

Scrutiny Annual Report

2007/2008



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Foreword

This, the eighth year since Luton Borough Council adopted the new political structures of Executive and Scrutiny, has been a year of transition for Scrutiny as well as for the rest of the Council. In their report on the Corporate Assessment of the Council in November of 2007 the Audit Commission said “the Council needs to improve the effectiveness of its scrutiny committees in holding the Executive to account and in challenging performance”. This was their judgement in spite of the improvements introduced earlier in the year, particularly the development of performance reporting arrangements. A conference was held in February 2008 for all Members. The conference focussed on future arrangements for Scrutiny and a number of options were discussed with a view to improving the effectiveness of scrutiny and responding to the changes to the way local public services are to be delivered now that the Governments’ white paper proposals had been set out in legislation. At that stage there was no clear consensus as to the way forward; however since then proposals have been developed and are under consideration to align the terms of reference of the Scrutiny committees with the themes of the Local Strategic Partnership (the Luton Forum) and the Local Area Agreement.

The committees have continued with work programmes from the previous year and have undertaken some important studies, have reviewed significant decisions of the Executive and have examined, reviewed and commented on the budget for 2008-09 as it was developed. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee adopted looked after children as the theme for the year and chose ‘bullying’ as its topic. The Environment and Non-Executive Functions Scrutiny Committee worked on its review of electoral services throughout the year and monitored the work of the officer team to reduce the Council’s carbon footprint. The Traffic Congestion Working Party has examined ‘hotspots’ throughout the town and made some important recommendations. The Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee completed its scrutiny of ‘the application of the Council’s human resources policies and procedures’ and submitted its report to the Executive. The Regeneration and Citizenship Scrutiny Committee developed a compliance framework from its work on ‘the respect agenda’ and then chose to scrutinise criminal damage. The Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee chose to scrutinise the Council’s sheltered accommodation provision and formed a stakeholder reference group to help with this review.

The Board has monitored the work of the five scrutiny committees and the Chairs of each committee have reported to the Board during the year. Following the dissolution of the joint committee with the other local authorities in Bedfordshire the Board has been the Council’s health scrutiny committee and this has formed the major part of the Board’s work this year.

The ten upper tier authorities in the Eastern region, of which Luton is one, have established a joint health scrutiny committee to scrutinise and respond to consultations on proposals for major changes to health services that affect the whole of the region and I have been the Council’s representative on that committee with Councillor Titmuss as my nominated substitute.

The Scrutiny team is very small with only three officers being devoted exclusively to supporting the five committees, the Board and the joint health scrutiny committee. Changes to the internal arrangements within the Chief Executive’s Department the previous year meant that, on a temporary basis, the Director of Scrutiny has taken on other, additional responsibilities; however the budget for 2008-09 provides for the team to be returned to four full time officers. Nevertheless, it would not be possible for the Members and the committees to do their job effectively if they were entirely dependent upon the Scrutiny Team so I would like to use this opportunity to say ‘thank you’ on behalf of the Scrutiny Board to the Scrutiny Officers, to the many other officers of the Council that have worked for and supported scrutiny and to officers and Members of other authorities and organisations that have helped with information and advice or have hosted visits or appeared as witnesses. Thanks are also due to members of the public, who have shown an interest in what we are doing by participating in working groups, attending meetings, asking questions and expressing their views.

Councillor David Taylor
Chair, Scrutiny Board

1. Introduction

Welcome to Luton Borough Council's Scrutiny Annual Report for 2007/08. The report details the work carried out by the five Scrutiny Committees over the last year.

Following the local elections in May 2007 the committees elected Chairs and Vice Chairs and reviewed their work programmes at their first meetings of the new municipal year. A briefing on democracy and scrutiny was provided for newly elected Councillors in June 2007. The practice has been adopted of submitting significant new policies or policy changes and significant Government consultation documents to scrutiny first so that when they are reported to the Executive for decision, the Executive will have the benefit of any advice from scrutiny.

This new year has represented a fresh start for scrutiny at Luton and this has provided a good foundation to build on next year with improved performance reporting mechanisms and a focus on partnership working towards the goals set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the targets negotiated and agreed through the Local Area Agreement.

In the past Scrutiny has been a catalyst for significant improvement in local services and it is to be hoped that, through its proper role as 'critical friend' and as a result of constitutional changes to give effect to the new powers and duties in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, this will be the case in future for other local public service delivery agencies as well as the Council.

2. What is scrutiny?

The Local Government Act 2000 introduced scrutiny as part of the modernisation of the governance of local authorities. The primary aim of scrutiny is to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability in Local Government.

The Act required all Local Authorities to implement a new political structure in the form of an Executive and a Scrutiny function. At Luton most of the decisions taken on running Council services are made by a small group of elected Members called the "Executive". Other Councillors, through the "Scrutiny" process, can challenge decisions taken by the Executive but those decisions cannot be overturned either by a scrutiny committee or even by the full Council provided they are within the policy framework approved by the Council.

Scrutiny Committees operate in a similar way to Parliamentary Select Committees by examining decisions taken by the Executive. Scrutiny reviews the performance of the Council in delivering services, enquires into issues of concern to local people, including services provided by other public bodies, and helps to develop Council policies.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 put in place the health scrutiny arrangements first proposed in the NHS Plan of 2000 and gave upper tier authorities the responsibility for scrutinising local health services. The Council undertook health scrutiny with the other local authorities in Bedfordshire through a joint committee with Bedfordshire County Council until the middle of last year when the County Council withdrew and the joint committee was dissolved. Since then the Scrutiny Board has acted as the Luton health scrutiny committee.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 introduces some important new functions for scrutiny including the ability to scrutinise the part other local public services should play (the 'duty to co-operate') in delivering the improvements in outcomes for local people they have committed to through the Local Area Agreement and the 'Councillor call for action'. Some of the provisions of the Act have not been commenced and the necessary regulations and statutory guidance have not yet been issued.

3. History, structure and process of scrutiny at Luton Borough Council

Executive and Scrutiny Functions have been in place at Luton Borough Council since May 2000.

The Role of the Scrutiny Board

The role of the Board is to plan, organise, monitor and review the work of the Scrutiny Committees and panels and to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the scrutiny process. The Board gives advice to Committees about how they should conduct Scrutiny and is able to exercise the power of Scrutiny in its own right.

The Council's constitution, introduced in December 2001, states that each of the scrutiny committees reports once a year to the Scrutiny Board and the Board reports once a year to the Council. This is that report.

The role of scrutiny committees

The five scrutiny committees are:

- children and young people
- environment and non-executive functions
- performance, resources and assets
- regeneration and citizenship
- social inclusion

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 the quarterly report on finance and performance (to PR&A)
 - and by reference from PR&A committee (other committees)
- **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

From time to time Panels may be set up to deal with specific topics, usually because a topic overlaps the remits of more than one Committee or includes aspects that are the responsibility of other public agencies. Most panels have a limited life and are disbanded once the task is completed.

The scrutiny process - reviews

All scrutiny reviews undertaken by scrutiny committees, undergo a six-stage process:

1. **Scoping and planning.**

This first stage involves making key decisions about the aims and objectives of the review, including the purpose, the evidence to be collected and key stakeholders who have an interest in the review. It also involves agreeing a timetable and plan for the work involved. Scoping may be informed by an information report about the subject of the topic.

2. **Evidence and information.**

This second stage involves collecting all relevant evidence and information from sources such as council officers, key stakeholders, best practice examples, publications and statistics. This may also involve taking evidence from witnesses and undertaking visits to see best practice in operation elsewhere.

3. **Analysis of evidence and information.**

This third stage involves drawing together all the evidence and information gathered at stage two and identifying key points and common themes that have arisen as a result of the review. (see below)

4. **Drawing conclusions and formulating recommendations.**

This fourth stage involves drawing conclusions from the evidence gathered, answering the question “what has been found?” and from these conclusions developing ‘SMART’ recommendations to be submitted in the final report to the Executive and/or the Council.

5. **Report stage of the review.**

The fifth stage involves writing a report of the review from stages 1-4; setting out what the aims were, how the review was conducted, what the evidence showed, and ultimately what was recommended should be done as a result of the review. The report is presented to the Executive (the decision making body), who then decide whether or not the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee should be accepted and implemented.

6. **The monitoring of progress and outcomes.**

This stage is only undertaken if and when the Executive accepts the recommendations presented to them in the Report of a Scrutiny Committee. This stage involves reviewing and monitoring whether the recommendations have been implemented in a timely fashion and the “value added” effect the recommendations have had on the service in question, (i.e. Has the implementation of the recommendations had the desired or predicted effect?).

The following table sets out a variety of ways in which stages of the process are conducted by scrutiny committees:

| | |
|--|--|
| Selection of topics | Topics for scrutinies can be suggested by Members of the Council, local citizens and service users. Heed is also taken of the Sustainable Community Strategy and any developments at a central government level that affect the citizens of Luton. |
| Scope – who decides? | Elected Members of the relevant Scrutiny Committees determine the scope of scrutiny topics. This includes identifying evidence requirements, witnesses and data sources. |
| What are the most common sources of evidence? | Literature research e.g., Government Papers/articles on new policies and guidance, transcripts of spoken word e.g. when meeting Users/providers, visual images through photos, presentations to Committees e.g. speakers who relate their own experiences. |
| Data types | Qualitative and quantitative data, both primary and secondary. Primary data is collected through e.g. visits to sites to experience services and find out first hand information. |
| How is the qualitative and quantitative evidence processed? | Summarising, weighting, sorting, merging, interpreting, analysing, testing. |
| How is evidence collected? | Interviews, focus groups, hearings at Committees or at service delivery locations, inquiry, observation, survey and site visits to authorities with recommended good practice. |
| Where is the evidence collected and where is it kept? | Evidence taken at meetings of scrutiny committees is summarised in the record of the meeting (minutes) and set out fully in the summary of evidence produced at stage 3. Evidence collected on visits is reported to the committees. A full record is kept in the Scrutiny office. |
| Is it used? | Yes, mostly. The conclusions drawn by a committee should be based on the evidence they have taken during their scrutiny of the topic. |
| How is it used? | To inform stakeholders, to inform policy, to check adherence to government guidance, good practice, and mainly to improve performance. To help Members arrive at conclusions and recommendations |
| Who uses it? | Members, officers and other stakeholders e.g. users. After the scrutiny is completed the Executive may use the evidence to plan their implementation of the adopted recommendations. |

Monitoring function of scrutiny

Performance

Information about the Council's performance in delivering services is compiled on a quarterly basis and published on the intranet and the Council's web site in a format that can be accessed by readers, including Members of the Council, and which highlights whether performance is good, satisfactory or poor, is achieving or not achieving targets and is improving or declining. Members are able to request a report on any aspect of performance relating to a service or function that comes under a committee of which they are a member. The intention is that Members will call for reports on services where performance is declining or where it is unsatisfactory and not improving. The quarterly report is submitted to Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee and performance issues identified from the report by that committee are referred to the appropriate scrutiny committee for investigation. The results of such investigations may give rise to recommendations to the Executive to address unsatisfactory or declining performance.

Call in

During a five day 'window of opportunity' following the publication of the decisions taken by the Executive, any two Members of the Council can 'call in' a decision (provided it is not exempt from call in) and that decision can then not be implemented until it has been scrutinised by the appropriate scrutiny committee. The committee has to deal with it within four weeks and then either raise no objection or advise the Executive to think again. Even so the scrutiny committees have no power to make the Executive change their decisions. Attached as appendix A is the record of Executive decisions called in to scrutiny during 2007-08.

Luton Excellence

The Council has instituted a programme of reviews to identify areas where there is the prospect of improving service response to the customer, improving satisfaction for employees providing the service and improving cost effectiveness for the Council. The Performance Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee has taken on the task of monitoring the delivery of the programme and its effectiveness.

Scrutiny topics

Completed studies of major topics almost invariably result in recommendations for change that are developed into action plans either by the scrutiny committee as part of the study or by the Executive following the submission of the scrutiny report and recommendations. It has become the practice of the committees to set a timetable to review the progress made in implementing those action plans. Usually the intervals are long, often twelve months; however the committees look not only at the timeliness of the actions being implemented but also their effectiveness and any unintended consequences (see stage 6 above).

Completed reviews are normally reported to the Council's Executive; however, occasionally a report will be made to the Council. This may be done if there is a desire to show that the whole Council supports the conclusions of the review.

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Scrutiny Board



Scrutiny Board

Introduction

The Council's constitution, introduced in December 2001, provides that each of the scrutiny committees reports once a year to the Scrutiny Board with the final annual report submitted to full Council. This is the seventh annual report of the Scrutiny Board.

The Board

During the municipal year 2007/08 the membership of the Board was: -



Councillor Taylor
(Chair)



Councillor Singh
(Vice Chair)



Cllr Ayub



Cllr Dolling



Cllr Garrett



Cllr Ireland



Cllr Pedersen



Cllr Raquib



Cllr Skepelhorn

The Board's terms of reference include the powers of the scrutiny committees with additional responsibility of overseeing the work of the scrutiny committees. The Board also approves, reviews and monitors the work programmes of the scrutiny committees.

The Role of the Scrutiny Board

The main remit of the Board is to plan, organise, monitor and review the work of the scrutiny committees and panels and to evaluate the effectiveness of the scrutiny process at Luton.

Last year the joint health scrutiny arrangements with Bedfordshire effectively ended from Autumn 2007. The initial intention was to place health scrutiny with the Social Inclusion scrutiny committee. However, this particular move would have meant the workload of that committee being unmanageable. The matter was referred back to the Board to reconsider and that resulted in a temporary arrangement of Health being added to the Board's remit up to the May 2008 Annual Council meeting, where a more permanent decision would be made on how to take forward Health scrutiny at Luton.

The Scrutiny Process

All scrutiny committees at Luton apply and follow the six-stage process: -

- Scope and plan reviews
- Evidence and information gathering
- Analysis of evidence and information
- Drawing conclusions and recommendations
- Production of the final report for Executive approval
- Monitoring outcomes of recommendations

The annual reports of scrutiny committees are a representation of the work carried out by the committees during the course of the year. A noticeable factor in all the annual reports is the omission of performance monitoring data, which is an area raised in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) conducted last year. This has been rectified with all performance data presented to Performance Resource & Assets scrutiny committee on a quarterly basis. Poor performance indicators are identified and referred to the relevant scrutiny committee to pursue further. The outcomes of the referrals are reported back to a future meeting of Performance Resource & Assets scrutiny committee.

Work completed

The Board has undertaken no reviews during the year. However, all Chairs of scrutiny committees are invited to Board meetings to give a précis of work carried out by committees.

The adding of Health scrutiny to the Board's agenda has meant longer meetings and lengthy discussions as updates on progress in particular the Government's White Paper intentions, which led to the abolition of PPIFs (Patient and Public Involvement Forums) and replaced with Links (local involvement networks) to mirror the PCT (Primary Care Trust) areas that will have the remit to include adult and older persons' social care and health. The new legislation includes the establishment of Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) with additional powers under the duty to cooperate and extends powers of scrutiny to allow partnership organisations to be scrutinised e.g. the Luton Forum. Royal Assent to the Act of Parliament legislating for the White Paper proposals was received in the latter part of last year; however local authorities are waiting for guidelines to be issued which are expected to be out in Autumn 2008.

Other health scrutiny issues, which the Board have been consulted on, are set out below: -

- Introduction of Local NHS organisations and Public and Patients Involvement Forums;
- Local Involvement Network (LINK) – An introduction;
- Consideration of consultation of the East of England Strategic Health Authority "Improving lives; Saving lives;
- Consideration of the consultation of the Luton tPCT paper "Developing Health Services for Everybody in Luton"
- Luton (NHS) Walk-in Centre – Scrutiny of the consultation process and the tPCT Board's decision
- Standard for Better Care – Healthcare Commission Assessment Process for Luton tPCT 2007-08
- Application for foundation trust status - Beds & Luton Mental Health Partnership Trust
- Response to the Healthcare Commission's Health Checks 2007/08
- Response to the Healthcare Commission's consultation on proposed Health Checks 2008/09
- Luton tPCT - Primary Care Access in Luton
- Consideration of the East & North Herts. NHS Trust consultation on their application for Foundation Trust Status;

The Board was also consulted on the consultation process regarding the Luton (NHS) Walk-in Centre and the tPCT Board's decision taken during the time of the joint committee arrangements that became a controversial issue that specifically related to the reduction of the opening hours at the walk in centre. The Board was asked to consider the adequacy of the consultation process and the decision taken by the tPCT not to reinstate the original opening hours.

The Board was satisfied that the consultation process was adequate, but considered the decision on the opening hours to be not in the interests of health service provision in Luton. However, having heard from the tPCT on proposals for a new GP-led Walk-in Centre and two other (Darzi) Practices, the Board decided not to refer any of the matters to the Secretary of State for review, as it would have led to further delays in implementing the new proposals.

The Board requested a further report from Luton tPCT in order to scrutinise the planned proposals for implementing the GP-led walk-in centre and the two Darzi Practices.

Current Review

At the Board meeting on 22nd April 2008 it was agreed to conduct a review on community cohesion. The terms of reference for the review are still to be finalised with the scope scheduled to take place in September with selected members from the committee. However, in the meantime, a background paper on community cohesion has been produced for the Board meeting on 26th June 2008 to familiarise members with work that has been ongoing regarding community cohesion at Luton.

The Bedfordshire and Luton Joint Health Scrutiny Committee

When upper tier local authorities were given a statutory duty to scrutinise local health services, the Scrutiny Board decided that this was best done jointly with the Bedfordshire County Council.

The joint committee comprised three members from Luton, five members from the county council and one member from each of the three district councils in Bedfordshire. Subsequently two representatives from the Public and Patients Involvement Forums were co-opted without voting rights by the joint committee.

The joint committee met every month. From May 2007, this council's representatives were:

Councillor Akbar
Councillor Timoney
Councillor Siederer

In line with the joint committee's practice, the chair came from the County Council and Councillor Akbar was elected as the vice chair,

The joint committee scrutinised the work of the health trusts within Bedfordshire and Luton. The following items of work related specifically to Luton or to both Luton and Bedfordshire:

- Luton tPCT –Variations in tPCT Commissioned services leading to a programme of Regulation 4 Studies;
- Luton tPCT's 3 year health strategy;
- Report on the implementation of Smoke-free in Luton;
- Report on the reinstatement of Mental Health Services
- Residential & Domiciliary Care for People with Learning Difficulties – Bedfordshire & Luton Mental Health & Social Care Partnership Trust;
- Luton NHS Walk-in Centre;
- Proposals for consultation on a sexual health strategy for Luton;
- Funding the NHS in Bedfordshire & Luton
- Arrangements for the dissolution of the Bedfordshire and Luton Joint Health Scrutiny Committee

The East of England Joint Health Scrutiny Committee

A Joint Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee is one established by two or more local authorities, to discharge some or all of the powers of the individual authority's health overview and scrutiny committees. Such a joint committee may be established for both a specific scrutiny review or for ongoing scrutiny planning and review.

An East of England Joint Health Scrutiny Committee was established in December 2007, as a 'task and finish' committee. It comprises all 10 social services local authorities in the eastern region. This committee was set up to scrutinise three major developments in the region: the Strategic Health Authority's three year plan – 'Improving Lives; Saving Lives', the Acute Services Review - 'Looking to the future' and the implications of Lord Darzi's NHS reform recommendations. All three have now been rolled into 'The clinical vision for the East of England NHS*', the region's response to the wider national NHS reform, 'Our NHS, Our Future'. This consultation will start on 12 May 2008.

Luton has nominated Councillor Taylor as its representative, with Councillor Titmuss as the nominated substitute on the joint committee. The Joint Committee has met twice, to discuss and agree process. It also received a presentation by the East of England NHS. The date and venue for subsequent meetings will be decided in due course.

Future Work

The Board has continued to receive information regarding Health Scrutiny. The delay in the release of guidelines on the White Paper has meant no definitive decision by the council on how to progress health scrutiny at Luton. The delay has also led to the uncertainty of scrutiny arrangements regarding the set up of scrutiny committees, which has led to an away day session held 9th February 2008 to consult members on the different models adopted by other local authorities. The guest speaker on the day was Gareth Wall from the Centre for Public Scrutiny who delivered two presentations; the first on the origins and basis for scrutiny and the second on the new world of scrutiny following the legislation discussed earlier in the report. The day was a success in terms of making members aware of the purpose of scrutiny and the effect of the new legislation that will widen its remit into other areas. However, Members achieved no general consensus on the best model for Luton; therefore it was agreed a further session takes place later in the year preferably after the release of the guidelines in the autumn. In view of what has been said, the Board agreed to continue receiving information regarding health until a definitive decision is made.

The Board will embark on an awareness raising and educational programme for its members relating to health issues in Luton. This will be done with help and support from relevant officers of the various NHS Trusts. It is expected that this measure will inform members of the health needs of the people of Luton, and point to strategic areas upon which scrutiny should focus. The health scrutiny work programme will then be developed accordingly.

Call-in

During the year the Board received one call-in of the Executive decision taken on 4th February 2008 (EX/19/08) relating to Luton Borough Council's response to the consultation on unitary proposals in Bedfordshire. The Board had no objection to the Executive's decision being implemented.

ANNUAL REPORT 2007-8

Children and young people scrutiny committee



Children & young people scrutiny committee

1. This is the third year of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. The Committee performed a cross cutting role of monitoring and evaluating service delivery, improving performance, contributing to policy development and investigating specific issues. It made several commendations to the Executive, most of which were accepted. No decisions of the Executive were scrutinised through the "call in" process this year.
2. Under its terms of reference the committee covers the following key areas with a view to responding effectively to the *Every Child Matters* agenda. The committee aims to focus on the five outcomes for children and young people and to monitor the progress of the children and young people's plan.
3. The committee met seven times during this municipal year in 2007-8. It made several recommendations to the Executive which were accepted.
4. The key decisions and outcomes achieved by the committee during the year are appended.

Membership

5. Membership of the committee will continue to be supplemented by the co-opted members who represent the diocesan boards, parent governors and employees. These co-opted members bring a great deal of expertise and first hand knowledge of the education sector and of young people to the committee and they are fully involved in the committee's work.



Councillor Akbar
(Chair)



Councillor Raquib
(Vice Chair)



Cllr Benard



Cllr Burnett



Cllr Campbell



Cllr Hinkley



Cllr Kiansumba



Cllr Malik



Cllr Patterson



Cllr Saleem



Cllr Stewart

Co-opted Diocesan
Representatives:

B. O'Byrne
J. Chipperton

Parent Governor
Representatives:

R. Nazar
M. Malik

Employee
Representatives:

M. Austins
G. Ryan
I. Smith

- Functions:
of the committee**
- a) schools
 - b) education and achievement
 - c) training
 - d) further education and higher education links
 - e) post 16 and learning skills council
 - f) adult education
 - g) developing young people as citizens
 - h) youth services
 - i) to scrutinise the effectiveness of the implementation of section 10 of the Children Act 2004
 - j) to oversee and scrutinise the process towards achieving the ECM agenda
 - l) to consider how these outcomes will be achieved and assessed
 - m) to monitor progress
 - n) to receive periodic reports on the progress that is being made in relation to any aspect of the children and young people's plan
 - o) to carry out scrutiny reviews of topics relevant to the panel
 - p) to examine any proposals to establish a children's trust
 - q) to keep under review the arrangements for safeguarding children at risk in Luton.
 - r) to hold the power to co-opt additional members representing the interest of children and young persons e.g. children's trust, voluntary sector, health service.

The scrutiny committee's main role is to examine the provision of services for children and young people in Luton and ensure that they are provided at the highest possible standard. It runs in a similar fashion to a House of Commons select committee. The committee can make recommendations for improvement to service managers and the Executive. Members can acquaint themselves with best practice by inviting officers responsible for achieving improvement in other best practice authorities to come to Luton and share their ideas and offer advice on how our services can improve. Sometimes members, accompanied by relevant officers, visit best practice authorities as a cross party group and, where appropriate, they invite service user representatives to accompany them as well.

The committee has continued to scrutinise a variety of high profile issues within its terms of reference that are of key strategic importance to the citizens of Luton.

The Government published its guide: 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children.' It sets out the key elements of the national programme of change in children and young people's services, which is given statutory force by the Children Act 2004. In the section on 'support for local change', the Government introduced the concept of the 'improvement cycle for children's services'. The cycle sets out an annual process of local needs analysis and a 'priorities' conversation with representatives of Government Office and the key inspectorates.

The children & young people's plan

Each local authority has to produce a local children and young people's plan. The plan sets out how the priorities are to be addressed; the actual delivery and commissioning of services, a process for evaluation through annual performance assessment every three years, and inspection via the joint area review.

Luton has, in consultation with its partners, produced its children's plan and an ensuing action plan for its implementation. This document, as well as its implementation is to become the focus of scrutiny in Luton and is being monitored by several local authority scrutiny committees elsewhere.

Public Engagement

The issue of a wider involvement by the citizens, users of the council's services, partners and providers in the scrutiny process has been a key challenge for Scrutiny Committees on a national basis. It remains a matter of concern for a number of Scrutiny Committees and has been a constant issue.

The Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee in Luton has been able to capture the views of young people through the various mechanisms put in place by the Council and the Children and Learning Department. However the direct input to the committee from young people remains a matter for further development.

Furthermore, members of the public have an opportunity to ask questions at Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee meetings and put their point of view forward. The committee also benefits from its co-optees representing: The Diocese, Employees and Parent Governors.

Personal invitations and regular monthly advertisement in local newspapers is used to publicise the meetings of the committee and to invite participation and comment on the current scrutiny topic that is underway. The citizens of Luton can also suggest topics for future scrutinies.

However, the main motivation to get involved lies in the fact that where people have shown an interest to participate in scrutiny they know that they will get a chance to air their views freely and frankly.

Their views are taken very seriously and where pertinent taken on board. At committee meetings, if possible, the Chair brings forward the items that the public wants to contribute to so that they don't have to wait for long before their item is taken up. This is now a commonly recommended good practice.

Public interest is attracted by giving a voice to the concerns of all the communities in Luton. A key example was the request from the voluntary sector to come and share with the committee the findings of a joint conference with the Police on bullying amongst young people in Luton.

Efforts have continued to increase public awareness of and participation in the work of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee, for instance through the improved content on the Council's website, public participation leaflets and by receiving feedback from the relevant officers working on issues that can impact on the lives of children and young people in Luton.

The key areas considered by the children & young people scrutiny committee during the municipal year: 2007-08

Looked after children theme for the year: This was the year of looked after children and the committee decided to adopt that as a theme for the year. It worked closely with the Children's Panel, which is dedicated to issues relating to children and young people in the care of the Local authority. Young people who attend those meetings have also begun to attend this committee from time to time. Throughout the year the committee received various reports from officers of the Children and Learning Department on the work that was being carried out.

A report was submitted to each meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to review the Work Programme. This year the committee also received the Executive's Forward Plan on a monthly basis.

Budget monitoring

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee examined the Council's Revenue and Capital Budgets both in private and public. Key officers attended the meetings to answer questions from Members of the committee and public.

Key reports 2007-08

An overview of the role and function of the local safeguarding children board – including achievements and current areas of work.

The Head of Children and Families advised that Scrutiny was required to scrutinise the work of the Luton Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) as part of the accountability process for the LSCB. She introduced Mr Geoff Gildersley, independent Chair of the LSCB, who was in attendance at the committee. Correspondence has been sent but no further progress has been made yet.

Good practice authorities to visit or receive evidence in relation to numbers of looked after children and out of borough placements

The Scrutiny Officer has made contact with two specific good practice authorities and officers responsible have been invited to share the ideas that helped them to recruit fostering and adopting parents locally and reduce the numbers of children placed out of their area.

Fostering and adoption services & corporate parenting strategy

The Committee agreed regular monitoring reports on fostering and adoption services on a six monthly basis.

A Corporate parenting strategy was agreed. Two members of the Children's Panel who were representing looked after children attended for this item and gave their views.

Luton play strategy

The Committee supported a report which formed the basis of an application for funding from the Big Lottery and agreed to receive a report on the outcome of the bid.

In line with the agreed strategy, Members requested that, in respect of the lack of play opportunities in other areas across the Borough, the Director of Children and Learning continue to explore the possibility for identifying and developing play opportunities in partnership with young people and residents.

Improving integration and cohesion in Luton

The committee received a reference from Scrutiny Board for the Committee to undertake thematic reviews on areas that fall within its remit or terms of reference with a view to improving integration and cohesion in Luton.

Rathbone

Rathbone was given a contract with the key aim to re-engage young people not in mainstream education. The committee has over the years received periodic reports on Rathbone, however this year the committee decided to recommend that the contract with Rathbone should not be renewed when it expires in July 2008. Instead they requested that the Executive seeks more cost effective methods of providing the service. The Executive accepted this recommendation.

Key stage 1-4 attainment incl. black & minority ethnic children and black & white boys from poorer backgrounds (ref: 13) literacy strategy

As a result of this report the Corporate Director of Children and Learning was requested to produce a Literacy Strategy for Luton, in consultation with other relevant departments. The strategy was presented to the committee and agreed.

| | |
|--|--|
| What were the most common source(s) of evidence presented to Committee? | Primary sources and secondary sources e.g. Primary sources included: Users and all those who are affected, they related their own experiences, and put forward their suggestions through Secondary sources: Literature research e.g., Government Papers/ articles on new policies and guidance. |
| What data types were used? | Qualitative and quantitative, Data was both primary and secondary. Primary data is collected through e.g. visits to sites to experience and find out first hand information or hear directly from the Users e.g. Hearing from looked after children about their experiences directly about issues that affect their lives. |
| Who determines the scope? | Elected Members of the relevant Scrutiny Committees determine the scope of scrutinies alongside the stakeholders or their representatives at the Committees e.g. The bullying review |
| Who decides the topics? | Members of the council, local citizens, heed is also taken of 2012 Agenda, or any developments at a central government level that affect the citizens of Luton. Of recent cues are also taken from good practice audits. |
| How is evidence collected? | Interviews, focus group, hearing at Committees or at service delivery points, inquiry, observation, survey and site visits to authorities with recommended good practice |
| Where is it collected and where is it kept? | On site, locally, directly |
| How is the qualitative and quantitative evidence processed? | Summarising, weighting, sorting, merging and interpreting. |
| Is it used? | Yes, mostly e.g. the evidence received about Rathbone informed the decision they made to recommend not to extend the contract of the existing providers |
| Who uses it? | Members, officers and other stakeholders e.g. Users, Providers, Policy makers |
| Why is it used? | Mainly to improve performance and to inform stakeholders, to inform policy, to adhere to government guidance, adopt good practice, and to help Members arrive at conclusions and recommendations. |

Over the years, as scrutiny matures, the monitoring role of the scrutiny committees has developed rapidly. Monitoring is mainly related to the implementation of the agreed recommendations of scrutiny, particularly those that are endorsed by the Executive, or recommended by internal or external Inspectors.

Most recent review

This year the committee chose to scrutinise bullying amongst young people in Luton.

A small project group of Members of the committee was constituted to agree the scope of the review. Regular progress reports have been submitted to the committee.

Key questions for the review

- a) Is there an agreed definition of bullying.
- b) Do Schools subscribe to the definition
- c) Are there mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating incidents of bullying in Luton schools?
- d) Do they reflect best practice?
- e) The committee agreed to look further into the following specific types of bullying in Luton: Cyber Bullying, Homophobic bullying, and Racist bullying.

The key findings

The Bullying review is still going on; its findings will be reported to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee when it has concluded its work. Key recommendations made by the review group will be forwarded to the Executive for consideration and endorsement.

Call ins This year no decision of the Executive was called in to the Committee.

Key outcomes 2007 to 08 - Stake holder and public involvement

Key outcomes: children and young people scrutiny committee

- 1 In consultation with Looked after children agreed: Confidentiality Protocol for Looked after Children and Young people within schools.
- 2 Selected Bullying as its first topic for Review in consultation with the Luton Safeguarding Children's Board
Outcomes so far:
 - Agreed definition and recommended school policy
 - Agreed to put in all the good practice requisites
 - Liaised with good practice organizations e.g. Anti Bullying Alliance
 - To investigate Cyber Bullying, Racist Bullying and Homophobic Bullying
 - Review is ongoing: Final Report due in Dec 08
- 3 A Young person invited to attend all the meetings of the committee and give feedback on the items being discussed.
- 4 Luton Play Strategy agreed for Children and Young people
- 5 Regular biannual reports on fostering and adoption services
- 6 Corporate Statement agreed
- 7 To seek other options than Rathbone to engage young people not in the mainstream education
- 8 The production of a literacy strategy for Luton.

The Committee benefits from Co-opted Members who bring in specialist information. It also has sought advice from members of the Children's Panel when appropriate.

However one consistent area that needs improvement is the involvement of the public, our partners, the stake holders and the voluntary sector. The Committee took on board a young person who was invited to attend. Efforts have continued to increase public awareness of the work of the Committee through the improved content on the Council's Web Site/ regular adverts in the local newspapers. Research has shown that this is a common aspiration across Local Authorities.

ANNUAL REPORT 2007-8

**Environment
and
non-executive
functions
scrutiny
committee**



Environment and non-executive functions scrutiny committee

Introduction

The Council's constitution, introduced in December 2001 requires each scrutiny committee to report once a year, on the annual progress of the Committee up to 31st March 2008 to the Scrutiny Board.

Membership of the Committee

The meeting of the Annual Council in May 2007 appointed the membership of this committee to be:

Councillors:



Councillor Ireland
(Chair)



Councillor Riaz
(Vice Chair)



Cllr Ayub



Cllr Garrett



Cllr Mead



Cllr Smith



Cllr Strange



Cllr Taylor



Cllr Timoney

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the committee stipulated in the Constitution cuts across two Executive Portfolios being Environment and Regeneration: -

- Functions :-
- Physical infrastructure – provision and maintenance
 - Use of land and impact of uses
 - Local Agenda 21 and sustainability
 - Pollution Control
 - Pest Control
 - Value and appropriateness of services
 - Operation of external partnerships
 - Critiques budget proposals, standards, performance and best value including views
 - All functions within the terms of reference of:
 - Administration Committee
 - Development Control Committee
 - Regulation Committee

Developments during the Year

During the course of the year the committee embarked on a review of 'electoral services' chosen as a topic following the Local Elections in May 2007. The initial proposal came after allegations and perceptions emerged around the abuse of postal voting. The matter was referred to the Police to investigate further the high numbers of postal applications received in one ward. The investigation found no fraudulent activity had taken place resulting in no further action.

Voting is a fundamental part of our democracy that enables voters to vote for a candidate of their choice, secretly in a fair and just manner. The democratic system in the United Kingdom is admired by other democracies that look to the UK electoral administrators for advice in developing their voting arrangements.

Voting is a fundamental part of our democracy that enables voters to vote for a candidate of their choice, secretly in a fair and just manner. The democratic system in the United Kingdom is admired by other democracies that look to the UK electoral administrators for advice in developing their voting arrangements.

The committee decided the aim of the 'electoral services' review should be to make a comparative analysis of best practice local authorities that have achieved Beacon Status in electoral registration with a view of improving the services at Luton. The review is currently at the evidence gathering stage and has received presentations from the Electoral Services Manager at Luton that outlined the process and procedure adopted. It has also invited and received evidence from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, renowned for its achievements using traditional voting methods, and Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council who have moved away from traditional voting methods opting for alternative and more innovative ways of voting.

No definitive completion date has been set for the review. However, it is anticipated it will conclude before budget proposals are considered at the October cycle of meetings. This will ensure any budgetary implications identified from the review are built into the final report with recommendations submitted for Executive approval.

Draft Bus Strategy

The above strategy was discussed extensively with stakeholders and senior officers with responsibility for that area with all comments incorporated into the final version of the Bus Strategy. The strategy has been agreed by the Executive in June 2007 and is available on the council's website.

Carbon Footprint

This item has remained as a standing item on the committee's work programme where updates and progress has been reported throughout the year. For instance the committee received and adopted a statement of principles that was approved by the Executive; invited to an event organised in St George's Square in July last year to raise awareness of climate change, with a further event in May 2008 that is particularly aimed at the council's partners and other local area organisations.

Local Development Framework

In September last year the committee received two reports that outlined the provisions of a joint venture between Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee's Local Development Framework Core Strategy. The outcome from the reports resulted in the committee recommending a proviso is given to the comments of the Environment Agency for provisions of a strategic flood risk assessment.

Licensing and Gambling Act 2005

The Licensing Act 2005 was enforced in November 2005 that resulted in a single integrated scheme for licensed premises that serve alcohol, private entertainment and light refreshments. Since the inception of the Act minor changes have been introduced that require the licensing authority to be consulted on any changes to pubs' and club holders' licenses before they are issued.

Traffic Congestion Working Party

The May 2007 elections brought a new administration, which, as part of their manifesto, pledged to look into the amount of traffic hotspots around the town. A cross party working group of members was set up to look into concerns raised by the public and produce a final report on recommended solutions to this committee. As well as the member-working group a separate Officers Working Group within the Environment and Regeneration Directorate was also tasked with finding solutions and resulted in the development a Congestion Management Strategy.

Traffic Congestion Working Party

The final report of the members working group is now completed that highlights five areas of concern, namely:

(i) Dunstable Road (Bury Park)

The working party acknowledged the refurbishment had changed the physical nature of this section of Dunstable Road. However, it was felt the shopping environment was blighted by the amount of pavement parking especially outside the old Odeon and recommended this be investigated to restrict the use of the pavement parking, as sufficient parking facilities are available due to the revamp and on the Sainsbury's site. The working party also recommended more visible parking enforcement officers to act as a deterrent for illegal parking. Another noticeable factor was the amount of heavy goods vehicles using Dunstable Road as a through route. It recommended the road be downgraded to access only with signage clearly marked as an area for residents and shopping only.

(ii)

The school run is another potential hotspot concern raised by the working party that adds to congestion, especially at peak times where it was revealed, in the consultation conducted by the Engineering section, that 75.1% of residents agreed this to be a particular concern. The main reason for the congestion is due to the sheer volume of traffic descending on schools in a short space of time e.g. at the start and end of the school day. However, various attempts have been initiated by the council to tackle the problem such as: school travel plans, safety around school projects together with safer routes to school to encourage walking. Best practice identified shows some local authorities such as Norwich City Council encourage parents to use park and ride schemes as drop off points with school volunteers used as guides to ferry children to school. However, Luton currently does not have a park and ride scheme, therefore this particular initiative cannot be taken up; although there are plans to have a park and ride scheme for Luton. The RAC is urging councils to provide more drop off zones, car sharing and mini buses initiatives to ease congestion on the roads. The recommendation put forward by the working group is to make use of CCTV cameras intended to catch and penalise illegal parkers outside school gates and also those parked on the yellow zig zags around schools.

(iii)

The Chaul End Lane and Dunstable Road roundabout is a potential hotspot that has come under criticism since the road layout was changed. The working group recommended that the lights on the roundabout be moved back to the junction, which should enable traffic to flow freely and stop the congestion build up.

(iv)

Waller Avenue/Leagrave Road is highlighted as hotspot areas, an oversight not mentioned in the Network Management and Congestion Strategy for Luton 2007-2012 document. However, the working party felt that the half junction box serves no purpose and recommend its removal.

There was cross party consensus to note that the delay in completing the East Luton Corridor scheme coupled with the M1 widening has added to the congestion build up in Luton. However, once these schemes are completed, it is thought this will ease the town's congestion points and reduce the pressure on Vauxhall Way, Stopsley Way and Eaton Green Road that are particularly affected during peak times.

Monitoring items

The monitoring reports received by this committee during the year are outlined below: -

- Carbon Footprint
- Bus Strategy
- Disability Equality Monitoring
- Implementation of the Licensing Act 2005
- Beds and Luton Minerals Development Plan – Preferred Option
- LDF Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper
- Traffic Congestion – Working Party
- Budget Prospects 2008-09
- Waste Management – options
- Motor cycles in Bus lanes
- Budget Proposals 2008-09
- Process of Planning Applications
- Consultation by National Air Traffic Services on Proposed changes to airspace with terminal control north

Call-ins

During the year the committee has received 6 call-ins in respect of: -

- Luton Busway- EX/153/07
- Translink - EX/164/07
- Bus Lanes – EX/173/07
- Marsh Farm Redevelopment – EX/204/07
- Luton Town Centre Transport Scheme – Selection of preferred route – EX 33/08
- Luton and South Bedfordshire – Draft Green Space Strategy and Action Plan – EX/52/08

All call-in decisions were discussed at great length with the outcome being to advise the Executive that the committee is happy with the decisions.

Future topics

The committee was advised of the work programme for the year that resulted in proposals of two future topics added: -

- Environmental Impact of Growth Areas
- Commercial and Industrial Recycling

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Performance, resources and assets scrutiny committee



Performance, resources and assets scrutiny committee

The committee

During the year covered by this report the Membership of the Committee was as follows:



Councillor Pantling
(Chair)



Councillor Malik
(Vice Chair)



Cllr Akbar



Cllr Franks



Cllr Kiansumba



Cllr Saleem



Cllr Titmuss

* Note: Councillor Pantling was elected to the Chair of the committee at the meeting on 2nd August 2007, Councillor Akbar having previously stood down.

The terms of reference of the Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee cover the following:

Executive portfolio:

- leader's
- finance
- information and efficiency
- performance and customer service

Functions:

- capital asset management
- human resources matters
- property
- information management
- financial strategy
- stewardship of public funds
- London Luton Airport
- trusts
- subscriptions and contributions to outside agencies
- pooled budgets

Panels:

A Member of Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee served on the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee with the Bedfordshire County Council until it was wound up.

Reviews completed

At the April 2007 meeting the Committee approved its final report on Balancing the Medium Term Financial Plan which had been carried out over the preceding two years and the recommendations from which had already been accepted and adopted by the Executive.

The Committee undertook a review of the Application of the Council's Human Resources Policies, Practices and Procedures during 2007-08. The topic had been selected at the end of the previous year as part of the Council's response to the issues identified in the Community Development service. The topic was scoped at the meeting in April 2007 and, after extensive research and the consideration of written and oral evidence, the committee concluded its work and agreed its recommendations at the 2nd April 2008 meeting.

The overall conclusions are that the Council is a good and fair employer, with robust HR policies, procedures and practices that seek to ensure all employees have equal access to training and development. While there are significant pockets of good practice, with effective managers doing the best for their people, some weaknesses and areas for developments were also highlighted. These form part of recommendations agreed by the Committee and some of the key ones are summarised as follows:

- Areas for improvement identified in the employee opinion survey should be the subject of clear action plans and the progress of implementation monitored;
- The Committee was concerned about the lack of clarity around the provision and analysis of HR management information, and has asked for a review to identify and address the gaps;
- There was also concern about the erosion of good practice in recruitment standards around fair selection training and representative interview panels, which the Committee recommended should be restored;
- The Committee commends two 'positive action' initiatives, 'Ladder to Success' and 'Getting Ahead', which seek to address the under-representation of black and minority managers in senior management;
- The Committee also considered it important that the Council should monitor the reasons why employees leave the organisation to identify and address any adverse trends. It therefore recommended that managers encourage leavers to complete the exit interview process, with a manager from a different unit, to get over any relationship issues.

The Committee's final report was presented to the Executive on 6th May 2008 for consideration. The Executive decided to note the report and instructed the Head of Human Resources to report back to the Executive on the feasibility and implications of implementing each of the recommendations.

Budget Scrutiny

The Committee reviewed the arrangements for scrutinising the budget for the forthcoming year and decided that the budget scrutiny protocol should be amended only to reflect the dates of meetings scheduled in the Council's calendar of meetings for 2007-08. All the committees met on 13th December 2007 to consider the base budget for 2008-09 and, on a confidential basis, the options for change (growth and savings). In the event, the revenue support grant settlement was significantly better than predicted so that, when all of the committees met again as planned on 4th February 2008, it was not necessary to consider officer identified options for non-efficiency savings to be incorporated in the budget.

In line with past practice, this committee 'hosted' a meeting to which all Members of the Council were invited on 6th February to consider the overall proposals for the revenue budget and the capital programme.

Reviews in progress

The committee has completed its current topic and has not yet decided on its next topic. Possible future topics are listed below under 'future work'.

Call-In

The Committee considered four call-ins during the year. Recommendations to the Executive were made on one, 'The Overall Provisional Revenue Outturn for the Year 2006/07'. The Executive had decided the areas where funds from the reserves were to be allocated. The Committee suggested reductions in some of the areas and proposed that funds to be allocated to projects which would be of benefit to the people of the Town, e.g. the bulk of the surplus to be allocated to the swimming pool fund. The Executive considered, but did not accept any of the proposals.

Monitoring Function

The committee has received reports on:

- Efficiency savings under the 'Gershon' programme
- The future of the Capital and Asset Management Service – identification of the preferred option
- Financial outturn 2006-07 – deployment of reserves
- Budgets and budget prospects – 2008-09
- Performance and finance information – quarterly
- The future of the Capital and Asset Management division
- Service Excellence – the improvement programme
- Workforce composition
- Balancing the medium term financial position – action plan
- Reshaping the estate – opportunities presented by 'building schools for the future'
- Human Resources improvement plan – response to issues in Community Development
- Comprehensive Performance Assessment - scorecard and direction of travel
- The revised policy and procedure on 'Unfair discrimination, Harassment and bullying.

Future Work

The committee's future work programme includes:

- Procurement
- Performance management – strategy and systems
- Budget monitoring – system
- Budget preparation – process
- Collection of Council Tax

Monitoring reports will cover

- Performance - quarterly
- Housing benefits - performance
- Workforce and recruitment - composition
- Progress towards a balanced medium term financial plan
- Customer services
- Luton Excellence – Update on progress
- The future of the Capital and Asset Management Division

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Regeneration and citizenship scrutiny committee



Regeneration and citizenship scrutiny committee

The committee

The membership of the Committee was as follows:



Councillor Singh
(Chair)



Councillor Burnett
(Vice Chair)



Cllr Foord



Cllr Neale



Cllr Raquib



Cllr Rutstein



Cllr Stewart

Terms of reference

The terms of reference of Regeneration and Citizenship Scrutiny Committee cover the following areas:

Executive portfolio:

- equalities and social inclusion (part)
- environment (part)
- regeneration and transport (part)

Functions:

- physical regeneration
- major projects
- heritage and tourism
- business advice and interface
- funding regimes and lottery
- new deal for communities
- community empowerment
- democracy and citizenship
- social regeneration
- crime and community safety
- leisure and amenities
- Community and Leisure Centres
- Inward Investment
- Economic Development
- Jobs and Training
- New Deal – Welfare to Work
- Single Regeneration Budget
- Regionalism
- Sports Action Zone
- Community Plan
- Culture and Arts
- Equalities
- Consumer Protection*

(* i.e. Trading Standards and Environmental Health – except for pollution control and pest control)

Reviews Completed

In March 2007, the Committee received a report on the 'Respect Agenda', a Government initiative published in January 2006, to build on work to tackle anti-social behaviour. The compliance framework document prepared by the Scrutiny section, provided a snapshot of actions that the Council and the other local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) services were taking to meet the requirements of the national Respect Agenda Action Plan.

The Committee was satisfied with the level of interventions in progress, and commended the Compliance Framework as a reference document to the Heads of relevant Services. The Compliance Framework was reviewed to show progress achieved in December 2007. The subject was discharged from the work programme, as the Respect Agenda has been superseded by the Government's new strategy for young people, entitled 'Aiming High for Young People', which aims to improve the lives of young people to enable them to fulfil their potential.

Reviews in Progress

The Committee chose to scrutinise the topic, "Tackling Criminal Damage" in 2007-08, a review that is continuing.

The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) had identified the topic as an area of concern. Criminal damage accounts for just under a quarter of all British Crime Survey offences, and just over a fifth of recorded crime. Although seen as a minor crime, neglected physical environments are unsafe, cause fear and undermine pride in the local community, and can be a catalyst to other forms of anti-social behaviour and crime. Criminal damage consistently features in the top 3 in lists of anti-social behaviours causing most concern to the public, costing the UK around £2.1 billion per year in clean-up and other associated costs.

So, apart from reducing crime and fear of crime, a reduction in criminal damage would have economic benefits in cost savings to victims and authorities responsible for repairs.

The CDRP has a multi-agency criminal damage action plan to address the issue, but this was being assimilated within the three-year Strategic Partnership Plan being launched in April 2008. The Committee aims to monitor progress on this topic and report in due course.

Call-In

The committee dealt with one 'call-in' during the year in relation to a petition on the Marsh Farm Central Area Redevelopment Consultation. The Committee had no objection to the called-in decision being implemented.

Monitoring Function

The Committee received reports on the following:

- Progress of the Stockwood Discovery Centre project;
- The Consultation on, 'Delivering Housing and Regeneration: Communities England and the Future of Social Housing Regulation Consultation';
- The recommendations of the Local Development Framework Working Party.
- An update on the performance of Leisure Trust - Active Luton;
- Budgets and budget prospects 2008-09;
- Feedback from a number of third sector recipients of council grants about their summer activities;
- Annual update on the Community Safety Strategy performance;
- The annual review of Domestic Abuse in Luton, including details of the revised strategy;
- The East of England Regional Assembly Regional Economic Strategy;
- Single Group Funding and Interpretation - Two aspects of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion - Our Shared Future report;
- Luton Drug And Alcohol Partnership - performance and funding;
- Grants allocation – annual recommendations;
- 'Our Shared Future' – Report on Integration and Cohesion; Government response and the Council actions;
- The draft Sustainable Community Strategy.

Future Work

The Committee's future work programme includes:

- Continuation of the "Tackling Criminal Damage" topic;
- Social enterprise organisations in Luton.

Monitoring reports will cover:

- Cultural Services –Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating;
- CDRP re-structuring update;
- Marsh Farm – Way Forward;
- An update on major regeneration projects in Luton;
- An update on the performance of Leisure Trust - Active Luton;
- Luton Cultural Services Trust – Business Plan;
- Budgets and budget prospects;
- Feedback from a number of third sector recipients of council grants about their summer activities;
- Annual update on the Community Safety Strategy performance;
- Luton Drug And Alcohol Partnership - performance and funding;
- Grants allocation – annual recommendations;
- 'Our Shared Future' (Integration and Cohesion) - English for speakers of other languages: provision in Luton;
- 'Our Shared Future' (Integration and Cohesion) - update on Council actions;

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Social inclusion scrutiny committee



Social inclusion scrutiny committee

This is the seventh year of the Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee. The Committee performed a cross cutting role of monitoring and evaluating service delivery, improving performance, contributing to policy development and investigating specific issues. It made several recommendations to the Executive, most of which were accepted. It also scrutinised the decisions of the Executive through the "call in" process.

Membership 2007- 08 The Committees Membership is as follows:



Councillor Timoney
(Chair)



Councillor Malik
(Vice Chair)



Cllr Bernard



Cllr Burnett



Cllr J. Davies



Cllr Q Hussain



Cllr Kiansumba



Cllr Simons



Cllr Skepelhorn

Under the terms of reference the committee covers the following key areas:

- Disabilities
- Exclusion & Disadvantage
- Anti Poverty
- Housing
- Benefits & Welfare
- Services to Vulnerable People
- Elders
- Mental health
- Homes & Day Centres

Public engagement

The issue of a wider involvement by the citizens, users of the council's services, partners and providers in the scrutiny process has been a key challenge for Scrutiny Committees on a national basis. It remains a matter of concern for a number of Scrutiny Committees. However, the experience of the Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee in Luton has been distinctly different. There has been an active involvement of our citizens, stakeholders, partners and providers in the scrutiny reviews. This is mainly through the Scrutiny Way Forward Groups and establishing a link with the voluntary sector. Not too long ago the work of this group was commended in one of the inspection reports. The efforts and contribution of such groups has enabled the Committee to fulfil its aims of getting feedback from those who are directly affected by the service under review, or are local providers or citizens of Luton.

Furthermore, members of the public have an opportunity to ask questions at Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee meetings. They respond to personal invitations, personal interests and some are members of the Scrutiny Way Forward Groups. Advertisement in Local newspapers is used to invite participation and comment on the current scrutiny topic that is underway and also to suggest topics for future scrutinies. However, the main motivation to get involved lies in the fact that where people have shown an interest and participated in scrutiny they know that they will get a chance to air their views freely and frankly. Their views are taken very seriously and where pertinent taken on board. At Committee meetings, if possible, the Chair brings forward the items that the public wants to contribute to so that they do not have to wait for long before their item is taken up. This is now a commonly recommended good practice.

Another way of involving public interest is by giving a voice to the concerns of all the communities in Luton and at the right time e.g. this year the committee agreed to consider the needs of the Polish community at its very first meeting of this Municipal year. It attracted a good response from the academics as well as the local communities. A unanimous decision was recommended to the Executive to assist the community in settling down in Luton. The Executive endorsed the recommendation.

The setting up of Scrutiny Way Forward Groups has been a key to this level of engagement. The relationship of the Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee to its stakeholders has had tangible results in the past and the committee continued to build on its past successes. The most recent example is the setting up of the Sheltered Accommodation Review Group. However, it cannot be assumed that the Executive can always be convinced, the main restrictions being the budgetary responsibilities and the balancing of priorities against competing demands. Sometimes the impediment lies in the delay in implementing those recommendations that are agreed by the Executive.

Efforts have continued to increase public awareness of and participation in the work of the Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee, for instance through the improved content on the Council's website, public participation leaflets and meetings of the scrutiny way forward groups, mostly held at venues convenient to the users. However experience has shown that such interest is often personal or topical.

The lack of presence of some of the visible socially excluded groups is evident. This is an area that the committee may wish to prioritise and ensure that impact assessments are made to ensure that none of its processes or practices are directly or indirectly discriminating against any of the groups. A proactive attempt will be made to ensure that the participants are representative of the communities in Luton and that their choice is reflected in the selection of Scrutiny topics. However it needs to be borne in mind that nearly all of our topics are most pertinent to those who are classed as socially excluded.

The Scrutiny Way Forward Groups are made up of current or potential Users and Carers, Providers, Partners, pressures Groups like Age Concern, Councillors, and Key Officers. The Scrutiny Officer can organise visits to good practice authorities, meetings, help with putting their view forward, select and invite on their behalf relevant speakers etc.

Meetings of the Scrutiny Way Forward Groups are usually held where their places of meetings/interaction are; this could be in Libraries, local community centres, Day Centres etc. Smaller groups of the Scrutiny Way Forward Group are facilitated to visit examples of good practice authority.

The key areas considered by the social inclusion scrutiny committee during the municipal year: 2007/8

The Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee has continued to focus on the regular examination of a number of topics as follows:

- Migrant workers need
- Disability Equality Duty Implications
- Progress on Day Care Needs of People with a Learning Disability
- Communities England – Consultation paper
- Private Sector Housing Condition Survey
- Draft Housing Strategy 2007-11
- Housing Allocations Policy
- Members Rota visits to Care Homes & Supporting People Progress
- Homelessness and Young people Housing Strategy Statement (Expected in April 2008)

Evidence received by the committee

| | |
|---|--|
| What were the most common source(s) of evidence presented to the Committee? | Primary sources and secondary sources e.g. Primary sources included: Users and all those who are affected, they related their own experiences, and put forward their suggestions through the Sheltered accommodation review and at Bramingham Centre. Secondary sources: Literature research e.g., Government Papers/ articles on new policies and guidance, e.g. The Housing Green paper, presentation on the needs of the polish community. Best practice and Transcript of spoken word e.g. through Users & providers input from the voluntary sector like Age Concern. |
| What data types were used? | Qualitative and quantitative, Data was both primary and secondary. Primary data is collected through e.g. visits to sites to experience and find out first hand information or hear directly from the Users e.g. Sarg members some of whom are affected directly. (Also see above) |
| Who determines the scope? | Elected Members of the relevant Scrutiny Committees determine the scope of scrutinies alongside the stakeholders or their representatives at the Committees e.g. Sheltered accommodation review |
| Who decides the topics? | Members of the council, local citizens, heed is also taken of the 2012 Agenda, or any developments at a central government level that affect the citizens of Luton. Recently cues are also taken from good practice audits |
| How is evidence collected? | Interviews, focus group, hearing at Committees or at service delivery points, inquiry, observation, survey and site visits to authorities with recommended good practice. |
| Where is it collected and where is it kept | On site, locally. |
| How is the Qualitative and quantitative evidence processed? | Summarising, weighting, sorting, merging and interpreting. |
| Is it used? | Yes, mostly, e.g. the data on polish communities was considered by the Executive as are all qualitative analysis sent to the Executive as a part of the final report. The recommendations at all levels are made in view of the evidence presented. (See outcomes) |
| Who uses it? | Members, officers and other stakeholders e.g. Users, providers, policy makers |
| Why is it used? | Mainly to improve performance and to inform stakeholders, to inform policy, to adhere to government guidance, good practice, and to help Members arrive at conclusions and recommendations. |

Scrutiny monitoring role

Over the years as scrutiny matures the monitoring role of the scrutiny committees has developed rapidly. Monitoring is mainly related to the implementation of the agreed recommendations of scrutiny, particularly those that are endorsed by the Executive

Most recent review

This year the committee chose to scrutinise the review of sheltered accommodation.

A representative scrutiny way forward group, made up of users, providers, partners including the Scrutiny Officer and senior officers from the Housing and Community Living Department and Age Concern was set up to oversee the production of a strategy for sheltered accommodation in Luton. It has now met five times and is known as the Sheltered Accommodation Review Group (SARG). Its meeting times are alternated between afternoon and evenings. This is to ensure that, as many people as possible are able to take part. The key questions that were agreed were:

Key questions

Are the current services and sheltered accommodation in Luton fit for purpose?

Do they reflect best practice?

Can they be made fit for purpose? If not

How best they can be disposed of?

Explore how those older people could be provided for who wish to receive care in their own homes.

The key findings

The review is still going on; its findings will be reported to the Social Inclusion scrutiny committee when it has concluded its work. Regular updates on the work of the SARG are reported to this committee.

Key recommendations made by the review group will be forwarded to the Executive for consideration and endorsement.

Call ins

| Decision called in | Subject | Reason | Name of Members calling in | Date of Executive meeting | Date on Call in Form | Scrutiny Committee considering call in |
|--------------------|---|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--|
| EX/211/07 | Residential Care Learning Disability for Adults | To allow Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee to examine advantages of commissioning against direct provision by the council | Councillors Dolling and Franks | 1st October 2007 | 10th October 2007 | Social Inclusion - 1.11.07 |

Key outcomes 2007 -08

| NO | Decisions of the SISC | Outcomes |
|------|---|---|
| I | Review of sheltered accommodation (Improving performance role) | Album of good and bad practice produced by the Older people's Working Group will be recommended to those responsible for implementing the recommendations of the Sheltered Accommodation review. |
| II | The Day care needs of people with a Learning disability. (Scrutiny Monitoring role (05/06/07) | <p>Users, Providers and key workers in Day Care services are a part of the Partnership Board.</p> <p>Quarterly monitoring reports will be submitted to the SISC. Newsletter turnaround will be improved and published on the website so that Carers, Clients and Staff are better informed.</p> <p>Portfolio Holder for Audit Social Care has been asked to oversee the progress on staffing issues.</p> <p>Progress on work sought for Clients unable get external placements will be monitored.</p> <p>Initiation of a newsletter at Bramingham Centre.</p> |
| III | Comments and suggestions were sent to govt. on the following documents Communities & England & The Future of Social Housing Regulations Consultation Document | Members comments and suggestions were included in the response to the Government documents on Communities & England & Future of Social Housing Regulation Consultation Document Agreement. |
| IV | The draft Private Sector Renewal Strategy is reported back to the Committee and the Executive in the New Year. | Monitoring the development of the private sector renewal strategy. |
| V | Budget Executive. | Members had an opportunity to scrutinise the draft Budget and put forward their views to the Executive both in private and public. |
| VI | That Members rota visits to Council Adult Social Care Homes, and Residential and Day Care Establishments be reintroduced. | <p>Member's visits re-introduced.</p> <p>Guidelines for visiting sheltered accommodation to be established</p> |
| VII | That guidelines set out in Appendix 1 Of the report of the Head of Adult Social Care (Ref: 9) be used by the Sheltered Accommodation Review Group (SARG) when visiting Sheltered Accommodation. | Guidelines for visits made by members of the SARG identified. |
| VIII | Age Concern perspective on Sheltered Accommodation. | An early contribution fro Age Concern to the Scrutiny Review on Sheltered Accommodation. |
| IX | Supporting People Strategy. | Monitoring the progress made in the Implementation of the strategy initially after six months and then on an annual basis. |
| X | Housing Strategy for People with a Learning Disability – Joint Review. | This Strategy was produced with full participation of users, providers and partners. Regular monitoring reports will be received biannually. Executive endorsed the Strategy. |

Forthcoming Year

Handbook

The scrutiny handbook, which is a useful source of information about scrutiny in general and about how it operates at Luton, is accessible on the Council's website. The handbook will be updated for 2008-09 following any decisions about revised scrutiny arrangements.

Newsletter and other publications

The publication of the internal newsletter has been allowed to lapse because of resource constraints; however it is intended that this will be reinstated once the officer team is complete again.

Website

The Council's website continues to develop and the scrutiny section contains a number of completed reports on major topics and other information about scrutiny such as annual reports and the handbook.

Centre for Public Scrutiny

The Council is a member of the Centre for Public Scrutiny and participates in many of their events such as the annual conference, the parliamentary visits and the health scrutiny network. The CfPS is a useful source of information and guidance on good practice. (see the website at www.cfps.org.uk)

Scrutiny Officers' Network

The Council participates in the officer network which is supported by CfPS and through this is able to participate in discussion about future policy at nation level and gain insight into government thinking around local government governance and democracy.

Appendix

Record of called in decisions - April 2007 to May 2008

| No | Decision called in | Subject | Reason | Name of Members calling in | Date of Executive Meeting | Date on Call in Form | Scrutiny Committee considering Call In and data |
|----|--------------------|----------------------------|--|---|---------------------------|----------------------|---|
| 1 | EX/112/07 | Revenue Outturn 2006-07 | To give Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee an opportunity to examine the financial position in detail and consider whether they wish to offer advice to Executive. | Councillors Rutstein and Strange | 4th June 2007 | 12th June 2007 | PRA-4.7.07 |
| 2 | EX/153/07 | Luton and Dunstable Busway | To allow Scrutiny Committee to examine the financial position in detail. | Councillors Franks, Pantling and Rutstein | 10th July 2007 | 11th July 2007 | Environment and Non Executive Functions - 30.7.07 |

Record of called in decisions - April 2007 to May 2008

| No | Decision called in | Subject | Reason | Name of Members calling in | Date of Executive Meeting | Date on Call in Form | Scrutiny Committee considering Call In and data |
|----|--------------------|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---|
| 3 | EX/151/07 | Annual Efficiency Statement | So that Scrutiny Committee may see the final statement submitted and any changes made under accumulation to examine and quantify of the on-going efficiencies identified to balancing the medium term financial plan. | Councillors Franks and Pantling | 11th July 2007 | 11th July 2007 | PRA - 2.8.07 |
| 4 | EX/164/07 | Translink | To enable Scrutiny Committee to examine in detail. | Councillors Franks and Rutstein | 28th August 2007 | 5th September 2007 | Environment and Non Executive Functions - 25.9.07 |
| 5 | EX/173/07 | Bus Lanes | To enable Scrutiny Committee to examine in detail. | Councillors Franks and Q. Hussain | 28th August 2007 | 4th September 2007 | Environment and Non Executive Functions - 25.9.07 |

Record of called in decisions - April 2007 to May 2008

| No | Decision called in | Subject | Reason | Name of Members calling in | Date of Executive Meeting | Date on Call in Form | Scrutiny Committee considering Call In and data |
|----|--------------------|---|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---|
| 6 | EX/204/07 | Marsh Farm re development | To allow Regeneration Scrutiny committee to consider whether the consultation arrangements are satisfactory to all for speedy progress on the development. | Councillors Franks and Smith | 1st October 2007 | 10th October 2007 | Environment and Non Executive Functions - 8.11.07 |
| 7 | EX/210/07 | Re-shaping the Estate | To allow PRA Scrutiny Committee to consider whether this strategy is likely to provide for best use of the Council's assets. | Councillors Strange and Mead | 1st October 2007 | 10th October 2007 | PRA - 31.10.07 |
| 8 | EX/211/07 | Residential Care Learning Disability for Adults | To allow Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee to examine advantages of commissioning against direct provision by the Council. | Councillors Dollings and Franks | 1st October 2007 | 10th October 2007 | Social Inclusion - 1.11.07 |

Record of called in decisions - April 2007 to May 2008

| No | Decision called in | Subject | Reason | Name of Members calling in | Date of Executive Meeting | Date on Call in Form | Scrutiny Committee considering Call In and data |
|----|--------------------|---|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---|
| 9 | EX/270/07 | Re-allocation of Budgets | To give Scrutiny Committee opportunity to examine reasons. | Councillors Strange and Smith | 26th November 2007 | 4th December 2007 | PRA - 19.12.07 |
| 10 | EX/19/08 | Unitary Consultation | To give Scrutiny Committee an opportunity to study the proposed response. | Councillors Franks and Smith | 4th February 2008 | 12th February 2008 | Scrutiny Board 04.03.08 |
| 11 | EX/33/08 | Luton Town Centre Transport Scheme - Selection of Preferred Route | To review the options | Councillors Dolling and Rutstein | 25th February 2008 | 4th March 2008 | Environment and Non Executive Functions Scrutiny 03.04.08 |