

Report to All Area Boards
Date of Meeting August - October
Title of Report PRGS Funding Bid: Wiltshire Voices

What is Wiltshire Voices?

Wiltshire Voices is a project to encourage broader participation in civic life. It is designed to ensure that the needs of all local people are properly understood and addressed.

Background

A recent review of the Area Boards revealed concern that some sections of the community are not fully engaged. These groups are often absent from meetings and events and their needs are not well understood. The Boards were criticised for focusing too heavily on the needs of the 'usual suspects.'

Responding to the challenge

Wiltshire Council's Cabinet considered this issue carefully. It has challenged the Area Boards to respond positively at local level. The Cabinet encouraged the submission of a funding bid to support this work and the Performance Reward Grant (PRG) Panel has given 'in-principle' support subject to approval by the Boards.

A focus on positive local action

Wiltshire Voices is about changing lives – not glossy reports. We want information in the form of personal stories, articles and recordings that will challenge, question and prompt responses. The information will be tailored to meet the needs of different people – such as service professionals, community groups, schools, parish councils and the media. The aim is to generate discussion, learning, ideas and - most importantly - *action*.

A lasting legacy

Wiltshire Voices is about making a lasting difference. New ways of involving people will be developed and this will become the way we do business not an optional add-on. With help from localised public services, communities will be finding and delivering solutions to local challenges and issues. Grants and funding will be better targeted to support projects that really make a difference. Priorities and plans will be more clearly focused on the needs of local people and our work will centre around improving lives not services. Over time these things will help make Wiltshire a better place for everyone.

Capacity and resources to deliver

Instead of each Board trying to engage many groups it is proposed that each Board works intensively with one priority group in its locality. Across Wiltshire this will mean that the needs of 18 different community groups will be addressed. The bid proposes that each Board is allocated a sum of £3,000 to complete its own local project. The work will be coordinated by the Community Area Manager and involve councillors, service providers and community groups – *but most importantly local people*. Each project will take around 8 months and Wiltshire Voices will be complete by Summer 2012 at the latest.

To enable Wiltshire Voices to proceed, the Area Board is asked to support this bid for PRG funding.

Wiltshire Voices

- What?** To make sure a wider range of voices are heard by:
- engaging a broader cross section of the community in the work of the Area Boards - 'not just the usual suspects.'
 - ensuring that the loudest voices do not always dominate
 - better understanding the needs of those who cannot or do not speak up for themselves
 - creating new ways for people to participate
 - encouraging more community based inclusion projects
 - developing community plans that focus on the needs of the whole community
- Why?** A survey conducted in Spring 2010 revealed serious concerns about the lack of involvement of 'everyday people' and harder to reach groups. In response, Wiltshire Council issued a challenge to the Area Boards to broaden community engagement.
- Who?**
- The project will focus on and involve those whose needs are less well understood.
 - The 18 Community Area Managers will facilitate the work across Wiltshire
 - Partner agencies, frontline service officers, support workers, carers, voluntary services and councillors will be involved
 - A small project team will lead the work in each area.
- How?**
- Project team of key people to plan and manage the project
 - Desk research and information gathering
 - Face to face engagement with target group
 - Recording, documenting and presenting
 - Publishing and promoting
 - Action planning
- When?** Commencing in Autumn 2010 and concluding by early Summer 2012
- Progress?** Area Boards across Wiltshire have been looking to identify target groups. So far, the following provisional programme has been established.

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| • Amesbury | <i>(Council tenants and leaseholders)^</i> |
| • Bradford on Avon | <i>(Boaters)^</i> |
| • Calne | <i>(People with mobility issues)^</i> |
| • Chippenham | <i>(Disability allowance claimants)*</i> |
| • Corsham | <i>(NEETS)^</i> |
| • Devizes | <i>(Victims of domestic violence)*</i> |
| • Malmesbury | <i>(Rural isolation and access)^</i> |
| • Marlborough | <i>(Recently retired)^</i> |
| • Melksham | <i>(Everyday people who currently do not participate)^</i> |
| • Pewsey | <i>(Rural families on low incomes)*</i> |
| • Salisbury | <i>(People with learning disabilities)*</i> |
| • Southern Wiltshire | <i>(Gypsies and travellers)^</i> |
| • South West Wiltshire | <i>(Young people in rural areas)^</i> |
| • Tidworth | <i>(Army dependents)^</i> |
| • Trowbridge | <i>(Teenage parents)^</i> |
| • Warminster | <i>(Older people in residential care)^</i> |
| • Westbury | <i>(Elderly people living at home)^</i> |
| • Wootton Bassett & Cricklade | <i>(Stroke sufferers)*</i> |

^ provisionally agreed

* subject to confirmation