
Individual Cabinet Member Delegated Decision

Leader of the Council, including Finance and Procurement, MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism and Health and Wellbeing – Cllr Richard Clewer

Service – Leisure, Culture and Communities

Officer Contact: Rhys Schell, 01225 716752, rhys.schell@wiltshire.gov.uk

Reference: L-05-22

Area Board Arrangements

Purpose of Report

1. This report seeks authority to implement the amendments to Area Boards as reviewed and discussed through the recent Overview and Scrutiny process.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The Area Boards underpin how the Council operates with our communities, offering a frequent and varied platform for local consultation, collaborative working and co-production of activities and services.
3. The Area Boards continue to deliver to the Wiltshire Council Business Plan, with specific focus and delivery to the following aims:
 - Communicate with communities in a way that promotes constructive discussion, tailored to the community's needs and developing better solutions to these;
 - Empower communities and groups to act in their local area;
 - Provide data and information to communities to support them with making the best decisions for themselves;
 - Help the people of Wiltshire to increase their activity levels and improve their health;
 - Enable a strong and active voluntary sector that is proactive in communities;
 - Provide opportunities for young people to be involved in positive activities; and
 - Tackle health inequalities across Wiltshire.

Background

4. The Area Board model was first introduced in 2009 and has delivered significant progress to develop stronger, more resilient and connected communities since its inception. The Area Boards were created to deliver local democracy, provide a platform for discussions on local issues and offer an opportunity for consultation and engagement between the council, its partners and the wider community.

5. The Area Board have devolved power to make decisions on a wide range of local issues where it is within budget, adheres to Wiltshire Council policy and does not affect other community areas.
6. The Area Boards are consulted where significant changes, reductions or closures of a service are planned in their area, raising awareness among residents and giving the opportunity to feedback local opinion.
7. The Area Boards fulfil the statutory duty to secure for qualifying young persons (aged 13-19 in the local area or up to 25 with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities) access to sufficient positive leisure-time activities which improve their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities. This is delivered through the Community Led Youth Model.
8. The overall objectives of the Area Boards remain consistent today however, in an operating model more than 12 years old it is natural that certain elements are subject of review and refresh to ensure they are meeting the current needs of local communities. Whilst there have been minor modifications to operating practices of the boards, there has not been a review undertaken with the involvement of Overview and Scrutiny.
9. The aspiration of the review was to build on the excellent practice and evident success of numerous Area Boards and to address areas where there was inconsistency in practice and approach. The number of boards, overall format, structure and local autonomy were not part of the review.
10. An analysis of the evidence including grant investment and recipients, partnership outcomes achieved by boards, meeting and engagement attendance, outcomes achieved by boards of grant
11. Two workstreams were agreed; one that focussed on updating relevant documentation and policies; the other regarding the way the boards operate when delivering to local priorities, operating working groups and investing grant funding.

Main Considerations for the Council

12. That the Area Boards adopt the approach as set out through the Area Board appendices A – G for the 2022/23 year, which have been developed through a robust Overview and Scrutiny process. These are:
 - a. Area Board handbook;
 - b. Area Board grant funding criteria;
 - c. Area Board Grant Assessment Panel;
 - d. Area Board grant funding flowchart;
 - e. Leader delegation;
 - f. Local priorities report; and
 - g. Working group terms of reference

The main proposals are set out in paragraphs 13 – 18.

13. A new Area Board handbook (Appendix A) has been developed which replaces the 2009 version and sets out the complete operating practices for boards.
14. The Area Board grant funding criteria has been reviewed and re-written. This offers improved clarity and guidance to applicants, officers and Councillors. The new criteria ensures that Area Board grant funding delivers to both the Wiltshire Council Business Plan and the respective local priorities. This is set out in Appendix B.
15. A Grant Assessment Panel (“the Panel”) is proposed that consists of: the Associate Director for Leisure, Culture and Communities; and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Area Boards (or, if unavailable, another member of the Executive as decided by the Leader of the Council). The Panel is available to review exception requests which is when an application meets the criteria, however, exceeds the £5,000 limit per bid and/or are across multiple Area Boards or are submitted by an organisation outside of the voluntary and community sector. The other role for the Panel is to undertake a review where a Member believes that the Area Board grant funding criteria has not been met and requests a review. This is set out in Appendices C and D.
16. To expedite urgent applications, a new and more robust Leader Delegation to officers is proposed. This clarifies what can be categorised as urgent and sets new funding limits. This is set out in Appendix E.
17. The Area Boards will support and lead actions that improve outcomes on up to 5 evidenced based and locally agreed priorities. At least one lead Member will be appointed for each priority. An Area Board work plan will set the strategy and record the action against each priority, with an annual review of progress. Each board will have complete autonomy to consult on their priorities as they wish. An update and refresh of the Area Board forward work plan will ensure that regular and timely data reaches the boards from internal departments and external partners. This is set out in Appendix F.
18. The role of working groups within the Area Board arrangement will be strengthened, with a clear focus on them delivering to local priorities. Boards will be minded that they do not necessarily need to be the lead organisation, however, should be content that any related group is advancing the priority in a satisfactory manner and report evidence and findings into the Area Board. A new generic Terms of Reference is in place for boards (Appendix G) to quickly establish groups, which includes a remit and scope which is to be set by each board for each working group.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

19. At the Overview and Scrutiny (OS) Management Committee on Tuesday 25 January 2022 a request was submitted from the Executive to establish a task group to provide Scrutiny input into the Council’s Area Boards arrangements.
20. The following terms of reference for the task group were endorsed by the OS Management Committee on 25 January 2022. To provide Overview and Scrutiny input into a review of:

- a. The future development and implementation of Area Board local priority setting
 - b. The operation of Area Board working groups
 - c. Area Board grant funding criteria
21. The Task Group considered 16 Executive proposals and the OS task group set out 24 recommendations, which were considered during 6 meetings over a 4-week period.
22. On Tuesday 22 March 2022, the OS Management Committee endorsed the report of the Task Group and referred it to the Cabinet Member for Governance, IT, Broadband, Digital, Licensing, Staffing, Communities and Area Boards for response at the Committee's next meeting. This can be found here: [Agenda item - Final Report of the Area Boards Task Group | Wiltshire Council](#)
23. The Cabinet Member has reviewed and will accept the recommendations at the OS Management Committee in May 2022. The proposals set out within this report and appendices have adopted the recommendations made.

Safeguarding Implications

24. There are no proposed changes to any safeguarding practices through this paper.
25. Area Boards will continue to uphold safe and strong safeguarding practices when delivering or facilitating community activity.
26. Officers who support the boards such as Community Engagement Manager will undertake regular safeguarding training.
27. Area Board grant funding requires documented evidence of suitable safeguarding practices and qualified personnel from voluntary and community sector organisations who are working with young people and older or vulnerable adults.

Public Health Implications

28. The proposals bring in additional focus around improving health inequalities within the county. The grant system is being updated to ensure grant funding applicants give due consideration to how their project supports under-represented, disadvantaged or vulnerable communities.
29. The proposal sets out the importance of taking a long-term view, focusing on what is right for Wiltshire and investing in prevention and early intervention to tackle problems before they get worse. The handbook also includes how Area Boards must consider the impact of their action on social mobility and ask how they can help to tackle the disparities in opportunity that exist.
30. The Community Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (CJSNA) remains instrumental in providing boards and communities with timely and accurate data. An improved sharing of information from the Wiltshire Intelligence

(<https://www.wiltshireintelligence.org.uk/>) website was discussed to enable boards and communities to collaboratively act and support critical areas.

31. Funding from the boards is targeted at improving the quality of life for older and vulnerable adults and improving opportunities in accessing positive activities for those aged 13 – 19 years (or up to 25 years with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities).

Procurement Implications

32. None identified

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

33. There is an overall positive impact on those people with protected characteristics, particularly young people and older people, and people with disabilities. The proposals set out to improve overall communication and involvement to help advance equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics. As an example, the working groups terms of reference request boards to ensure that “membership is fully representative of the local community, carefully considering the diversity and inclusion of the group”.
34. The proposals also include the adding of a specific question to grant funding and assessment that targets health inequalities and removing barriers to improved health outcomes in Wiltshire. Consideration will be given to how Area Board funding investment supported projects that promote equality and inclusion and/or supports under-represented, disadvantaged or vulnerable communities.
35. As this is dealing with processes that will be applied equally for all applicants there are no direct equality impact implications. However, when considering any grant applications regard must be had to the Council's public sector equality duties.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

36. The proposals ask that boards adopt climate change and the environment as one of their five priorities, supporting the councils target to become carbon neutral by 2030.
37. Additional wording to grant applicants is being introduced to ensure that delivery to the Wiltshire Council Climate Strategy are specific and outcomes focussed.
38. No further impacts identified.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

39. Area Board grant funding may not be appropriately invested towards business plan objectives, with inconsistency in approach likely across the areas.
40. Working groups of the boards may not have without sufficient guidance or information to establish effective governance arrangements.

41. Area Boards may not be prioritising resources effectively to identify or deliver to local priorities.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

42. Relationship management may be needed with Town and Parish councils due to a funding amendment. A briefing note will be issued to all towns and parishes and monthly meetings are held where this will be managed and discussed.
43. Ensuring that the changes are effectively implemented is the biggest risk, which would lead to confusion across Area Boards and inconsistencies in practices. A robust and comprehensive communications plan will be undertaken with Members, key officers and external partners. This includes briefing notes, presentations and meetings with all Area Board Chairs.

Financial Implications

44. There are no direct financial implications. The grant funding amendments have been proposed to tightened measures and controls which ensure sound financial management and appropriate investment of the delegated budgets. This is reflected in a new grant funding criteria, the grant assessment panel and significant tightening of the grant system to produce robust accounting information.

Legal Implications

45. Cabinet adopted the Grant Expenditure Policy on 19 July 2016. This policy set out to ensure best use of the limited funding to ensure high quality outcomes for Wiltshire residents in accordance with the Council's Business Plan. The proposals contained within this report have taken into account and are consistent with this policy. The funding principles noted within the grant expenditure policy remain active and should be considered alongside the proposals set out within this report.

Workforce Implications

46. None identified.

Options Considered

47. All proposals considered are set out in the [OS Report final report of the task group](#). The recommendations from the OS task group have been reviewed and adopted into the proposals set out.

Proposal

48. To adopt the proposed changes to the Area Board working practices with immediate effect as set out above and within appendices A-G.

Reason for Proposal

49. To improve the Area Board model funding investment arrangements, the focus and outcomes of evidenced based priorities and the efficiency and consistency of working groups.

Report Author: Rhys Schell, Service Manager Engagement and Partnerships

Date of report: 27 April 2022

Appendices

- a. Area Board Handbook 2022
- b. Area Board Grant Funding Criteria
- c. Area Board Grant Assessment Panel
- d. Area Board Grant Funding Flowchart
- e. Leader Delegation
- f. Local Priorities Report
- g. Working Group Terms of Reference