

SOCIAL INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2003/04

Introduction

The Council's constitution, introduced in December 2001, provides that each of the scrutiny committees reports once a year to the Scrutiny Board. This is the first annual report of the Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee because the former Lifelong Learning and Social inclusion committee reported for 2002-03.

The Committee

During the year covered by this report the Membership of the Committee was as follows:

| | |
|------------|-----------------------|
| Chair | Councillor Shaw |
| Vice Chair | Councillor Skepelhorn |
| Member | Councillor Garrett |
| Member | Councillor Iqbal |
| Member | Councillor McGarvie |
| Member | Councillor Timoney |

The terms of reference of the Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee cover the following:

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Executive portfolios | Deputy Executive Leader (part) Environment and Housing (part) |
| Functions | Children's Issues and Initiatives Youth Offending Team Corporate Parent Looked After Children Anti-poverty Housing Benefits and welfare Services to vulnerable people Disabilities Exclusion and disadvantage Health and Health Action Zone Elders Mental Health Homes and Day Centres |

Mentor

The Scrutiny Board appointed Councillor Mead to oversee the work of the Social Inclusion scrutiny committee

Panels

Members of Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee served on the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee with the County Council and the Children's Services Panel.

The Role of Scrutiny Committees

The role of scrutiny committees is as follows

- To hold the Executive to account
 - By considering Executive decisions which are 'called in'
 - By giving advice to the Executive about matters included in their forward plan
- To monitor and evaluate performance
 - Using performance Indicators
 - And best Value reviews of services
- To examine topics of public interest or concern
- To consider topics referred by the Executive
- To undertake policy development, reviews and revision
- To undertake the role of community champion
 - By reviewing the performance of other public and 'common' services
 - By considering matters affecting the area and/or local people

Work completed

The Committee has met generally every four weeks throughout the last municipal year. The Committee continued with part of the work programme that had previously been set by the Lifelong Learning and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee on the basis of the advice tendered by the Scrutiny Board to choose a limited number of topics and to carry out an in depth scrutiny of those topics and developed new topics during the course of the year.

The topics chosen by the committee for 2003-04 were as follows:

| In depth scrutiny | Monitoring |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Care and accommodation for the elderly | Implementation of the new housing allocations system |
| Tenant participation | Homelessness |
| Community care for vulnerable groups | |
| Social housing development in neighbouring areas | |

Best Value Reviews

The following Members were appointed to monitor and scrutinise the best value reviews being carried out during the period covered by this report.

| Review topic | Councillors |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Mental Health services | McGarvie |
| | Shaw |
| | Skepelhorn |
| Physical Disability services | Garrett |
| | Iqbal |
| | Shaw |
| Housing (strategy and private sector) | Iqbal |
| | McGarvie |
| | Shaw |
| Passenger Transport | Garrett |
| | Shaw |
| Services for children aged 0-10 | McGarvie |
| | Skepelhorn |
| | Timoney |

Performance

The Committee, following the advice of the Scrutiny Board, appointed two members to monitor statistical information about the service delivery performance of services coming within the remit of the committee. The members of the committee appointed to this task were Councillors Shaw and Skepelhorn. There were no performance issues referred to the Committee by the two nominated members.

During the Course of the year the Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee decided that each of the scrutiny committees should receive reports on the priority performance indicators relating to services within their remit.

Work in Progress

The committee has carried out a great deal of work on the topics of care for the elderly and services for vulnerable adults and has established two broadly based working parties to assist with the task of collecting and interpreting evidence and information. A contingent from the older persons working party visited Liverpool and Warrington to see and evaluate the approach those two local authorities have adopted to the provision of accommodation and services for older people. The committee has monitored the development and implementation of the new lettings system for housing accommodation.

Future Work Programme

The topics currently being worked on are approaching completion following which the committee will make a start on the scrutiny of social housing development in neighbouring areas. This is likely to have a bearing on the urban development corporation being set up to implement the Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis growth area.

Councillor Shaw

Chair of the Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee

7th April 2004