

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE		Report No. 12
Date of Meeting	17 January 2008	
Title of Report	Area Boards in North Wiltshire	
Portfolio	Partnership Working / Resources & Democracy	
Link to Corporate Priorities	Partnership Working	
Key Decision	Yes	
Executive Workplan Ref	B367	
Public Report	Yes	

Summary of Report

To present to Members feedback from each of the Area Committees on a proposed way forward for the implementation of Community Area Boards in North Wiltshire during the transition to a Unitary Authority.

Each of the 5 Area Committees in North Wiltshire has expressed interest and support for forming a pilot Area Board during the transition period ahead of the formal Vesting Day for the new Authority.

This report seeks the Executive's support for the development of pilot Area Boards in North Wiltshire.

Officer Recommendations

It is recommended that

- 1. The Executive support the development of pilot Area Boards in North Wiltshire.**
- 2. Area Committees until the implementation of pilot Area Boards.**
- 3. Scheduled Area Committee meetings in the 2008/09 year be used as development forums for the pilot Area Boards.**

Other than those implications agreed with the relevant Officers and referred to below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Community & Environmental Implications	Human Resources Implications	Equality & Diversity Implications
yes	none	yes	yes	yes
Contact Officer Jo Cogswell Community Partnership Manager				

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report provides feedback from each of the Area Committees with respect to the implementation of Pilot Area Boards ahead of the formal Unitary Authority vesting day in April 2009.

2. Options and Options Appraisal

- 2.1. **Option One** It is recommended that
 - 2.1.1. The Executive support the development of pilot Area Boards in North Wiltshire.
 - 2.1.2. Area Committees continue until the implementation of pilot Area Boards.
 - 2.1.3. Scheduled Area Committee meetings in the 2008/09 year be used as development forums for the pilot Area Boards.
- 2.2. **Option two** Members put forward alternative proposals to the recommendations listed in paragraph 2.1 above.

3. Background Information

- 3.1. The One Council for Wiltshire submission sets out *strong, effective and accountable leadership* as one of the main benefits of the proposal. The establishment of twenty Community Area Boards is presented as a key vehicle in achieving and driving strong leadership at a local level.
- 3.2. Comprehensive Area Assessment will mean that measurable community level outcomes will need to be delivered and monitored. The Area Boards present a vehicle to achieve targeted outcomes.
- 3.3. The County Council is keen to see pilot Area Boards developed and operated in the period of time up to vesting day in April 2009. The benefit of the pilots will be to trial various aspects of the Area Boards proposal and to ensure that the Area Boards themselves are given every opportunity to succeed. An invitation has been extended by WCC to develop Area Board pilots across North Wiltshire
- 3.4. The Executive considered this invitation on October 4 2007. The Committee resolved that

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- (1) The views of the Area Committees are sought, at the next round of meetings, with the results being reported back to the meeting of the Executive following that round, on the following:
 - Terminating Area Committees in the current form at the end of December 2007;
 - The development of pilot Area Boards in North Wiltshire;
 - The setting up of an additional forum for Town and Parish Councils; and
 - Establishing a mechanism for agreeing Community Area Awards for the remainder of the municipal year.
- (2) Authority be delegated to the Community Partnerships Manager in consultation with the appropriate Lead Member to agree a timescale and advance the Area Boards work to develop the pilots specific to each of the 5 community areas.

- 3.5. Appendix One includes the extracted minutes and feedback from each of the Area Committee meetings. Each of the 5 Area Committees has expressed support for the formation of an Area Board Pilot in their respective Area.
- 3.6. Contributions to the debate around Area Board Pilots came from NWDC Members, WCC Members, Town and Parish Council Members, Community Planning Partnerships and local community group representatives. In each case the decision to support a pilot was made by the relevant NWDC Area Committee Members and reflected the views of support expressed by all those present.

4. Implementing Area Boards

- 4.1. Some key issues were raised by the Area Committee feedback not least of all support for piloting an Area Board approach during the transition period that will offer an opportunity for the final Area Board framework to be influenced by findings in North Wiltshire.
- 4.2. There were some practical concerns raised during the consultation; the question of Community Area Grants was one such issue. Whilst the level of detail around the operation of the Area Board pilots has not yet been finalised officers would suggest that the authority to award Community Area Grants should remain with NWDC Members. Further, award decisions should be made in a specific and formal part of any pilot Area Board meeting.
- 4.3. It was clear from the Area Committee meetings that there is a general preference for Area Committees to continue until pilot Area Boards can be implemented. This approach will guard against the loss of specific functions and areas of responsibility if the Area Committees simply to cease to exist in their current form. More specifically;
- Grants – Community Area Awards
 - Debate and Liaison with Town and Parish Councils
 - Links to Community Planning Partnerships
 - The opportunity for Elected Members to meet to discuss issues in their area both formally and informally
- 4.4. If Members of the Executive resolve to support the implementation of Pilot Area Boards work can begin with officers from the County Council to prepare the detail for how pilot Area Boards can be developed in North Wiltshire.
- 4.5. The project that will result in the implementation of Area Boards across the whole of Wiltshire falls within the Governance and Community Leadership Workstream of the Transition programme. The Workstream Board is due to consider how Pilots could be implemented and to what scale during the month of January.
- 4.6. District and County Council Members from across Wiltshire have been invited to attend a seminar to be hosted by the Workstream Board on the evening of January 21st to meet together to discuss and develop ideas for improving community area working in Wiltshire. There is a clear desire from those involved in advancing the work for Area Boards to draw on the knowledge and experience across all five councils.

5. Timescale

- 5.1. The success of Area Boards will rely heavily on the support and input of the various stakeholders that are detailed in the One Council for Wiltshire submission. At this stage project plans for the implementation of Area Boards and Area Board pilots are still being finalised.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. There would be little or no cost savings from the proposals in the 2007/08 financial year, particularly if meetings scheduled for 2008 are continued and used as development forums ahead of any formal pilot.
- 6.2. The costs of Area Boards will need to be calculated and a budget identified as a part of the planning process for the Pilots. It is assumed that any additional costs – beyond that which this Council would have spent on Area Committees - will be provided by the County Council from the transition, or other budgets. Reassurance that this will be the agreed way ahead will be sought from the County Council.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. The structural aspects of the proposal may need the approval of Council. The Council's Constitution may then need to be amended to reflect the new arrangements for the new municipal year.

8. Community and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. The implementation of Area 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 Area Boards so that they work to best effect for the residents of North Wiltshire.

9. Human Resource Implications

- 9.1. Officers in the Community Partnerships and Democratic Services Teams have time set aside in the current work plan to implement the programme of improvements to Area Committees. This resource can be realigned to facilitate the development and implementation of Area Boards during the transitional arrangements. Consideration will need to be given in relation to how the Area Boards will be supported once they have been launched as a part of the pilot programme.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1. The very nature of Area Boards and the ability of such a forum and decision making body to deliver against priorities in local communities and across the County puts issues 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 the Area Boards and the subsequent decisions and actions that the Boards will make.

Appendices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appendix 1 – Minutes and feedback from Area Committees
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report to Council September 5 2006 Review of Area Committees• One Council for Wiltshire Submission• Report to Executive October 4 2007 Area Boards in North Wiltshire

Report prepared by

Jo Cogswell
Community Partnership Manager

01249 706455
jcogswell@northwilts.gov.uk