

## Briefing Note Area Board Arrangements May 2022

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### Overview

Area Board arrangements have been amended following a review that was scrutinised by an Overview and Scrutiny (OS) Task Group. This process set out to improve the Area Board funding investment arrangements; support the boards, establish and effectively deliver to evidenced based local priorities; and increase the efficiency and consistency of working groups. The overall aspiration of the amended arrangements is to build upon the excellent practice and evident success of numerous Area Boards, to address areas where there was inconsistency in practice and to ensure they are best suited to serve Wiltshire communities. The number of Area Boards, overall format, structure, and local autonomy were not part of the review.

The OS Task Group considered 16 Executive proposals and subsequently set out 24 recommendations, which have been adopted within the new arrangements. [Agenda item - Final Report of the Area Boards Task Group | Wiltshire Council.](#)

A Single Member Decision was issued from the Leader on 27 April. No comments or representations were received by 6 May, and the confirmed implementation of the changes was issued on 6 May to come into effect on 16 May 2022.

### Background

The Area Board model was first introduced in 2009 and has delivered significant progress to develop stronger, more resilient and connected communities since its inception. The Area Boards underpin how the council operates with our communities, offering a frequent and varied platform for local engagement, consultation, collaboration, intelligence sharing and co-production of activities and services.

The overall objectives of the Area Boards remain consistent today, however, in an operating model more than 12 years old it is natural that elements should be the subject of a review and refresh to ensure they are meeting the current needs of local communities. Whilst there have been minor modifications to operating practices of the boards since 2009, there has not been a review undertaken with the involvement of Overview and Scrutiny since their inception.

The Area Boards continue to deliver to the Wiltshire Council Business Plan, with specific focus and delivery to the following aims:

- Communicate with communities in a way that promotes constructive discussion, tailored to the community's needs and developing better solutions to these.

- Empower communities and groups to act in their local area.
- Provide data and information to communities to support them with making the best decisions for themselves.
- Help the people of Wiltshire to increase their activity levels and improve their health.
- Enable a strong and active voluntary sector that is proactive in communities.
- Provide opportunities for young people to be involved in positive activities; and
- Tackle health inequalities across Wiltshire.

## **Brief Overview of Area Board Arrangements**

A summary of the main changes are highlighted in the sections below. For the full detail please see relevant appendices, many of which can be found on the [Area Board homepage](#) or provided by your local [Community Engagement Manager](#).

- Area Board Handbook 2022
- Area Board Grant Funding Criteria
- Area Board Grant Assessment Panel
- Area Board Grant Funding Flowchart
- Delegation
- Local Priorities Report; and
- Working Group Terms of Reference

## **Local Priorities**

- Area Boards will be asked to select up to five local priorities, which will be evidence led to ensure they have the greatest impact on the lives of those in our communities. Area Board resources including officer time, meetings, engagements, working groups and funding should be directed at furthering the objectives linked to the respective priorities.
- Area Boards will be asked to appoint at least one Councillor lead for each priority. Their role is set out within the Local Priorities Report.

## **Working Groups**

- Area Boards are encouraged to create or re-constitute working groups to advance local priorities and increase collaborative working. The Area Board will consider each priority, in respect of the actions required and the existing arrangements in place, prior to setting up a new working group.
- Where there is an existing community or partner led group addressing this priority, the Area Board should work in partnership and not create a working group of its own. Where a working group is required, the exact purpose is set out by the Area Board using the table found within the Working Group Terms of Reference.

## **Grant funding**

- A streamlined and robust Area Board Grant Funding Criteria has been introduced and can be found in the Area Board Grant Funding Criteria document. The main amendments are as follows:
  - Funding is available to voluntary and community sector organisations that can show a need for financial support up to a total of £5,000. Town and Parish councils are eligible to apply for revenue funding, in respect of Youth Grants or Older and Vulnerable Adult Grants, where they are able to show a need for financial support.

- Applicants will be requested to demonstrate how their project meets two aims of the Wiltshire Council Business Plan and one of the Area Board local priorities. The Area Board grant funding system is being updated to reflect this.
  - The guidance enabling boards to approve grants outside of the existing criteria due to 'exceptional circumstances' has been removed and has been replaced by a Grant Assessment Panel.
  - Matched funding requirement for applicants has reduced from £1,000 to £500, which will support increased investment leverage and encourage wider fundraising.
  - All applications must be received at least four weeks before an Area Board.
- A new Grant Assessment Panel is being introduced to escalate applications that are referred by Officers or Councillors where they are not clearly meeting the grant funding criteria. The Grant Assessment Panel will undertake an open and transparent review of referred applications and advise the Area Boards whether an exception can be granted and whether the application can proceed to determination by the Board. For full details please see Area Board Grant Assessment Panel and the Area Board Grant Funding Flowchart.
  - Delegation from the Leader has been issued to all Community Engagement Managers to deal with urgent matters that may arise between meetings of the Area Board. The Community Engagement Manager (CEM) has the authority to approve expenditure from the delegated grants budget up to £1,000 per application. This is only possible when the item is deemed urgent (by CEM, Chair and Vice-Chair), follows due process enabling Area Board Councillors five working days to review and consider the application and has majority Councillor support. For further details please see the Delegation document.

## Further information and communication

Relevant updated documents are now live on the [Area Board webpage](#). Community Engagement Managers have a slide deck that they will present at the next Area Board Business Meeting. A [recorded presentation](#) that sets out the changes is also available.

An Area Board Chairs meeting will take place in early June where these arrangements will be discussed and Chairs will be requested to feedback to their respective boards if required.

Please contact Rhys Schell if you would like to attend a dedicated Wiltshire Councillor briefing session regarding these changes, which will be delivered via Microsoft Teams. Interest for this will be assessed and offered as appropriate.

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