AREA COMMITTEE BOARD

9th April 2008 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Simmons (Chair); Councillors Ashraf, Campbell, R.J. Davis and Mead.

4   APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Khan and Smith.

5   MINUTES (REF: 2.1)

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 30th January 2008 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6   INTERIM REPORT IN NEIGHBOURHOOD GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT (REF: 8)

The Chief Executive submitted a report which presented the interim outcome of his Task and Finish Group on their analysis of the Government's White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' and how those requirements could be translated into neighbourhood governance and management arrangements for Luton.

The Chief Executive advised that the neighbourhood governance model had three general principles:

- Strengthening the role of Ward Councillors through deepening democratic engagement and accountability with a primary role of leading ward Forums.
- Basing new Neighbourhood Forums on the current Area Committee structure, which were already linked to safer neighbourhood policing structures.

- Continuing locality governance based on leadership through the Council's decision making process (Executive, Scrutiny and Full Council) and the Luton Forum.

However, the future direction of neighbourhood management was more complex and required further detailed consideration.

The Chair thanked officers for the work which had been carried out on developing the proposals. In view of the complexity of the neighbourhood management concept, she suggested that a two phase approach be adopted, the first phase focussing on developing the neighbourhood governance model and the second concentrating on

neighbourhood management. She suggested that the recommendations on neighbourhood management be deferred at the present time.

Members welcomed the proposals. Whilst it was felt that service delivery decisions could be devolved to neighbourhoods, it was agreed that skills and capacity would need to be built within the community prior to delegation of budgets. There was also felt to be a role for community development in contributing to the neighbourhood governance arrangements, continuing the links with the Area Committee process, assuming that Neighbourhood Boards would replace that structure. The importance of maintaining transparency in those arrangements was emphasised.

The Chair suggested that the paper be amended to refer to a two phase approach to neighbourhood governance and management and Political Groups be invited to comment on the neighbourhood governance arrangements proposed, prior to a report back to a future meeting of the Committee.

Resolved: (i) That the Board's thanks to officers for their work in developing neighbourhood governance and management proposals be recorded.

(ii) That the Chief Executive amend the report to reflect a two phase approach to community governance and management, concentrating on community governance only, in the first instance.

(iii) That the three Political Groups represented on the Council be invited to debate and comment on the neighbourhood governance proposals and submit their comments to the Chief Executive by the middle of May 2008.

(iv) That the Chief Executive report back to a future meeting of the Area Committee Board with the views of the three Political Groups.

(Note: The meeting ended at 6.25 pm)