

REPORT TO THE MALMESBURY AREA 1 COMMITTEE

**FROM THE MALMESBURY AND THE VILLAGES COMMUNITY AREA PARTNERSHIP
(MVCAP)**

28 November 2007

PROPOSAL FOR PILOTING AREA BOARDS IN WILTSHIRE

Purpose of Report

1. To indicate the interest of MVCAP in becoming a pilot community area to help test and develop Area Boards in Wiltshire.

Background

2. MVCAP supports the proposals in the submission for one Council for Wiltshire to establish a community area board for Malmesbury and the villages which would work closely with the partnership.
3. As part of its learning and development programme, the partnership has examined its role and discussed how this could develop in the future. A summary of the current and future role, purpose and support for MVCAP is given below.

Introduction

4. The community area partnership, MVCAP, was formed following a one-day event held in May 2005 in Malmesbury to bring local people, elected representatives, service providers and other stakeholders together to identify and discuss local issues and priorities.

Aim of the Partnership

5. The overarching aim is for local people to ensure that the quality of life in the community area is sustained and enhanced.

Purpose of the Partnership

6. To be a voice of the community and the major body for parish councils, community leaders, community activists, representatives from local organisations and businesses and local people to come to engage on at a local level on issues identified in the community plan. Following extensive consultation over the period of a year, the partnership published the community area plan for Malmesbury and the villages in May 2006. The community area plan and its updates are central to the partnership's activity and remains its mandate for local action.

Responsibilities of the Partnership

7. To be the place to rehearse and discuss community issues and priorities and to lobby the community area board for actions and decisions to be made.

8. To support local people in addressing local projects to resolve some local issues where appropriate.
9. To be as open, transparent and inclusive as possible.

Functions of the Partnership

10. To identify local issues and priorities through the development of the community area plan and to monitor how these are being addressed by the relevant parties.
11. To engage in and provide feedback on local consultation and other local service initiatives.
12. To solve local problems directly and/or encourage and support local people and the community area partnership in developing local projects to address any problems or issues.
13. To provide a local focus for communication and a strong local identity as a place for local people to have an influence which will feed in to the community area board.
14. To gain publicity for local activities and events and encourage others within the community to join in.
15. To host local events such as the state of the community area debate jointly with the community area board.
16. To participate with the community area board in initiatives to tackle cross-cutting issues or issues which require a collaborative style of working.

Membership of the Partnership

17. The community area partnership operates with a terms of reference, which includes the election of a chair, a vice chair, a treasurer and secretary at its annual general meeting. The administrating body for its funding is currently North Wiltshire District Council. There is a standing core membership of volunteers from the area and MVCAP is open to anyone from the area who wants to join, including representatives of local organisations and public service delivery bodies.

Connectivity of the Partnership

18. MVCAP is not the gatekeeper to other local community groups and initiatives, but encourages these groups to make links and wider connections to this central coordinating partnership under one or more of the 8 themes covered in the community area plan (eg the economy, lifelong learning, culture etc). Links are also made with the following:
 - Area 1 Committee
 - Community Area Board (in the future)
 - Town and Parish Councils in the Malmesbury community area
 - Wiltshire Forum of Community Area Partnerships
 - North Wiltshire Local Strategic Partnership
 - North Wiltshire District Council
 - Wiltshire County Council
 - Wiltshire Police, Fire
 - Health and partners
 - Wiltshire Strategic Board (Wiltshire Assembly in the future)

- Housing and Residents Associations
- Business community
- Voluntary sector
- Local Area Agreement, the Community Strategies and the Local Development Frameworks

Coverage of the Partnership

19. MVCAP covers the whole population and interests of the town and all of the parishes in the community area, which in future will include the wards of the new unitary councillors.

Frequency of Meetings

20. The partnership meets every six weeks, usually from 6.00 pm (in Malmesbury library during the winter and at local venues in the different villages during the other months).

Resources for the Partnership

21. The partnership is currently dependent on the commitment of a core group of individuals and really needs funding and sustainable support to enable it to continue to deliver and to engage more widely in the future; this will also need to include some funding to refund expenses to volunteers. It is noted that the proposals for the future arrangements includes the following level of resource which will be accessible to the partnership:

- Community services officer
- Secretariat support
- Core funding for community area partnerships (including funding to cover the expenses of volunteers)
- Funding to support bids for local community projects
- Assistance with research, intelligence gathering, consultation, external funding applications, events management, communications and publications, financial and performance management
- Training and development programmes
- Access through the community area board to local elected representatives, a Cabinet member and local service providers

Risks for the Partnership

22. MVCAP is committed to sustaining its activity at the local level and implementing the community area plan throughout the transition period towards the new Council for Wiltshire in April 2009. The risk is that the focus will be solely on the transitional arrangements over the next 18 months rather than on continuing to sustain and build on the capacity of the community area partnership to deliver.
23. Stronger links are required in terms of being able to exert greater influence over what happens in the locality eg through the new community area board. At present, there is not a clear process for taking forward and swiftly resolving some strategic priorities for the area eg the risk of flooding; the need for more affordable housing; transport issues. MVCAP sees itself as being able to add weight by flagging up these issues collectively where they affect a range of parishes in the community area (or even across the district or County). The risk is that there is currently no coherent way of feeding in and addressing these issues.

24. MVCAP intends more actively to participate in the Wiltshire Forum of Community Area Partnerships (WFCAP) in the future eg in helping to develop a consistent terms of reference for the community area partnerships across Wiltshire (which will also allow local variations as required). The level of the overall contribution of volunteers to the partnership is currently being assessed. The risk is that the contribution of volunteers is under-estimated and that community area partnerships would not be sustainable without being able to keep up this level of voluntary input.

Recommendation

25. MVCAP recommends and continues to support the idea of running a pilot in the Malmesbury community area to help develop and test the new arrangements with community area boards and community area partnerships.

Contact Details

Terry Mockler tgmockler@aol.com

on behalf of the members of MVCAP, Val Price (Chair) and Carole Soden (Vice Chair)