

Area Boards

Area Boards Practice Papers

May 2013

Introducing the Boards

Wiltshire Council wants to make sure local people are fully involved in decisions that affect them. The council's area boards bring local decision making back into the heart of the community providing a way for local people to shape the policies and services of Wiltshire Council, the police, NHS and other partners.

There are 18 area boards across Wiltshire. Each area board covers a community area within the county - in most parts of the county this includes a market town and its surrounding villages.

The boards meet every six to eight weeks at various locations within their area to make decisions about issues affecting the community. These decisions are taken by elected Wiltshire councillors who represent the towns and villages in the area.

Residents and key organisations like town and parish councils, the police and local NHS also play an active part in area boards. Members of the community area partnership - an independent, voluntary, non-political organisation which brings together public bodies, businesses and voluntary and community groups - also attend area board meetings.

At each area board meeting, local people can come along and discuss issues with the councillors. The councillors take these views into account when making final decisions.

Each area board has its own budget which it uses to support projects identified by the community and local groups.

By working in partnership with local communities, the council can achieve so much more than it ever could on its own. We hope this will lead to better services, better communities and a better quality of life for everyone in Wiltshire.



Westbury Area Board

Purpose

The purpose of Area Boards is to promote the development of stronger and more resilient communities across Wiltshire's community areas through:

- Efficient, transparent and accountable decision making
- Effective collaboration with public, voluntary and private sector partners locally to meet the aspirations of local people
- Shaping the delivery of local services
- Addressing local issues
- Building community leadership and local engagement

Functions

The Area Boards have the following remit:

- To provide a focus for community leadership, local influence and decision-making, through the democratic mandate of elected councillors
- To keep an overview of and influence the delivery of services in the area
- To bring together key service providers and the local community
- To consider future priorities through a community-led planning process linked to the Joint Strategic Assessment for Wiltshire
- To allocate grants to support local community-led projects
- To provide feedback on consultations affecting the area
- To provide two-way communications for the community area
- To consider issues referred to the Board by town and parish councils, partners and the public
- To establish task and finish groups to examine local issues.
- To oversee the development of a local community 'campus' in the area.



Pewsey Area Board

Who's who at an Area Board?

- **Area Board Chairman:** a local councillor elected each year by the other councillors on the Area Board. The chairman runs the meetings and is the local spokesperson for the board. The chairman reviews issues, plans the agenda, monitors actions and works with service providers, partners and local groups to ensure that everything runs smoothly.
- **Local Councillor:** your democratically elected community leaders. Councillors have voting powers at the area board and they are accountable to local people for their decisions and actions. The local councillors pursue issues in their area, monitor local services, speak up for and represent the local community and have a major influence on the way local services are provided.
- **Cabinet Member:** one of 10 councillors who make up the Council's top decision making committee – the Cabinet. The Cabinet makes the main policy and budget decisions for Wiltshire Council. Each cabinet member attends area boards across Wiltshire but can only vote on their own. Cabinet members can refer matters to cabinet for review when local action has not resolved an issue. Coming to the area board helps the cabinet members assess the local impact of the policies for which they are responsible.
- **Service Director:** a senior Wiltshire Council officer who provides advice and information for members of the board. The Service Director supports the community area manager to follow up issues raised at the area board and can raise local issues with senior managers and challenge services when the area board needs support.

- **Community Area Managers:** support the chair and local councillors in their role, providing a link between the board, local people and organisations in the local community. The managers (or CAMs) work closely with councillors, service managers and partner organisations to bring local people and local services together to tackle local issues. The CAMs provide advice about grants, support local projects, encourage volunteering, help people get involved and have a say and promote the work of the Area Board in the area.



- **Democratic Services Officer:** provides administrative and procedural advice to the community area manager and board members at area board meetings and briefings. The DSO produces and publishes area board agendas and minutes and tracks and records progress on decisions made at area board meetings.
- **Parish Councils:** parish and town councillors attend each Area Board meeting to represent the views and interests of their local communities.
- **Community Area Partnership:** a community group responsible for preparing a community-led plan setting out priorities for action in the area.
- **Partners:** the Police, NHS, Fire and Rescue, Tenants, Housing Associations, MOD and many other partners also attend the Board meetings to contribute their views on local issues.

Area Board meetings

Area Board meetings are managed in a professional way to provide a positive experience for participants. Meetings are managed in a way which encourages people to participate by being informal, open and including everyone. Good publicity, relevant local items and enough notice of what will be discussed, all help to encourage people to attend and participate.

People value the opportunity to discuss issues directly with councillors and partners before decisions are taken. Round-table discussions are popular with both the public and councillors and this is encouraged.

To make sure meetings are open to everyone, the Area Boards:

- publish a list of future agenda items, which is kept up to date during the year, to give everyone enough notice of the issues that are to be considered
- have good media support including press releases and direct email to the community area network linked to the local 'Our Community Matters' blogsite
- meet in the evening to maximise attendance
- meet every two months with a maximum of 8 meetings per year
- encourage parish councils, partners and the public to refer issues for consideration by the Area Board.
- Has a informal, relaxed set-up for meetings to make everyone feel welcome

Voting

Only the elected unitary councillors on the Area Board may vote on matters involving the discharge of its formal 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 participants. The Area Board may decide to test opinion by a show of hands or by using handheld voting equipment before the unitary councillors make their decision.

Quorum

The quorum for each Area Board is one quarter of its total voting membership, subject to a minimum number of three voting members

Procedure and rules

The Area Boards have to follow the procedure rules and guidance contained in the Council's constitution.

Find out more

You can find out more about the Area Boards on our web pages at:

[Area Boards](#)



Devizes Area Board