



# Member Briefing Community Boards

*8 February 2021*



# Community boards

An update on the progress of Buckinghamshire Community Boards including examples from Community Board chairs and coordinators

## 1. Welcome

Gareth Williams, Cabinet Member Communities and Public Health

## 2. Community Boards: Seven months on

Claire Hawkes, Service Director Localities and Strategic Partnerships

## 3. The role of the chair

Arif Hussain, Chairman High Wycombe Community Board

Anne Wight, Chairman Wing and Ivinghoe Community Board

## 4. The role of the coordinator

Amy Jenner, Aylesbury Community Board Coordinator

Jack Pearce, Beeches Community Board Coordinator

## 5. The journey continues

Gareth Williams, Cabinet Member Communities and Public Health

## 6. Questions

# Working together: Local voices, local choices, local action



## Community boards aim to:

Put people at the heart of everything we do and be a council that thinks local.

Create vibrant, inclusive and creative community-led partnerships that actively improve the lives of people living and working in Buckinghamshire.

Celebrate and understand the diversity of our local communities, giving local people a voice and empowering councillors and communities to influence local services design and delivery.

# Our vision for community boards

## Collaboration

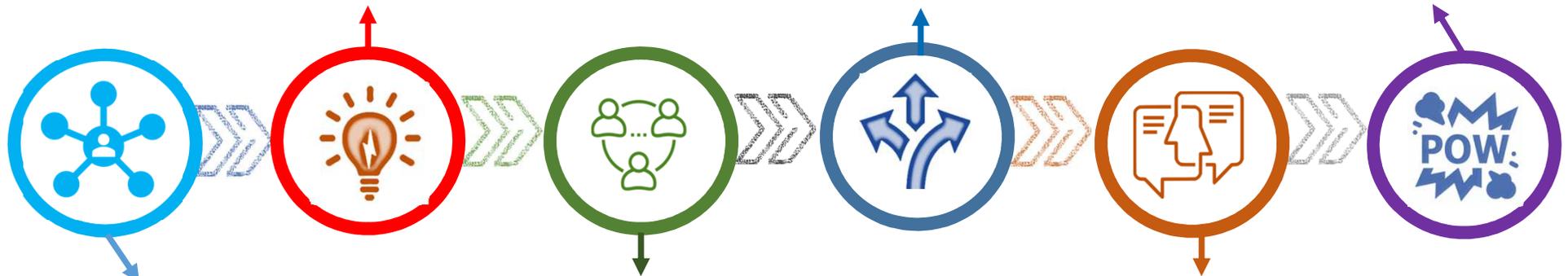
Lots of people from across the community coming together to understand and build a picture of local need and exploring solutions. 'Everyone is welcome' ethos. Fully representative of the local community, working together with key partners to make Bucks a great place live, work and grow up.

## Activity

Boards established as the place to talk with a focus on being local. Community feels ownership and actively drives discussion. Wide variety of activity including smaller pop up creative initiatives as well as deep dives to get under skins of local issues. Informed by data and insight to deliver projects that meet local need and matter to their local community. Open to the art of the possible.

## Impact

Feedback demonstrates the positive impact on priority areas. Local data and intelligence shows greatly improved outcomes for local people. Boards recognised nationally as good practice examples of localism. Able to leverage external funding.



## Dedicated local go to

A key local link between the council and community, championing their local area and an ambassador of community needs. Trusted and well known in the area. A friendly community ear, open to exploring ideas and opportunities for the local area. Networking, facilitating and signposting as well as building fantastic local relationships and making things happen.

## Meetings

Innovative inclusive approach to 5 active public meetings with excellent representation. Considerable activity outside formal meetings with range of thematic working groups that are the 'engine room'. Extensive community engagement gathering critical intelligence and views to feed into discussions.

## Engagement

Lots of community conversations to enable the local voice to be heard and empowered to be involved in things that matter to them. Effective, vibrant and diverse communication channels to keep people informed and involved. Innovative engagement tools to gather peoples' thoughts. Boards well known in their area. Council wide approach to using local boards for early engagement on potential service design or change.

# Local Face of the Council

- 16 Community Boards are at the heart of our commitment to localism
- Essential way of delivering our council priorities at a local level
- Critical part of knowing our communities well
- Invaluable insight by listening and feeding back into the council



# The boards are brand new

- They have started their journey and because of Covid lost significant planning time
- Launched in July 2020 – team of newly recruited chairs, vice-chairs and coordinators – all of whom had to hit the ground running and learn the ropes on the job!
- Over the summer the new service created a back office (3 staff teams) and some comms to have a more formal launch in September and enable the boards to begin considering local priorities and release funding. This would not normally be the timetable!
- Great public health and local profile data to help priority setting conversations
- It's a new way of working that we're all getting used to – culture change for all, the council and partners
- Some stakeholders really embracing the boards and giving really good feedback. We know some are feeling the loss of the LAF structure. Evidence of Town and parish councils coming on board and engaging in their local boards – still more to do
- Lots of partners and community groups involved in boards and keen to work together – opportunity to do more
- Embracing digital - engaging and including the community through online and recorded meetings, getting used to more innovative engagement tools and virtual working groups. Better attendance than drafty village halls – people can catch up or pop in for part of the meeting.
- Stepping into digital comms – a number of boards have Facebook pages and setting up e-newsletters to keep people informed and involved
- Summary progress dashboards for each board in place and council reports being planned
- Had some excellent use of funds clearly linked to council priorities. Some good use of services driving council priorities through boards for local buy in
- The board set up has enabled a swift local focus in emergencies – Cllr crisis fund, Buckingham floods



Amersham Board at the market

*“ It takes time to create a new infrastructure. Great to see your boards have started and you’ve had to do introduce something new in a pandemic too. Although it will be tricky at first keep going, its worth it!”*

*Durham*

# Localities & Strategic Partnerships is also brand new

Localities and Strategic Partnerships is a brand new service area that includes:

- Community safety
- 16 Community Boards
- Community engagement and development
- Specialist projects team
- Town and Parish liaison
- Voluntary and Community Sector Partnerships
- Devolution
- Welfare team
- Helping hands



# Who's involved



## Key areas of focus: Common themes

Environment/ climate change	Young people
Older people	Transport
Covid recovery	Health and wellbeing
Infrastructure	Community resilience

## 10 examples of board projects

**01** Cross board funding extra capacity for local sexual assault and abuse support service

**02** Crisis funding for covid related groups and initiatives including hot food and support for holiday periods

**03** Town Centre development and recovery initiatives including shop local campaigns and supporting reopening of high streets

**04** Community transport project across 5 boards to support vulnerable people accessing Covid vaccinations

**05** Initiatives to encourage food education and healthy active lifestyles for families

**06** Be your own Boss project across 5 boards with BBF to support new businesses to get up and running

**07** Youth focus - Youth councils being explored, youth reps on working groups, surveys and engagement asking for youth views

**08** Expanding existing projects - new Dementia friendly communities, Street Associations in Beeches, promoting Neighbourhood Watch & volunteering

**09** Exploring opportunities for social isolation projects

**10** Lots of focus on environment projects to encourage green spaces, planting trees and encouraging wildlife



# My role and High Wycombe Community Board

Cllr Arif Hussain, Chairman

“We have encouraged everyone to reach out to us and work together for the benefit of our residents. It has been a pleasure to be a part of a hugely committed community.”

## Our Board:

- We are a team!
- The board is about everything outside of the meetings – we’re about proactively going out to find things we can do to improve the community in High Wycombe
- Raising awareness of the board throughout summer and supporting awareness days in town centre
- Making connections with partners, groups and the community to create a network
- Exploring issues like town centre regeneration with Richard Barker and Steve Bowles
- Bringing the board together with local groups and organisations for regular Covid briefings with Public Health
- Christmas lockdown support: LEAP activity bags, gift cards for care leavers, hot meals

## What works for our community:

- No stuffy meetings! Keeping meetings informal with a bit of humour and making people feel comfortable and involved
- Listening to feedback and ideas and being open to mould and change the board as it grows
- It’s lots of work but we’re making a difference on the ground and there’s a real opportunity for members to be involved

“Thank you for the professional, friendly, human & yet efficient Wycombe Community Board meeting tonight.”  
Covid Community Group



# My role and High Wycombe Community Board

Cllr Arif Hussain, Chairman





# My role and Wing and Ivinghoe CB

Cllr Anne Wight, Chairman

“Inclusivity for us is key. From the outset our moto has been that everyone is welcome regardless of background or experience.”

- Large rural board - including Watermead on the Aylesbury border – lots of different priorities
- Building an inclusive and welcoming board the key focus – forming good relationships across all political parties and local councils, bringing everyone together
- Board steering group set up as a sounding board – includes residents, community members and key players to help us to bounce ideas around and steer the board in the right direction
- Our sub groups is where all the excitement takes place with community members as the coordinator – informal community sessions exploring issues
- Lots of engagement - residents involved, using Facebook to promote events and generate conversation, working with schools to hear the views of young people



## Projects and priorities:

- Focus on Covid and crisis support for the community including funding for PPE and food storage
- Joining with other boards on cross boarder projects for wider impact – e.g. extra support for abuse victims
- Improving travel and traffic issues including traffic calming projects and exploring new cycle ways
- Improving the environment, green spaces and outdoor activities exploring green energy use in older buildings, wild flower meadows, outdoor gym equipment, walking trails
- Youth projects and improving health and food education with family cooking lessons and the **Fun, food and fitness fair – May 2022!** Keep an eye out!





**Amy Jenner**

Aylesbury Community  
Board Coordinator



**Jack Pearce**

Beeches Community Board  
Coordinator

## What does our day to day role look like?

- **Communication** – every day we speak to different internal and external partners and stakeholders, including members, parishes, VCS organisations and residents, by email, phone, on Teams or via social media.
- **Collaboration** – we attend meetings with our internal services to understand how we can work with them to serve our residents. We also engage with external partners to learn about what they do and identify opportunities to involve them with the Boards.
- **Organisation** – we organise and support our Board meetings and sub-groups, assess and process funding applications, and work to keep our budgets and key documents up to date.
- **Covid response** – we work with our local VCS organisations and liaise with colleagues within the Council to support the Covid response.



*'Cannot praise my Board coordinator highly enough – working flat out, keeps in regular contact, comes up with ideas, is well respected in the area – great job!' Chair*

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL

## What do we enjoy about our role?

- **Variety** – we deal with such a variety of issues, from very local problems to more strategic projects, every day is different and brings new challenges.
- **Learning & Development** – we benefit from a mixture of formal and informal development sessions, and we are always learning more about our local communities and how we can best meet the needs of our members and residents.
- **Working in our Communities** – we have the chance to facilitate important conversations and bring positive change to our local communities. We enjoy hearing about the great work our local organisations are doing and exploring how we can support them.
- **Good Support** – we are fortunate to have a great team and have developed lots of good relationships quickly (even whilst working remotely). We also have excellent support from our managers, Chairs and members.

# The journey continues

- We have made a great start in difficult times, it will take time for the boards to become established
- Carrying out a review during March to identify opportunities to refine our approach next year
  - Conversations with internal and external partners
  - Reflecting on what's worked well and what could have been better
  - Learning from each other – as each board has developed it's own style and approach
- Thank you for your involvement so far in helping the boards get up and running
- There is more to do and we're looking forward to watching the boards shape into community partnerships and improving the lives of our residents
- Interesting journey so far, lots of activity and lots of learning – opportunity for new council to be seen as coordinated, collaborative, and a good local listener



# Questions to the panel

