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REPORT TO THE CRICKLADE & WOOTTON BASSETT   Report No. 8
AREA (2) COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	**9th July 2008**
Title of Report	**Community Boards – Development Phase**
Link to Corporate Priorities	Partnership Working
Public Report	YES

Summary of Report

To ask Members to note progress on the Development Phase of the Community Boards project and to nominate 3 Members to represent the Area (2) Committee on a Task Group to help shape Community Boards during the transition period ahead of the formal Vesting Day for the new Authority.

Officer Recommendations

It is recommended that

1. **Members note progress on the Development Phase of the Community Boards project.**

2. **The Area (2) Committee nominates 3 Members to sit on a Task Group with other representatives to work to develop the new Community Boards using scheduled Area (2) Committee meetings as a development forum.**

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Community & Environmental Implications	Human Resources Implications	Equality & Diversity Implications
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

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1. Introduction

1.1   This report updates Members on the Development Phase of the Community Boards project and recommends that 3 Members representing the District Council's Area (2) Committee are nominated to sit on a Task Group alongside representatives of Wiltshire County Council, the Northern Community Area Partnership, Town and Parish Councils and service providers. This Task Group will help to shape new Community Boards during the transition ahead of Vesting Day for the new Authority. The scheduled Area (2) Committee meetings will be used as a development forum (alongside its normal business and with no changes to its current constitution and voting rights).

2.   Options and Options Appraisal

2.1   **Option One**
        It is recommended that

2.1.1 Members of the Area (2) Committee note progress on the Development Phase of the Community Boards project.

2.1.2 The Area (2) Committee nominates 3 Members to sit on a Task Group with other representatives to work to develop the new Community Boards**.**

2.2   It is hoped that Task Groups will be established in all those Community Areas involved in the development phase leading to fully operational Boards. In this Community area other representatives will include 3 County Councillors, a representative from the Northern Community Area Partnership and representatives from Town and Parish Councils. In addition, a request is likely to be made to RAF Lyneham to participate and other service providers (Health, Police and Fire Services) will also be closely involved.

3.   Background

3.1.1 A key feature of Wiltshire County Council's unitary bid was a commitment to bring local government and public services closer to the community. This will be achieved by setting up Community Boards in each of Wiltshire's community areas. These boards will work with local communities and partners to deliver public services shaped around the needs of local people and places.

3.1.2 At its meeting on 5th December 2007 Members of the Area 2 Committee resolved that the Area Committee supported the creation of an Area Board pilot in the Cricklade and Wootton Bassett Community Area.

3.1.3 At the Executive meeting on 17th January 2008 it was resolved that the development of pilot Area Boards in North Wiltshire be supported; Area Committees continue until the implementation of Area Boards and that scheduled Area Committee meetings in 2008/9 be used as development forums for the pilot Area Boards.

3.1.4 All District and County Council Members were invited to attend a Community Leadership and Governance Seminar in Devizes on Monday, 21st January in Devizes to discuss and develop ideas for improving community area working.

4.   Composition and Role of Community Boards

4.1.1 Under the new Authority the Boards will comprise the Wiltshire Councillors for the area in question. The Boards will form part of the Council's decision making structure and will be enshrined in the Council's constitution. Parish and Town Councils and

members of the public will be strongly encouraged to participate at meetings of the Board.

4.1.2   The role of the Boards will be to take decisions regarding local services. They will consider the implications for the Council of issues raised by the wider Community Area Partnerships including those raised in the annual 'State of the Area' debate. The Boards will be expected to shape Council services in response to local needs and circumstances and also to ensure that services are coordinated to tackle local 'cross-cutting' issues such as community safety, opportunities for young people and older people, regeneration, and the local environment.

4.1.3   In the longer term, the aspiration is for other key organisations providing public services to the area – such as the Health, Police and Fire services - to be represented on the Board and for them to make executive decisions at these meetings too.

4.1.4   'In a Nutshell' summaries of the roles of Community Area Boards and Community Area Partnerships are at **Appendices 1 and 2.**

5.   Development Phase – Community Boards

5.1.1   A development team has recently been established to work in the 12 areas that will be helping with the development phase (this includes all five of North Wiltshire's Community Areas). The areas were selected following representations received from the local community, Community Area Partnerships and Area Committees. The list of project managers and the pilot areas in which they are working is at **Appendix 3.**

5.1.2   The primary aim of the project will be the development of Community Boards. This will include:

- Reviewing the boundaries of the Community Areas following the work of the Boundary Commission.
- Agreeing the powers that will be delegated to area level
- Agreeing how the boards will manage front line services within each Community Area
- Developing new ways of engaging local people and partners in local decisions.
- Agreeing how the Boards will hold public service providers to account
- Agreeing how Community Boards will operate in practice
- Agreeing the support needed by elected Members in their new role

5.1.3   Project plans will be developed for each Community Area involved in the development phase and elements that may be tested during the pilot phase are listed at **Appendix 4**.

5.1.4   Key aspects of the project will include:

- Communicating with elected members, local people and partners
- Engaging local elected Members in the project with a Task Group being formed in each development area which will examine particular aspects of the project
- Working with the scrutiny task group to review progress
- Working with University of Southampton to test and evaluate new approaches.
- Running events and activities in each area to stimulate local participation
- Engaging the Wiltshire Forum of Community Area Partnerships (WFCAP), Community Area Partnerships and Area Committees in the discussions at every stage.

5.1.5   Progress will be reported to the Community and Local Governance Workstream Board, the Joint Implementation Executive and the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board on a monthly basis. Progress updates will also be given to this Area Committee.

5.1.6   Members should be aware that with the limited timescales and resources available it will not be possible to test all elements listed at Appendix 4 in all 12 participating development areas. It is hoped that each pilot area will test out and properly evaluate different elements to ensure that most new governance arrangements are tested ahead of the Community Boards becoming fully operational.

3   Legal Implications

3.1   No constitutional changes will be necessary. Area Committee meetings will continue as scheduled.

4   Financial Implications

4.1   There will be little or no cost savings from the proposals in the 2007/8 financial year, particularly as meetings scheduled for 2008/9 will be used as development fora.

4.2   The costs of the development phase are being calculated and budgets identified as part of the planning process for the pilots. It is assumed that any additional costs – beyond that which the District Council would have spent on Area Committees- will be provided by the County Council from the transition and/or other budgets. Reassurances that this will be the agreed way ahead will be sought from the County Council.

5   Human Resource Implications

5. 1 Officers in the Democratic Services Team will, where staffing levels permit, work with the Community Boards - Development Phase project manager to implement the programme of development work.   Part of the development phase will be to consider how the new Community Boards will need to be supported once they have been launched following Vesting Day.

6.   Community and Environmental Implications

6.1   The implementation of Community Boards as an effective community forum and base for local decision making as described in the proposal will serve to ensure that North Wiltshire issues are championed through to appropriate discussion and decision in the new Unitary Authority. By advancing the pilot work in conjunction with local communities and key stakeholders there is the opportunity to shape the Boards so that they work to the best effect for the residents of North Wiltshire.

7.   Equality & Diversity Implications

7.1   Once operational, the very nature of Community Boards and the ability of such a forum and decision making body to deliver against the priorities in local communities across the County puts tissues of equality and diversity at its centre. There will be opportunities for inequalities to be addressed as a result of the stakeholder involvement in the development of Community Boards and the subsequent decisions and actions that the Boards will make.

Appendices:	• Appendix 1 – 'In a Nutshell' - Community Area • Appendix 2 – 'In a Nutshell' - Community Area Partnerships • Appendix 3 - List of Pilot Community Board Areas • Appendix 4 – Elements for Testing - Development Phase
Background documents used in the preparation of this Report:	One Council for Wiltshire submission

Previous Decisions Connected with this Report

Report	Committee & Date	Minute Reference
Area 2 Committee Executive	Area (2) Committee - 5th December 2007 Executive 17th January 2008	CR31 E52