

Wiltshire Council's campus project and how it might be applied for the benefit of villages in the Southern Wiltshire Community Area

Introduction

At the last meeting of the Area Board the chairman tabled a paper outlining the Council's ambitions for a campus in every community area (attached). The campus programme offers very real benefits in terms of improved amenities and easier access to services. The Cabinet member with responsibility for campuses, Cllr Jonathon Seed, described exciting developments in other community areas where very worthwhile community benefits were going to be delivered.

Responding, the chairman explained his concerns about how the campus idea might be applied in our particular community area. The particular characteristics of the Southern Wiltshire Community Area made the approach to campuses being adopted elsewhere inappropriate. Specifically:

- There is no logical or geographic central point
- The Community Area is made of a large number of villages with little or no inter-activity
- The Community Area regarded Salisbury as its service centre

It was agreed that the chairman would meet Cllr Seed to discuss the problem.

Meeting

The subsequent discussion with Cllr Seed, Tracy Carter and Mark Stone – the Director with responsibility for the campus project - produced the following:

- Explicit recognition and acceptance of "the unique nature" of our Community Area
- An agreement that a multi-campus approach was appropriate and justified
- An agreement that there was a clear campus opportunity and requirement at Downton

And there was discussion of possible additional campus locations and indications of the size of budget which might be available.

Emphasis was placed on the fact that the essence of the campus programme was that they should be community-based projects designed and driven by the communities they are designed to serve.

The Board is being encouraged to set up a Community Operations Board (COB) to take this project forward.

Possible scope of campuses

Each campus would be designed to meet the needs and wishes of its immediate catchment area or 'cluster' of villages with these needs and wishes being specified by the communities themselves.

Each campus would aim at:

- Providing improved local access to council services
- Providing improved leisure services and amenities
- Providing new services to meet the particular characteristics of the local area (which in our case might mean a focus on our increasingly elderly population)

The sorts of things which could be considered are:

- Leisure or sports centres
- 'Outreach' provision of leisure activities (eg mobile gym)
- Meeting rooms
- Outdoor all-weather courts (tennis, netball, football etc)
- Library
- Youth activities
- Children's centre/Playgroup
- Creche
- Adult Social Care services
- Parish Council offices
- 'Outreach' provision of council services (eg Housing benefits etc)
- Partner services (police, health)

It must be borne in mind that although Wiltshire Council has made funds available for every campus project the funding will be the subject of a bid which must be clearly justified on the basis of a business case based on community-derived evidence.

The next steps

Our villages have widely differing existing amenities and community provision - what will be required in one village will already be available in another; what is wanted in one village will not be of interest in another. So although there will be the need to identify needs and aspirations at an individual village or village 'cluster' level some over-arching co-ordinating body is required to develop the overall strategy for our community area. Sub-groups might then be formed to consult each potential campus location or village 'cluster' and specify that particular campus solution.

In other community areas the overall, coordinating bodies are called Community Operations Boards – COBs. However, to reflect our particular circumstances perhaps we should adopt "Campus Opportunities Board"? It is a requirement that COBs should not be led by WC members although, of course, councillors would contribute to their work. The COB would report their findings at each stage to the Area Board.

The Terms of Reference for our COB would be to:

- Consider the overall geography of the community area together with the available information from the JSA, WC's asset mapping, demographics and transport links
- Obtain from PCs and other community organisations further information on existing facilities and transport links and other relevant information that would inform the COB's view on the most appropriate campus locations
- Using the above identify locations where their proximity and ease of access to Salisbury might indicate that a campus provision might not be appropriate or that some other form of provision might be called for
- Consider the best locations for campus projects based on the above information and the catchment areas which they would serve
- Plan and organise the consultations for Downton and at the catchment area level identified above and the consultation for those locations where a campus provision might not be appropriate
- Draw together the consultation findings and make recommendations to the Area Board.

Recommendations

1 Agree to adopt "Campus Opportunities Board" instead of "Community Operations Board" for our COB.

2 Set up a provisional COB using volunteers from across our community area.

Cllr Richard Britton

Chair, Southern Wiltshire Area Board

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