

28th November 2007

Community Area Boards and Community Area Partnerships

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform the Shadow Executive of the approach and progress to date of developing a community area model involving a local Board and a Partnership

Background

The proposals outlined in the unitary submission for community governance, engagement and flexibility have been the cornerstone of our unitary bid and are seen as Wiltshire's unique selling point.

Our approach builds on the community engagement processes established over the past 10 years by the County Council and the 4 District Councils working in partnership with the Police, Health and the voluntary sector.

Our agenda for this work stream will include developing:

- Community Area Boards providing strong local leadership
- Greater community engagement and participation in decisions
- An enhanced role for community partnerships
- Joining up services at a local level to deliver better outcomes more quickly
- Allocating funding to support local projects and tackle local issues
- Procedures for dealing with community calls for action and petitions

What is the primary aim of an Area Board/ Area Partnership model (e.g. modernisation of services, reducing disadvantage, community development, democratic renewal, partnership working)?

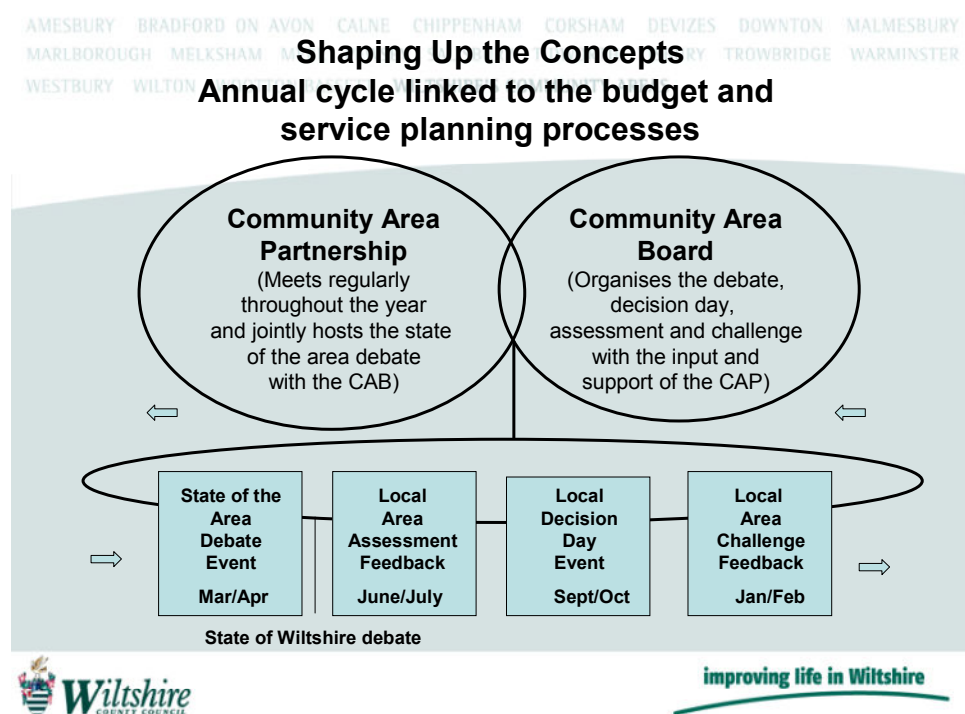
The primary aim of the project to establish a community area board and partnerships in each of Wiltshire's community areas is to establish a coherent structure for local community governance in Wiltshire.

In carrying out this project it is essential that we determine the scope for community influence on local service delivery and also how services may need to be re-designed in order to be able to engage and deliver in this way. This engagement also needs to be closely linked to the Council (and other agencies) budget and service planning cycles. The longer-term primary aim underpinning the approach is to continue to build and sustain local people's trust and satisfaction with the Council.

Other outcomes anticipated from establishing these arrangements are to maximise the effectiveness of service delivery and improvement within realistic and well-understood budget constraints and to promote and assist local communities in building social capital.

What will the model look like?

Currently there are a number of different Community Area Partnership models across Wiltshire, with varying strengths and challenges. By 2009 we wish to move to a more consistent model with core terms of reference that are more widely understood by all sectors and local communities. In order to achieve this longer-term aim, the idea is to have a single, visible place and occasions within the local community where local people will know when and where a decision is made, how to influence these decisions and how to resolve issues and problems swiftly.



Community area boards will work closely with local community area partnerships to engage local people in a core process based around 4 annual community events:

- Annual state of the community area debate, including identification of local issues drawing on research and evidence and local consultation, service prioritisation and participatory budgeting with mainstream service delivery
- Local area assessment with an account of the issues arising from the state of the area debate and what has and has not been (or cannot be) addressed and by whom.
- Decision day where local people can bid in a participatory way for funding for local projects from a small grants fund
- Local scrutiny/ challenge to examine and address issues which are cross cutting and/or difficult to address

Who are the lead partners and where will the process happen (e.g. across the whole authority or in specific areas)?

There will be a joint project team leading the process and it will then be embedded in the governance structure of the new Council for Wiltshire which will be vested in May 2009. Work started on developing new governance structures with presentations and discussions across a wide range of partners, including Town and Parish Councils, in May 2005. District

and County Councillors have also been involved in discussions about how better to engage people locally and discussions have been held with a large number of Wiltshire's Town and Parish Councils to gauge what they would want to have greater influence over or to deliver directly to local communities.

Currently we are moving into further discussions with various groups such as the Wiltshire Forum for Community Area Partnerships (which is a community-led group), Town and Parish Councils, partners such as Health and Police. We are also planning workshops with key services delivered by the County and District Councils to discuss service re-design and to determine the degree of flexibility within mainstream budgets to allow greater local engagement in setting service priorities and challenging current service delivery in some cases.

The aim is to establish between 8-10 boards to start operating during 2008, followed by further development in South Wiltshire and other community areas during 2008/2009 so that all community areas have operational boards by April 2009. Some Community Partnerships have already expressed an interest in becoming a pilot (Warminster, Malmesbury, Trowbridge and Tidworth). There is currently a review in North Wiltshire of the Area Committee structure that may result in a whole district' pilot going ahead.

There are difficult resource issues during this period, but the key challenge is to pull together a team to run 8 to 10 pilots across Wiltshire and then to recruit a full permanent team for April 2009. This will mean that some resources will need to be allocated from the Transition programme.

Other Considerations for the Shadow Executive

Joint Councillor Seminar

There have been a number of requests for a joint County and District Councillor seminar to focus on this work. A seminar date has been identified for 21st January 2008, a formal invitation with more detail will be issued shortly and support from all Councils welcomed. The seminar will provide an opportunity to discuss in more depth the Information Briefing Papers (Appendix 1).

Draft Information Briefing Papers (Appendix 1)

There are a great many questions regarding the role, purpose, responsibilities and membership of the Community Area Board/ Community area partnership model and what it will mean for a range of stakeholders. Answers to these questions are in an Information Briefing Pack that is being developed. There are currently three draft papers on Community Area Boards, Community Area Partnerships and Strengthening Community Leadership; two additional papers are planned for the Role of Town & Parish Councils and the Role of the Voluntary & Community sector.

Reference Group

Invitations to nominate representatives to form a reference group have been sent to Leaders of District Councils, Wiltshire Association Of Local Councils, Voluntary & Community Sector Consortium and Wiltshire Forum of Community Area Partnerships. It is hoped that the reference group will provide a 'checks and balance' challenge to the Community Leadership and Governance workstream, adding other stakeholder views and perspectives to the work that is underway.

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