Area Boards Review – Action Plan

Background

The area boards were implemented in 2009 as part of the new unitary council. The boards were established to ensure that the new council, whilst being big and efficient, would also be local and provide the opportunity for communities to engage, influence and be part of decision making that directly impacts on a local area.

Five years on the boards are established and widely recognised as a forum for the community to engage in council and other public sector business, and to have a voice on future services and what's appropriate in their local community. With the shift towards greater community working and more community-led services, it was considered an appropriate time to undertake a review of the area boards and how these will evolve in the future to reflect the changes and opportunities ahead.

Objectives of the review

- Build greater resilience in local communities
- Build on the community working and the engagement of local communities in the work of the council (and other public sector partners)
- Devolve more services and decisions at local level
- Increase the level of influence in decision making in local areas
- Raise awareness of what's happening in local communities
- Provide opportunities for communities to come together and do more together

Key drivers for the review

- Need for communities to do more for themselves given the decreasing resources in public services
- Improve the sense of place and belonging in local communities – this is evidenced to increase the sense of general wellbeing, pride and involvement in a locality

Key areas that were considered for action;

1. All area boards
2. The future role of the Community Area Manager (CAM)
3. Funding for all area boards

Key stakeholders that were consulted and involved in the review

- Area board chairs
- Community Operation Board chairs
- Key partners; police, health, fire and rescue
- Voluntary and community groups
- Community Area Managers
- Corporate and Associate Directors
- Wiltshire Council managers
- Overview and Scrutiny Task group
- Cabinet members
- Town and Parish Council representatives

Feedback

All the views and feedback received have been taken into account in the delivering this action plan.

Actions

The actions focus on the following four areas;

1. **All area boards**
2. **Future grant allocations**
3. **The future role of the Community Area Manager (CAM)**

Process for decision making

- The review of area boards has taken into account the wide ranging consultation exercise, together with the views of Overview and Scrutiny and the actions following this are set out in the action plan below - these need to be ratified by cabinet.

- The review and action plan (including finance arrangements) will, therefore, be considered at cabinet on 22 April 2014.

- The grant allocations will, therefore, need be made as a delegated cabinet member's decision in order to have the governance arrangements in place for area boards for 1 April 2014. The grant available for each area board will be published by the cabinet member in advance of the start of the financial year (2014/15). Area boards will manage their budgets accordingly.

Action plan

Themed area	Feedback on areas for improvement/development	Action	Timing	Accountability
1. All area boards	Format and topic of a meeting to be themed (where appropriate) to increases level of involvement	Reduce formal meetings to a minimum of 4 per year, plus two themed meetings; • one additional meeting • one JSA focused meeting Vary the style, approach and content of the meeting and encourage through effective marketing increased participation - based on the theme, event and target audience	**Calendar year – 1 April 2014**	**Cabinet member and AD**
	Look at the best location and time (based on target audience and theme)	Go to communities and look at other events, activities and locations where it may be more appropriate to hold an area board meeting		**CAMs**
	Increase awareness of the meetings and events	Deliver a comprehensive communications and marketing plan that focuses on target audiences and increasing awareness, participation and community interest in the meetings, events, themes		**AD**
	Use the JSA to focus on issues and priorities in a community area. This can help with themes, events and activities.	One JSA meeting to be held per year to encourage setting local priorities. Look at appointing elected members as theme champions and encourage sub meetings/events based on these themes; such as boosting the local economy; tackling health issues, recognising the impact of culture, arts on wellbeing etc.		**HoS**
	Improve the quality of presentations and method of presenting	Encourage more public participation and different types of presentations to convey information and news; look at, where possible, community-led presentations, talks, updates or entertainment/showcasing of local		**AD**

		talent or businesses		
	Encourage more discussion	Target the theme and audience and look at interactive and participative sessions, wherever possible – led by community participants		**Cabinet member and AD**
	Make it less like a council meeting and more community focused (seating, setting, refreshments, interactive exhibitions, workshops etc.)	Look at tying into an event or activity; such as tea dance, or health fair, or wealth of Wiltshire at local level		**AD**
	Improve pre-meeting briefings and preparation for a meeting	Discussion with presenters and set out clear guidance and opportunities for audience participation and involvement, as well as timing and desirable outcomes Meet and greet by chairs and lead members		**AD plus chairs**
	Be flexible - reflect the local community	Adopt a more flexible approach to where area board meetings can be held		**AD**
	Build on community led services and decisions such as; CATG role in determining priorities for highways and the current review that is taking place on the future provision of open access youth services	Work with area boards to look at the success of existing community-led services and agree the communication, awareness raising and support to adopt this approach in more service areas – This will include work that is currently underway on future open access youth services as part of the review of future provision of youth and how this can effectively be led by local communities through the area boards. This will also form part of the review of the role of the existing CAM.	**From April 2014**	**Cabinet member and AD**
	Use technology for virtual attendance at meetings	Trial to be carried out by selected area boards on a theme - the impact and value to be assessed and implemented across all boards	**From April 2014**	**AD**

	Greater use of social media for interaction at meetings	Trial to be carried out by selected area boards with input from the communications team; this could be tested on a consultation or new way of working; such as the provision of community led youth services recognising this channel as appropriate for young people	**From April 2014**	**AD**
	More support for some area boards recognising that one size doesn't fit all	The current level of support provided to area boards will be reviewed to align senior officer support and other support, as appropriate.	**End March 2014**	**Cabinet member and AD**
2. Grant allocation policy	Need to reduce discussion time - possibly agree in advance – currently seen as time consuming. The new funding arrangements are outlined The grant funding policy has been delegated to the lead member and all area board chairs have been informed of the budget allocation for 2014/15.	**Grant funding** The grant available for each area board will be published by the cabinet member in advance of the start of the financial year (2014/15). Area boards will manage their budgets accordingly. All grant funding decisions are to be made ONLY at area board meetings but the chairs may hold a grant discussion meeting to review the applications in advance of the area board meeting, and may invite applicants to this meeting. CAMs will assess the suitability of bids as fit, or not fit, for funding. They will not make funding allocation recommendations to the area board. **Councillor initiated projects** To reflect the needs of local councillor divisions or several divisions. No funding for a councillor initiated project can be allocated to precept raising town or parish council. *Please note: allocations made in this funding stream*	**By 1 April 2014**	**Cabinet member** **Full funding pack available with revised arrangements**

		will be subject to scrutiny and review this year and may not be continued in 2015/16.		
3. The future role of the CAM	The current CAM role is under review. It is intended to create a new role that is focused on greater community engagement to reflect the changes in community working in the future. A new, enhanced role that reflects the area board's review and the need to deliver a new model for community working will be tested in Corsham.	A secondment role will be advertised for Corsham. It is intended that the current CAM role is reviewed and that the way forward will be a new role that will focus on high level community engagement with greater responsibility including making appropriate and mutually beneficial connections, supporting the community and area board to deliver key priorities and community-led services. The secondment role will form part of the pilot aligning the new campus to community area working.	**March 2014**	**AD**
	Need to review the current CAM role to reflect the changes that are ahead; campuses, more community led services, greater community engagement, connecting shared interest groups, bringing wider communities together, delivering key outcomes	Role and responsibilities will evolve as part of the review and the development of community working in each local area.	**By end of 2014**	**AD**
	Need to review the administrative role to support area boards, CAMs and the emerging new role.	Area boards will remain a fully functioning executive committee of the council and will need appropriate support. It is proposed that a centralised admin support service will provide what's required to assist the new role	**By end of 2014**	**AD with CLT and other ADs**

		with meeting arrangements, papers/information etc.		
	Review the support required at meetings; front of house, senior support and appropriate expertise.	The senior support for area boards is currently being reviewed to align appropriate support for future meetings.	**From 1 April 2014**	**AD with CLT**