

LIFELONG LEARNING 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 Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee because, until May 2003 there was a Lifelong Learning and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee.

THE COMMITTEE

The Membership of the Committee at the beginning of the year was as follows:

Chair	Councillor McKenzie
Vice Chair	Councillor Iqbal
Member	Councillor Ashraf
Member	Councillor Bullock
Member	Councillor Campbell
Member	Councillor Hand
Member	Councillor Hinkley
Member	Councillor Pedersen
Member	Councillor Simmons
Member	Councillor Skepelhorn
Member	Councillor Wates
Co-opted Diocesan Representatives	Rev. P. Budgell (vacant)
Parent Governor Representatives	C.D. Brown V.W. Cowell
Employee Representatives	J. Callow (vacant) G. Ryan J. Wigglesworth

During the year Rev. Peter Budgell resigned as a diocesan representative and Jack Callow and John Wigglesworth resigned as employee representatives and Linda Crick was appointed as an employee representative.

The terms of reference of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee cover the following:

Executive Portfolio	Lifelong Learning
Functions	Schools Education and Achievement Training Further Education and Higher Education links Post 16 and Learning Skills Council Adult Education Libraries Developing Young People as Citizens Youth Services

MENTORS

The Scrutiny Board appointed Councillors McGarvie and A. Hussain to oversee the work of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee.

PANELS

Members of Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee served on the Best Value Scrutiny Panel and the Swimming Pool and Leisure Facilities Scrutiny Panel. The panel that had been set up to scrutinise teacher recruitment and retention was not re-established as the newly formed committee decided to deal with this topic itself.

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 the work programme that had previously been set 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.

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

In depth scrutiny	Monitoring
School admissions	Educational attainment – key stage results and value added
Achievement – an examination of what works	OfSTED inspections – LEA support for schools in special measures
Special needs children – assessment and support	Community Education and Development – Best Value Review
	Private Finance Initiative Projects
	Teacher Recruitment and Retention

The former Lifelong Learning and Social Inclusion Scrutiny committee selected the Schools Admissions topic. The topic was selected, as there were issues around accessibility and popular schools, in particular at the transition from primary to secondary phase. The key objectives of the review were to provide better information/advice for parents, to operate a clear and fair policy, to identify where the problems were, to ensure adequate transport/safe journeys to school, to account for the shifting and growth of demand, to take account of the effect on community cohesion and to avoid the splitting of siblings. The scope was to include all schools, school organisations and post 16 preparations.

The table below outlines the sources from which the evidence was gathered:

Date Report	Officer reporting	Substance of report
20/06/02 6.2	Admissions Manager	Admissions policy and catchment area system Legislation governing the admission of pupils to schools <i>The Committee determined the scope of the topic and how the scrutiny should be conducted.</i>
09/09/02	Director of Lifelong Learning	Admissions policy and practice DfES code of practice 7 principles applied by the Admissions Forum Over subscription criteria Phase transfers 2002 Casual admissions Appeals Pressure on school places Legislative changes proposed by the DfES

24/10/02 5.2	Head of Resources and Performance	School capacities Allocation of additional places <i>The Committee requested information about the School Organisation Plan, temporary accommodation and revised capacities by catchment area</i>
	Pupil Access Service Manager	New legislation and code of practice on admissions – oral report <i>The Committee asked for further information when the final details are known and for the estimated timetable for setting up the new admissions forum.</i>
21/11/02 5.3	Assets Planning and Regeneration Manager	Temporary accommodation, funding for conversion to permanent and the method of prioritising conversion. – oral report
5.4	Pupil Access Service Manager	Timetable for the establishment of the new admissions forum (by March 2003 for admissions in September 2004) – oral report <i>The Committee requested a list of the items considered by the forum.</i>
27/02/03 6.5	Pupil Access Service Manager	Oral report <i>The Committee decided to suspend further work on this topic until the results of admissions and phase changes in September 2003 were known</i>
25/09/03 7.6	Pupil Access Service Manager	Results of admissions and phase changes for the autumn term <i>Conclusions</i>
23/10/03	Scrutiny Officer	Summary of Evidence <i>Final report to be produced</i> <i>Recommend that capital funding be set aside in 2004/05 and in future years to support localised primary school expansions in order to maintain the Council's policy of 'local schools for local children'.</i>

The final report, which outlined the conclusions and recommendations, was submitted to the Executive on 19th January 2004. As a result the Executive agreed to set aside capital funding in 2004/05 and in future years to support local primary school expansions enabling the Council to retain and maintain its policy of local schools for local children.

The committee has continued to monitor the support provided by the Council as a local education authority to schools in special measures; initially Halyard High School and latterly Ashcroft High School.

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/members
Passenger Transport	Pedersen
	Simmons
	Mr. C.D. Brown

The final report on the review of Passenger Transport was considered by the committee and commended to the Executive, which adopted its recommendations. Funding for implementation of those recommendations has been approved with effect from April 2004.

PERFORMANCE

The Committee, following the advice of the Scrutiny Board, appointed 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:

Service	Councillor/member
Schools performance	Hinkley
Attainment	Mr G. Ryan
Attendance	Skepelhorn
Youth Service	Iqbal
Special needs and early years	Simmons
LEA performance	Mr V. Cowell
Libraries and Museums	Hinkley

There were no performance issues referred to the Committee by the nominated members.

During the Course of the year the Scrutiny Board 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 undertaken a very substantial amount of work taking evidence and gathering information in relation to the achievement topic which focuses on educational attainment and looking at best practice locally and nationally to see whether it can be applied in Luton to improve the attainment of pupils in all LEA schools and at all key stages. To achieve this, other local authorities such as Camden and Newham have been invited to Luton to share best practice in all key stage from 1 to 4. The committee has recently received presentations from the two local colleges serving Luton to discuss how they raise attainment levels in their establishments. Members of this committee have also been on beacon open days held at Barking and Dagenham and Redbridge LEAs who again shared best practice on how they raised pupil attainment. LEA visits have been planned for members of the committee to visit Peterborough and Bath & North East Somerset LEAs. The evidence gathering stage is coming to the end in which the committee will be presented with best practice adopted by some of the schools in Luton. Also there is some consultation to be arranged to hear the views of year 11 pupils, parents and teachers, before Members can form conclusions and recommendations.

FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The committee has selected Special Needs Children – Assessment and Support' as its next major topic'. It is envisaged that this will not commence until the attainment topic has been completed. The committee will continue to monitor the matters listed above.

Councillor McKenzie

Chair of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee

25th March 2004