



Report to Cabinet

Date: 10th May 2022

Title: **Community Boards Review - Select Committee Report**

Relevant councillor(s) Councillor Mimi Harker OBE, Chairman, Communities and Localism Select Committee

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Ward(s) affected: *Not ward specific*

Recommendations:

Recommendations made by the Communities and Localism Select Committee to Cabinet are that:

- 1) A refreshed vision for Community Boards should be agreed and widely promoted to ensure a shared understanding for residents, key partners, elected members and council officers about the role of the Community Boards in enriching local communities.
- 2) The unique skill set required to be an effective Community Board Chairman, as well as the necessary commitment in terms of energy and time, should be given due consideration when appointing Community Board Chairmen.
- 3) Cabinet should ensure that there is sufficient resource and resilience in the Community Board Co-ordinator team due to the pivotal role they play in delivering the Council's localism agenda.
- 4) Community Boards should be allowed full autonomy to identify and agree their own local priorities, in line with Buckinghamshire Council's priorities and to establish relevant sub-groups in order to tackle key issues in their area.
- 5) A proactive communications strategy for Community Boards should be developed as a matter of urgency, to enable a 'step change' in community engagement, the

promotion of Community Boards and the positive impacts they have had in their local area.

- 6) There must be greater clarity around the Community Board funding process and improved transparency around decision making. The process should be revised to deliver both the necessary governance and oversight and efficient processing of monies in a realistic and proportionate way.**
- 7) Consideration should be given to an alternative mechanism for the delivery of local Highways schemes.**
- 8) Community Board Champions should be appointed in each service area of the Council, to demonstrate corporate commitment to the CBs as the local face of the Council and to act as a dedicated contact point for Community Boards Co-ordinators. In addition, guidance should be issued which sets out clear expectations for service officers in supporting Community Boards and manages expectations of the Community Boards, in terms of the resource that might be available, especially in smaller service areas.**
- 9) An overarching plan, we suggest a three year road map, for the development of the Community Boards should be drawn up, with clearly defined milestones to enable their progress to be evaluated.**
- 10) The success of each Community Board and individual projects that receive funding should be evaluated in a simple and proportionate manner. (This could be as straightforward as each CB reflecting on the priorities they set at the beginning of each year and how well the projects they have supported have delivered on those priorities at year end)**
- 11) A mechanism should be established to enable greater sharing of best practice ideas across Community Board areas and to consider opportunities for working in partnership across Community Board boundaries.**

Reason for decision: For Cabinet to consider the recommendations of the Communities and Localism Select Committee.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Communities and Localism Select Committee agreed to set up a rapid review into Community Boards in the December 2021.**

1.2 After some initial discussions across the wider Select Committee, a smaller group of councillors volunteered to participate in further evidence gathering meetings with a number of stakeholders, which took place across two consecutive days in March 2022. The review group was chaired by Cllr Mimi Harker OBE and comprised of Cllrs Paul Bass, Peter Cooper, Greg Smith, Linda Smith BEM and Ashley Waite. Following the evidence gathering meetings the review group then met to discuss and agree its key findings and recommendations, which are presented in the report found at Appendix 1.

2. Other options considered

2.1 Appendix 1 provides further context to the Select Committee's recommendations. Cabinet is asked to consider these recommendations and provide a response.

3. Legal and financial implications

3.1 These will be considered as part of the Cabinet's response.

4. Corporate implications

5.1 These will be considered as part of the Cabinet's response.

5. Consultation with local Councillors & Community Boards

5.1 The report and recommendations were produced by a cross-party review group of Members from the Communities and Localism Select Committee.

5.2 As the focus of this review was the Community Boards, a variety of stakeholders attended evidence gathering meetings in early March. These included Community Board Chairmen and Co-ordinators, Town and Parish Council representatives, Council service officers and community groups who had benefitted from Community Board funding. The Chairman also attended a number of Community Board meetings, at their invitation. All 16 Community Boards were represented at the evidence gathering sessions.

6. Next steps and review

6.1 As noted above, Cabinet will provide a response to the Select Committee recommendations at its meeting on 10th May 2022. The Communities and Localism Select Committee will then receive an update after 6 months and 12 months to monitor the implementation of these recommendations.