



**PILOT AREA BOARD/PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY TASK GROUP
REPORT OF A MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 28th NOVEMBER 2008
AT COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE**

Present:

Task Group: Mr Mike Hewitt - Chairman (SDC), Mr Ross Henning (NWDC), Mrs Paula Winchcombe (KDC), Mr Steve Oldrieve (WCC)

Members/

Partners - Mr Tony Deane, Mr Doug Ross (Trowbridge CAP), Mr Len Turner (WFCAP)

Officers: Ceri Williams (Scrutiny Officer), Steve Milton (Pilot Boards Team Leader – Development Phase), Tracy Carter (Assistant Director – Operations WCC), Brad Fleet (Service Director designate – Development), John Quinton (Head of Democratic Services – WCC)

1. Report of the previous meeting

Members noted the report of the previous meeting.

2. The Relationship between Community Area Boards & Frontline Services

The Assistant Director for Operations provided the Task Group with an overview of the experience of working with the Pilot Area Boards to date. During the item some of the following issues emerged:

- a) Training for Staff – Concern was raised that officers with limited exposure to members would have to attend the Boards. To combat this, the Assistant Director planned to hold regular meetings to share ideas and experiences. It was also noted that Highways Officers did have experience of working with local members and Town/Parish Councils and it was felt that because of this the majority of training would be done on the job.
- b) Structures – it was not planned to shape the team structure around the Boards. However, examples of a Community base approach were

already evident through the Parish Steward scheme, traffic schemes and Rights of Way.

- c) Resources – it was difficult to gauge the resource requirements for the Boards as each area would have to identify its own priorities. The pilot phase would provide valuable evidence on potential demand. Operational issues such as the reporting of potholes would still be managed centrally through Clarence and not via the Area Boards.
- d) Partnership working – discussions were already taking place with the police about coordinating local inspectors with area highway engineers.
- e) Board influence – the ability of Boards to influence decision making was discussed. The Boards would offer opportunity for local challenge for service delivery but strategic decisions would be in part determined by the budget priorities, which members could help influence through the State of Wiltshire debates and Budget Scrutiny.

Agreed

- To thank the Assistant Director for the briefing
- To support the team's community based approach as demonstrated through the Parish Steward structure
- To ask the Assistant Director to monitor the pilot phase to ensure resources provide adequate support for the Boards on the new Council
- To ask the Assistant Director to ensure officers from her team feel equipped and supported when attending Board meetings

3. The Relationship between Area Boards & Section 106 Agreements

The Service Director for Development (designate) tabled a report containing a series of recommendations which related to the involvement of area boards in the planning process. The primary recommendation suggested that the new statement of community involvement (SCI) should include provisions for the area boards to become involved in the preparation of the new Wiltshire LDF and, in particular, the council's leisure open/space strategy.

Members voiced their approval of the report, whilst acknowledging they had not studied the content in detail.

Agreed

- To thank the Service Director for the briefing and to approve in principle the content of the report with the additional following recommendations and commentary:
 - A) To ask the Pilot Area Board Project Team to meet with the Statement of Community Involvement authors to ensure a policy base is in place for Area Boards to influence Section 106

Agreements. The Task Group to be updated on progress at its next meeting.

- B) To support the principle of Area Boards being involved in the pre-submission stage of applications
- C) That the monitoring system for the new council should include all section 106 funds including transport and education
- D) That Development Control arrangements for the new council are as those agreed by the Implementation Executive 13th Nov 2008.
- E) That the report should reflect Community Area Partnership interests in addition to Boards

4. Resources for Area Boards

The Head of Democratic Services WCC briefed the Task Group on the Democratic Support that had been identified for the Boards within the new Council. Members were provided with a copy of the Democratic Services Structure for Wiltshire Council to facilitate the discussion.

Key issues to emerge included:

Board support – It was not anticipated that the Area & Member Support Team Leader would provide dedicated support to individual Boards but would service meetings if required. The two Senior Democratic Services Officers were expected to work with the largest Boards such as Chippenham, Trowbridge and Salisbury.

Officer role – the officers would not only offer committee management support but would support members with their constituency roles, such as managing surgeries and elements of case work. Members discussed the value of ensuring meetings were coordinated across the Boards and centrally.

Resources – there were not enough Democratic Services Officers to populate the structure for the new council; external recruitment was required as a result. In the interim period agency staff would be recruited to support the pilot boards. Temporary staff that excelled could potentially be recruited on a permanent basis.

Agreed

- To thank the head of Democratic Services for the briefing
- To ask the Head of Democratic Services to ensure that meeting dates in the new council are coordinated for Board and non-Board member meetings through a centralised diary system
- To accept the level of support proposed, whilst recognising that the allocation of resources had been based in part on assumption due to the difficulty in gauging how busy individual Boards would be.

5. AOB

The Chairman of the Task Group invited Mr Doug Ross and Mr Len Turner to provide members with a Community Area Partnership perspective of the evidence received at the meeting.

During the item some the following points emerged:

- A) Trowbridge Partnership funding – the County, District and Town Councils all currently provided £6k to the partnership.
- B) Pilot Manager role – it was important that the Partnership and Board maintained close working relationships but there was concern that if the Pilot Manager led at Partnership level it would be too local authority orientated.
- C) The new governance structure offered massive opportunities for the Partnerships and were positively received.
- D) Wiltshire Forum for Community Area Partnerships – an umbrella organisation whose role was to ensure custom and practice was fit for purpose.

Agreed

- To thank the Partnership representatives for the briefing and to extend an invitation to future meetings.

The Task Group was presented with a programme update. Members voiced concern that the commencement of the evaluation phase on Feb 14th would mean that the Task Group's final report may be submitted in advance of the project team's final proposals to the IE.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Friday January 9th 9.45 am – County Hall