

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

FOR THE

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
BEST VALUE REVIEW

VISION REPORT

February 2004

1. Additional Potential Outcomes that relate to the new Community Development Unit

1.1. Promoting Local Governance & Renewal

- Increase in the awareness of local people and communities of what the Council is doing or planning to do.
- Greater partnership working and capacity building with local communities
- Increased levels and effectiveness of community participation in decision making locally and through the Local Strategic Partnership – Luton Forum
- Local people engaged more effectively in Area Committees
- Local people in targeted neighbourhoods have clear infrastructure for ongoing involvement in Neighbourhood Renewal.
- Improved Council co-ordination on key strategies relating to public engagement.
- Increase in satisfaction of local people and communities of the Council.
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1.2. Enabling the Delivery of Better Services

- At least 20 local people in each Area Committee area participating in developing local services and priorities.
- Integrated networks of local people and service providers - better understanding by local people and organisations of the opportunities and constraints facing the Council and its partners in service provision.
- Increase in the number of community centres managed by community organisations.

1.3. Promoting Greater Community Involvement & Cohesion

- At least 20 local people in each Area Committee area feel they can influence decision affecting their local area.
- Local communities have clear infrastructure for ongoing involvement in and development of local projects and initiatives.
- Greater understanding, shared vision of and confidence in what is good practice on community cohesion within and across communities
- Evidence of practical targeted activities to promote cohesion.

- Increased % of local people who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

1.4. The Role of the CDU

- An agreed strategy for Community Development across the Council.
- “Portfolio” responsibility for leading and delivering community development outcomes through key Council priorities and strategies; e.g. Local Strategic Partnership development, Community Plan, Community Cohesion, Neighbourhood Renewal
- Evidence of good practice developed for Members, Council Departments, community organisations.
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1.5. Performance Management

- Responsible for collating information required for Comprehensive Performance Assessment in response to the development of Local Performance Indicators for community development

2. Financial context

- In common with most other Councils, Luton finds itself in a position where the level of its future resources are uncertain, a number of statutory spend pressures will continue to increase and the Government has given clear indications that it will not hesitate to cap authorities where it believes that budget increases are excessive. The medium term budget forecast indicates that further spending reductions will be required to contain these competing pressures.
- The Council is limited in its range of areas where budget reductions can be made. The majority of its services are statutory and whilst efforts can be made to maximise their efficiency, the Council does not have the option of compromising on its statutory obligations.
- The scope of the services covered within this Best Value review are fundamentally discretionary services. Furthermore the level of spend on providing the existing range of services represents a significant proportion of the Council's expenditure on discretionary services and the spend per head is well above average.

- The scope of the Best Value review focuses on analysing the 4 Cs. It is also focussed on improving the service.
- The brief for the review does not cover consideration of the Council's wider financial position albeit the recommendations are influenced by the need to reduce expenditure in this area.
- Given the overriding financial position that the Council finds itself in, there is a need for a process of reflection on the sustainability of the current level of spend on the services covered in this review.
- Members need to give consideration as to whether it is appropriate to recycle any potential savings/capital resources arising from the review back into improving the future provision of the service or alternatively that any opportunities for savings could be considered in part or in whole as being a necessary contribution towards the Council addressing the medium term budget pressures.
- Fundamentally this is a matter for the Executive to consider, however, it is important to make reference for this in the Best Value report as the review team recognises that the services within the scope of this review are merely components of the vast array of services provided by the Council and the overall aims and objectives of the Council are of overriding importance.

The Board also wished the following questions to be addressed.

3. "Why are Community Associations being proposed in preference to Trusts, bearing in mind the Council's strong commitment to Trusts in recent times?"

Appendix "K" contained in the Vision Report considers the different methods of voluntary organisations running community buildings. Whilst each of the methods has its merits, the view of the Best Value Review Group is that Community Associations (CA's) provide the best initial start-up model for ensuring that the processes of engagement and development, so vital in achieving the sustainability of services required, are achieved. It is a sound and proven method for delivering a democratic outcome which can ensure that no one is excluded from the process. CA's can promote local neighbourhood work, community involvement and development. The local community is positively encouraged to become involved in the day-to-day management and development of the centre and its activities. CA's do not preclude the opportunities of

partnership working and may perform all of the functions of community development trusts.

4. "Community Centres are the same as Leisure Centre's aren't they? Why can't they be provided within the same management structure?"

Community Centres, if operated correctly, are very different from Leisure Centres. Whilst both types of building serve the needs of communities the Community Centre is **unique** in that it allows communities to develop programmes which support the needs of local people. The differences are detailed in the report and highlight the value of the support that Community Centres can provide more fully. (See 11. 4. 3 through 11.4.8 on pages 39/40) Given the Council's need to restructure its Services to accommodate the requirements of "Every Child Matters" it would certainly be possible to locate the management of Community Centres within the same Department as other centres (such as leisure centres) as they develop towards management by local communities. The CDU could provide support to the Centres during the transition from Council to Community management either from within the same department, or from another department. The Best Value Review Group's recommendation is that the Community Development Unit be placed within the Chief Executive's Department where it will work strategically and link with all council services and key strategies ensuring that a community development strategy is delivered corporately. The officer Structures Project Team chaired by the Chief Executive will be considering the remaining issues about location of services, including community development, towards the end of February 2004.

5. "Has the issue of Extended Schools be considered?"

No new centres will be developed without considering present buildings. As part of the best value review and included in the appendices are maps that have been prepared for each of the nineteen wards within Luton. These maps indicate all community buildings within each given Ward and will be used to inform any future discussion on Community Centre provision. Community Development staff continue to support initiatives jointly with colleagues from other Service Departments and with Partner Agencies to ensure no duplication of provision. A key element of Community Centre's main business is the provision of daytime usage, one of the key requirements of community organisations.