

SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP: FEAR OF CRIME

HELD ON FRIDAY 25th JUNE 2010

PRESENT: Councillors Garrett (Chair), Dolling, Neale, Stewart and Timoney

LBC SUPPORT OFFICERS / ADVISORS

Mark Farmer – Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Angela Fraser – Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Susan Rowland – Democratic Service Officer

WITNESSES

Councillor Ashraf – Portfolio Holder for Community Safety

ACTION

42 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Bullock and Singh

43 NOTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (REF: 3)

It was agreed that the notes of the meeting held on 4th June 2010 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

44 FINAL REPORT (REF: 5)

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety Councillor Ashraf was in attendance at the meeting to respond to Members questions.

Following the consultations carried out by Members involving over 200 residents that included the focus groups carried out by BMG, it was found that the Task and Finish Group findings mirrored the findings in the BMG report. People's fear of crime was far in excess of actual crimes committed this was often due to having a Crown Court in the town that meant members of the public received information from the media regarding non-Luton cases that accelerated the fear of crime and therefore the public perception. Councillor Timoney felt that this situation could get worse with courts around the country closing that could result in more cases from other courts being referred to Luton in the future.

A Member asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety if the CDRP was the collective organisation who made decisions, or were there sub groups that branched from it, and which recommendations would the Executive have to respond to. The Task and Finish Group needed to be clear when framing recommendations that they are sent to the correct body for a response to be made.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety explained that SoLUTioNs is the crime and disorder partnership that deals with community safety issues. Recommendations from the Task and Finish Group should be sent to the Community Safety Executive the decision making body that will then refer them on to SoLUTioNs to action.

Councillor Neale stated that the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group would first go to the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting on the 29th July and then the Executive in August. The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety explained that some aspects of the recommendations within the Task and Finish Group would be the Council's responsibility with the others being the recommendations for the Community Safety Partnership. He stated that the Community Safety Partnership met quarterly.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager informed the Task and Finish Group that the Community Safety Partnership had a statutory responsibility to respond to any recommendations referred to them within 2 months.

Councillor Neale reiterated that the recommendations firstly had to be reported to Overview and Scrutiny Board. Once Overview and Scrutiny Board had agreed the recommendations they would be referred to the Council's Executive and the Community Safety Partnership Executive as appropriate. The Community Safety Executive would ensure that a response was received by the Council.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager informed the Group that Scrutiny had explored 'Best Practice' from other authorities. He explained that it was clear from consultation with residents that confusion arose about the different bodies responsible for community safety. He explained that residents were confused about the different bodies responsible for community safety. Councillor Dolling suggested that an appendix be included that explained what the different organisations were responsible for.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager proposed to summarise the

document in a 6 page leaflet that made it easier for members of the public to understand the roles of the different organisations involved in community safety.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager said that the consultation suggested the public wanted one point of contact, one telephone number whatever the problem, whether it was policing, criminal damage in housing, antisocial behaviour, and vandalism with a delegated person who could action their problem, monitor progress of their problem and report back the outcomes to the person concerned.

The Group came to the conclusion that :-

1. Communication between the different agencies was very important.
2. People wanted more reassurance – with more uniformed police including Police Community Safety Officers (PCSO's) involved in neighbourhood policing.
3. Councillors should play a much greater role in community safety and should be involved at Ward level through Ward Forums etc and Area Committees.
4. The public should be encouraged to be engaged more in community safety.
5. There was a need for one point of contact or telephone number for members of the public, and that the public were kept informed of the progress of their complaint.
6. That a leaflet be produced that summarised the various agencies involved in community safety.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety agreed with the Group's conclusions and informed Members that the figures for Luton were very encouraging. People had a perception or fear of crime, but that was not supported by the crime statistics.

The Chair mentioned the problems experienced at some schools at the end of the school day including incidents such as throwing bricks in residents' gardens. The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety suggested that Police be requested to be in attendance on occasions for an hour or so at the end of the school day at the schools where residents had experienced problems.

The Group agreed that:-

- (i) That the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Task and Finish Group, be authorised to make any

necessary changes required to finalise the report and recommendations.

- (ii) That the Task and Finish Group meet informally for one final time on the 15th July at 10.00 am to sign off the report for submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting on the 29th July 2010.

THE MEETING ENDED AT 16.00 pm