

Report to	Southern Wiltshire
Date of Meeting	30/01/2014
Title of Report	Wiltshire Council's Campus Programme

1. Wiltshire Council's Campus Programme

Over the next two to three years Wiltshire Council aims to provide a campus in every community area. Whilst the primary intention of the campus programme is to facilitate better and more coordinated delivery of council services to meet the expectations of local communities another key objective of the plan is to use the initiative to provide new or improved community amenities.

2. Developments

Wiltshire Council is encouraging every community area to establish a Community Operations Board (COB) to drive through the campus project.

The programme is well advanced in some community areas where there is a clearly-defined service centre eg. a town which is fairly centrally placed in the community area so that surrounding villages tend naturally to gravitate towards it for their retail and service requirements.

Providing a community building of some sort – or developing an existing facility – provides exciting opportunities for the provision of improved community facilities as well as a single focal point through which WC's services can be accessed.

3. Challenges for Southern Wiltshire Community Area

The natural service centre for our community area is Salisbury. We do not have a logistical or geographic central concentration of population within the community area. Our very separate and distinctly different villages are scattered and have little inter-relationship.

It is therefore not easy to see how the campus idea would or could be applied in our community area.

For this reason the Area Board has so far resisted the creation of a COB until this fundamental question has been discussed and some guidance has been obtained about what alternative arrangement(s) might be possible for us.

4. A possible way forward

Regular attendees of our Area Board meetings will be aware that in the context of the provision of youth development activities we recently decided to try to address the scattered, diffuse rurality issue by grouping our villages into six 'clusters' where there is some logical and geographic connection between the settlements in each cluster.

Work is now going on to see what youth activity opportunities might be created in each cluster.

This strategy is attracting very positive comment in County Hall.

The Board is now considering whether this approach might also be applied to the campus project.

Instead of having a single centre to which all villages naturally gravitated (which clearly does not apply in southern Wiltshire) it might be possible to develop a campus 'solution' for each cluster.

It would be open to each cluster to decide what it wanted to achieve from its own campus project both in terms of council service provision and delivery AND community amenity.

Hitherto, the Board has felt there are dangers in beginning this project by establishing a COB at this early stage because the approach is completely different to that being adopted in other community areas. It has seemed sensible first to have some guidance about both the acceptability of such an approach and the scope of any options which might realistically be made available to individual clusters.

No such guidance has yet been forthcoming.

5. Decision required

Despite the uncertainty surrounding our proposed approach to the campus idea should we set up a COB to begin the work of defining the objectives and requirements of our clusters as they might be taken forward as our campus project?

The pros:

- Starting now gives us lots of time to formulate our ideas and requirements.
- It might stimulate consideration by WC of our approach and produce some guidance on what might or might not be possible.

The cons:

- It has not been easy to find volunteers for such Working Groups.
- By setting this hare running prematurely expectations might be raised which cannot be delivered because of our approach being unacceptable to WC.
- We would, to some extent, be 'working in the dark' – not knowing what might or might not be acceptable to WC.

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