

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

22 April 2014

Subject: Area Boards Review

Cabinet member: Councillor Jonathon Seed, Cabinet Member for Communities, Campuses, Area Boards, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding

Executive summary

To update cabinet members on the outcome of the recent review of area boards and the action plan that takes into account the views and feedback received from those consulted and involved in the review.

The review set out to build on the good work of the area boards to improve community working and engagement in the council's business and services. This included:

- How area boards could be assisted in their role to help create more resilient communities
- Improving the engagement of local communities in the work of the council (and other public sector partners)
- Devolving more services and decisions at local level
- Increasing the level of influence in decision making in local areas
- Raising awareness of what's happening in local communities
- Providing opportunities for communities to come together and do more to increase their resilience and ability to cope with issues and matters at a local level.

The area boards are widely recognised as a forum for the community to engage in council and other public sector business. They provide an opportunity for local people to have a voice on future services and what's appropriate in their local community. The need to increase community working including the emerging model for community involvement in local services and their delivery - such as community-led services – meant it was an appropriate time to undertake the review and to consider how the boards can evolve to reflect the changes, challenges and opportunities ahead.

Proposal

Cabinet members are asked to;

- a. Note the actions (as set out in the attached action plan – appendix 1) to evolve the area boards and to improve community working - incorporating the feedback and views of all those involved in the review.
- b. Note that the role of the community area manager has also been considered as part of the review to reflect what's required to deliver the actions and to meet future needs and the differing ways that local communities work.

Reason for proposal

To take appropriate action – based on feedback - to build on the good work of the area boards to improve community working and engagement in the council's business and services. The action plan reflects the feedback received and focuses on;

- Increasing the level of influence in local decision making
- Raising awareness of what's happening in local communities
- Improving community engagement to create and strengthen community resilience.

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Purpose of the report

1. To update cabinet members on the outcome of the review of area boards and actions for evolving these to improve community working and engagement in the council's business and services. This includes;
 - Assisting area boards in their role to help create more resilient communities
 - Building on the community working and the engagement of local communities in the work of the council (and other public sector partners)
 - Devolving more services and decisions at local level
 - Increasing 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

Background information

2. 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 new models that will be tried and tested (Corsham), as well as 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. We also recognise;

- The need for communities to do more for themselves given the decreasing resources in public services
- The need to 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
- The need to empower local communities

Key areas that formed part of the review

- All 18 area boards
- The future role of the Community Area Manager (CAM)
- Funding for area boards for 2014/15

Key stakeholders and consultees

- 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

Implementation of the feedback – Action Plan

The feedback and views of the consultees has been incorporated into the attached action plan. The plan focuses on three areas:

- a) All 18 area boards
- b) Future grant allocations
- c) The future role of the Community Area Manager (CAM)

Main Considerations for the Cabinet

3. Cabinet members are asked to;
 - a. Note the action plan and the recommendations to evolve the area boards to improve community working and engagement that incorporates the feedback and views following the consultation process
 - b. Note the need to test and review new model of community working
 - c. Support the review of the role of the community area manager to establish a revised role that supports the future model for community working
 - d. Note the opening of the campus in Corsham in June 2014 and agree to a pilot aligning the campus to community area working.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

4. No known or potential environmental impacts of the proposal.

Equality and Diversity Impact of the Proposal

5. The review of the area boards and the actions that will help to evolve the boards for the future are based on greater community engagement and involvement in making decisions that affect local areas and will influence the delivery of community-led services.

Risk Assessment

6. The review aligns to the emerging campus programme and seeks to minimise the potential risk that the new campuses do not become the hub for the local community area.

Financial Implications

7. There are no financial implications following the review. The actions and proposals will be managed in the existing budget allocations.

Legal Implications

8. There are no legal implications following the review.

Public Health Implications

9. There are no public health implications.

Safeguarding implications

10. There are no safeguarding implications.
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Background Papers

None

Appendices

Action Plan – appendix 1

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