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**PILOT AREA BOARD/PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY TASK GROUP  
REPORT OF A MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 9<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2009  
AT COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE**

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**Present:**

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

Members/

Partners - Mr Tony Deane, Mrs Mollie Groom, Mr Tony Molland (WCC)

Officers: Ceri Williams (Scrutiny Officer), Steve Milton (Pilot Boards Team Leader – Development Phase), Julie Martin (Development Consultant)

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**1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Oldrieve and Mrs Walker.

**2. Report of the previous meeting**

Members noted the report of the previous meeting.

**3. The Area Board Handbook**

The Task Group considered the latest version of the Area Board Handbook, published on December 23, 2008. This version had incorporated the feedback from the original consultation period.

During the subsequent debate some of the following issues emerged:

**Document language** – the general perception of the members was that the document in its current format and language did not have a specific audience. The project officers agreed that they were likely to produce secondary documents for the public and members.

**Performance** – The scale and number of performance measurements linked to the Area Boards was challenging. The Project Team intended to

work with the Area Boards to identify the measurements they would like to use to demonstrate effectiveness. The members felt it important to divide the indicators into statutory and non-statutory.

**State of Area Debate** – after questioning the terminology it was recognised that different approaches would be adopted across the county towards one-off public events.

**Local Challenge** – discussions took place around the relationship between the Area Boards and the scrutiny function. Members felt strongly that service officers when invited, should be compelled to attend meetings.

**Paragraph 31** – “Only elected members will be able to nominate or propose the Chair person and Vice-Chair person” – the Task Group recommended this to be changed to “Only Unitary members.....”

**Paragraph 40** – The Task Group felt that the Area Boards should have the ability to move into the ‘part 2’ exemption process, if required.

**Number of members** – it was questioned whether it was legal to operate a Board with 2 members. The Project officers agreed to confirm but were confident that this was covered under delegated powers.

**Paragraph 47** – concern was raised about the level of grant funding the Boards would be expected to provide.

**Board funding** – when considering paragraph 49 the Task Group discussed the funding sources available for the Area Boards.

**Forward plan** – the Task Group recognised the importance of maintaining a detail and current forward work plan at each of the Area Boards

**Paragraph 87** – the Task Group felt that formal responses from the Cabinet should be 21 days rather than the proposed 28 days.

**Cross county issues** – this issue was discussed through the example of Tisbury, where local children live in Wiltshire but attend school in Dorset. Similar examples across the county were provided in relation to healthcare.

**Paragraph 96** – as paragraph 87.

**Respect for officers** – it was recognised that at Area Boards officers may be exposed to hostile behaviour. The project team was aware of this issue and were developing strategies to counter the risk.

**Training for Chairman** – the question of whether training for the Chairman should be mandatory was discussed in detail.

**Election of the Chairman** – the project officers agreed to discuss with the Head of Democratic Services the mechanics for electing the Chairman of Area Boards.

**Role of the Task Group** – discussions took place about the need to have a group of members championing the Area Boards. The Task Group felt it could play an important role whilst acknowledging its role in scrutinising the project.

**Service Responses** – the Task Group was concerned that under the section “Working with Services in the Community” there were a number of blank components. The Services were expected to supply this information by January 13<sup>th</sup>. The Chairman agreed to take this concern to the Implementation Executive.

### **Agreed**

- **To request to a future meeting a consolidated report which showed the various funding sources for the Area Boards**
- **To ask the Project officers to liaise with the Head of Democratic Services to develop the mechanics for electing the Chairman**
- **To recommend that the Area Boards should have the ability to move into the ‘part 2’ exemption process, if required**
- **In relation to paragraph 31 to change the wording from “only elected members will be able to nominate or propose the Chair person and vice chair person” to “Only elected unitary members .....**
- **To recommend that the Cabinet responses detailed in paragraphs 87 and 96 should be 21 days.**
- **To recommend to the project team that they produce a generic risk assessment for the Area Boards**
- **To recommend that training for the Area Board Chairman is strongly encouraged but not mandatory**

#### **4. Project Update**

The Task Group considered the weekly update report – 12 December 2008. The main area of interest related to the formal consultation on the proposed area board boundaries.

### **Agreed**

**To receive an update on the formal consultation in relation to the proposed area board boundaries.**

#### **5. Date of Next Meeting**

Friday January 22<sup>nd</sup> 9.30 am – County Hall