

**COMMITTEE:** AREA COMMITTEE BOARD

**DATE:** THURSDAY 9<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2012

**SUBJECT:** INTEGRATION OF THE AREA COMMITTEES AND  
NEIGHBOURHOOD GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME

**REPORT BY:** HEAD OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT & STRATEGIC  
POLICY

**CONTACT OFFICER:** DEAN STOKES

**IMPLICATIONS:**

<b>LEGAL</b>	✓	<b>COMMUNITY SAFETY</b>
<b>EQUALITIES</b>	✓	<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>
<b>FINANCIAL</b>		<b>CONSULTATIONS</b>
<b>STAFFING</b>		<b>OTHER</b>

**WARDS AFFECTED:** ALL

**PURPOSE**

1. That Members consider and provide a steer on the proposed way forward for integrating the Neighbourhood Governance (NG) programme with Ward Forums and Area Committees.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2. **Area Committee Board is asked to note the report and support the recommendations as outlined in paragraphs 10 ((a) to (h)) and 15 ((a) to (h)).**

**BACKGROUND**

3. Following extensive evaluation and policy commitments, the Board asked officers to develop a way forward for the extension of the outline NG framework and programme (see appendix A) across the 5 Areas of the Borough, and to integrate the programme with ward forums and Area Committee arrangements.
4. This work is taking place in the context of ongoing organisational change across the Council, involving closer collaboration between the Community Development Service (CDS) and Consultation and Citizen Engagement. Further more, it remains subject to further review in the

context of the Council's transformation agenda and budget challenges over coming years.

5. The adoption of the Luton Forum Community Involvement Strategy (CIS) in Jan 2011 and the current H&CL Service Plan (incorporating the draft CDS Strategy 2011-2014) provides a clear framework for guiding and supporting the implementation of NG work in an overall community involvement and partnership context. The NG approach provides a central means to deliver on strategic objectives for public involvement, active citizenship and neighbourhood reach and delivery.
6. This is about practical steps to create a more coherent, single offer for citizens. The proposals here will support the extension of the NG approach across all five areas of the borough.
7. The proposals here, if agreed by Full Council, will take the Council towards a more citizen-focused approach. The proposals take account of the current budget constraints and take the Council in the right direction to meet the considerable budget challenges to come.

## **REPORT**

### **INTEGRATION OF THE NG PROGRAMME WITH WARD FORUMS AND AREA COMMITTEES**

8. Analysis of the Area Committee cycle and NG programme has demonstrated potential for efficiencies in reducing the number of meetings through integration and greater collaboration across key services involved. At the same time, this integration will increase opportunities for supporting the community leadership role of Members, strengthen the evidence base for assessing local priorities, and the effectiveness of the Council's co-ordination of local partnership arrangements to address them.
9. Pilot work to test different models of integration has shown a consensus amongst Members, citizens and officers involved that:
  - a) Ward forums and Area Committees should continue to be held on the same dates at the same venues
  - b) The format and agenda of the Area Committee need to be adapted to enable integration and improve the effectiveness of the meetings and in effect take on the structure/format of the NG Area Boards.
  - c) Officer and Member teamwork and coordination needs to be strengthened to ensure adequate support to ward forums, enable greater citizen involvement, and generally improve the effectiveness of these meetings
10. The Board is therefore asked to consider the following proposals:

- a) Reduce the frequency of the Area Committee/Ward Forum cycle for the coming municipal year from 4 per year to 3 per year in all areas.
- b) Require officers from key services and corporately to align Council and partner resources, work with Members and engage citizens in order to support and develop the Ward Forums and improve their efficiency and effectiveness.
- c) Change the name of Area Committees to Area Boards e.g. West Luton Area Committee becomes West Luton Area Board etc. This is to signal the general shift of emphasis of Area Co-ordination from a public meeting to a meeting in public in line with the broad direction of the NG programme. Officers will work with Members to develop a meeting format which reflects the most useful aspects of the Area Committees and the Area Boards.
- d) Change the name of the Area Committee Board to the Community Involvement Board.
- e) Fully integrate the business of Area Boards with that of Area Committees, and ensure the management of the meetings reflects this new approach.
- f) Seek and confirm Democratic Services support for these arrangements.
- g) Confirm and enact appropriate constitutional arrangements for the Council so as to reflect the arrangements described above.
- h) Reduce the number of area tours i.e. two per ward per year, totalling 38 to one per ward per year, totalling 19. This is not to say that an extra tour cannot be implemented as and when required.

### **EXTENSION OF THE NG PROGRAMME**

- 11. As reported to the Board, the roll out of the NG programme to cover 3 Areas (West, South and Central) has required the transformation of the Community Development Service to resource current delivery arrangements within existing staffing level. This has been achieved incrementally, one Area per year, so as to allow for staff learning, strengthening partnership working, and continuous improvement and refinement of the programme.
- 12. Given the ongoing budget challenges faced by the Council and partners, in order to achieve full extension across the Borough, this approach will have to be maintained and support for the NG approach and its full integration with Ward Forums and Area arrangements widened to other

service areas across the Council, and in particular Consultation and Community Engagement and Tenants' Participation.

13. The NG programme as a key aspect of the Council's and its partners' public involvement offer to citizens will continue to be reviewed and adapted to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Key aspects of delivering the programme will need to be confirmed by relevant service areas, and further progress made in integrating this work with the Councils' overall strategic direction, as set out in the proposals below.
14. This approach will also require continued commitment of key partners. Bedfordshire Police have seconded a member of staff to the CDS NG team since the inception of the NG pilot, and have confirmed this arrangement until March 2013. The Council is in discussion with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG the NHS body for commissioning services in Luton currently in formation following guidelines the Health and Social Care Bill) regarding ways in which joint objectives for public involvement can be delivered through the NG programme and the CIS and how National Health Service (NHS) investment in this might be achieved. Partners (both internal / external to LBC) will continue to be consulted and encouraged to provide the required resources for the continuation of the NG programme and its inherent benefits to achieving their individual objectives.
15. The Board is asked to consider the following proposals for the extension of the NG programme (integrated with Ward Forums and Area arrangements) in subsequent years:
  - a) Extend the programme to one new area (Area North) in 2012 – 2013 with a final roll out to Area East in 2013-14
  - b) Further review of our overall approach in order to identify areas requiring improvements in effectiveness and efficiency and report these back to the Board.
  - c) Note that CDS will continue its transformation and take account of key staffing requirements for delivery of the NG approach.
  - d) Note that the Consultation and Community Engagement team will align work programmes and confirm service commitments to ensure support for the delivery of the NG approach and its integration with Ward Forums and Area arrangements as part of taking forward the Community Involvement Strategy.
  - e) A Communications Strategy / Delivery Plan will have to be agreed based on the on-going and new roll out of arrangements for NG/Ward Forums/Area Board with the Communications Unit.
  - f) Officers in the short term will establish matrix management arrangements and resource pooling including agreed apportionment and allocation of available budgets between the two service areas to ensure effective co-ordination and delivery of an integrated public involvement offer.

- g) Require officers to consider options for aligning the work of Tenants' Participation service with the overall NG Programme and Community Involvement Strategy.
- h) Require officers to consider future budget savings in the context of the objective of improved public involvement and area co-ordination – the quality rather than the quantity of citizen engagement being key
- i) Ensure further strategic integration of the NG programme and Ward Forums/Area Boards through the Community Involvement Strategy to ensure the effective support of Council services and key partners for the community leadership role of Members.

**PROPOSAL/OPTION**

- 16. It is proposed that Members follow the recommendations as outlined in paragraphs 10 (a) to (h) and 15 (a) to (h).
- 17. The alternative options would be to:
  - a) Make an alternative decision to integrate the work programme of Area Committees and Neighbourhood Governance.
  - b) Defer the report
  - c) Maintain the status quo

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 18. As there are recommendations to change the names of the respective area committees and that of the Area Committee Board, this will require an amendment to the council's constitution. This has been agreed with J. Newman solicitor in Legal Services on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

**EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 19. The work of Area Committees and Neighbourhood Governance will have a direct impact on Council Services and will address issues such as accessibility, local participation and generally assist in improving the quality of life within the borough. More importantly the whole programme offers citizens a greater voice in the democratic process.

**APPENDIX**

Appendix A: Neighbourhood Governance Model of Engagement Framework and Programme – Summary and Overview

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

Localism Act 2011  
Health & Social Care Bill