

LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT 2002/03

Introduction

The Council’s constitution, introduced in December 2001, provides 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 the second annual report of the Scrutiny Board.

The Board

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

| | |
|------------|--------------------------|
| Chair | Councillor Dr. Hambleton |
| Vice Chair | Councillor R. Davies |
| Member | Councillor Ali |
| Member | Councillor Franks |
| Member | Councillor Hand |
| Member | Councillor Hoyle |
| Member | Councillor Jenkins |
| Member | Councillor McCarthy |

The terms of reference of the Board include the powers of the scrutiny committees. In addition the Board has the role of overseeing the work of the scrutiny committees. The Board approves, reviews and monitors the work programmes of the scrutiny committees.

Mentors

The Scrutiny Board appointed the following Councillors to oversee the work of the scrutiny committees:

| Committee | Members |
|---|---|
| Environment and Non Executive Functions | Councillor R Davies Councillor Dr. Hambleton |
| Lifelong Learning and Social Inclusion | Councillor Hoyle Councillor McCarthy |
| Performance, Resources and Assets | Councillor Jenkins Councillor Franks |
| Regeneration and Citizenship | Councillor Ali Councillor Hand |

Panels

Members of the Scrutiny Board serve on the Leisure Panel, the Housing Panel and the Community Cohesion Panel.

The Role of the Scrutiny Board

The role of the Board is to plan, organise, monitor and review the work of the Committees and panels and to evaluate the effectiveness of the scrutiny process. The Board can also exercise the power of scrutiny in its own right.

The Scrutiny Process

Following a review of the approach to scrutiny undertaken by the Board at the December 2001 meeting, the four committees were asked to adopt a five stage process involving:

- Scoping, planning etc
- Evidence and information gathering
- Analysis of evidence and information
- Draw conclusions and formulate recommendations
- Report

and to apply this process to a small number of important topics (the 'big issues'). As will be seen from the appended annual reports of the committees they have done this and there appears to be a consensus that this approach is much more effective than the relatively unplanned and superficial approach that had applied previously. In order to facilitate this approach the committees were advised to continue to nominate groups of three Members to appraise best value review reports and to nominate two Members to examine performance indicator statistics so that reports on service delivery performance would only be called for if the two nominated members felt that there was an issue that was not being adequately addressed or that was not responding to treatment. The committees have made some progress with topics in their work programmes and these will continue into the next municipal year.

Work completed

The Board has met four times during this last municipal year.

The Board approved a work programme for the year for the scrutiny committees and has monitored changes to the work programme through the course of the year.

The Board has been kept informed about progress on implementing the Government's decision to give Social Services authorities the power to scrutinise local health organisations and the Board approved in principle arrangements to undertake health scrutiny jointly with Bedfordshire County Council. The Board's recommendations to the Constitution Committee have been accepted and will shortly be considered by the Council so that the Joint Committee can be established and begin its work.

The Board has kept the arrangements for training Members and officers in the work of scrutiny under review.

The Board made recommendations about changes to the 'call in' procedure that were accepted by the Council and have been incorporated into the constitution.

The Board has considered and approved proposals for restructuring the staff team that supports scrutiny.

The work undertaken by panels during the year has resulted in two major reports to the Executive. The Leisure Panel, chaired by Councillor Dr. Hambleton considered the future funding, management and operation of the Council's leisure and community facilities. The panel reached the conclusion that the Council should adopt the non-profit distributing organisation (or trust) as their preferred model.

The Community Cohesion Panel chaired by Councillor Hussain undertook a study of race and community relations and reported their findings focussing on ten key issues with recommendations for action.

A panel was formed to consider issues around the recruitment and retention of teachers in Luton schools but had not met. This panel will be re-formed for 2003-04.

A panel was formed in response to the report by Lord Laming on the enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. The task of the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel is to monitor and review the response of the Council and its partners to the report and to consider and advise the Council about the Government's proposals in the expected 'green paper'. The panel has met once informally and once formally.

Future Work

The work of the Leisure Panel and the Community Cohesion Panel is completed and they will not be re-formed in the new municipal year. The Teacher Recruitment and Retention Scrutiny Panel will begin its task and the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel will address the proposals in the Government's Green Paper when it is published. The Board will keep under review the effectiveness and suitability of the arrangements for implementing overview and scrutiny of local NHS bodies through the joint committee with Bedfordshire County Council. The Board will consider the proposals submitted by the scrutiny committees for any additions to their work programmes for the new municipal year. The Board will continue to monitor the work of the scrutiny committees and will undertake a further review of the effectiveness of the scrutiny process at their meeting in January 2004.

Appendices

Attached are the annual reports of the four scrutiny committees approved by the Board.

Councillor Dr. Hambleton
Chair of the Scrutiny Board

16th April 2003