

AREA COMMITTEE: BISCOT, HIGH TOWN & ROUND GREEN

DATE: TUESDAY 29TH JUNE 2004

SUBJECT: AREA REPORT

REPORT BY: HEAD OF LOCAL DEMOCRACY

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IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL	COMMUNITY SAFETY
EQUALITIES	ENVIRONMENT
FINANCIAL	CONSULTATIONS
STAFFING	OTHER

WARDS AFFECTED: BISCOT, HIGH TOWN & ROUND GREEN

PURPOSE

1. To bring before the committee an update on the issues that were raised following the last Area Committee held on the 26th January 2004.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. Biscot, High Town and Round Green Area Committee is recommended to note the report and make recommendations on further action where required.

BACKGROUND

3. This report encapsulates the progress of the area committee since the implementation of the initiative in October 2001. In addition it includes information on projects and activities supported by the committee and by liaison and mediation with both internal and external service areas, pursues the concerns raised by both the local community and Members of the council.

REPORT

4. The issues for this area committee, which has been mentioned in paragraph 3 have been collated and are outlined in the attached plan shown as **Appendix A** of this report.
5. Members of the public who appear on the current database were informed of this meeting by post on the 8th June 2004 and publicity for this cycle of meetings has appeared in the Luton News, Herald & Post on the 19th & 20th May, 9th & 10th June and the 23rd & 24th June 2004. It has also appeared in the Luton on Sunday on the 23rd May and the 13th & 20th June 2004 respectively.
6. Additionally, posters were also dispatched to every General Practitioner, Dental Practice, Chiropodists, Chiropractors, Educational establishment, Library, Sports Centre, Community & Youth Centre, Day Centre, Places of Worship and Sheltered Housing provision, across the borough. The information gave dates for every Area Committee and was then followed up with specific information about the Area Committee, relevant to that area.
7. The Area Committee web site is regularly updated and can be accessed on www.luton.gov.uk/areacommittees

AREA PROJECTS

SUMMER ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

8. Members may recall that over the past two years it has been the custom and practice of this area committee to allocate the sum of £1,500 per ward for the purposes of facilitating activities for children and young people during the course of the school summer holiday period. This funding would be just a contribution and may/would compliment other funding streams that have been made available through 'On Track' - 'Positive Activities for Young People' scheme or the youth service
9. The activities would be organised either by the Council or through organisations registered with the youth service, whereby staff and or other facilitators have been checked in accordance with the Criminal Records Bureau procedures.
10. At the time of writing this report there were no further applications under the area projects scheme.

MINI WARD FORUMS

11. This committee will be aware that during the course of October, November 2003 and January 2004 two pilot schemes, took place within the Crawley, Stopsley & Wigmore Area Committee and the Challney Leagrave & Lewsey Area Committee, to test out two mechanisms that could possibly replace the community process, that was then in existence across the town.
12. This came about following the number of concerns that had been raised by Councillors, officers and the public about Luton Borough Council operating two

area based democratic / consultation mechanisms, that is to say area committees and community forums. In particular, the issues of resources (time, staffing and funding) and overlapping of work objectives have been highlighted, with some local residents taking the opportunity to use both arenas to raise the same concerns and issues. Officers are also aware that there is a desire on the part of Members of the Council to develop area committees by extending their functions and increasing the frequency of meetings. It was clearly understood by all participants in the area committee / community forum process that what was being suggested was not a proposal to reduce the level of community involvement but rather to improve and enhance this involvement in the most effective way.

13. The pilots commenced at the Challney, Leagrave & Lewsey Area Committee on the 21st October 2003 with a Service Surgery. The meeting was attended by 95 people and during the course of the pilot, 36 issues were recorded for action.
14. Those in attendance expressed overwhelming support for the surgeries and said they would like them to continue and be part of the area committee process in the future.
15. The first of the mini ward forum approaches took place at the Crawley, Stopsley & Wigmore Area Committee on the 4th November 2003. Again the meeting was well attended with 52 people present, all of whom actively engaged in the forum process. Having had the benefit of observing the two arenas it was interesting to note that where the service surgery had a more personal touch, the forum setting was far more cross cutting and engaging, thereby creating a more cohesive approach to community issues at a local level.
16. The above format was reversed for the January 2004 cycle of meetings. The Crawley, Wigmore & Stopsley Area Committee, did not attract as large an audience as one would have liked and equally those who attended were not as attracted to the service surgery as they were to the forum approach on the previous occasion. However, the forum model was well received by the community in the Challney, Leagrave and Lewsey wards and a wide majority expressed a preference for this type of arena in the future, which was a reversal from the previous occasion.
17. The recommendation to adopt the 'Mini Ward Forum' approach was supported by Area Committee Board at their meeting on the 30th March 2004 and subsequently formally agreed by the Council's Executive at their meeting on the 13th April 2004.
18. It is anticipated that this new approach will -
 - Use the mini ward forums to inform and shape the agendas for area committees.
 - Inform community plans at an area and ward level.
 - Be a mechanism for capacity building in the community.
 - Proactively address democratic renewal and citizenship.

BUDGET UPDATE

19. Please see (**Appendix B**)

AREA TOURS

20. The area tours for 2004/2005 are set out below.

Biscot, High Town & Round Green		
Ward	Date	Time
Biscot	11th May 2004	09.30 Hrs
High Town	2nd July 2004	09.30 Hrs
Round Green	24th September 2004	09.30 Hrs
Biscot	22nd November 2004	09.30 Hrs
High Town	14th January 2005	09.30 Hrs
Round Green	1st March 2005	09.30 Hrs

PROPOSAL/OPTION

21. It is proposed that Members of the Biscot, High Town & Round Green Area Committee note the report.
22. In relation to the proposal for a contribution towards summer activities for young people members may opt to, grant the proposal, make a reduced contribution to the one that is recommended or refuse the proposal. There would be no benefits in making a deferment, as this area committee would not be meeting again until after the summer recess.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

23. Much of the work conducted by the Area Committee will have an impact on Council services and will address issues such as accessibility, local participation and the general quality of life within the Borough.

COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

24. A large amount of the work being pursued and undertaken by service areas and other outside agencies will make a major contribution to community safety and need to be considered alongside other schemes which may be under consideration or being implemented.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

25. Any contribution made by the Area Committee will be met from existing budgets.

ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

26. The implications of the work being undertaken will address and improve the environment, create safer communities and address the quality of life for local people.

APPENDIX

27. Appendix A – Updates on issues from previous meetings
Appendix B – Budget update.

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

None