Agenda

LAF/LCP TASK & FINISH GROUP

Date: Wednesday 2 May 2012

Time: 1.30 pm

Venue: Room 84, Old County Offices

Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	1.30pm	
2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST		
3 WILTSHIRE AREA BOARDS Steve Milton, Head of Community Governance, Wiltshire Council will talk to the group about Wiltshire Area Boards. There will then be an opportunity for members to ask questions. **Papers:** Briefing note on Wiltshire Area Boards	1.35pm	1 - 2

3PM SHORT BREAK

4 UPDATE ON EVIDENCE PROGRAMME James Povey, Policy Officer, will provide members with an update on the evidence programme including the following: • Survey • Website • Written statement requests • Other evidence requested	3.10pm	
5 UPDATE ON 28TH MAY EVIDENCE SESSION James Povey, Policy Officer, will provide members with an update on the draft agenda for the full day evidence session scheduled for 28th May and the meetings that have been arranged with District Council representatives. This will be an opportunity for members to discuss potential lines	3.25pm	

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

of questioning and to identify any further information that might be needed in advance of the meeting.

6   UPDATE ON RECENT LAF/LCPS   **3.50pm**
An opportunity for members to highlight any issues or observations from recent LAF/LCP meetings they have attended.

7   DATE OF NEXT MEETING
Monday 28th May 2012 at 10am in Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury

---

If you would like to attend a meeting, but need extra help to do so, for example because of a disability, please contact us as early as possible, so that we can try to put the right support in place.

For further information please contact: Kelly Sutherland on 01296 383602
Fax No 01296 382538, email: ksutherland@buckscc.gov.uk

Members

Mrs M Baldwin	Mr W Lidgate
Mr N Brown	Ms J Puddefoot
Mr T Egleton	Mr B Roberts
Ms N Glover	Mr P Rogerson

Wiltshire Council Area Boards

Steve Milton (Head of Community Governance, Wiltshire Council) is attending the LAF Review Progress Meeting on the 2nd May to talk to the group about their Area Boards, which are their equivalents of Local Area Forums. So members can get the best out of the session they may find it useful to familiarise themselves with the Area Board arrangement and be aware of some key distinctions between Area Boards (ABs) and LAFs.

Key things to note:
- Wiltshire is a unitary authority, and a number of Area Board improvements were implemented as part of the community governance proposals that formed part of the unitary status bid.
- In addition to Area Boards Wiltshire also has separate Community Area Partnerships. They are strictly independent and non political federations of voluntary groups, public bodies, businesses and individuals. Community Area Partnerships write their community plan and promote local action and projects. Area Boards provide funding to these partnerships, and they share the same area boundaries.

Background

Wiltshire Council Website: http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council/areaboards.htm
(has links at the foot of the page to an introductory paper on ABs, a lengthy Area Board handbook, and a copy of the 2010 review of ABs).

Online video of Area Boards: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMv29aOYge0

Learning from Wiltshire

The following are key points I have noted that Wiltshire do, and which could inform possible changes / enhancements to our own LAFs:
- **A Cabinet Member and service director** will always attend an AB and they rotate to ensure they all attend each LAF over an 18 month cycle.
- **Children and Young Peoples Issues Groups** attend ABs.
- ABs are held in an informal **café style**
- **Public participation** at meetings
- **Roundtable discussions** and use hand held **voting systems**
- Also use audio and visual aids at meetings
- A purpose of Area Boards is for **Transparent and Accountable decision making** and they aim **to build community leadership and local engagement**
- **£2.5m** delegated to ABs annually (through area grants, devolved service funds, strategic projects, and Councillor projects)
- Area Boards **have powers and make decisions**
- Each AB has an annual **state of the community area debate**
- Each AB produce a **local area assessment** informed by the debate
- Publish and maintain a **forward plan of agenda items**
- **Chair and vice chair appointed annually** by the local unitary councillors
- ABs **assess service performance** across county using local service performance data and budget info split to community area level.
- Have a **Community Issue System** - online register of issues submitted by anyone, which get referred to an owner, tracked online. Tricky or common issues highlighted and discussed at ABs.
- Use **Participatory Budgeting**

- Recognise '**changed councillor role'** to one being see as 'in control', highly visible and active community leaders, linked into local networks, empowered and resourced, with multi agency influence. Recognise this means more time consuming, and support/training required, in the firing line and with potential for conflicts. Possibly need to let go of 'party first' attitude.
- ABs aim for **decisions by consensus** where possible involving all participants. Final decisions on discharged executive functions must be made by elected unitary councillors.
- Details on procedures, rules and guidance on the operation of ABs are contained in the **area board handbook**. These may be amended from time to time by the leader.
- **Newsletter style version of minutes** (called 'Just a Minute'). Example available.
- Guidance provided on **overlap of matters/decision delegated to 'officers' and ABs** –to help clarify, officers have a checklist to help decide when & how to involve local councillors and AB's.
- A '**Wiltshire Voices' project** has been conducted that aims to reach out to people seldom heard, and let them be heard at ABs: http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/communityandliving/wiltshirevoices.htm
- Wiltshire has a **'Community Information Network'** (called Wiltshire Intelligence Network) providing an online 'one-stop shop' for key local data and reports from key organisations. Area Board info is channelled through this.

Reviews of Area Boards

Wiltshire conducted both a pilot study of Area Boards and conducted a Leaders Review of them in 2010 (http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/review-of-area-boards-march-2010.pdf). Some of the findings are worth noting when considering our own review:

- The **pilot study** concluded that ABs must have local decision making powers or risk being ineffectual 'talking shops'. They were thought likely to be most interested in the 'high profile' public facing services (such as community safety, street scene, transport, education, social services, health and highways – those services that have most direct impact on the wellbeing of the local community). There should also be a service protocol setting out those matters over which the Area Boards will be consulted. Engaging the Board should be part of the 'day job' for Frontline Service Officers.

- The Leaders Review collected information via a survey and delegate workshop. A lot of findings concerned the need to improve the representativeness of ABs, recommending efforts to broaden public participation, encourage Parish Council forums/alliances to feed into ABs, encourage more informal or consultative meetings on themes of local concern, ABs should publicise themselves more to increase participation. Other recommendations included referring more matters to ABs for local decision making, more advance notice of consultations to ABs, annual reports by ABs to detail their successes, plain language communications and use of new media, broaden range of venues, provide more information to parish and town councils on the role of ABs and councillors.

- The review found low satisfaction levels with AB public awareness and press coverage, lack of broad cross section of community at meetings, the role and effectiveness of the Community Area Partnerships and links to ABs, delegated powers and decision making, parish council involvement.