

REGENERATION AND CITIZENSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15th March 2007 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Mead (Chair); Councillors Bailey, R. J. Davis, Hinkley and Skepelhorn

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Strange

15 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)

An apology for absence from the meeting was received on behalf of Councillor Hoyle.

16 MINUTES (REFS: 2.1 AND 2.2)

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 5th and 8th February 2007 be taken as read, approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

17 TRUST STATUS FOR CULTURAL SERVICES (REF: 9.1)

The Head of Leisure and Community reported that following the success of the Council transferring its sport and physical recreation services to Active Luton in November 2005 and as a result of the budget process in February 2006 it was proposed to create a museums trust in the early part of the financial year 2007/08. As part of the budget process most recently undertaken, further proposals had been made to transfer both the arts service and library service to trusts later in 2007/08.

The Council had committed to the transfer of the museums service to trust status with the financial benefits built into next year's budget. There was also a commitment to realise financial benefits next year from transferring the arts and library services to trust status. The Committee were requested to consider the following options and to pass its views to the Executive for consideration:-

- i) Transfer the museums service on 1st July 2007 and the arts and library services on 1st April 2008.
- ii) Transfer the museums, arts and library services on 1st December 2007.
- iii) Identify alternative budget savings to the benefits realised by transfer.

A Member commented that the transfer of libraries was more complex than sport as there was a statutory element within the library service that the Council had a duty to provide. The transfer could not be done quickly and if the December date was too early, was there a possibility this could be

delayed? It was important to transfer the services correctly rather than quickly.

The Head of Leisure and Community confirmed that the Council had a duty to provide library services although there was no compulsion to meet standards and the library service had suffered budget reductions. The Head of Leisure and Community explained the Agreement would be based on the management of services on behalf of Luton Borough Council the assets belonged to the Council with the critical service embodied with the Trust. The management of branch libraries would be written into the agreement. Although a date of 1st December 2007 for transfer of the museums, arts and libraries to Trust Status was the target there may be flexibility to push the date back.

A Member enquired whether the Arts Carnival Centre was safeguarded. He also asked about the implementation of trust status in school libraries.

The Head of Leisure and Community explained that the school and main libraries worked closely together and that schools' requirements would be reflected in the Agreement. It was not yet decided whether school libraries would be transferred to trust status. The Arts Carnival Centre would be safeguarded.

The Chair asked if consultations had taken place with affected staff.

The Museums Services Manager had held 2 meetings with museum staff. The arts and library staff had not been consulted as yet. The Museums Services Manager had received positive feedback from the staff within the museum service they were very protective of the service. A shared folder had been created for staff to post their comments. She further commented that communication was the key and that staff were being updated all the time and were very positive about transferring to Trust status.

The Chair enquired whether the £6 million lottery bid for the Stockwood Discovery Centre had been ring-fenced.

The Head of Leisure and Community informed the Committee that the Stockwood Discovery Centre would not be leased to the Trust until the project had been completed.

Resolved: (i) That the report (Ref: 9.1) be noted.

(ii) That the Executive be informed that the Regeneration and Citizenship Scrutiny Committee agree a set target date of 1st December 2007 be implemented for the transfer of the museums, arts and library services to Trust Status.

(iii) That the Executive be informed that the implementation of 1st December 2007 for the transfer of the museums, arts and library service to

Trust Status be agreed subject to all the Council's statutory duties with regards to the transfer of the library service being met and the date be delayed if necessary to ensure all the Council's legal requirements are achieved.

18 ENCOURAGING AND SUPPORTING NEW BUSINESSES – PRESENTATION ON POSSIBLE STRATEGY FOR LUTON (REF: 9.2)

The Service Manager, Business and Economy gave a presentation on the various organisations that offered help and advice to businesses which included social enterprise. He explained that the Council offered support to businesses through its various departments including Trading Standards and Environmental Services.

A Member pointed out that businesses required a point of contact where they were directed to if they required advice.

The Service Manager, Business and Economy replied that a health check was carried out on the business concerned, that considered the type of assistance they required and the maturity of the business. A decision was then taken on where to direct the business depending on the partners who worked with the Council. Luton Borough Council aimed for joint working in this area with Bedfordshire County Council and South Bedfordshire District Council, Business Link and the Chamber Business.

Mr Allen Paterson from Basepoint gave a presentation on Basepoint's Butterfield site in Luton that assisted new businesses setting up by offering easy in and easy out flexible terms for leases together with a full time site management team. Butterfield site would be opened by the end of May 2007 with 100 business units available to let or lease, 17 units had already been reserved by innovative companies.

A Member commented that it was excellent that 17 units had already been let and asked when it was expected that the remaining 70-80% of units would be let.

Mr Allen Paterson replied that Basepoint were expecting 85% of units to be let within 18 months to 2 years. The site was nearing completion and the contactor had almost finished landscaping the site.

The Chair enquired how long companies stayed at a site such as Butterfield.

Mr Allen Paterson responded that the aim of Basepoint was to encourage new businesses to develop, many smaller companies leased a small unit for approximately 6 months, bigger businesses would be expected to stay in the larger units for 2-3 years. A Business Development Manager, Heather Pedder had been recruited to offer business advice and planning for start up businesses.

Mr Steve McAteer from Business Link gave a presentation on the running of the organisation following restructure of the services. He explained that Business Link for Essex (Xixion) had linked up with Business Link Hertfordshire (Exemplas) and was now Business Link East that delivered business advice in the east of England.

He further explained that there were currently 54 business advisers across the region, by the end of the year it was anticipated that there would be 90. A call centre was based at Hatfield. The representative remarked that businesses required one point of contact in the first instance and to be directed to other organisations that provided the appropriate support required. If there were too many organisations offering assistance to businesses it was the representative's opinion that businesses would not seek assistance. It was important that organisations offering business support worked together.

The Chair enquired if there was a charge for the workshops being offered to assist businesses?

Mr Steve McAteer replied that the workshops were free of charge; a voucher scheme was redeemed to any organisation on the scheme to assist them onto the next step or level of support.

A Member enquired what arrangements were in place that ensured organisations advice and activities were not duplicated?

The Service Manager, Business and Economy replied that Business Link are a key partner in delivering high quality, impartial information to businesses in Luton. As with all our local partners, combining resources and liaising closely on projects is going to provide maximum efficiency avoid duplication and will ensure we assist as many customers as possible.

Resolved: (i) That the report (Ref: 9.2) be noted.

(ii) That Business Link be requested to report on the progress and targets to a future meeting of Regeneration and Citizenship Scrutiny Committee in 9 months time.

(iii) That Mr Steve McAteer and Mr Allen Paterson be thanked for their interesting presentations.

19 RESPECT AGENDA – SCOPE (REF: 9.3)

The Scrutiny Officer gave a presentation on the mapping exercise outlining the Respect Agenda and discussed with Members the highlighted topics from the Respect Agenda that the Committee wished to scrutinise.

Members decided that the Scrutiny Officer needed to carry out further work, and that the Compliance Framework document of work in progress required updating on a regular basis. They agreed that the Compliance

Framework be commended to the relevant Heads of Services to enable them to develop appropriate interventions and monitor the achievements.

A Member pointed out that the Luton Forum had started examining the Respect Agenda and found the content to be too much for them to undertake. It was suggested that Scrutiny examined where the gaps were and what should be investigated, what was being done and how it was all being managed, this Committee had not reached that point yet.

Another Member suggested that the Scrutiny Officer liaised with the T.C.C.G (Tasking Co-ordinating and Commissioning Group) on areas of Council responsibility, their concerns and what subject required scrutinising. She stated that the T.C.C.G. did not feed back on each individual task of the Respect Agenda at every meeting but chose topics that caused concern. At every T.C.C.G. meeting from April a member from the Respect Task Force would be in attendance.

A Member stated that the Committee needed to decide the issues that needed addressing by the Council were working and the Luton Forum kept informed of the Council's progress.

Resolved: (i) That the report (Ref: 9.3) be noted.

(ii) That the Scrutiny Officer carry out further work to the Compliance Framework and update it on a regular basis.

(iii) That the Compliance Framework be commended to Heads of Department to help them assess further their respective services responses to the Respect Agenda.

(iv) That the Scrutiny Officer liaise with the T.C.C.G.(Tasking Commissioning and Co-ordinating Group) and the Luton Forum on the gaps and problems of the Respect Agenda and report to the next meeting of the Committee on issues identified within their remit to be scrutinised.

20 ANNUAL REPORT (REF: 9.4)

The Scrutiny Officer presented the draft Annual Report for 2006/07 to the Committee and agreed that:-

- item 5.5 (*given the cross cutting nature of the Respect Agenda, the compliance framework has identified a number of potential areas of most concern, on which the committee has decided to focus its efforts in the coming year*) on the Respect Agenda required additional work.

The Committee accepted the draft Annual Report for 2006/07 to be submitted to Scrutiny Board for submission to the Council meeting on 17th April 2007, subject to the matters discussed at this meeting being reflected within that report.

Resolved: (i) That the report (Ref: 9.4) be noted.

(ii) That the Committee accept the draft Annual Report for 2006/07 to be submitted to Scrutiny Board for submission to the Council meeting on 17th April 2007.

(iii) That the matters discussed at the Committee's meeting on 15th March 2007 be reflected in the Committee's Annual Report for 2006/07.

(iv) That the Respect Agenda item requires additional work.

21 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (REF: 9.5)

The Scrutiny Officer explained that the Work Programme for 2007/08 had not been updated, he outlined the items to be discussed during the next Municipal Year:-

- 21st June 2007 – Behaviour Awareness Group Presentation.
- 21st June 2007 – Museum Manager – Stockwood Discovery Centre due to open in July 2008 with funding from Heritage Lottery Fund and Objective 2.
- 4th October 2007 – Leisure Trust (active Luton) Annual Update
- 4th October 2007 – Domestic Violence Update
- 8th November 2007 – Community Safety Strategy Update with Police and Safer Luton Partnership
- 7th February 2008 - Luton Drug and Alcohol Partnership Performance/Funding update.
- 7th February 2008 – Grants Allocations

It was agreed to invite the Pakistani Kashmiri Youth Forum, the Bangladesh Youth League and the Crescent Road Summer School to a meeting of the Committee with all the groups being given a 10 minute slot to give a presentation on how they had utilised their grant allocation from the Council.

Khidmat and Friends of Bright Eyes were each to be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to advise how they had utilised their grant allocation from the Council.

That Encouraging and Supporting New Business update be brought back to the Committee in 9 months time.

A Member requested that at the Committee's 21st June 2007 meeting a report be submitted on the work of the running track to support the Olympic Bid 2012.

Another Member suggested that invitations for officers attendance at meetings, such as the Police should be requested as early as possible to enable officers' attendance.

Resolved: (i) That the report (Ref: 9.5) be noted.

(ii) That the Scrutiny Officer be instructed to incorporate the items identified above into the Committee's Work Programme for 2007/08.

(Note: The meeting ended at 8.10 p.m.)