



Area Board Handbook

April 2022

Contents





Background	4
Area Board infographic	6
Area Board network	8
Our Identity and Area Board principles	9
Local Priority Setting	9
Area Board Meetings, Engagements and Working Groups	11
• Business Meetings	
• Engagements	
• Task and Finish or Working groups	
Local Highways and Footpath Improvement Groups	15
Funding	15
Role of the Area Board Chair	17
Role of the Councillors	17
Role of Democratic Services	18
Role of Community Engagement	18
Area Boards in action – examples	19
Additional Area Board information	24

Background



The Area Board model was first introduced in 2009 and has delivered significant progress with Wiltshire Council's aim to develop stronger, more resilient 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. They also 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. Many of the overall objectives of the Wiltshire Area Boards remain consistent today, however, an evolved framework has been developed that builds upon the strengths of the model and promotes the use of more flexible and informal methods of engagement to better meet the requirements of local residents.

The focus of the Area Board model is to:

- Develop a strong, well established and highly functioning network of local partners, organisations and residents
- Generate an in-depth understanding of our local communities, including the demographics and the issues faced by the residents
- Empower and facilitate community led action
- Recognise the talents, expertise and knowledge of our communities, trusting and supporting them to co-deliver local services

- Ensure decisions are taken in consultation with and close to the residents that they affect
- Effectively share data and intelligence at a local level
- Provide a local platform for local engagement and conversation
- Deliver an opportunity for residents to gain an understanding of the way the council works
- Help deliver the Wiltshire Council business plan at a local level with the involvement of communities

The Area Boards have delegated powers and devolved budgets to help facilitate community led action. They work with communities to establish local priorities and then put collaboratively developed action plans in place to address them. The boards use a variety of engagement platforms to develop a strong network of local partners and residents that includes formal meetings, events, workshops, surveys and working groups.

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.

The Area Boards work strongly towards delivering to the 2022 – 2032 Wiltshire Council business plan. The guiding themes of the business plan have been integrated into the way the Area Board model has been developed.

Understanding communities

We ensure our dialogue with communities is open, transparent and inclusive, in the right place and at the right time so that our services meet our distinctive local need.

Working together

We design and deliver our services in partnership with service users, local communities and other public sector partners where appropriate. We collectively consider how to integrate our work, get maximum value for public sector spend

Prevention and early intervention

We take a long-term view, focusing on what is right for Wiltshire and invest in prevention and early intervention to tackle problems before they get worse. We have a whole life approach to planning and providing services for our residents. This includes our ambition to reach net zero carbon.

Improving social mobility and tackling inequalities

In everything we do, we consider the impact of the action on social mobility and ask how we can help to tackle the disparities in opportunity that exist within Wiltshire.

This handbook provides an overview of the Area Board model, but for further detail please see Part 3B Section 4 of the Wiltshire Council constitution, which is subject to review from the Leader.



● Evidence base ● Community Network ● Vehicles for action ● Outputs and outcomes



Data, evidence and community insight

Area Boards review a wide range of data sources from the joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA), internal council services, external partners and hold community conversations on a variety of different themes to widen their understanding of local issues.

Locally agreed priorities and Wiltshire Council Business Plan

Using this data and through community consultation the Area Boards agree their local priority themes, ensuring work and desired outcomes are closely aligned to that of the Wiltshire Council Business Plan.

Elected Councillors and local officers

Each elected Wiltshire Councillor sits on their local Area Board and is a voting member for all decision making functions. The Councillors are supported by the local Community Engagement Manager and Democratic Services Officer.

Local partners, volunteers and residents

Each Area Board has a comprehensive network of local groups, organisations, volunteers and residents. The Area Board promotes the sharing of information and joined up working between parties.

Strategic business meetings

Each Area Board meets at least 4 times per annum to undertake its core business, brings key partners together and holds strategic conversations regarding the local community.

Community engagements and activities

An informal method of engaging communities through events, workshops, surveys or outreach conversations, usually focussed on a particular issue or community priority.

Working and action groups

Working groups of local officers, Councillors and volunteers share intelligence, identify opportunities for joined up working and stimulate local action focussed around a specific local priority theme. Groups may be led by the Area Board or another local partner.

Community grant funding

Area Boards invest capital and revenue funding into local community led projects that are able to demonstrate shared objectives with the board and fit the grant criteria

Partnership projects, initiatives and joined up services

Through effective communication and using a variety of methods to engage communities, the Area Boards aim to ensure that local projects, initiatives and services within Wiltshire are joined up and effective.

Informed, connected and resilient communities

Communities and local residents support one another, share best practice, problem solve through local networks and link in with their local Area Boards.

The Area Board network

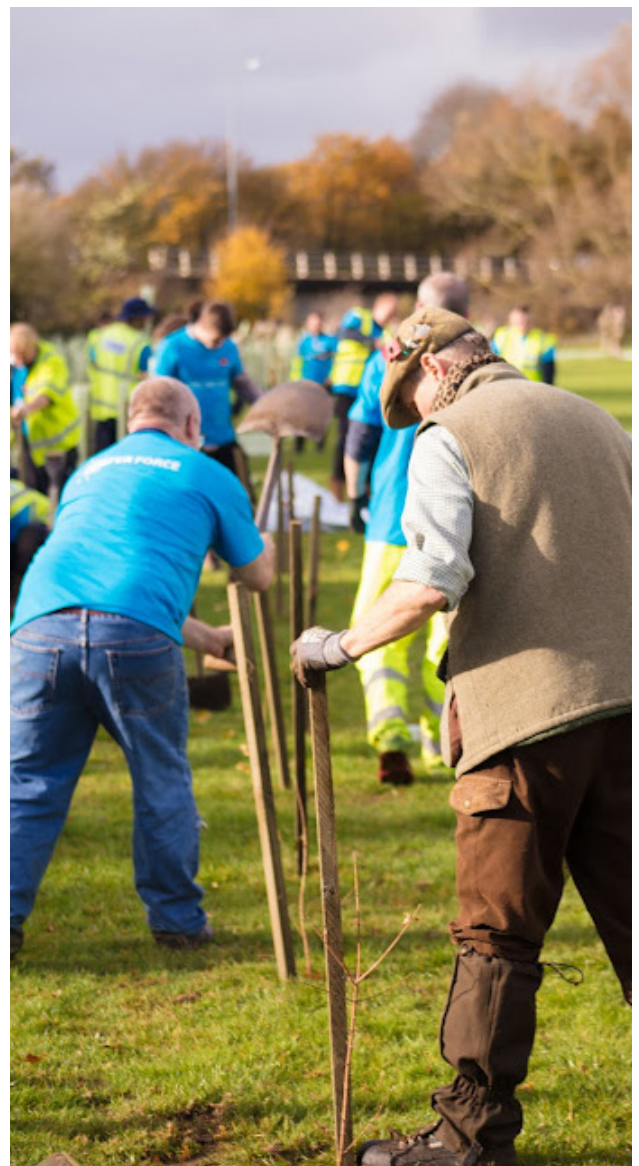
Each Area Board comprises the elected unitary councillor representing the electoral divisions within that respective area and is supported by a Community Engagement Manager and a Democratic Services Officer. An Area Board must develop and maintain exceptionally strong networks of local partners, organisations and residents to successfully facilitate community led action. The Area Boards aim to develop a collaborative, focussed and joined up network through regular communication, partnership activities and events and sharing of data and intelligence. Whilst not an exhaustive list, some typical key members of the Area Board network are as follows:

- City, town and parish councils
- Voluntary and community sector organisations (regional, countywide and local level)
- Wiltshire Police
- Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Ministry of Defence
- Bath, Swindon and Wiltshire Partnership, Healthwatch, Local Health Representatives
- Local businesses, Chambers of Commerce
- Schools
- Housing Associations
- Residents and resident action groups

To develop this network the Area Boards welcome and value involvement from local individuals and organisations. The local Community Engagement Manager and Councillors proactively encourage involvement and are available to be contacted regarding Area Board business (www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/6142/Introduction). Residents and partners can also e-mail areaboards@wiltshire.gov.uk.

For partners and residents there are a wide range of reasons to engage with the boards. Area Boards can offer:

- Strategic guidance on local, complex issues
- Funding, advice and support for a community led projects
- Expertise and support on delivering services locally more effectively
- Local data and intelligence on a range of topics
- An open forum for discussions or consultations that relate to local issues
- A platform to share and promote relevant ideas and initiatives
- A link to elected Councillors and local Officers



Our Identity and principles of Area Board working

The Area Boards follow the principles set out within Wiltshire Council's organisational identity.

"We are public servants, innovating and collaborating with partners and residents to build stronger communities. We are an evidence based, high performing organisation, we reward achievement, recognise effort and are focussed on making a difference and delivering the best outcomes for our residents. We are one council and our EPIC Values (Empowering People, Innovation and Collaboration) define what we stand for, creating an inclusive and agile environment where we celebrate each other's successes."

The Area Boards have autonomy in their approach to reflect the unique nature of their respective communities. However, there are some key principles of working that all Officers and Councillors must follow, which are set out below. Area Boards are:

- Transparent, fair, democratic, and evidence based in decision making.
- Welcoming and inclusive in our approach to engaging and supporting communities.
- Empowering our communities, trusting and respecting them to lead and where necessary providing the tools for them to become more resilient.
- Working collaboratively in an outcomes focussed manner, and using innovative approaches to achieve objectives.



Local Priority Setting

Each Area Board is regularly faced with a multitude of different issues, projects and initiatives. To effectively steer the energy and resources of the Area Boards, each board democratically selects up to 5 priority themes that will be the main focus of their work. These priority themes are based upon local evidence and data as well as local insight and opinion from partners and residents.

The Area Boards receive funding to deliver a devolved youth model as well as support for the Health and Wellbeing of vulnerable adults and older people. Wiltshire Council has also made a commitment to seek to become carbon neutral by 2030. There is therefore an expectation that Area Boards will have priorities set around Young People, Older and Vulnerable Adults and the Environment/Climate Change.

In practice each board will agree up to 5 local priority themes through a vote of the local Councillors. The themes are kept broad to enable additional specific actions to be delivered under each one. A generic example with 3 priority themes is shown on the next page.

Priority theme	Local action	Target(s)
Youth engagement and positive activity provision	Develop and promote the Area Board youth survey to all local partners and young people	To obtain evidence from secondary school students about lives and preferred activities
	Re-establish the local Youth Forum	Collaborate to provide youth activities, networking, info sharing
	Rural youth outreach engagement project	Specific area of concern is rural young people. Focus on understanding barriers and addressing them.
	Work with partners on summer activity programme	To increase activity opportunities for young people during school holidays.
Supporting the environment	Establish local environment working group	Development of a working group to lead on the Area Board efforts with climate.
	Respond to Climate Strategy	Ensure local views are part of the consultation
	Work with groups to strengthen local green voluntary organisations	Improved action and project development from VCS sector.
	Work with T&PC on green project focussed event	Bring all green minded projects and organisations together to share best practice and how we can work together in future
Reducing isolation and loneliness	H&WB working group development to bring a comprehensive network of partners focussing on this.	Stronger partnership approach to this key priority and increased local intelligence
	Build and promote older persons social isolation and loneliness programme	Activities for older people to access
	Commence digital outreach project with partners	Isolated, lonely individuals in villages in particular, but addressing digital divide
	Support development of Friday coffee morning for isolated/ lonely people	Older, isolated people in particular deprived and isolated area

Table 1 - Example Area Board work plan

Priorities are reviewed at least annually, however can be amended as and when the Area Board feel is required. This may be because the board feels that no further local action is possible, or due to new intelligence that the board has uncovered that requires a change in direction. Priorities can be updated and amended through a vote of the Area Board councillors at a business meeting.

The data profiles produced by the Community Joint Strategic Needs Assessment provide insight into how a community area is faring in comparison to local and national comparators. The Area Board assesses any new information provided to them and will hold specific engagement activities such as events, workshops and surveys to better understand local opinion on issues and themes.

Each Area Board is actively encouraged to appoint at least one lead Councillor for each priority. A report which sets this out will be taken to the first meeting of the Area Board after the annual meeting of council.

Area Board Business Meetings, Engagements and Working Groups

Since 2009, Area Boards have piloted different approaches with their communities to engage and facilitate local action which has created a great deal of learning on how to approach the model moving forwards. In some circumstances this has required the boards to lead and bring others along with them and in other situations, the board is a supportive partner.

The Area Board infographic shows the multiple ways in which the Area Boards engage with communities and facilitate community led action.

The operating framework for Area Boards allows them to tailor their approach to their communities, considering what their local priorities are, the partners involved and the outcomes they wish to achieve. It importantly offers more opportunities for our residents to engage on issues important to them. Area Board Councillors and Officers will meet quarterly to review the upcoming meetings, engagements and working groups. The model promotes each Area Board to develop its network of activity through 3 main strands:

- Business meetings
- Community engagements such as events, workshops and surveys
- Working groups



Business meetings

Each board will hold 4 formal decision making meetings per annum, where delegated functions such as grant funding decisions and other matters in accordance with the constitution are resolved and recorded. The aspiration for the meetings is to bring together partners and residents for informed local strategic discussions, receive updates on key business and to set the local directive on issues.

Many agenda items are derived from the Area Board forward work plan. The forward work plan is shared with key council officers and external countywide partners to ensure that important strategic updates are received by the boards. Local officers, organisations and groups are also contacted directly to provide specific dedicated updates that relate specifically to the community area in which the board operates. Area Boards should consider whether an item would be best discussed at a business meeting or taken to a more informal or specific session as set out under Area Board engagements. The board will review and consider grant funding applications, review local highway schemes, update on recent engagements and working groups and promote public questioning and debate or receive local petitions. The Democratic Services Officer will provide the main support for the business meetings.

Area Board engagements

An Area Board engagement is a flexible, informal activity that focuses on a specific local issue or topic that is clearly linked to one of the selected 5 priority themes. Examples of engagement activities are events, surveys, workshops, targeted outreach sessions and drop in discussions. These activities provide flexibility and an informality that enables each board to decide how best to engage in respect of the target audience, the issue at hand and the target outcomes.

Planning and reporting of the engagements will take place at Area Board business meetings to ensure the approach is agreed and the intelligence is shared with the Area Board network. It is expected that the respective Councillor lead for the specific priority theme linked to the engagement would be greatly involved in the engagement, however, all Councillors are encouraged to participate. The Community Engagement Manager provides the main support for the Area Board engagements.

For Area Board engagements to be impactful and successful, it is advised that the following elements are in place:

- An agreed target outcome that links to and progresses an Area Board priority theme
- A defined audience
- A suitable platform for engagement e.g. Microsoft Teams, in person
- Accurate records of the key actions and outcomes
- Data to share with the Area Board business meeting

Some examples of engagements and their benefits below:

- A themed survey that runs over a specific period to understand the views of a wide or cross section of the community. Predominantly run online, however, hard copy options should be made available.
- A one-off workshop that brings people together to increase an understanding of a topic and generate community input. Excellent when forming an idea or shaping a project or idea.
- Reaching out through invitation for a mutual discussion or visiting specific members of our community on their terms. A targeted outreach session is an excellent way to engage with those who may not otherwise be heard or may not be represented at Area Board business meetings. Some examples could include BAME communities,

- Travellers, Gypsies, Boaters or young people.
- A themed event that raises the profile of a particular issue or priority, bringing residents and partners together. Particular success was found in undertaking events around carbon neutrality and climate change in recent years.
- A drop in discussion enables a set time where residents or partners can come along and speak with members of the Area Board on a specific topic. This could be held online or in person.
- A key partner may already be undertaking an engagement that links with an Area Board priority. The board could look to join up via a partnership engagement adding value, helping to shape the activity and receiving the data and evidence gathered.

Working groups

Working groups are an excellent vehicle for driving Area Board priorities. It is recommended that each Area Board has a working group linked to each of their respective priorities (up to 5) however, the board does not need to be the lead organisation for each group. There are many excellent partner and community run working groups already in existence across Wiltshire and the aspiration where this is the case is to work in partnership and complement this work. Once the Area Board has established its priorities, it should assess the local landscape and agree whether an Area Board working group is required or whether to progress its local priority work through a partner or community led group.

Area Boards should establish working groups that:

- Have a clear, defined and achievable purpose, set by the Area Board.
- Have the appropriate people and organisations working together, for the right duration and with measures in place to review the work of the group.

- Increase the agility and flexibility of decision making, increasing the speed in how decisions are reached and the quality of the overall Area Board investment.
- Do not encroach and overstep in a space where communities are already leading.

Examples of the type of exercises that Area Boards may request working groups to undertake are as follows:

- Research and review key data, intelligence and information related to the specific priority theme, to develop an in-depth understanding of the issue and opportunities reporting findings back to the board.
- Democratically consider issues, projects and initiatives that could be developed and identify risks to their delivery.
- Engage with the relevant partners to advance objectives, empowering the wider community to lead where appropriate.
- Provide regular updates and information to the Area Board for review and further guidance.
- Make informed, transparent and fair funding decisions if a budget has been allocated.

Following the earlier example (see table 1) an example, of how the working groups that may link with their respective priorities

Youth engagement and positive activity provision – an Area Board led local youth working group.

Supporting the environment – an environment community group led by local partners with the Area Board an active participant and regular sharing of information and joint initiatives.

Reducing isolation and loneliness – an Area Board led older people's group, however, jointly facilitated with the local Town Council.

	Area Board business meetings	Community engagements	Working groups
Description	To bring residents, partners and Cllrs together to carry out the business function of the board. An opportunity for council, partner and community updates.	To specifically deliver activities that would engage with members of the community on a particular topic or theme.	To bring up to 10 local representatives together to review issues, undertake research and identify opportunities for action on a specific priority theme.
Frequency	4 times per annum	Flexible – planned and targeted as agreed between officers and Councillors	Flexible. Generally in line with business meetings.
Method	To be in person unless legislation is updated. Predominately evening meetings in set locations.	A mixture of online and in person engagements. Date, time and venue are flexible.	A mixture of online and in person engagements. Date, time and venue are flexible.
Key elements	Chairman’s announcements, and receive updates from partners, council departments, Area Board engagements and working/ groups. Business decisions including funding, open Q&A public forum dedicated slot. Recorded and published minutes.	Surveys and polls, community consultations, themed events, themed workshops, themed discussions, targeted outreach engagements. Brief notes of key actions and decisions which go to Business Meeting.	Set directive from Area Board to group. Research, review into relevant issues and provide data/ intelligence back to board. Identify opportunities for local action. Can make funding recommendations. Brief notes of key actions and decisions which go to business meeting.
Key personnel	Area Board Cllrs Democratic Services Officer Community Engagement Manager Multimedia team Corporate Business Support team Area Board network	Area Board Cllrs Community Engagement Manager Communities Business Support Team Multimedia team Area Board network	Area Board Cllrs Community Engagement Manager Area Board network

Table 2 - Comparison of meetings, engagements and groups

Local Highways and Footpath Improvement Groups

The Local Highways Footpath Improvement Groups (LHFIGs) operate differently to other working groups of the Area Boards. Supported by the Senior Transport Planner, Senior Traffic Engineer, Local Highway Maintenance Engineer and attended by Wiltshire Councillors and Town and Parish Council representatives, the group makes recommendations to the Area Board to determine priorities and levels of expenditure required for small-scale transport schemes in the community area. LHFIGs operate a discretionary highways budget to provide new and improved highway infrastructure. The budget can be used for schemes that improve safety, increase accessibility and sustainability by promoting walking, cycling and public transport and improve traffic management. It cannot be used to fund revenue functions, such as routine maintenance schemes or the provision of passenger transport services.

Schemes considered by the LHFIGs must have first been raised through the highway improvement request system and endorsed by the relevant town or parish council.

See LHFIGs terms of reference for further detail.

Funding

Wiltshire Council devolves significant funding to the Area Boards in order for them to invest in local community projects and initiatives that meet local priorities and deliver exceptional outcomes for residents. Grant applications must demonstrate how they will improve the local communities by addressing priorities and help to deliver to the council's Business Plan.

The Area Boards aim to work in partnership to achieve maximum value for its investment. They take a long term view to invest in prevention and early intervention, focusing on tackling inequalities and improving social mobility.

Each Area Board receives an annual allocation of devolved funding from Wiltshire Council to invest in community led projects and initiatives. The funding streams are as follows:

- Community grants - capital funding to help provide facilities and equipment for projects that are important to the local community. Capital funding can be used to purchase assets or for the significant refurbishment of existing assets. Capital items are expected to have a lifespan of at least 5 years.
- Youth grants - revenue funding for projects that provide positive activities for young people aged 13-19 or up to 25 years old with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A positive activity can be any educational or recreational leisure-time activity including arts, sports, leisure and informal education and community based which helps young people achieve healthy and safe lifestyle outcomes.
- Older and vulnerable adults grants - revenue funding to support projects that benefit and improve older and vulnerable residents health and wellbeing. Reducing social isolation and loneliness and supporting people to maintain independence at home for as long as possible, are key drivers for this funding.

The Area Board grant funding criteria sets out the respective funding streams and process in more detail.

The Grant Assessment Panel is in place to support Area Boards in ensuring that delegated grant funding is appropriately

invested into community projects, by enabling an additional review of submitted applications.

The panel is in place for two key reasons:

1. An exception request: 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 processing officer can refer for an 'exception' ; OR
2. A councillor request for review: Where a councillor believes that the Area Board grant funding criteria has not been met and requests a review by the Panel.

Further information regarding the grant assessment panel can be found here:

[Area Board Grants - Wiltshire Council](#)

An annual review of the Area Board investment is undertaken which assesses the impact of the countywide spend, with particular indicator showing the value against local priorities and the business plan. Area Boards are encouraged to invite grant applicants to feedback on the outcomes their project achieved and to retain local close monitoring of the projects in which they invest.

Delegation

1. In order to deal with urgent matters that may arise between meetings of the Area Board, the Community Engagement Manager (CEM) has the authority to approve expenditure from the delegated grants budget when the following conditions are met:
 - a. The item is deemed urgent (definition below) by the CEM, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Area Board
 - b. The item follows due process

as set out in paragraphs 3-6, enabling all Area Board councillors 5 working days to review and consider the award.

- c. The award does not exceed £1,000
 - d. The award has a majority support from all Area Board members
2. In order to be an urgent matter it would have to be the case that a delay in approval until the next scheduled meeting of the Area Board would have a critical impact on the project for which the grant is requested. If the CEM should deem the application urgent, they are to liaise with the Chair and Vice Chair of the board. If there is unanimous agreement that it is urgent then it moves to the next stage.
 3. The CEM will seek the views of all Area Board councillors via written notification and may authorise expenditure if a majority are in favour. Councillors will be allowed 5 working days to consider the application and their response. The decision will be reported to the next meeting of the Area Board, along with the reason the matter was considered urgent to expedite the work of the Area Board.
 4. Standard grant funding criteria is to be followed, including the role and remit of the grant assessment panel.
 5. The CEM may authorise up to £1,000 per application, with a maximum of four applications to be approved between meetings of the Area Board.

If there are more than four applications that have been deemed urgent, the proper officer can be asked to call an additional business meeting of the Area Board. The proper officer will determine whether

an additional meeting is required.

6. If a working group of the Area Board make a recommendation on a grant funding award, the CEM delegation process set out in paragraph 1 above can be used.

Role of the Area Board Chair

The Area Board Chair plays a vital role in the success of the Area Board. Elected at the first Area Board after the annual meeting of council, the Chair will oversee the workplan of the Area Board and maintain very close working relationships with the local Community Engagement Manager and Democratic Services Officer.

Holding a firm grasp of all elements of the Area Board model, the Chair is critical in ensuring that all workstreams of the board are being delivered effectively and collaboratively with the key local partners and residents.

Further elements that are expected of the Area Board Chair are as follows:

- Clear, fair and inclusive approach as chair of meetings, engagements or working groups. Problem solving to deliver democratic and consultative meetings.
- Proactive in engagement with the community, using innovation and piloting new approaches
- Acting as a spokesperson, promoter and advocate for the Area Board and making themselves available for interview or media related matters.
- Sharing best practice and feeding back progress to regular meetings such as Area Board Chairs.

- Regular and clear communication with fellow local Councillors, key officers, partners and local residents on behalf of the board.
- Encouraging fellow local Councillors to lead priority themes and overseeing the delivery.
- Evaluating performance and assessing potential improvements in light of feedback and evidence

Role of the Councillors

Each of the 98 elected Wiltshire Councillors sit on a local Area Board. The success of the Area Board hinges on the active participation of all local councillors. The role of the Councillor with Area Boards are wide ranging, however, some key elements are as follows:

- Work closely and cooperatively with fellow local Councillors and Officers
- Engage in appropriate Area Board meetings, engagements and working groups
- Advocate and promote the work of the Area Board to residents and partners
- Take a lead on at least one local priority theme, taking active steps to develop the key actions across the community area. This could include chairing a working group, working in partnership with local residents and partners on projects and initiatives and reporting back to the Area Board.
- Diligently and democratically consider all funding applications against the grants criteria, local priorities and Wiltshire Council business plan.

Role of Democratic Services

The Democratic Services Officer supports the delivery of the Area Board business meetings. Their roles includes:

- Legal, administrative and Councillor support within the Area Board and wider constitutional framework
- Organising the dates and venues for the Area Board business meetings
- Maintaining the Area Board forward workplan
- Drafting, coordinating and publishing the Area Board agenda
- Liaising with guests and speakers
- Tracking decisions and ensuring the Area Board acts within its devolved powers
- Recording and publishing the minutes of the business meeting

Role of Community Engagement

The Community Engagement team support all elements of the Area Board model, including the business meetings, community engagements and the working groups. Their role includes:

- Providing relevant reports and updates to the Area Board business meeting and bringing relevant local items to the agenda
- Facilitating the Area Board local priority setting process with local Councillors
- Bringing forward eligible community projects for Area Board funding consideration
- Overseeing the delegated authority funding process
- Managing the delivery of the Area Board working or task and finish groups with the respective Councillors

- Managing the delivery of the Area Board engagements with the respective Councillors
- Supporting communities and Councillors with Area Board agreed local projects and initiatives
- Promoting the relevant activity of the board, communicating its key messages and successes to a wide audience.
- Developing and maintaining community contacts through partners, volunteers and residents.





Area Board in action examples

Older people

Area Board example

Situation

Evidence showed that COVID-19 had resulted in many older people losing confidence and becoming social isolated and lonely despite provision of support and groups.

Task

The Area Board decided to work with the Older Person's Champion and engage with local community groups and organisations to explore offering a programme of both online and social activities.

Action

The Area Board awarded £1k to help deliver a range of one-off events, free taster sessions and ongoing activities. Volunteers were sought to support existing organisations to deliver activities and encourage older people to participate.

Result

Nearly 100 events and activities organised that helped alleviate loneliness and isolation and enhance wellbeing. A "Silver Salisbury Brochure" was produced recognising that older people may not use IT. Produced an increase in take up of local older persons activities.



Environment

Area Board example

Situation

The Corsham Community Area agreed with Wiltshire Council that there is a “climate emergency” and made it a priority to take forward local action to help address it.

Task

The Area Board identified its role as encouraging a community response to the Wiltshire Climate Strategy including raising awareness, supporting local action and linking with Wiltshire Council and its partners.

Action

A Corsham Climate Strategy Meeting was held in Sep 2021 and a Corsham Area Climate group was established in Nov 2021.

Result

All Town and Parish Councils in the area are developing climate action plans. First ever Corsham Eco fair in April 2022. The Climate Group now has seven local organisations as members, increasing local collaborative working.



Supporting low income families

Area Board example

Situation

COVID-19 prevented children and young people attending school. Those on low incomes were affected most and were often without a laptop to enable them to participate in home learning

Task

The Area Board responded quickly, recognising that it needed to engage with schools to gauge both demand and what support it could offer. It also needed to investigate alternative provision beyond direct funding of schools.

Action

The Community Engagement Manager worked with the Westbury Area Head's Group and also made introductions and links between schools, and local groups.

Result

The Area Board awarded £4,600 which was distributed depending upon demand. 20 families were directly provided with a device from this project. Wiltshire Digital Drive also provided additional support across the community.



Young people

Area Board example

Situation

It was identified that there was no direct youth engagement for young people in Upavon and Burbage which are the 2 largest villages in the area outside of Pewsey. Local consultation had picked this up as a potential need

Task

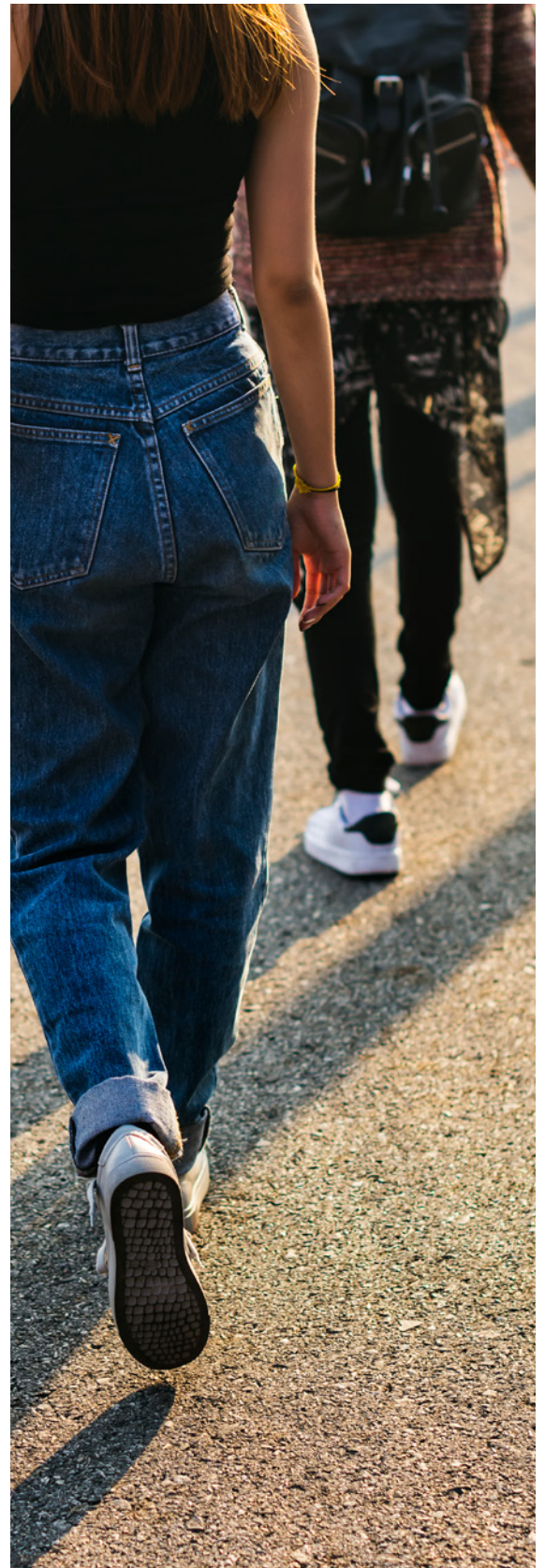
The Area Board and Parish Councils recognised that demand needed to be tested and support for local people offered if a group was to be established. The Area Board's task was to facilitate this in the short term to allow time and space for a community response.

Action

Funding was awarded by the Pewsey Area Board to enable the Open Blue Bus to run for 18 months in both villages to test need, offer their expertise and to find and train volunteers. Both Upavon and Burbage PC have been fully involved.

Result

Open Blue have established core groups of 10 or more young people that now meet in both villages. Several people have come forward to help volunteer. Support has now included Trenchard Lines Camp which is very isolated,. Discussions are ongoing for regular provision once the funding for the bus ends.



Additional Area Board information

The terms of reference for Area Boards are set out at Part 3B Section 4 of the Constitution. Part 3B Schedule 1 lists each Board along with the Unitary Electoral Divisions and parishes within them.

Area Boards are subject to access to information procedure rules as set out in Part 5 of the Constitution. Agendas will be published no later than 5 clear working days before a meeting.

Only the elected unitary councillors on the Area Board may vote on matters involving the discharge of executive functions. Voting is by a majority of the voting Members present. The chair of the area board has the casting vote.

Area Boards will seek to reach decisions by consensus, where possible involving all voting participants.

Decisions involving the discharge of executive functions can be made by the local Area Board, provided the decision does not:

- Have a significant impact outside of the area concerned;
- Have a significant impact on the overall resources of the Council;
- Contradict any policy or service standard set by the Council;
- Involve the taking of regulatory or quasi-judicial decisions;
- Relate to the exercise of functions in respect of any particular person, including any individual Member of staff.
- Involve expenditure outside of their budgets

Area Boards also must not be directly involved in deciding planning applications.

Declaration of interest

All Wiltshire Councillors are subject to the Wiltshire Council Code of Conduct as set out in Part 12 of the Constitution link). Guidance is provided to all at this link. Those who are Parish and town/city councillors will also be subject to a Code for that Council, which may or may not be different to the Wiltshire Code. Councillors should declare any relevant pecuniary (financial) or non-pecuniary interests. Those with a pecuniary interest must not take part in any discussion or vote on an item. Those with a non-pecuniary interest should consider whether it is appropriate for them to be involved in discussion or voting.

Councillor 'Calls for Action'

Councillor Calls for Action were introduced in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Wiltshire Council developed a process guide and this is reflected in Part 8 of the Constitution.

Local petitions

The Council's rules on petitions are set out at Part 4A of the Constitution.

A petition is any communication which is signed by or sent to the Council on behalf of a number of people. This includes both written and electronic petitions ("e-petitions").

The Council has set up a Petitions Homepage to provide further information and guidance to councillors and the public. Petitions are usually directed to and reported to the Council as a whole, but organisers may choose to direct them to an Area Board.

Petitions in respect of non-determined planning or licensing applications will not be covered by this petitions scheme, and will be referred to the relevant service as formal representations. Petitions in respect of statutory petitions

or on matters with existing right of appeal such as Council tax banding and non-domestic rates, are covered by other procedures

Petitions are submitted to Democratic Services for acknowledgement and initial action. If relevant to the remit and powers of an Area Board a petition may be presented or debated at that Area Board.

Any petition with more than ten signatures may be considered for debate at an Area Board. This would be granted at the discretion of the Chairman of the Area Board if submitted and acknowledged at least ten working days before the meeting. Any valid petition with more than 50 signatures submitted and acknowledged at least ten working days before a meeting will be granted a debate if requested by a petition organiser.

The arrangements for a debate will be at the discretion of the Chairman of the Area Board, subject to consultation with the Monitoring Officer or their representatives and considering the remit and powers of the Area Board.

If a petition organiser considers that their petition has not been dealt with properly, they may submit a complaint to the council's Complaints Service.

Any complaint should be made within twenty working days from the Council response to the petition organiser.

Any complaint must set out in what way it is considered that the petition has not been dealt with properly. Any review undertaken would consider whether the steps taken by the Council in response to the petition were adequate, not whether the decision on how to respond to the petition was correct.

Transfer of Community Assets

The Area Boards have powers to transfer the management and/ or ownership of assets to the community and may do so in some instances, at less than market value, if sufficient social or economic benefits can be delivered.

Following the receipt of an application, the Community Engagement Manager and Estates team produce a covering report for the Area Board to consider the application. The Area Board make a decision on the community asset transfer. If the property is classed as being of strategic importance to the council, the Cabinet Capital Assets Committee have the final say, taking into account the recommendation of the Area Board.

Further detail on the process can be found on the Area Board homepage.

www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council-democracy-area-boards

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