executive opens up its jobs website to local companies looking to recruit for good quality jobs, for a small fee. This would provide small local companies with a value for money recruitment solution. It would be a practical way of encouraging businesses to recruit locally and would also provide a one-stop-shop for job seekers saving them time on filling out numerous application forms.

RECOMMENDATION 18: That the Executive provides the Overview and Scrutiny Board with a response to the recommendations within two months and outlines any recommendations it proposes to implement; a lead Portfolio Holder and a lead officer responsible for implementation and a timescale for when each of the recommendations are to be implemented.

Stream 1: Attracting Business to Luton

Transport

Luton benefits from a good strategic position geographically, and transport links via road, rail and airport. The town itself suffers from traffic jams at peak times and a lack of affordable parking in the Town Centre. There are two main bus companies which run services in the town and it is well served by black cabs and mini cabs.

Highways Development Agency Junction 10a

A great deal of investment (about £600 million) has gone into junctions 6 to 14 of the M1, but junction 10a has not been updated and is still a cause of slowing and traffic jams both on the motorway and in London Road leading into the Town Centre. The Highways Agency has placed planning restrictions around the area of Junction 10a which conflict with some of the regeneration plans which the Council would like to see implemented.

At the Economy Board meeting on 15th November 2010, officers explained that the Highways Agency had been blocking planning permission for developments likely to increase traffic across Junction 10a, and that this was interfering with the strategic regeneration of the town.

RECOMMENDATION 1 - that the Executive works with the Members of Parliament for Luton and surrounding areas lobby the Highways Agency to clarify the position with regard to junction 10a and lift planning restrictions on new developments.

Guided Busway/Park and Ride

Given the lack of space in Luton Town Centre which is available for car parking, it is not surprising that many companies complain that parking is expensive. Some other local towns (i.e. Bedford and Cambridge) have implemented Park and Ride systems to move the parking out of the town centre. Some of these Park and Ride systems work very well (in Cambridge, the initiative has earned a lot of money for the Council) but others have been underused and subsequently lost money.

The Luton Dunstable Guided Busway project, which is due to start implementation in 2011, is expected to relieve pressure on parking facilities in Luton at the same time as bringing business to Dunstable Town centre, where visitors will be encouraged to begin their journey.

The Council has some plans for "Park and Ride" Schemes at Butterfield and Junction 10a, but the bus companies require initial start up funds to establish new routes and this money is not currently available in the Council budget.

Local bus services

Luton is well served with buses from two main companies running routes throughout the town. However the routes and the times of the buses do not always reflect the strategic needs of the town, with community centres and work hubs such as the airport, Butterfield Park and Capability Green, and Sundon Park and Dallow Industrial Estates suffering a lack of transport around the clock. The airport in particular, housing many shift workers, suffers from a lack of transport which can cause problems for low paid workers and holiday makers. It is possible that this

impacts on the numbers of people using the airport.

Some residents had commented that to get from one side of Luton to the other frequently takes two or more buses, not always by the same operator. This can lead to expensive and time consuming trips. The issue was raised that a "Luton Travelcard", valid across operators and perhaps encompassing "Plusbus" local rail services would improve uptake of public transport and improve access to work for many residents and visitors. It would also encourage visitors to Luton to stay in the town whilst exploring London and the surrounding countryside.

RECOMMENDATION 2 – that the Executive:

- works with local bus services and businesses to update routes and times to optimise access to community and work hubs in the town and airport around the clock.
- uses the leverage gained through the guided Busway scheme to encourage all local bus operators to sign up to a single universal "Luton Travelcard" scheme.
- considers use of the Council's transport fleet to run certain routes.
- looks into offering a central car sharing website.

Rates

In order to attract businesses to the town, Luton needs to be competitive and affordable. The Council does not have direct control over many of the rents which are being charged on privately owned premises, but it can exercise some measure of control over the business rates. In Dunstable Town Centre rates have been strategically reduced to aid struggling businesses, and the Localism Bill which began its passage through Parliament in mid-December also mentions powers for local authorities to reduce rates to encourage businesses. The Task and Finish Group is aware that in the current economic climate, the Council will not have much leeway with which to reduce rates but believes that in some cases this might be a good investment in order to encourage long term providers of quality jobs to establish bases in Luton.

RECOMMENDATION 3 - that the Executive considers the use of temporary targeted business rate cuts to encourage new good quality long term employers to establish themselves in Luton.

Business Support

Luton Borough Council provides support and guidance on start ups, enterprise, business growth and investment, premises, skills and training needs. The Regeneration team also help businesses to apply for national and European grants and arrange networking events. There is a local Business Link (although next year this will be run nationally with less face to face contact) and several incubation units for small businesses at Wenta, the Chamber of Commerce, the Spires and the Hat Factory. There are also various regional agencies such as "Resource Efficiency East" which currently offer free advice and support to new businesses, although funding for this will end in 2011-12.

In the future, the Council and the Chamber of Commerce as well as other providers will need to work more closely together with their limited funding to avoid duplication of provision.

Publicity

Luton suffers from regular negative publicity in the national media. This may discourage some high profile businesses from settling in the town despite its many advantages. Fear of crime has also been cited by many residents as a probable reason that companies might avoid the town. However, the actual theft and violence rates in Luton have nearly halved in the last two years, and the majority of residents feel safe going about their business.

The Council and its partners are working hard to promote the positive side of Luton, with the Regeneration department taking its “Think Luton” brand to business fairs throughout Europe, and closer to home Luton Forum’s “Luton In Harmony” project which has gathered thousands of signatures from residents pledging to fight racism and discord in the community. So far, 29,000 pledges have been signed and 35,000 badges distributed to schools in Luton. Posters and stickers are to be found all around the town including a “Luton in Harmony” flag flying from the Town Hall, together with a full programme of events for 2010 and 2011 including mixed culture musical events in the town centre.

The Council and local publicans are working towards “Purple Flag” status in the town centre (This is run by the Association of Town Centre Management <http://www.atcm.org/purple-flag/>) To secure the award of a Purple Flag, an area has to achieve set standards in respect of key elements as shown in the diagram below.



The Task and Finish Group concluded that achievement of “Purple Flag” status was likely to reassure potential visitors of the quality and safety of the Town Centre, which would impact positively on businesses and people moving to Luton.

RECOMMENDATION 4: that the Executive:

- explores ways in which Luton is promoted through cooperation and partnership with employers in the town such as the airport, the owners and operators of Luton’s railway stations, and other business partners, by advertising and promoting the town and its vibrant community.
- invites local businesses to contribute, advertise jobs and participate in events organised by the Council, for example the Neighbourhood Governance “Your Say Your Way” local area events.

Town Planning

Development of Power Court

The Task and Finish Group was particularly interested in the future of Power Court, a large business park which is currently awaiting development on the north of the town centre near to the train station. The site has been derelict for several years and is one of the first things that many visitors see when embarking from Luton Station. There has been concern from Members that having a derelict site visible from the train station presents an unwelcoming gateway into Luton.

The Council owns 40% of the site and private landowners own the other 60%. The Council does not have enough money to develop the land itself, but is seeking to use the land which it owns to leverage a good development deal. The Council Planning Department has a vision for the land which includes sympathetic development to form a new town square near St Mary's church with mixed use buildings which complement those existing in the Mall. The Council planners are trying to avoid having a large supermarket built on the site which will damage existing businesses and not enhance the environment. So far there has been difficulty in getting the private landowners to agree an acceptable development.

RECOMMENDATION 5: that the Executive, as current part landowner of the site, invites other developers with a more acceptable development vision to buy the land at Power Court from the existing landowners.

Development of Luton Train Station

Luton Station is owned by Network Rail but operated by First Capital Connect. It has remained essentially unchanged since the 1930s. It is the first thing that many commuters see when they enter Luton and as such an important part of the image of the town.

In November 2009, Lord Adonis the then Transport minister identified Luton Station as one of the ten worst in the country. In March 2010 Kelvin Hopkins MP opened a Westminster Hall debate about the station which resulted in money being set aside by Network Rail for its development.

In the months since, there has been ongoing development of the approaches to the station including the bridge to High Town, and a new 720 place car park has been opened recently by the Transport Minister, Norman Baker, which generates some of its own energy from wind turbines. Future plans include a surface level walkway from Bute Street to the station, a new frontage to the station, lifts to all platforms and more retail space in the station. Because of funding constraints, this work will have to be completed in several discrete stages and will take several years. The land will be bought from Network Rail by the Council in order to make this work feasible.

The train station and its image is critical to the long term development of the town – therefore it is essential that Luton Borough Council and First Capital Connect act immediately to refurbish and regenerate the station and its grounds to a decent standard.

RECOMMENDATION 6: that the Executive:

- in its community leader role uses its influence to call First Capital Connect and Network Rail to account and agree a short term development plan to improve the state of the company's holdings at Luton Central Station.
- encourages local businesses to sponsor further improvements to the station and surrounding area.
- appoints the Overview and Scrutiny Board to conduct a review into the short and long term improvement of Luton's railway stations, transport links and environs which form prominent gateways into the town.

Town Centre

A recurring theme in evidence taken from residents, officers and partners, was that people did not feel safe in the town centre. This issue was explored in the Fear of Crime survey which showed that crime had been decreasing year on year and was actually less than many similar areas. However there are problem drinkers in the town centre and particularly in the evenings and at weekends the footfall through the town centre is largely young drinkers, excluding other groups such as families and the elderly from safely enjoying the area.

The Community Safety Partnership "SoLUTiONs" has been working intensively with business partners in the town centre to provide initiatives such as Street Pastors, Taxi Marshalls and the SOS Bus which have shown an impact in reduced crime and injuries. The police regularly confront drinkers in the town centre and the issue of daytime drinking remains minimal.

Cllr Neale (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board) gave evidence on behalf of the "Tackling Alcohol Related Crime and Disorder" Task and Finish Group. One of the conclusions drawn by the group was that drink and drug related disorder was perceived as a large problem by residents because those not involved in drinking activities felt excluded from the Town Centre in the evenings. They felt that if there were more family and cultural activities available in the Town Centre in the evenings, such as the library, theatre and late night shopping, the footfall would be more mixed and the Town Centre would seem more welcoming. Better late night parking facilities and public transport would also help with this.

" 'Zoning' could be utilised, i.e. encouraging different types of business to be located in different locations in the town in order to avoid over-capacity, or saturation, as is currently found with many off-licences and fast food outlets clustered in locations too close to bars and clubs."

"Witnesses were generally in agreement that coordinated action was necessary at a strategic level, linking the functions of licensing, housing, planning, transport, parking and retail. The local planning framework, the Group was told, was largely silent on the requirements of and opportunities for the night-time economy."

"Luton needs the benefits of a more successful planned mixed-use economy, which will help to bring about a more diverse customer footfall and greater spending in the town, as well as an enhanced public image and reputation, which will in turn help to develop new business. Less crime and anti-social behaviour would certainly be welcomed by residents and visitors as a consequence of these improvements; but a far greater prize would be the regeneration of the town, and the transformation of

Luton into a place where people choose to live, work and play”

Tackling Alcohol Related Crime and Disorder” Task and Finish Group Report 2011

The Group felt that more robust use of planning powers could prevent clubs and off licenses opening too close together, and a “night time economy business levy” could be used to require late opening businesses to contribute towards extra policing costs generated by their businesses.

RECOMMENDATION 7: that the Executive and stakeholders work with local businesses to physically improve the town centre, and employ a town centre manager whose primary task would be to secure funding from other sources to implement continuous town centre improvement.

RECOMMENDATION 8: that the Executive should ensure that all available licensing and planning powers are used, in order to prevent the town centre being overloaded with the same type of businesses, such as licensed fast food outlets, which damage the nature and appearance of the area and contribute to anti social behaviour.

Development of Napier Park

Napier Park is one of the Southeast’s largest urban regeneration projects. The £400m redevelopment of the former Vauxhall brownfield site includes plans for 1,000 homes, 490,000 sq ft of offices, 43,000 sq ft of shops, and a 40,000 sq ft conference centre. In addition there are plans for a 200 bedroom hotel.

This development is expected to generate temporary jobs in construction and ongoing roles in the shops and hotel – in excess of four thousand jobs in total. The Guided Busway is expected to travel up Kimpton Road to serve the Napier Park development. The Task and Finish Group voiced concern that if the development was not carefully controlled by officers, these high-employment-generating shop units may be replaced by warehouses, which produce much lower employment densities. Maintaining the balance of shops, offices and hotel would be key to the success of the development.

The current position is that the owners are putting together a funding package. Given the low demand for both domestic dwellings and industrial units it may take some time before construction work starts. There is small movement to the land around the Chamber of Business offices on the railway side of Kimpton Road, in that there has been an application for development in Stirling Place although there are no dates yet.



<http://www.napierpark.com/>

Any developments in Luton will have an impact on the traffic particularly around junction 10a which means that the applications for development will not be approved by the Highways Agency without a traffic management plan showing minimal traffic impact on Junction 10a. If there is a negative impact on the Junction 10a traffic then the application could potentially be refused.

RECOMMENDATION 9 the Executive must not waver from the commitment to establish a balanced range of job-creating units in the Napier Park development.

“Red Carpet” help for large employers

The Task and Finish Group discussed whether it would be possible for the Council Planning department to offer a “red carpet” to make the planning process easier for companies which would benefit the town by bringing large numbers of good quality jobs.

The Council Regeneration Department is already positioned to offer advice to companies, help with funding and finding a site for their business. The planning department works hard to make sure that planning decisions are made quickly and is in the top quartile of performance for Councils around the town – they also work hard to negotiate with businesses and developers to bring the maximum amount of benefit to the town.

Job Centre plus and Barnfield have also positioned themselves to contact large employers planning to come to the town and offer specialised training packages to encourage them to employ local people.

The Chamber of Commerce, Chamber Business, also has a role to play in encouraging new businesses to invest in the town.

Maintaining occupancy of existing business parks

Luton currently has several industrial estates, including Sundon Park, Dallow Road, and Kingsway Road. Luton also boasts several business incubation centres at The Spires, The Hat Factory, Wentra, and Chamber Business. There are flagship business parks at Capability Green and Butterworth Park.

The parks are currently over half full, with vacancies for new businesses.

Planning and Regeneration officers are careful to appoint only appropriate businesses to the business parks – for example Butterfield Park is a site for small innovative and scientific businesses which give highly skilled jobs, and they would not approve, for example, a large mechanised plant on those sites. A balance has to be struck between having full occupancy, and using the parks for the best job creation opportunities.

The Task and Finish Group also felt that better signposting and more standardised branding could help direct visitors more successfully to existing business parks and help to promote them as sites of choice in the area.

Industrial Property

Luton has “inherited” a lot of old buildings which companies do not want to hire. The Council has a role in encouraging owners and developers to invest in these properties to bring them up to the standards which modern companies will want to use. Officers from the Council’s Regeneration department maintain a list of industrial premises available for sale or lease in the town, which are made available to businesses through the Council Website.

Housing

A recurring theme from evidence was that housing can be an important factor in the decision of a business to relocate permanently. Good quality, affordable housing should be available to rent or buy for employees who need to relocate. The availability of high quality family homes suitable for executives and their families may also influence businesses in their decisions to settle in the town.

Because Luton is an urban borough with little “spare” space within its boundaries it can be difficult for developers to build larger family homes. Frequently the only land available is on existing Brownfield sites which are often more suited to flats and high density housing.

There are a great many new build flats but the housing stock is often quite old particularly in the private rented sector.

In 2009/10 710 new homes have been built in Luton. During this period, privately owned homes in Luton had a range of improvement measures funded via the Warm Front scheme including: 1181 boiler replacements, 143 cavity wall insulations, 328 draught proofing, 181 heating insulations, and 400 loft insulations. There is an Empty Homes Strategy in place, and Luton has invested heavily in bringing its Council properties up to the Decent Homes standard.

Despite the financial crisis, Luton Borough Council and its partners still have several projects ongoing for 2010/11 and the proposed Housing Joint Venture is well advanced with grant funding now confirmed for the first phase and planning permission secured for two of the three sites involved.

The percentage of non decent properties in the private sector is lower than the national average. Also, more of our vulnerable people are living in “Decent Homes” compared to the national average and the proportion of “fuel poor” homes in the private sector is less than the national average.

Description	Luton 2005	Luton 2009	National
Non Decent Stock	32%	32%	36%
Vulnerable in Decent Home	65%	75%	57%
Fuel Poverty	7%	6%	12%

Source: *Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2010*

RECOMMENDATION 10: that priority is given to renovating old housing stock, using all powers to bring empty homes into use, and continuing with the established new build programmes.

Local Enterprise Partnerships South East Midlands LEP

The Regional Development Agencies such as EEDA who used to channel funding and coordinate regeneration work throughout the region have been shut down in 2010/11, and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are expected to take their place. Luton is part of South East Midlands LEP.

“The South East Midlands partnership brings together businesses, universities and colleges, community groups, social enterprises and local government in Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Luton, Milton Keynes, Cherwell, Aylesbury and Dacorum. Together these partners will work closely with Government to support inward investment, innovation, economic growth, new enterprise and job creation.”

<http://www.southeastmidlands.org.uk>

Decisions are still being made about governance and funding, but the LEP is expected to be largely self funding, with member councils donating officer time. Luton Borough Council’s Chief Executive and Head of Regeneration have been heavily involved in establishing the ground work for the LEP.

The LEP will be applying for money from the Regional Growth Fund to fund development of Junction 10a although the Government has said that funding will be concentrated in northern regions.

RECOMMENDATION 11: that the Executive focuses on playing a strong strategic & political role in the development of South Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and uses this role to attract inward investment into the town.

Inward Investment

The Regeneration department have identified several types of business which have centres of excellence in the local region –

“Five key sectors account for just over 37% of existing employment in MKSM but almost 85% of the currently predicted growth for MKSM by 2021. The MKSM five key sectors are:

- High performance engineering (HPE) and Motorsport, including aerospace, research
- Sustainable construction and the built environment
- Creative industries, including design, media, software, architecture, arts etc

- Logistics, covers warehousing, road and air transportation, cargo etc
- Business Services, covers professional services provided to commercial businesses e.g. finance, legal, consultancy, property, data processing, ITC hardware, etc

Other sectors MKSM expect to do well over 2012-2021 are health and social care, retailing, hotels and catering, and education.”

Luton's Local Economic Assessment

These form a good focus for branding and marketing the town to outside investors. The Council is trying to focus on attracting businesses to remain in Luton long term and, crucially, employ local people. There have been some businesses which have moved to Luton but brought their employees with them from elsewhere, which is less helpful.

In the last 6 years, the department have brought more than £46 million into Luton and Dunstable through the Grant for Business Development. (GBI) and Selective Finance Investment (SFI) – however this grant will not be available in the future.

Luton could be seen as in competition with several other local towns and areas for inward investment – Bedford, Central Beds, Dunstable, Leighton Linlade, Stevenage, Dacorum, Milton Keynes and Northampton being the largest. Most of these towns are included in the Local Enterprise Partnership. The Council is planning to establish closer relations with UK Trade and Investment to encourage it to promote the town.

Nature of airport and subsidiary businesses

“The Airport, and airport-related manufacturing and services, has grown to be the central specialism of Luton (and the wider sub-region). Currently the Airport supports

1. 7,900 local jobs
2. An annual economic value of just over £793m to the local economy
3. £425m of direct annual business expenditure into the local economy
4. £165m of indirect supply-chain effects.

In addition, it is estimated that through business and personal taxes, rates and airport duty revenue of over £260m is generated for local and national government, bringing the overall annual economic value of the LLA to over £1bn. It also acts as an attractor for inward investing businesses.”

Luton Local Area Assessment 2010

London Luton airport is the fifth biggest in the UK, offering over 100 routes. It had 9 million passengers in 2010. The airport generates about 1000 jobs (directly and indirectly employed by the airport) per million customers – there are currently about 8000 jobs. The airport also has apprentices.

Easyjet is a very important operator from the town's point of view, as it links Luton directly with business centres and capitals such as Geneva or Zurich. This enables businesses located in Luton to travel throughout Europe very cheaply. Ryanair is also popular and offers mainly leisure destinations.

There has been an ongoing debate about whether to increase the size of the airport, or extend the runway to accept larger planes. Luton is one of the few airports where there is no problem with passenger demand and there is potential to grow significantly. There is room at the airport for expansion – it is considered that the airport could almost double its current passenger numbers without having to build any extra

buildings except for improvement of the Arrivals area.

However, to accommodate larger planes for long haul flights, the airport would need to expand physically, which may cause disruption to neighbouring residents.

The land where the airport is situated is quite hilly and it would require a massive engineering effort to provide enough level land for a new runway expansion. The existing runway is sufficient for routes straight to the East Coast of America. In general, where long haul flights have been tried by small airports other than Stansted and Heathrow, they have not been successful in paying for their investment. It is difficult to compete with Heathrow in any case as it is so close.

London Luton Airport does manage some freight flights but they do not create many jobs for the size of the operation – for 40,000 tonnes a year only 20 people are employed, in a separate warehouse. Luton is not looking to expand its freight operations as East Midlands and Heathrow already have most of the market and it would not be efficient to compete with them. There is also the issue that late night freight lorries and flights would be unpopular amongst residents.

When the CEO of Luton Airport, Glynn Jones, gave evidence to the Task and Finish Group, he stated that local educators provided a lot of competent people, and training was not considered to be an issue – although some of the better jobs available at the airport required very specialist knowledge which could only be acquired by those with long term airport careers.

He also stated that he considered Lutons' transport infrastructure as very competitive with that of other airports, if not the best, allowing customers to access the airport via train, bus and car. The town benefits from close links with the M1, M3 and M40. Because of this at least one airline had relocated from Stansted to Luton.

However congestion in the mornings coming on and off the M1 is a significant problem. There is also difficulty for shift workers to get to and from the airport late at night. London Luton airport has been looking into the viability of running a bus service, but it would need to be fully funded as the bus operators will not take a risk on a new route. Because staff come from all over Luton, and most of the local bus services shut down late at night, a subsidised airport bus service would need to travel all around Luton, and it would be difficult to make sure that enough people used it for it to be viable. TUI, an airport company, runs a bus from Wigmore into the town centre for its customers, which is considered successful.

RECOMMENDATION 12: that the Local Strategic Partnership works with companies related to the airport to advertise all of their non-specialist jobs centrally in Luton, perhaps through the job centre or Luton Borough Council's jobs website.

RECOMMENDATION 13: that the Regeneration department should work with the airport and associated companies to make sure that every opportunity is taken to promote Luton internationally as a business location.

Stream 2: Quality of Jobs

The Group decided to draw attention to the issue of “Good Quality Jobs”. These were perceived to be the jobs where an employee could comfortably raise a family and had good working conditions, long term stability, and the opportunity to train and/or progress in their work.

The flip side of this is poorer quality jobs; temporary jobs without holidays and sickness benefits or redundancy entitlements, jobs where the transport costs eat into the wages, jobs with no security and little chance of progression.

The responses from the web survey showed that there were many different aspects to what people thought was a “Good Quality Job”. Here are just some of the replies (complete replies shown in APPENDIX)

Q5. How would you define a good quality job?

- Stable, permanent (with sick pay and holiday pay), with training and a chance of progression with hard work recognised. Somewhere I can get to easily.
- One that is interesting and productive
- Security, pay and conditions, valued as employee
- Flexible, challenging, opportunity to learn and progress
- Appropriate/ongoing training, good teamwork, management support and feeling valued/trusted.
- Allows for good work-life balance (e.g. flexible working and walking to work). Provides a worthwhile product/ service. Allows skills and career development. Recognises and rewards achievement.
- secure and in pleasant surroundings
- A job that you enjoy, and are proud to say that you do. Offering the amount of money you need to live comfortably.
- Permanent

The Group decided that the efforts of the Council and Partners should be concentrated on trying to encourage businesses which provide Good Quality jobs. Residents also need to be supported to access the Good Quality Jobs which already exist in the town - many of these are advertised in agencies outside the town and often go to specialists from outside Luton.

Nearly two in five people that work in Luton, live outside Luton - and the trend has been for less workers to live in Luton. People who work in Luton reside in six main District localities. In 2008:

- | | | |
|---------|----------|--------------------|
| • 64 % | lived in | Luton |
| • 14 % | lived in | South Bedfordshire |
| • 5.5 % | lived in | Mid Bedfordshire |
| • 4.5 % | lived in | Bedford |
| • 2 % | lived in | Welwyn Hatfield |
| • 1 % | lived in | Milton Keynes |
| • 8% % | lived in | other |

In-commuters who work in Luton come relatively shorter distances – from Central Beds, and Bedford particularly. Only 10% of workers come from outside Luton, C. Beds & Bedford. In-commuting (from areas, not volumes) has not changed significantly since 2001.

Two in five people who live in Luton, work outside Luton - the trend is for more people to commute out

The figures for 2008 show, for people in employment who live in Luton, that:

- 60 % worked in Luton
- 7 % worked in South Bedfordshire
- 6 % worked in London (via Southwark)
- 4 to 5 % worked in each of Milton Keynes, St Albans, Dacorum (Herts)
- 1 to 2 % worked in each of Stevenage, Watford, Bedford
- <1 % worked in each of Mid Beds, North Herts, Hertsmere, City of London, Cambridge

Luton's Local Area Assessment

Similar numbers of people live in Luton and work outside, as those who live outside and commute in to Luton. For the residents who live and also work in Luton, wages are often disproportionately low:

“In 2009, the median gross pay for full time workers living in Luton was £441.9 per week, compared to £509 for those living in the East region. However, for people working in Luton (who may or may not live in Luton) the median earnings level is £493. People working in Luton (including about 40% that live outside) earn more than people living in Luton, which suggests that a good deal of the better paid jobs in Luton are taken by people living outside the area. If you combine these earnings factors with evidence about the lower skills and qualification levels of Luton residents (see the topic section for skills) this indicates that there is a skills gap that is preventing some local residents from taking up good opportunities locally, and that some Luton people with higher qualifications are tempted to choose (or are forced) to move out of the Luton area to use their acquired skills and knowledge.

Luton exhibits greater inequality among income levels than the East region and other Districts in the East of England. The workers living in Luton and amongst the lowest 25% of earners in the town (in 2008), earned on average £16,950, which is about 6% below the average for the lower quartile for England and nearly 10% below the average for the lower quartile for the East region.

The average fulltime earnings (men and women) for workers living in Luton was £26,700 in 2008, which is about 23% below the rate for the East region, and 17% below that for England.”

Mal Hussain, regeneration

It is clear from this that for some reason Luton residents are not successfully competing for the best jobs within the borough. The Group examined potential barriers to local residents accessing these jobs below.

Education and training

Luton benefits from a great many training opportunities with a University, colleges, and adult training centres.

The University of Bedfordshire offers a full range of degrees in sciences and humanities and is increasingly well regarded. The campus at Putteridgebury specialises in management degrees. It has recently begun to offer internships with local employers who are keen to engage local graduates.

The number of applications to the University has nearly doubled in two years, and it scored top marks in a recent Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) audit in 2009. A new £34million Campus Centre has been opened as part of an £89million redevelopment project in the Luton campus, including the building of new student halls and a new Postgraduate and Continuous Development Centre due to open in 2013. A new Law Moot Court and "Business Pods" have also been opened on the Luton campus, and an extra £12m invested in Media and Computing facilities. A new site for healthcare students has been opened at Butterfield Park.

Research funding at the University has more than doubled since the Governments' Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) described their research work as "world leading" and "of international significance", and the University has been awarded a £1.1million grant to set up The Tilda Goldberg Centre for Social Work research.

The University works closely with employers on its curriculum, while forging close links with over 5500 UK companies to provide training and industry accredited courses.

In 2009, 92% of graduates were in work and/or further study within six months of graduation.

Barnfield College has expanded greatly in recent years and as well as offering A-Levels and vocational courses now also offers Foundation Degrees, which are equivalent to the first year of a standard university degree. There is also a technology campus offering well regarded industry standard technical qualifications such as Microsoft Certified Professional and CISCO. Barnfield runs Adult Apprenticeships, 16-24 apprenticeships, and a variety of trade courses such as bricklaying, carpentry, plumbing and motor repair. It is well regarded in the hospitality industry, providing training from hotel management, chefs, hairdressing and many other vocational courses. Barnfield has been working with Job Centre Plus to provide short courses for the unemployed to prepare them for certain roles identified by potential employers. A new Technical College will be opening in the Kimpton Road area in 2011/12 which will bring even more opportunities.

Barnfield mentioned that there was low uptake for the Adult Apprenticeships even though several companies had come forward to offer places this is possibly due to the very low salaries associated with apprenticeships.

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) cut will hit local students very hard as many of them qualified for this and used it to pay for their transport and books. Barnfield is trying to ameliorate this for current students by helping with transport costs and will be looking in to further ways to support their students.

Luton Adult Community Learning also provides further education and short courses

to people across the town:

Luton Adult Community learning provides learning in some 50 venues across Luton. Yearly we enrol over 6,500 learners. Over a thousand of these are Skills for Life learners which includes, Literacy, Numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages. These courses are often a pre-requisite for gaining employment. The service also offers courses in a range of subjects to both help support learners to obtain employment and supports them in their careers at work. These courses include, Business Administration, Information technology and Customer Care. The service also offers a range of NVQ courses at both level 2 (GCSE) and level 3 ("A" Level) in Social Care, Teaching Support and Child Care.

The service has over 3,000 enrolments on non-vocational leisure learning provision. Predominately this aimed at people who wish to pursue their leisure interests. Increasingly however the service is delivering courses to meet specific needs in Luton such as Trips and Falls, Why Recycle, Affordable Warmth and Get to Know your Local Council. Often this provision can be a first step into more formal learning for qualifications.

The service also holds a contract to deliver Information, Advice and Guidance for people who want to know more about work and learning opportunities. This is delivered on a one to one basis as well as to groups. All learners who attend courses at Luton Adult Community Learning are entitled to this service. The Information, Advice and Guidance Advisers also visit many groups to support participants to gain employment by running sessions on Job Search Skills, CV Writing and Interview Techniques.

The service is also involved in a number of initiatives to support people into work. These have included Economic Participation which in the past two years has worked with over 500 individuals. The service is currently involved in a bid to the "Growth Fund" to support economic activity in Luton and the surrounding area. The future strategy for the service is that it will increasingly be part of bids for funding to support economic activity locally

Roger Cannon, Luton Adult Community Learning

There is also a range of private provision in town from tutoring companies to companies offering secretarial courses.

Much of the training, however, is not free. Although Barnfield receives funding to support those on out of work benefits for over 6 months, and those who are economically inactive, this funding fluctuates and it is not always clear which courses would be available to those without the means to pay for them.

JobCentreplus also provides funding for certain demographics but this too changes depending on the amount of time people have been out of work, and what is funded can change year by year. There is no reliable, central point where unemployed residents can find information on courses for which they may qualify.

RECOMMENDATION 14: that the Executive works with all training providers to provide one central place such as the council website or a local paper where all free courses and apprenticeships (including adult apprenticeships) are regularly advertised together with simple application criteria.

RECOMMENDATION 15: that the Executive, Job Centre Plus and local educators map

their education activities to make sure that all groups have fair access to training (i.e. cheap/free training opportunities are not focussed solely on certain age groups or locations)

Transitory businesses

This was noted as an issue when considering Good Quality jobs – for example call centres or warehouses which are set up and employ hundreds of people for short periods before making them redundant and moving to other towns or countries.

Luton Borough Council's Business Development section researches businesses and offers space in business parks and other incentives only to businesses which it has reason to believe will commit to remaining in Luton and employing a good number of local people.

The Task and Finish group does recognise that part time jobs can give some opportunity for experience and progression, but supports the decision of the Regeneration department to manage business parks to encourage long term investment by companies.

Supporting local people to apply for Good Quality local jobs

The Task and Finish Group looked at what support the Council and its partners could offer to local people to make sure that they were in the best position to apply for good quality jobs within the town, rather than having to travel outside it.

Two of the main barriers to local employment looked to be transport and training.

Although there has been a slow down in construction work since the recession, there are still several large building works being undertaken in the town under the Building Schools for Future banner, including TOKKO, a youth centre in the town centre, being built with money from the "MYPLACE" national fund. Development is also expected in Napier Park and Power Court. These projects are run carefully so that the construction companies have to employ a certain number of local people and apprentices as part of their contract. Below is an example:

Considering the unique nature of the TOKKO project (value, scale and high specification of design and materials) we are proposing the following KPIs in relating to apprenticeships and local jobs;

- Local unskilled labour employed during construction - 40% of labourers employed by construction has a permanent residence within 15 miles of Luton.
- Local skilled staff employed on projects during construction - 40% proportion of skilled employees sourced from within 1 hour travel time from Luton.
- Local sub-contractors procured on projects during construction - 10% proportion procured from within 15 miles of Luton.
- Materials procured locally during construction - 10% procured within 15 miles of Luton.
- Apprenticeships provided by supply chain - One.

Wayne Simpson | Luton Learning and Community Partnership New Projects Manager

Another main barrier is that good quality jobs available in Luton are often not advertised in the local press where residents can see them. This has been raised as an

issue by residents and confirmed by desktop research. The quantity and quality of jobs advertised in the job centre and in the local press is not always representative of the quality of the jobs actually available in the town.

It was noted that the Council itself tends to advertise for its top posts and highly remunerated interim posts through agencies which do not necessarily advertise in Luton. Although these are aimed at attracting a high quality of candidate nation wide they also deny local people who may have the necessary skills the chance to apply unless they can find out which agencies are used.

There are sound economic and environmental reasons why it would be beneficial for well paid jobs in the Council to be offered to residents. Local area knowledge, a personal, long term stake in the success of the Council, reduced turnover and reduced absenteeism due to a shorter trip to work would combine with larger amounts of their salary invested in Luton property and spent in Luton businesses. Having a clear progression route for local people to achieve good salaries without leaving the town would increase community cohesion.

Where the Council feels that it will not find suitably qualified candidates within Luton, the question should be asked why this is the case. Luton has a University and several colleges offering training from NVQ to PhD, and the Council itself has a large workforce and a training programme which should provide for succession planning.

RECOMMENDATION 16: that the Executive advertises all positions, including interim, temporary and high profile, on its website. Where this is not practical because of agency contracts, that it publicises which agencies it uses and those agencies are asked to particularly consider applications from local residents.

In addition, the Council is seen as an employer of choice in the town and other businesses may look to it for good employment practice. If the Council promotes and employs local people then it offers continuity to businesses and may challenge their own employment practices.

The Council has a well established and successful online job application website which is regularly visited by thousands of job seekers. The application form is streamlined and there is an opportunity to ask screening questions.

RECOMMENDATION 17: that the Executive opens up its jobs website to local companies looking to recruit for good quality jobs, for a small fee. This would provide small local companies with a value for money recruitment solution. It would be a practical way of encouraging businesses to recruit locally and would also provide a one-stop-shop for job seekers saving them time on filling out numerous application forms.

Future Progress

The Task and Finish Group was concerned that, once made, the recommendations may

suffer inertia through a lack of clarity over which officers were responsible for carrying them out. Accordingly, there is one further recommendation regarding the future progress of this report:

RECOMMENDATION 18: That the Executive provides the Overview and Scrutiny Board with a response to the recommendations within two months and outlines any recommendations it proposes to implement; a lead Portfolio Holder and a lead officer responsible for implementation and a timescale for when each of the recommendations are to be implemented.

Evidence

The Task and Finish Group had a three month period to consider evidence and write the recommendations. The Group had five public meetings, which were advertised in Luton Line and the local press. The Group spoke to local specialists and an unemployed resident.

- Mal Hussain (LBC Regeneration)
- Chris Pagdin (LBC Head of Planning)
- Laura Church (LBC Head of Environment and Regeneration)
- Marie Green – Job Centre Plus Regional Manager
- Rachel Wallsgrove – Barnfield College Head of Adult and Employer Sales
- Glynn Jones – Chief Executive Officer of London Luton Airport
- Cllr Barry Neale – Head of Overview and Scrutiny Board
- Abigail White – unemployed resident
- 60 residents through an [online survey](#).

Representatives for the Group also attended Luton's Environment and Economy Board, which consisted of partners from:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • EEDA | • Wenta Business Support |
| • Luton Sixth Form College | • Job Centre Plus |
| • Marsh Farm Futures | • Princes Trust |
| • Skills Funding Agency | • Basepoint |
| • University of Bedfordshire | • Business Link |

An online survey was put on the front page of the Luton Borough Council website to invite contributions from residents and gathered 60 contributions.

The Luton Local Area Assessment was released during the evidence gathering period of the Task and Finish Group and has been considered as evidence.

In February 2010 CEDOS, the Chief Economic Development Officers Society, together with ADEPT, the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport produced a Recession Report which advised on strategies and approaches for local authorities to consider to tackle the effects of the recession. It has several useful “best practice” scenarios, although it was published before the Coalition Government published its additional spending cuts.

In early 2010 there was a Task and Finish Group Report on Fear of Crime, which has also been considered.

Luton Borough Council Citizen Engagement department have recently undertaken two in depth consultation exercises which relate to Job Creation and Economic Growth - Economic Development Strategy research of 500 residents and the Business Survey (290 Luton firms). The Group has also looked at departmental strategies and documents located on the intranet, such as the Housing Strategy on <http://www.luton.gov.uk/housing/>, and Performance information from http://www.luton.gov.uk/internet/council_government_and_democracy/

Economic Development Strategy Research May 2010

In March 2010, Luton Borough Council asked CELLO **mruk** research to conduct a survey of residents for the Economic Development Strategy 2010.

A quota-controlled Borough-wide telephone survey of 503 adult residents (aged 16-74) was undertaken in April-May 2010. This is a headline summary of the figures. The full report is available on request.

The survey looked at people's employment status and training and analysed this in the context of their age, location, ethnicity and disability status.

Employment Status

- 59% of respondents were in full or part time paid employment. 18% were not in full or part time paid employment, and 4% were students.
- Two thirds of student respondents were not in any form of employment. Around one third of student respondents work in paid employment part time (29 hours or less per week).
- 51% of non working respondents indicated that they were retired. 22% look after the family / home. 8% are out of work and not claiming Job Seekers Allowance; while 7% are claiming Job Seekers Allowance. 6% said they were out of work due to long term illness or disability. One respondent indicated that she was a full time carer.
- Nearly one quarter of working respondents indicated that no qualifications would be needed for their current job; and 19% said a Degree would be necessary.
- 73% of working respondents indicated that they are required to use a personal computer or another form of computerised equipment at work.

Participation in Training and Learning

- The majority of respondents rated themselves excellent or good in all three skill areas of reading English, writing English, and mathematics.
- Mathematics had the highest frequency of a self assessed "poor" rating as a skill level (5%).
- 30% of respondents have not been involved in learning or training for six or more years. 22% last studied 1-5 years ago. 22% have studied within the last year (including 5% within the last 4 weeks of the survey). About the same number of people are either currently studying/learning (14%) as have never studied since leaving school (13%).
- 56% of respondents who were currently studying or last did so within the previous 12 months have been involved in vocational or work-related skills and knowledge training. Nearly one third (31%) were on a course leading to an academic career or qualification; and 15% were involved in training or learning for personal development. 20% were involved in academic studies; 11% studied ICT or computing; while 10% undertook training in the field of care provision.
- Respondents' employers paid for just over half their training (52%). 19% of respondents paid for studies themselves. There was no cost involved for 12%.

- 32% of respondents trained at work; while 23% did so at a training company. 19% attended college; and 9% attended University. Less than 10% trained at other locations.
- Majority of respondents believe they would not need to develop any skills either for work (58%) or personal reasons (62%). 10% of respondents feel they will need to develop their IT / computing skills for both work and personal reasons.
- 42% of respondents would look for information about training and learning on websites. 21% would locate information at college; while 19% would go to the library.
- Overall, 73% of respondents indicated that there are no barriers to learning or training, while just over one quarter of respondents (27%) indicated that there are barriers, including cost, childcare, and disability.
- If given the option, respondents indicated a preference for training at home (46%), college (45%); and at work (38%).
- Just over two thirds (68%) of respondents indicated that they have qualifications. 36% have GCSE/GNVQ/A Level qualifications. 23% have a University or CNA degree, 15% have Trade/Industry/Professional qualifications; while 12% have SCE Standard Grades (or equivalent).
- 8% of the respondents with qualifications indicated that they were awarded overseas, of which 71% are recognised in the UK.

Employment Circumstances – Demographic Comparisons

- Wards with highest rate of full or part time paid employment: Barnfield (74%); Wigmore (72%); Crawley (71%); Challney (70%)
- Wards with highest rate of those not in full or part time paid employment: Round Green (37%); Limbury (29%); Biscot (27%); Farley (27%)
- More men in paid employment than women (65% vs. 54%)
- More respondents in 35-64 age group in paid employment (70% vs. 55% of 16-34 age group & 6% of 65-74)
- 16-34 only age group with students (21%)
- More white respondents in paid employment than non white (60% vs. 56%)
- More non white respondents are students than white (10% vs. 4%)
- More respondents identifying as disabled are not in paid employment than those who do not so identify (43% vs. 16%)

Community Safety Survey 2009

A Community Safety Survey was commissioned in order to provide information relating to the public's perception and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). In July 2009, 1058 telephone interviews were conducted across Luton. The Community Safety Survey includes a vast amount of detailed information relating to many very specific aspects of residents' perceptions regarding crime and Anti Social Behaviour which can be accessed in the full report .

Overall Findings

- 80% of people are satisfied with their local¹ area as a place to live
- 93% feel safe outside in their local area during the day
- 33% do not feel safe outside after dark
- The key reasons for feeling unsafe were identified as being youths/ gangs/ teenagers hanging about and, general fear of something likely to happen
- 42% of people thought that burglary was a problem in their local area
- 36% of people thought that robbery was a problem in their local area
- 31% of people thought that vehicle crime was a problem in their local area
- About a fifth of people felt that levels of burglary, robbery and violent crime have got worse in the last 12 months

¹ "local" is defined as the area within 15-20 minutes walking distance from the respondents' home

Web Survey of Residents

As part of the Task and Finish Group, a web survey was put onto the Council's website Luton.gov.uk over the Christmas period. 60 residents completed the survey.

Residents offered a variety of views on the availability of work in Luton, but the majority of responses outlined the difficulty of finding a job within Luton at all skills levels, with some residents noting that the better jobs seemed to be advertised externally. Luton's strong points were seen to lie in its proximity to London and good transport network which allowed residents to be flexible in their pursuit of work. Residents also commented on the job cuts which the Council itself was making in response to reductions in government grant.

Full replies to the survey are available in the APPENDIX. Some questions and answers are reproduced below.

Q5. How would you define a good quality job?

- One that's at least above minimum wage, and doesn't involve anti-social hours.
- Of sufficient length to be able to plan financial commitments securely Using the skills that I have Interesting Flexible enough to maintain a work life balance

Q6. Do you think there are sufficient jobs for your level of qualification?

- Not a lot of specialist IT jobs or companies that require these skills in Luton.
- There are not enough jobs for any level of qualifications.

Q7. Do you think there are sufficient jobs for your level of experience?

- The current trend for interim managers means no advertising of vacant posts
- There are very few jobs at beginner level that allow constant progression. As University fees rise, the number of school / college leavers requiring employment will rise. Most jobs are either at a very basic level with no progression, aimed at "graduates" or require experience. Apart from a handful of apprenticeships, School leavers either have the choice of Asda, or nothing.

Q8. What is your experience of finding a job in or within travelling distance of Luton?

- If you just look at the local press there are hardly any jobs. I would probably have to work in London or accept temporary work.
- I have only ever managed it once, all other jobs have been in London

Q9. What do you feel are the main barriers preventing people finding work in Luton?

- Limited vacancies and opportunity, particularly for better paid employment Many jobs not advertised locally
- Too many temp jobs

Q10. What do you think could be done to encourage companies to invest in Luton?

- Improve infrastructure and stop cutting jobs.
- Raise the profile of Luton nationally highlighting positive aspects. Raise the aspirations of young people in Luton, and reduce the number of people depending on the benefit system.