

Scrutiny Annual Report

2006/2007



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Foreword

It is now seven years since Luton Borough Council adopted the new political structures of executive and scrutiny. There have been relatively few changes to the constitutional arrangements over those years. However scrutiny has developed and improved by learning from good practice elsewhere including at other councils and by a programme of development for scrutiny councillors.

This year has seen a return to something like normality for scrutiny with the committees electing chairs (but not vice chairs) at the meetings immediately following the annual meeting of the council in May 2006.

The scrutiny board reviewed whether the arrangements in place were fit for purpose and decided to make changes to the terms of reference of two of the committees (lifelong learning and social inclusion) in order to focus the attention of one scrutiny committee on the 'every child matters' agenda and to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the action plan drawn up by the local Children's Strategic Partnership Board. The remit of the lifelong learning scrutiny committee was amended by adding children's social services and the youth service and removing libraries and the committee was re-named children and young people scrutiny committee to reflect its clearer focus. The transfer of functions was from and to social inclusion scrutiny committee. These changes also had the benefit of aligning these committees more closely with two of the council's departments which had already been restructured to help focus on the delivery of the children's agenda.

The new children and young people scrutiny committee has been planning and preparing for a phased approach to the scrutiny of children's services. Environment and non-executive functions scrutiny committee has completed its study of waste and recycling which has highlighted the need for the council to consider the available technologies for the treatment of residual waste researched by the committee. The regeneration and citizenship scrutiny committee has completed its review of the support available for new businesses and has reported on its research into leisure facilities for young people in Luton. The performance, resources and assets scrutiny committee completed its work on balancing the medium term financial plan and advised the executive about all the approaches that should be considered next year. The social inclusion scrutiny committee has monitored the implementation and effects of recommendations adopted from previous years' studies.

The budget scrutiny protocol was reviewed and revised to allow time for the final budget proposals to be considered by each of the scrutiny committees before the executive met to make their recommendations to the council. The agreement of executive and scrutiny to apply the revised protocol enabled both to undertake their tasks in an orderly fashion.

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 mean that, on a temporary basis, the director of scrutiny has taken on other, additional responsibilities. 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 Scrutiny 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 Haji Abid
Chair, Scrutiny Board

1. Introduction

Welcome to Luton Borough Council's Scrutiny Annual Report for 2006/07. The report details the work carried out by the five scrutiny committees over the last year.

Scrutiny at Luton has achieved some fundamental milestones since its implementation and has moved on from the developmental stage to challenging the executive and holding them to account for executive decisions and service delivery and performance. The lack of permanent chairs of most of the committees last year has been overcome and the committees have all had permanent chairs this year. A number of important pieces of work have been completed and recommendations from scrutiny that should improve services to local people once they are implemented have been accepted by the executive. The report on options for improving the scrutiny arrangements called for by the scrutiny board at the end of last year was put on hold until after the May 2007 election with the only changes being those referred to in the chair's foreword to facilitate the scrutiny of the children's agenda.

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 undertakes health scrutiny with the other local authorities in Bedfordshire through a joint committee with Bedfordshire County Council.

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 board appoints individual members to oversee the work of scrutiny committees. Membership of the board for 2006/07 is as follows:



Cllr Abid (Chair)



Cllr RJ Davis



Cllr Garrett



Cllr Magill



Cllr Mead



Cllr Roden



Cllr Siederer



Cllr Worlding

The role of scrutiny committees

The five scrutiny committees are:

- children and young people (formerly lifelong learning)
- 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 best value reviews of services
- 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 which 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.
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 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 scrutiny can be suggested by members of the council, local citizens and service users. Heed is also taken of the 2011 agenda, or 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 the scrutiny. 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, transcript of spoken word e.g. when meeting users/ providers of 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.
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.
Why 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. 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 scrutiny board will be keeping this approach under review.

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 2006-07.

Best value reviews

Scrutiny committees are able to consider the reports of best value reviews before submission to the executive for approval and implementation. The best value review programme has come to an end and consideration is being given to establishing a programme of value for money reviews to deliver step change in performance delivery.

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; 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.

4.

**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 to the scrutiny board the annual progress of the environment & non executive functions scrutiny committee up to 31 March 2007.

Membership of the committee

The annual council in May 2006 appointed membership to the committee as follows:

Membership

Councillors:



Cllr Dolling (Chair)



Cllr D Chapman



Cllr Hoyle



Cllr Ireland



Cllr Pantling



Cllr Worlding
(replaced Cllr Timoney
w.e.f. 11.7.06)

Terms of reference

The terms of reference designated to the committee covers the following areas:

Executive portfolios:

- environment
- waste management

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

Completed reviews

The year began with the committee deciding to choose waste and recycling as their next topic following the report presented by the head of waste management on waste minimisation and landfill allowance trading scheme strategy. The review took thirteen months to complete. The methodology chosen by the committee to conduct the review included: evidence from internal and external witnesses, visiting alternative waste treatment plants in the UK and in Germany to ascertain best practice adopted elsewhere and an immense amount of desktop research.

Waste and recycling has been a controversial issue reported in the media and national and local newspapers. The disposal of waste for years in the UK has been made easy by sending it to landfill sites. However the introduction of LATS (Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme) and the European Directive has forced waste disposal authorities to rethink and minimise the amount of waste disposed at landfills that are now reaching capacity. Luton along with many other local authorities is faced with this predicament. However, actions taken by some authorities have seen drastic measures implemented in order to avoid hefty fines that can run into millions if targets remain unmet. Initiatives such as alternate weekly collections and 'pay as you throw' schemes have seen recycling levels increase, even though they have been met with public disapproval. However, such initiatives are prevalent in Europe making them the current leaders to achieve high recycling rates and hence reducing the amount of waste that is landfilled. Maintaining and achieving high recycling levels is not an easy process. However, with the right alternative waste treatment facility, waste can be used as an energy source to supply power to homes, a common practice used in Europe.

The review recognises current and future recycling initiatives already in place, but also acknowledges that these alone will not enable Luton to meet the 2008/09 targets and beyond. It is imperative the council acts now to avoid the impending fines by planning and preparing the type of alternative waste treatment facility needed. The committee acknowledges the cost of providing such a facility can run into millions and therefore funding such a facility alone is not an option for the council. The importance of partnership working with other local authorities was evident throughout the review to help share financial costs and in finding a suitable location to house such a facility. Another important finding was the winning of hearts and minds of Luton residents in communicating the seriousness of the situation and the impact that unmet recycling targets can have not only on the council but also on Luton residents that ultimately can result in increased council tax.



Outcome of the review

The final recommendations put forward by the committee that are to be considered by the executive on 4 June 2007 are as follows:

- (i) that the environment and non-executive functions scrutiny committee support the executive to urgently pursue cooperation with other authorities on alternative waste treatment methods and be mindful of the implications after 2016 when the contract with WRG ends.
- (ii) that the executive note the evidence and findings made by the environment and non-executive functions scrutiny committee on waste and recycling, and is urged to support waste and recycling treatment facilities that are deemed to have the lowest environmental impact.

- (iii) that the executive be requested to ensure that, at regional and local level, they put pressure on Defra to take the lead in the development of alternative waste treatment facilities.
- (v) that the executive take account of the environmental impact of transporting waste to recycling treatment facilities outside of the UK in its evaluation of the environmental impact of any treatment solutions.
- (vi) that the executive considers educational programmes to inform the residents of Luton about the implications of disposing of waste to landfill sites and its impact on greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. Residents should also be made aware of the financial implications that face the council that ultimately could result in an increase in council tax.

Review in progress

No determination has yet been made by the committee on the next topic. However, the committee was informed the council is currently developing a strategy to meet the Nottingham declaration commitments and agreed to include this as a standing item on the work programme.

Monitoring items

A number of items have been monitored by the committee during the year:

- best value review – engineering and transportation
- gambling policy
- provisional bus strategy
- budget prospects
- strategic waste option appraisal
- best value review – environmental services, phase 3
- review of bus lanes
- Translink – progress and business plan
- presentation by Grant Thornton - Translink
- real time passenger information
- St George's Square – update
- freight strategy

The committee invited stakeholders to participate in order to feel part of the scrutiny process and would like to thank them for their contributions regarding the bus strategy, real time passenger information, review of bus lanes and Translink.

Call-ins

During the year, one call-in (EX/339(iv)/06) was received on 11 December 2006 that related to the environmental health service best value review of dog wardens to reduce the service by one post. The call-in was discussed in depth by the committee that agreed it had no objection to the decision being implemented.



Telecommunications masts

On 26 July 2006 a special meeting was held by the committee to discuss the health risks associated with telecommunications masts. Although the committee had already conducted a review on telecommunication masts some years ago, concerns were raised at the development control committee that were passed to the committee. In order to ascertain whether there are health risks associated with telecommunication masts the committee invited senior officers from the planning section to give an overall perspective on the council's position that confirmed telecommunications companies can install equipment on public highways without the permission of the council unless the installation obstructs vision or causes a danger to highway safety. The government encourages operators to share existing masts where possible to help reduce the number of new masts being erected. The committee also invited two external witnesses; Dr Michael Clark from the radiation protection division at the Health Protection Agency (HPA) and Alasdair Philips from Powerwatch. Both presentations discussed telecommunications masts and whether they were a health risk. Although some anecdotal evidence would agree they are detrimental to health - a high percentage of masts erected in certain areas of Luton have found people experiencing problems as a direct result of living in close proximity - there is little research to confirm they are detrimental to health. The committee agreed to:

- note the continuing protest by Luton residents over the installation of mobile phone masts
- note the government's decision to rule out action to alter planning rules on mobile phone masts
- support the attempts made by Andrew Stunell MP in the last parliament, through his private member's bill to give councils greater powers regarding:
 - o prohibiting any development without planning permission
 - o allowing a local council to have regard to health issues on a precautionary basis
- request the chief executive writes to both Luton MPs urging them to support the bill in the current parliament and lobby government for adequate funding for research into the health risks associated with mobile phone systems.



Future topics

The current future topics of the committee's work programme are as follows:

- co-ordinated street scene
- commercial and industrial recycling
- underground services
- impact on the environment and health

5.

**Children and
young people
scrutiny
committee**



Children & young people scrutiny

Revised terms of reference and renaming of the committee

1. In response to the *Every Child Matters* agenda the lifelong learning scrutiny committee's terms of reference and its title were changed. Similar changes have been made in other local authorities as well. These changes were considered necessary to focus on the five outcomes for children and young people and to monitor the progress of the children and young people's plan. The committee's main terms of reference are derived from the former lifelong learning and social inclusion scrutiny committees, the main change being the transfer of children's social services to this committee. The two corresponding directorates had also been re-structured and re-named as the children and learning directorate and the housing and community living directorate.
2. Bringing all the matters that affect children and young people together under one committee in Luton will enable the progress towards achieving the aims of the *Every Child Matters* agenda as reflected in the council's children and young people's plan to be monitored.
3. Following its formation, the committee met four times during the year and made several commendations to the executive. No decisions of the executive were 'called in' to this committee during this municipal year.
4. The key decisions made by the committee during the year are appended as appendix 1 to this report.
5. The terms of reference and membership of the committee are set out in the table below. The councillor 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.

Membership

Councillors:



Cllr D Chapman
(Chair)



Cllr Ashraf



Cllr Bailey



Cllr Campbell



Cllr Dolling



Cllr Harris



Cllr Hinkley



Cllr Iqbal



Cllr Pantling



Cllr Roden



Cllr Timoney

Co-opted diocesan representative: B O'Bryne
J Chipperton

Parent governors representatives: 2 vacancies

Employee representatives: M Austins
G Ryan
I Smith

- Functions:**
- schools
 - education and achievement
 - training
 - further education and higher education links
 - post 16 and learning skills council
 - adult education
 - developing young people as citizens
 - youth services
 - to scrutinise the effectiveness of the implementation of section 10 of the Children Act 2004
 - to oversee and scrutinise the process towards achieving the ECM agenda
 - to consider how these outcomes will be achieved and assessed.
 - to monitor progress
 - to receive periodic reports on the progress that is being made in relation to any aspect of the children and young people's plan.
 - to carry out scrutiny reviews of topics relevant to the panel.
 - to examine any proposals to establish a children's trust
 - to keep under review the arrangements for safeguarding children at risk in Luton.
 - 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.

Report

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 *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.

The inspectorates, with Ofsted in the lead, have been developing and consulting on a number of documents as follows:

- the framework for the inspection of children's services
- joint area reviews of children's services
- annual performance assessment of council children's services
- inspection of children's services key judgements and evidence

Taken together these documents constitute the 'architecture' of how children and young people's services will be planned, monitored and evaluated from this point forwards. The outcomes of these processes will have significant implications for children and young people, the relevant directorates, the council as a whole and its local partners.

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 will become the focus of scrutiny and is being monitored by several local authority scrutiny committees.

Key events under the auspices of the CYPS committee in 2006-7

Workshop on building relationships for effective scrutiny

Workplace potential is an organisational development consultancy. Under the auspices of the Centre for Public Scrutiny a workshop was being developed on building partnership relationships for effective scrutiny. It requested an opportunity to pilot the workshop with members, officers, and co opted members of the committee. In view of the importance of working with various partnerships emerging at a local level and particularly for the ECM objectives members agreed to take part in the pilot. The workshop took place on the 1 December 2006.

The workshop and its key outcomes:

- a greater understanding of the diversity between and within partner organisations. A shared understanding of the language used by different partners
- clarity of roles, responsibilities and commitments within partnerships
- tools and approaches needed to build effective partnerships where difference is valued and how all resources, including people, are utilised
- community leadership within the sphere of public scrutiny and how officers may support elected councillors to undertake this role
- the opportunities and barriers to partnership working.

Process for the selection and prioritisation of scrutiny topics for 2007-8

In order to manage and prioritise the committee's work programme the scrutiny officer presented a topic selection matrix plotting all the topics that were suggested by the service, by equalities forums, the topics being scrutinised by other local authorities and suggestions made by members of the public and by user groups. Discussions were also held with the children and young people strategic board. However no specific suggestions for topics by the board have as yet been received. Further efforts will be made to assist our partnership organisation in suggesting topics for scrutiny. The committee agreed that, as this was a year for looked after children, it be adopted as a theme for the year and identified the following topics for inclusion in their work programme.

Theme for the year and scrutiny topics

The committee chose looked after children as a theme for the year. Arising from the discussions at the children's panel it was decided to prioritise a scrutiny review of the protocols regarding looked after children particularly regarding confidentiality. The following topics were also prioritised for scrutiny:

- a. anti bullying strategies – including the impact of homophobic bullying
- b. general health /obesity amongst children and young people
- c. parenting strategy
- d. improving support for vulnerable families and children especially hard to reach groups
- e. school meals
- f. teenage pregnancy
- g. key stage 4 attainment especially in mathematics (including a focus on black and minority ethnic pupils).

The involvement of children and young people in scrutiny is one of the biggest challenges for the committee. The following were suggested as possible points of contacts:

- a. Luton children's panel
- b. youth MP
- c. youth service groups, at least 10 per area
- d. database details of a large number of young people who would be prepared to be involved in future surveys
- e. publicity in educational institutions, community centres, internet cafes.

Key challenges for 2007- 08

The key challenges for the year ahead need to be recognised. The committee has identified the following:

- build better working relationships with its partners in achieving the five outcomes
- the involvement of children and young people especially those from the socially excluded groups.
- financial pressures both for the local authorities and the children and young people
- building a scrutiny framework for the monitoring of the children's plan
- marking the year of looked after children by a programme of events in association with our partners.

Appendix 1

Scrutiny committee deliberations for the year 2006-7

Review of the music service

The review of the music service recommended that the strategic manager, expressive arts, examine the possibility of increasing the local authority contributions to help assist low income families to encourage children to continue to benefit from the music service. A comparison of charges levied at other local authorities was also requested.

Rathbone in Luton

Rathbone's mission is to provide young people who are experiencing significant disadvantages the right opportunities to learn and to achieve. Jonathan Foot, divisional director, and Emma Smith, centre manager from Rathbone, gave a presentation to the committee on Rathbone.

Members agreed that following Ofsted's review of Rathbone a report be submitted to the committee advising it of the outcome.

Behaviour support action plan monitoring report

Progress in behaviour support locally since April 2004 was outlined. A member requested that the committee be kept up-to-date on the situation with the health partnership. Members expressed their appreciation for the progress that had been made and asked the behaviour and tuition manager to forward the committee's congratulations to the Avenue Centre on their Ofsted inspection which assessed the service as 'outstanding'.

Educational achievement action plan

The committee received a report on the education achievement action plan which updated the committee on actions taken in respect of their recommendations on educational achievement. The committee noted its disappointment over no tangible evidence of improved leadership as a result of the leadership incentive grant.

The head of school improvement was instructed to:

- i) convey the children and young people scrutiny committee's disappointment to head teachers of secondary schools
- ii) carry out a review of the leadership incentive grant and report his finding back to the committee.

Key stage results – summer 2006

The head of school improvement informed the committee that Black African pupils consistently outperformed other groups in English, maths and science in respect of the difference between local authority performance in 2006 and national performance for 2005.

Directors's presentation

The director of the newly constituted children and learning directorate gave an elaborate presentation setting the scene and sharing his vision for the committees work on *Every Child Matters*.

Building schools for the future - update

Regular updates are received and further updates will continue next year in order to keep track of progress.

6.

**Performance,
resources and
assets scrutiny
committee**



Performance, resources and assets scrutiny committee

Introduction

The council's constitution, introduced in December 2001, provides that each of the scrutiny committees reports once a year to the scrutiny board. This is the sixth annual report of the performance, resources and assets scrutiny committee.

The committee

During the year covered by this report the membership of the committee was as follows:



Cllr Titmuss
(Chair)



Cllr P Chapman
(Vice chair)



Cllr Ashraf



Cllr Harris



Cllr Mead



Cllr Siederer



Cllr Simmons

Terms of reference

Executive portfolio:

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

Functions:

- capital asset management
- human resources
- property
- information management
- financial strategy
- stewardship of public funds
- London Luton Airport
- trusts
- subscriptions and contributions to outside agencies
- pooled budgets
- to act as the council's "audit committee"

Panels:

Members of performance, resources and assets scrutiny committee serve on the joint health scrutiny committee with the Bedfordshire County Council.

Reviews completed

The committee undertook a second review of the operation of the budget scrutiny protocol that had been used during the 2004-05 and 2005-06 budget rounds. The committee was concerned about the insufficient time allowed at the end of the process between the publication of the proposals to be considered by the executive and the budget meetings of the executive and council. The committee was advised that because the government had announced revenue support grant allocations for 2007-08 at the same time as the grant for 2006-07 had been announced, there would be more time available. The executive agreed to recommend the council to make changes to the timetable of meetings so that there would be sufficient time for all of the scrutiny committees to meet at the beginning of February to consider the budget proposals relating to their areas of responsibility. On this basis the budget scrutiny protocol, suitably amended, was agreed by the committee and the executive. In the event, all of the committees met as planned on 5 February and, in line with past practice, this committee 'hosted' a meeting to which all members of the council were invited on 7 February. However it is questionable whether the results justified the substantial investment of member and officer time in the process. The committee will review the protocol and its effectiveness again as part of its work programme for 2007-08.

The committee completed its scrutiny of "balancing the medium term financial position" at the end of November having spent twenty months on the subject and taken evidence from several other authorities and from the Regional Centre of Excellence. The committee's conclusions were broadly that whilst the task of delivering a balanced budget for 2007-08 didn't look too difficult, the forecasts for 2008-09 and 2009-10 looked very challenging and that every feasible option for reducing expenditure and restraining growth would need to be deployed over the next two years. The committee identified a range of measures most of which were already under active consideration by the council. These were outlined in the committee's recommendations to the executive which highlighted the need for work to start immediately following the completion of the 2007-08 budget on addressing the challenge of developing a robust medium term financial plan that will achieve financial balance over the three following years. The committee's conclusions and recommendations were accepted by the executive. The executive also agreed that an implementation plan should be produced to enable progress to be monitored by the committee.

Reviews in progress

The committee has chosen as its next topic the application of human resources policies practices and procedures.

Monitoring function

The committee has received reports on:

- efficiency savings under the 'Gershon' programme
- business partnership with Atos Consulting
- Atos business cases - housing revenue account, professional services
- revenues function
- council tax collection performance
- the site of the former Hart Hill school
- the future of the capital and asset management division
- budgets and budget prospects
- the council's corporate plan

- information management function (including e-government)
- prudential borrowing
- performance indicators
- town centre properties and development schemes
- legal services function
- customer services – progress
- employment practices

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
- workforce makeup and recruitment statistics
- progress towards a balanced medium term financial plan
- customer services
- the future of the capital and asset management division
- e-government
- HR practices – monitoring and enforcement

7.

**Regeneration
and citizenship
scrutiny
committee**



Regeneration and citizenship scrutiny committee

Introduction

The council's constitution, introduced in December 2001, requires each scrutiny committee to report its annual progress once a year to the scrutiny board. This report covers the regeneration and citizenship scrutiny committee's achievement for the year ending 31 March 2007.

Membership

The membership of the committee determined at the May annual council 2006 is as follows:



Cllr Mead (Chair)



Cllr Bailey



Cllr RJ Davis



Cllr Hinkley



Cllr Hoyle



Cllr Skelphorn

Terms of reference

The regeneration and citizenship scrutiny committee's terms of reference cover the following areas:

Executive portfolio:

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

Completed reviews

The committee completed two reviews - *Encouraging and Supporting New Businesses* and *Research into Youth and Leisure in Luton*.

Encouraging and supporting new businesses

The review entitled *Encouraging and Supporting New Businesses*, aimed to identify how Luton Borough Council could provide a productive, timely and co-ordinated approach to assist and intervene, to encourage and support the development of successful local businesses.

The key findings were as follows:

- more co-ordinated approach needed to support businesses to avoid duplication. The 'best practice' model found at the Medway Beacon Council was commended;
- more information on local funding initiatives could help businesses get over funding barriers;
- there is a need for a single point of contact where information and advice could be provided;
- a clearer communications and marketing strategy is needed to promote Luton as a viable location for businesses;
- mentoring schemes offered by some agencies, e.g. Bedfordshire and Luton Business Link, should be more widely available, to promote and encourage people going into business and provide ongoing support.

Outcomes

(a) To ensure that a timely and co-ordinated approach is in place to offer help and advice to new businesses in Luton, the committee agreed the recommendations set out in the final report of regeneration and citizenship scrutiny committee on encouraging and supporting new businesses, which were presented to the executive and accepted as follows:

- that the executive requests officers within the regeneration section to investigate the Medway option as a possible way forward to help support and encourage new businesses in the town and avoid duplication of service provision and identify a lead agency to take on this role.
- that the executive recognise that access to funding is the main barrier faced by new businesses and that this is an area where the council can only act in cooperation with specialist financial agencies.
- that the council website and other media be utilised to provide information on local initiatives that could assist new businesses.
- that the executive requests officers within the regeneration division to look into the viability of providing services through the council's call centre/one stop shop facility. The executive should note that this could potentially have resource implications in providing specialist knowledge in certain areas. A possible way forward would be to include this as part of the service level agreement.
- that the council as a statutory body, the council should provide a lead and develop with other agencies an enterprise/small business support strategy in consultation with outside organisations such as Exemplas and Basepoint.
- that the first contact for potential businesses should be at a single well advertised location, which needs to include a meaningful assessment of their needs by a knowledgeable individual, and should be the first step in mentoring. The success of the initial contact being dependent upon being able to access, or be directed to all the relevant services, advice and information from that first contact point.

- (b) Following the executive's acceptance of the above recommendations, the service manager - business and economy-of the regeneration division presented an overview how the council was proceeding in this regard, at the committee's meeting on 15 March 2007. As envisaged, much of the work is being done in partnership with expert external organisations. Two specific ones working with Luton Borough Council are Business Link East (Exampas is a subsidiary) and Basepoint. The committee received informative presentations from both.

Business Link East is a strategic partner of the East of England Development Agency. It sets itself as 'the place to go for business support' in the region, including Bedfordshire and Luton. Its commitment is to stimulate the market for business support, be easy to access and provide or broker impartial advice to businesses. It currently deploys nine advisers within Bedfordshire and Luton. Among the free services provided, are pre-start support workshops on a range of business subjects as follows: business ideas, business planning, sales and marketing, finance and legislation, business practice and using IT and the web. Business planning is the most popular single topic taken up in Bedfordshire (including Luton) in the last year – 48 out of 118 workshops covering all the topics.

Basepoint are experts in design, build and management of business and innovation centres. They are responsible for developing the business centre at Butterfield Green, Luton, due for opening in May 2007. The centre will provide 100 business units to let or lease on 'easy in – easy out' flexible terms. Basepoint provide full time on site management of the centre and expect about 85 per cent occupancy within two years.

The committee was grateful for the information provided and requested an update in nine months. The subject has now been included in the regeneration and citizenship scrutiny committee work programme for 8 November 2007.

Research into youth and leisure in Luton

The committee completed its review of the research into youth and leisure in Luton, including activities provided by the voluntary sector. Surveys had been undertaken with both parents and young people.

The key findings were as follows:

- results from young people showed that youth clubs were the most popular activities, followed by a swimming centre and subsidised sports and leisure facilities;
- more specialist clubs such as boxing, yoga and rock climbing were seen as essential activities that should be made available;
- the cost of activities was perceived as a barrier along with the lack of efficient transport to reach such facilities;
- the summer holiday activities provided for the first time by youth services in 2006 were well attended across almost all areas of the town;
- the voluntary sector contributed significantly to youth leisure provisions.

Outcomes

The committee was pleased with the very comprehensive nature of the research and submitted the following recommendations to the executive:

- that the children and young people scrutiny committee should continue to monitor youth and leisure activities in Luton and to add this item to their work programme;

- that feedback be provided by the youth service, as part of their progress report against the best value review improvement plan on youth services, such a report to include a report on youth provision in the 2007 school summer holiday. The next report is due in September 2007.

The children's panel of the young people's representatives had requested that the committee looks into the subject of affordable leisure activities for under 16 years, with more activities being arranged during school holidays. Following the conclusion of the above research, a report was completed by way of feedback to the children's panel.

Review in progress

The committee commissioned research into the *Respect Agenda*, published by the government in January 2006, to build on work in progress to tackle anti-social behaviour. The scrutiny section was tasked with mapping a compliance framework to show the council's current position compared to the requirements of the *Respect* action plan. An initial report was presented and discussed by the committee at its meeting of 15 March 2007.

The mapping exercise showed that this subject is substantial and cross cutting, addressing the antisocial behaviour of children and young people and their families. Broad areas covered are as follows:

- activities for children and young people;
- improving behaviour and attendance at schools;
- supporting families;
- a new approach to the most challenging families;
- strengthening communities;
- effective enforcement and community justice;
- strengthening community justice.

All of the of the statutory and voluntary agencies forming part of local *Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership* (CDRP) are affected to some extent, some more than others, particularly, the council and the police. The framework indicates a high level of compliance by most services, including Luton Borough Council and the police. Except for the proposals being progressed centrally by the government, most of the other requirements are the subject of interventions locally and are very much work-in progress.

Monitoring implementation and developments relating to the *Respect Agenda* is now the responsibility of the tasking co-ordination and commissioning group (TCCG) of the CDRP. The TCCG comprises most of the responsible managers identified in the compliance framework. A few other managers, as well as the scrutiny officer, who are not TCCG members have been co-opted on the group. The Luton Forum continues to keep a strategic overview of the subject, as the 'refreshed' local area agreement contains five outcomes directly related to the *Respect Agenda*. A member of the national *Respect* taskforce also attends the TCCG meetings to help steer local delivery of the *Respect Agenda*.

Outcomes

The committee decided that the *Respect Agenda* compliance framework was work in progress requiring updating on a regular basis. They agreed that it be commended to the relevant heads of services to enable them to develop appropriate interventions and monitor the achievements. They also agreed that the Luton Forum be kept informed of the council's progress.

In addition, the committee decided that the scrutiny officer should liaise with the TCCG to learn about areas of concern with implementation of the *Respect* actions, which would be considered as potential future topics for scrutiny. Those selected would become scrutiny topics on which the committee would focus its efforts in the municipal year 2007-08.

Call-in

The committee dealt with one 'call-in' during the year, relating to an executive decision on proposals for change in the community development service.

A number of councillors and members of the public expressed concerns about the impact the proposals would have on the service and service users. They were critical of the lack of consultation and impact assessment of the proposals. They feared additional burdens would be placed on social services to make good withdrawals of certain community centre facilities, which provide a safe haven and an invaluable support network, particularly for the elderly and vulnerable.

The portfolio holder with responsibility for community development stressed that the aim of the proposals for the future of the community development service was not the closure of community centres, but that changes had to be made in light of budgetary constraints. It was explained that the service provided in Luton was one of the most expensive in the country.

The head of leisure and community confirmed that a central training and administrative function would be retained and that all community centres would remain open on a more cost effective basis.

Members voted on the options and resolved that the committee had no objection to the called-in decision being implemented.

Monitoring function

The committee has received reports on:

The committee received reports on the following:

- warden schemes;
- leisure trust (Active Luton);
- domestic violence - report on progress by the council and other agencies;
- community safety strategy 2005-2008 - annual progress;
- African Caribbean Community Development Forum - grants monitoring;
- Alzheimer's society - grants monitoring;
- Luton Drug And Alcohol Partnership - performance and funding;
- grants allocation – annual recommendations.

Future topics

The committee agreed to focus on areas of concern within the *Respect Agenda*, as potential future topics for scrutiny in the municipal year 2007-08. Each of the broad areas provides a wealth of opportunities to impact on local services, particularly relating to anti-social behaviour reduction.

8.

**Social inclusion
scrutiny
committee**



Social inclusion scrutiny committee

Membership

Councillors:



Cllr Hinkley (Chair)



Cllr Abid



Cllr Bullock



Cllr M Hussain



Cllr Shaw



Cllr Skepelhorn

Terms of reference

During the year the terms of reference for this committee were modified. In the main its responsibilities for children and young people were passed on to the newly constituted children and young people scrutiny committee. This modification was necessary to keep a focus on all the issues that affect children & young people by bringing them under one committee. Several other local authorities have adopted a similar approach. IDEA¹ and CfPS² have also recommended it as good practice.

Executive portfolio:

- housing and waste management
- community living

Functions:

- anti-poverty
- housing
- benefits and welfare
- services to vulnerable people
- disabilities
- exclusion and disadvantage
- health and health action zone
- elders
- mental health
- homes and day centres
- libraries children's issues and initiatives

The children and young people scrutiny committee will be better able to monitor the progress towards achieving the aims of the *Every Child Matters* agenda as reflected in the council's children and young people's plan. On the other hand the social inclusion scrutiny committee will continue to monitor performance of the housing and community living issues and to drive improvement.

Public engagement by the committee in the scrutiny process

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. This committee expressed its particular concern over the involvement of socially excluded groups not just by inviting them to attend the scrutiny meetings but also by gearing the agenda towards their concerns. It was agreed that the scrutiny officer would approach the equality forums and ask them to suggest topics for scrutiny.

The scrutiny officer attended three of the forums personally and the other one was approached through the social inclusion manager. The function of scrutiny was explained at the meeting and how scrutiny can be used to raise the issues of most concern to them. They were asked to suggest topics for possible scrutiny. The following areas of interest were identified:

Topic	Suggested by
Dial a Ride services	Disability forum
Impact of homophobic bullying on educational achievement of young people	LGBT forum
Depression, unemployment and isolation	Women's forum
No suggestions were received but further efforts will be made	Race forum

This could be considered as one of the key outcomes this year because research has shown that public engagement and particularly from socially excluded groups is very hard to get. At the time of writing this report one of the areas highlighted has already been selected by the children and young people scrutiny committee as a topic for scrutiny.

Highlights of the key areas considered by the social inclusion scrutiny committee during the municipal year 2006-07 are attached as appendix II.

Scrutiny outcomes 2006/7

No	Topic	Outcome
I.	Tenants participation	Several attempts had been made to bring together all the strands of local engagement with the community. Once the government white paper was released it was at a meeting of this committee where it was decided that a coordinated approach to community engagement would be better. This approach is currently being developed with a view to setting up a community engagement strategy,
II.	The day care needs of people with a learning disability.	Users, providers and key workers in day care services are a part of the partnership board. Six monthly monitoring reports are submitted to the committee.
III.	Older people's strategy group	A relationship of trust and confidence has been built between the committee and the representative group of older people in the town. Changes to the eligibility criteria. Recommendation by CSCI that periodic progress reports submitted to the CSCI ¹ should be provided to this committee as well.
IV.	Budget scrutiny	Members had an opportunity to scrutinise the draft budget and put forward their views to the executive

Called in decisions in 2006/7

A call-in procedure is a key component of scrutiny. Any two members of the council can call in decisions made by the executive. Members have five working days to call in the decision following which the appropriate scrutiny committee considers it. At the time of writing this report the called in items considered by the committee this year were:

Decision called in			Reasons for call ins	Cllrs who called in the decision	Date	Committee
1	EX/132/06	Implementation of strategy for the future living needs of Luton's older people	a) so that it can be examined by the social inclusionscrutiny committee b) disagreement with decision	Councillors: a) J.Davies and Franks b) Shaw and Simmons	10 April 2006	social inclusion scrutiny committee 26 April 2006
2	EX/308/06	Reference from north Luton area committee – sheltered housing warden service	Not happy with decision	Councillors Bailey and Shaw	13 Nov 2006	social inclusion scrutiny committee 7 December 2006

Conclusion

Scrutiny has been able to play an important role in the review and monitoring of the council's policies, strategies, performance improvement and decision- making. The work of the committee and its value has been recognized externally by CSCI Inspectors. Over the seven years it has played a key role in informing policy development and added value to council service delivery by initiating and reviewing improvement.

The social inclusion scrutiny committee has continued to focus on the regular examination of a number of topics. The committee met 6 times. It considered a number of areas; investigating, questioning and involving the users. However a clear trend has emerged in its work this year. An initial analysis shows that the committee has devoted a lot of time to driving performance of the areas within its remit.

Highlights of the key areas considered by the social inclusion scrutiny committee during the municipal year: 2006-07.

10 APRIL 2006

Meeting considered a call-in about the closure of care homes. It was recommended that the executive:

- (i) extend the consultation period to 12 weeks.
- (ii) that a phased closure plan be developed that maximises opportunities for staff and residents to move as a group, as per the strategy for the future living needs of elderly people.
- (iii) include the provision of a 60 bed residential home and two extra care sheltered schemes in the procurement arrangements for a partner to develop future elderly provision.

13 APRIL 2006

The action plan of the *Supporting People* strategy would be monitored regularly and a progress report will be submitted to the social inclusion scrutiny committee every six months on the outstanding items in the action plan.

10 May 2006

CSCI report

- (i) the committee received a report which advised members of:
 - (a) the findings of the Commission for Social Care Inspection's (CSCI) inspection of Luton Borough Council's older people's services and
 - (b) the council's progress in relation to the action plan to address the report's recommendations, agreed with CSCI.
- (ii) inspectors reflected the positive contribution of this committee. In their words 'The work of the committee led to a wider involvement of councillors and understanding of social care issues.' They also welcomed the monitoring of the action plan and suggested that periodic progress reports that are submitted to the CSCI¹ should be provided to this committee as well.

Older people's inspection improvement plan

- (i) that when the decision of the Department of Health on the council's application for funding is known, if that decision is unfavorable, the executive was requested to give urgent and serious consideration to the council itself funding all of the actions in the older people's inspection improvement plan which are currently unfunded and that this should be the highest priority call on any net under spends on the council's 2005/06 and 2006/07 budgets and any savings from the recent industrial action and any other savings or windfalls
- (ii) that the director of housing and community living investigate and report to the committee as soon as possible, with costings, on the setting up of a service level agreement with voluntary sector partner organisations for volunteers to undertake monitoring visits in relation to services for older people.
- (iii) that all councillors act as a monitoring body until the arrangements outlined at (ii) above are in place by monitoring two cases in their own ward per month.
- (iv) that the committee be consulted on the arrangements for monitoring private sector companies who are providing the council with care packages.
- (v) that the director of housing and community living report to the committee on a quarterly basis on all areas identified in the older people's inspection improvement plan and on progress in addressing the issues not forming part of the action plan identified by the committee at the meeting.

- (vi) that arrangements be made for the older persons team to make a presentation to the committee on older people's assessment and care management and improvements made since the inspection.
- (vii) that the information explaining the revised eligibility criteria be sent to scrutiny committee members.

6 June 2006

The committee received a presentation on housing needs from Jonathan Lee of Opinion Research Services which had carried out a survey conducted for the service. This provided a real insight into the current provision and future housing needs in the borough.

21 September 2006

A bi-annual monitoring report was received from Bedfordshire and Luton Mental Health and Social Care Partnership NHS Trust.

2 November 2006

- (i) a key outcome of this meeting was the decision to establish a community engagement working group. Several attempts had been made to consider how the participation of tenants and all other people in a locality could be improved. In view of the government's white paper it was agreed to set a working group to draw recommendations on how community engagement in Luton could be improved. This report is expected at the meeting in September 2007.
- (ii) another key outcome was the clear decision for this committee to scrutinise performance indicators on a regular basis. The head of adult social care and the head of housing were asked to draw up a schedule of performance indicators for this committee to monitor.

7 December 2006

- (i) it had been proposed that the eligibility criteria for people receiving community care support could be raised to critical only. This decision was called in and a special meeting was called to discuss the issue. A large number of older people and their carers came to the meeting at short notice and shared their worries with the committee. On the 7 December the committee was informed that the eligibility criteria would not be critical only but substantial and critical.

9.

Other forms of scrutiny

Other forms of scrutiny

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. A joint committee was established with three members from Luton, five members from the county council and one member from each of the three district councils in Bedfordshire. Subsequently two members representing the patients' forums have been co-opted without voting rights by the joint committee. The joint committee has met on a monthly frequency throughout the year. This council's representatives were Councillors Roden, Siederer and Titmuss. Councillor Titmuss was elected to be the vice chair of the joint committee. The joint committee has scrutinised the work of the health trusts within Bedfordshire and Luton. The annual report of the Bedfordshire and Luton joint health scrutiny committee is attached as appendix B (to follow).

The changes to the organisational arrangements for the national health service have resulted in the establishment of both a strategic health authority and an ambulance and paramedic service for the whole of the eastern region. The way in which these bodies are to be subject to local authority scrutiny has been and continues to be the subject of consideration and development by the ten upper tier authorities in the region. The chairs of the health scrutiny committees (including the vice chair in the case of Luton) meet on a quarterly basis to exchange information and experience and to consider what advice to give to their authorities in relation to regional and sub-regional scrutiny of health services. At the time of writing this report, arrangements for responding to the review of acute services had been drafted by officers and were under active consideration by the chairs.

A special joint health scrutiny committee had been formed by Cambridgeshire County Council to receive and respond to the consultation about the proposal to move Papworth hospital to Cambridge; however Luton decided not to participate in that joint committee.

10.

**Forthcoming
year**

Training

Member training and development was not a high priority during 2006-07 as members of scrutiny committees were by now familiar with their roles and the techniques that make for effective scrutiny. However work is going on to plan and prepare to meet the needs of new members in May and June of 2007. Officer training will be planned following decisions on new scrutiny arrangements.

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 2007-08 following any decisions about revised scrutiny arrangements.

Newsletter and other publications

In order to improve communications and raise the profile of scrutiny internally a newsletter is now published electronically every half year and circulated (by a link to the intranet website) to members and senior officers.

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 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 centre is a useful source of information and guidance on good practice. (see the website at www.cfps.org.uk)

Appendices

Appendix A

Called-in items May 2006 to April 2007

No.	Decision called in	Subject decision	Reason	Name of members	Date of executive meeting	Date of call-in	Date of meeting considered
1	EX/132/06	Implementation of strategy for the future living needs of Luton's older people	a) So that it can be examined by social inclusion scrutiny committee b) Disagreement with decision	Councillors: a) J.Davies and Franks b) Shaw and Simmons	10 April 2006	a) 10 April 2006 b) 11 April 2006	Social inclusion scrutiny committee 26 April 2006
2	EX/185/06	Proposals for the community development Service	No information on consultation in the report	Councillors Harris and Shaw	5 June 2006	5 June 2006	Regeneration and citizenship scrutiny committee 22 June 2006
3	EX/308/06	Reference form north Luton area committee – sheltered housing warden service	Not happy with decision	Councillors Bailey and Shaw	13 November 2006	20 November 2006	Social inclusion scrutiny committee 7 December 2006
4	EX/339 (iv)/06	Environmental health best value review	Dissatisfied with decision	Councillors Shaw and Simmons	11 December 2006	14 December 2006	Environment and non-executive functions scrutiny committee 11 January 2007

Appendix B

Annual report of the Bedfordshire and Luton joint NHS scrutiny committee to follow.