REGENERATION AND CITIZENSHIP SCRUTINY

7.30pm on Wednesday 12th May 2004

PRESENT: Councillors R J Davis, A Hussain, Mead and Strange

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Boyle, Franks, Howes, Q Hussain, Ireland,McKenzie and Rutstein.

25 APOLOGIES (REF: 1)

Apologies for absence from the presentation were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bullock and Skepelhorn.

26 TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (REF: 6)

The Chair welcomed Members of the Environment and Non-Executive Functions Scrutiny Committee and other Members of the Council who had been invited to attend the presentation.

The Business and Inward Investment Team Leader gave a presentation with regard to the Town Centre Development Framework.

In particular, the presentation provided an overview of the key principles in the Development Framework.

The meeting was advised that the framework would set the scene for the future of the town centre in terms of transport, traffic and the way it looked. Bids had been made to a number of different sources but £150,000 had been secured to enable the Council to recruit consultants to develop the picture/vision for the centre for the future.

The Committee were advised that the draft Development Framework represented the consultant's recommendations to the Council on proposals to regenerate the Town Centre. These recommendations would be used as the basis for consultation with the wider public, stakeholders and key strategic agencies. Amendments to the Development Framework would take place following the consultation process.

Members noted that as wide as possible public consultation process would be needed and consultation would be aimed at the following:

- Residents and town centre users through an exhibition in the Arndale Centre, information on the Council's website and articles in the local press and Lutonline.
- Community, faith and voluntary groups through the Luton Assembly.

- Businesses via a business breakfast with facilitated workshops. This would be undertaken in partnership with Luton Town Centre Partnership.
- A briefing to the Luton Forum.
- A more detailed briefing/feedback session for Members.
- Lunchtime briefing for Luton Borough Council staff.

Additional options would also be investigated such as use of the citizen's panel, a competition for schools, on-street face-to-face interviews, use of focus groups and attendance at other consultation events/meetings such as Area Committees.

The period of public consultation would last until the end of June and was intended to gauge the level of public support for the key principles of the Development Framework. During the summer the key principles would be developed into a more detailed action plan on how the Development Framework can be implemented. This would include interventions and actions required by agencies such as the Council, private sector developers and other agencies such as English Partnerships and EEDA. The final Development Framework and Action Plan would need to be endorsed by the Council in September. This would then be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance or form part of the Local Development Framework.

Members of the Committee and other Members present raised a number of issues including the following:

- Access through the Arndale Centre out of normal shopping hours.
- Better access from the High Town Area.
- Need to consult the business community particularly those in the town centre area.
- Need to consult the Senior Peoples' Forum and the Disability and Advisory Forum.

The Head of Planning advised the Committee that the main reason for the tight timetable was to respond to criticisms from Central Government about the lack of actions identified in the draft Framework and through the consultation process to further identify the actions which needed to be taken.

A Member of the Committee sought and received assurance that the scrutiny function would form part of the process for evaluating the results of the consultation exercises.

Resolved: (i) That the Team Leader (Business and Investment) be thanked for her informative presentation.

(ii) That the public consultation process for the Town Centre Development Framework set out in the report of the Director of Environment and Regeneration

(Ref: 6.1) be commended to the Executive subject to (a) the revised timetable being incorporated and (b) consultees being encouraged to suggest alternatives to the proposals as well as commenting on the proposals.

(Note: (i) The meeting ended at 8.20pm.

(ii) Councillor A Hussain declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in the subject matter before the Committee in his capacity as a Private Hire Operator.)