



Report to Cabinet

Date:	13 September 2021
Title:	Community Board Annual Report and Update
Cabinet Member(s):	Steve Bowles, Cabinet Member for Communities
Contact officer:	Claire Hawkes, Service Director Localities and Strategic Partnerships
Ward(s) affected:	None specific
Recommendations:	To note the achievements of the Community Boards in their first year, 2020-21 and plans for the year 2021-22.
Reason for decision:	N/A

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Community Boards launched as part of the unitary council in July 2020 and despite the challenges faced by us all due to Covid, have made a great start at connecting with Buckinghamshire communities as the local face of the Council.
- 1.2 The 16 Community Boards are a brand-new way of working as part of the new Council's commitment to Localism, driving forward council and community priorities in a way which is right for that local area. The Boards help the Council to connect with community groups, partners and residents to understand what matters to them and together work together to problem solve.
- 1.3 As part of the review of the first year, an annual report has been produced to recognise and reflect on the achievements of the Community Boards in launching a new service, establishing themselves within their communities and supporting local initiatives. This review has also provided an opportunity to strengthen processes and ensure there is robust governance and transparency across processes and decision making.
- 1.4 This report also provides an update on what's on the horizon for Community Boards in 2021-22.

2. Annual report and update

1.1 Even though the Boards launched at speed in the midst of the pandemic, there have been many advantages and successes including:

- Helping the new Council have a local presence in the civic response
- Enabling funding to get to local community groups supporting vulnerable people
- Forming local relationships and conversations building on the impressive community response
- Online meetings generating more inclusive approach and participation
- Good desire and appetite from across all stakeholders for the boards to succeed and a willingness to be involved

2.1 With the start of a new year, with newly elected councillors and chairmen, arises the opportunity to look back at the Community Boards achievements and look ahead to focus on local need and Council priorities for 2021/22.

2.2 Throughout their first meetings of 2021, Community Boards took the opportunity to reflect on their progress to date and review the opportunities and plans for 2021/22.

2.3 The Community Board annual report 2020 – 21 is attached as Appendix A.

2.4 Following the elections, with some new chairman, vice chairman and local councillors across the Boards, the Localities service delivered a detailed induction programme throughout June to reiterate the aims, objectives and vision for the Boards and set the direction for the new year. This included everything from how Community Boards work, the funding process and introduction sessions with services to the themes of environment, economic recovery and health and wellbeing.

2.5 The Community Boards have successfully held their first meetings of the new year throughout July with a reinvigorated focus to be proactive in their communities to support council and community priorities. There has been lots of positive engagement, action groups are already up and running, projects ideas forming and funding proposals being approved for community projects.

3. On the horizon for 2021-22

3.1 This year the Cabinet Member for Communities has set two key areas of focus aligned to the Council's priorities: **Improving the Environment and Supporting Economic Recovery**. The Boards have allocated 15% of their budget to these areas and will be working with service areas to develop and support community proactively inviting ideas and project proposals and working with local partners.

3.2 There are many opportunities the Boards could be involved with over the next year and the Localities team will be engaging with service areas and partners to explore opportunities for working together to support the Council to deliver projects and priorities locally and establishing that local face of the Council. In the pipeline so far:

- a) Promoting adoption and fostering
- b) Supporting the Queens Jubilee community celebrations
- c) Supporting service area consultations and local engagement on hot topics including the day opportunities review
- d) Encouraging local engagement on local infrastructure issues including HS2 and East West Rail
- e) Working with Public Health on keeping people healthy through targeted community projects linked to PH priorities including tackling cardiovascular disease, diabetes, supporting mental health, reducing social isolation eg. infant mental health in schools, Mental Health First Aiders in schools, dementia bus, engagement events to look at supporting older people
- f) Improving youth engagement with the Council and Community Boards through a reinvigorated Youth Voice linked to Community Boards
- g) A focus on working with services and partners to improve the environment and champion climate change
- h) Supporting economic recovery post Covid including working with services on town and village centre revitalisation plans
- i) Addressing concerns in local communities, working with Community Safety, the Police and other partners on community safety issues
- j) Sharing learning on community concerns, and bringing communities together with services on local issues to facilitate good local engagement and helping communities get on well with each other
- k) Working with schools, colleges and universities on mentoring projects
- l) Supporting environmental projects to encourage people to be active outside and enjoy their surroundings to help their feeling of wellbeing eg. seed funding for new walks
- m) Supporting community resilience working with Parish Council's on joint planning for example areas that regularly flood to facilitate joint community planning

4. Other options considered

- 4.1 Not to produce an annual report. This option doesn't provide the opportunity to reflect and share the work that has been achieved over the last year.

5. Legal and financial implications

- 5.1 No legal or financial implications.

6. Corporate implications

- 6.1 No corporate implications.

7. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 7.1 N/A

8. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 8.1 As part of our ongoing development plan we will be engaging with services and partners about how we can work together to make the Community Boards a success in supporting council and community priorities.
- 8.2 The Communications Team are developing a communications plan to increase awareness and involvement in Community Boards and how communities can access funding for project ideas that benefit their community board area.

9. Next steps and review

- 9.1 Each Community Board will develop their annual action plan, these will be monitored throughout 2021/22. There will be regular updates about all Community Board activities and an annual report scheduled for Full Council in April 2022.

10. Background papers

- 10.1 None

11. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 11.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk