

## **Protocols to be followed by those wishing to present to Marlborough Area Board.**

### **Summary:**

In order to increase attendance at meetings, stimulate good quality debate and have better informed decision making, Marlborough Area Board wish to see the three following elements within all presentations made at its meetings:

- The topic and information provided is to be as local as possible
- Debate from the audience is to be encouraged as much as possible
- Where possible, the audience will be allowed to make a decision or give a view on the matter being discussed, as part of a genuine, timely consultation.

### **Background:**

Area Boards were set up in Wiltshire with the aim of building stronger connections between high-level plans, people providing services and what local people want. Area Boards are a formal part of Wiltshire Council and will look at such issues and try to find solutions. They will have authority to act as a local arm of the council. Other organisations providing public services – such as Health, Fire, the Police, Town and Parish Councils - will also work with the Area Boards. For example, the Police are keen to work with Area Boards to further develop neighbourhood policing. Local residents will also be an important part of Area Board meetings as they are the people living and working in these community areas.

Empowerment is partly about involving local people in what the council wants to help achieve for the benefit of all, as well as helping local people achieve what they want for their area. There is a relationship too between the collective empowerment of a local community to make their views heard and the individual empowerment of a person to have a voice. The following qualities need to be recognised and taken into consideration to help people feel included and able to contribute to public meetings, especially where services will be present and what they provide is open to influence:

- My contribution is welcome and so am I
- I am able to contribute
- I can see how to contribute
- I can get what I need to make my contribution
- I can invite, welcome, encourage and assist others to contribute
- I belong to this place and act from having a sense of responsibility for it

Marlborough Area Board (MAB) would like to encourage more people from all parts of the community area to attend meetings and take part in meaningful discussions about the services and actions that take place in their community and help to shape these. In particular, MAB aims to ensure that its meetings generate informed debate from the audience so that decision-making can be based on both factual information and local opinions. In order to do this, debate at meetings needs to be stimulated through a number of factors.

MAB has been undergoing a development phase where its own performance has been analysed and some changes have been adopted already. In order to improve the quality of its meetings and to try and increase attendance of local residents to its meetings, MAB has

developed a number of protocols to be adopted by those giving presentations at meetings in order to make these happen.

## **Protocols**

MAB has identified three elements which it hopes will improve the quality of its meetings and ultimately encourage greater attendance. These are: Locally relevant information; debate to be encouraged and stimulated; audience to be allowed to make a choice. In order to make these happen, MAB has developed the following protocols. These will be sent to all people wishing to make presentations to the meetings so that they can be developed accordingly.

### *Local Relevance:*

It has been noted that many services, including Wiltshire Council departments, see presenting to Area Boards as a simple way to contact residents throughout Wiltshire. Often their message concerns a county-wide service that does not necessarily impact on a particular community area.

MAB want all presentations at their meetings to be as locally focused as possible. MAB will require presentations to include as much information about the Marlborough community area as possible rather than concentrate solely on the wider or county level. MAB would like presentations to include information about the services available in the community area, who uses them, any local results, etc. If a service is to change, MAB would like to know what changes will specifically occur in the Marlborough community area and how local residents will be affected by these changes and not solely the wider area effect.

If those wishing to present to MAB cannot fulfil these criteria on local relevance, MAB members will decide whether or not it is in the interest of local residents to hear the presentation and may decline to take that particular item.

### *Informed Debate:*

As one of the main considerations behind establishing area boards was the devolution of decision-making to a more local level, Area Boards must ensure that debate about the matters brought to them is as full as possible. This not only allows attendees to have their say on these matters but it gives them the necessary information to allow them to make an informed opinion about it.

MAB recognises that many of those attending meetings want a chance to have their say, either to question officers or members in relation to the agenda items brought to the meeting or to give their opinion on it. Being allowed to do this will not only bring about better quality decision-making but will help show attendees that their opinions count and are valued by the Council and other service-delivers. Knowing this can also have the effect of attracting more people to MAB meetings to have their say too.

MAB will require that all presentations at their meetings contain an element that is open to the floor, either to ask questions of the presenter or MAB members or for general discussion on that topic. The presenter will be asked to have a number of questions or other prompts for the audience that can be used to stimulate debate. The MAB Chairman will ensure that as many people from the audience have their say and will effectively chair these discussions.

### *Choice:*

As well as being given the chance to question presenters or Area Board members about the topic of the presentation, the audience should also be given the chance to take part in the decision-making processes of MAB.

MAB will require that all presentations, *where possible*, contain an element of choice for the audience. This may be in an informal way, such as the Chairman of MAB asking for any comments from the floor on a particular topic. Ideally, the audience will be able to make a choice between a number of options related to the topic being discussed. This may be done by a show of hands or by making use of TurningPoint software and the voting handsets operated by Wiltshire Council. The results of this voting will be used by MAB members when making their own decisions at Area Board meetings.

## **Implementation**

Services and partners wishing to present to Area Boards currently request time at meetings via the Forward Work Plan. MAB members will discuss the items and topics due to be on the agenda of the forthcoming Area Board meeting at the ABC meeting (Area Board Coordinating briefing) which takes place approximately 6-8 weeks prior to the Area Board meeting. If MAB members choose to take an item for the agenda, the Community Area Manager or Democratic Services Officer will contact the person making the presentation and send them this set of protocols so they understand MAB's requirements. The MAB officers will check the presenter understands these and discuss with them how the protocols can be achieved.

How each presentation meets these protocols will be discussed at the Chairman's Briefing meeting, approx. 2 weeks before the Area Board. If MAB does not feel these criteria have been met fully, the presenter will be contacted and either told to make amendments to their presentation or told that it has been removed from the agenda. In this case, they will be given the option to take the item as a Chairman's Announcement instead. In certain cases, it may be more suitable for an item to be deferred to another MAB meeting when that topic will fit with other, similar ones on the agenda.

Andrew Jack  
Community Area Manager, Marlborough  
July, 2012