



Report to Full Council

Date:	17 May 2023
Title:	Community Boards Annual Report 2022-23
Cabinet Member(s):	Steve Bowles, Cabinet Member for Communities
Contact officer:	Wendy Morgan-Brown wendy.morgan-brown@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	All
Recommendations:	To note the achievements of the Community Boards in 2022-23
Reason for decision:	N/A

1. Community Boards 2022-23

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the work and performance of the Community Boards during 2022-23 through funded projects and engagement work.
- 1.2 The Community Board Annual Report 2022-23 is attached at Appendix A.
- 1.3 During their third year, it is becoming evident the Boards have found their place in their respective areas and have begun working as originally planned, engaging with local communities to identify and deliver change and improvements for residents.
- 1.4 The Boards have made significant progress in collaborating with a wide range of partners and stakeholders through building relationships and networks, the Boards have helped to strengthen their communities and support them in achieving their aspirations.
- 1.5 Relationships with the majority of town and parish councils are good with real partnership working and engagement taking place. Many Board Managers operate from town and parish offices/facilities, ensuring their faces are known and providing opportunities for residents to come and speak with them. They have regular meetings with nearly all town/parishes, with open doors to others who may not have the time or wish to engage at present.

- 1.6 Face-to-face engagement has been made easier this year, with the Boards hosting their own engagement events and attending numerous local events. Through these interactions, the Boards have directly engaged with residents, listened to their concerns, and gained a deeper understanding of local issues. The recent Youth Summit provided a fantastic opportunity to engage with young people and the insight has been shared for Boards to consider locally.
- 1.7 Through engaging with a range of local partners and without providing funding, the Boards have played a crucial role in facilitating activities to improve the local community, including setting up a repair café, tree planting schemes, and a community hub to attract investment and provide facilities for groups. The amount of engagement work is high, and whilst not every piece of engagement can be recorded, a strong list of examples is included in the annual report.
- 1.8 Board's priorities have been aligned to those of the council but at a very local level. These have included improving health and wellbeing, supporting young people, enhancing the environment and communities. Additionally, the Boards have effectively responded to new areas of priority such as addressing the cost of living crisis, supporting Ukraine and Opportunity Bucks.
- 1.9 Three of the Boards cover the ward areas being focused on through the Opportunity Bucks programme. With oversight through the Community Board, Ward Partnerships have been established in these areas and these are identifying key local challenges and issues in these wards. In line with the aims of the Community Boards and the Opportunity Bucks programme, action plans are being developed to address these challenges. For all six Wycombe wards these action plans have been agreed and work has commenced. For the three Aylesbury wards and one Chesham ward work is continuing to develop these plans.
- 1.10 During 2021/22 a review of Community Boards was undertaken which involved a Member Task & Finish Group and a Scrutiny Review, a number of actions were identified which have now been delivered. The changes have seen quicker and clearer decision making across the service, provided stability across the function of the Boards and quicker funding decisions. A successful small grants process was also introduced which has seen much smaller organisations able to deliver Board priorities.
- 1.11 During 2022/23, the Boards began to move away from what was perceived as grant giving Boards to focus on projects which are identified through the discussions at the Boards. The local priorities are identified through the Boards and a high number of projects to deliver the priorities are now being established and delivered through Board action groups.
- 1.12 Several Boards have taken the opportunity to deliver projects together to bring wider benefits to communities or secure better value for money. For example, the

Growing Hope clinic provided speech and language sessions for non-verbal children across two boards. Several Boards worked together to deliver a virtual dementia tour experience, and there was a lot of joint working on Christmas food hampers and Christmas gifts.

- 1.13 Boards continue to have the flexibility to work as they wish, using action or task/finish groups as required, and each Board works to suit their communities allowing for organic growth under the governance in place.
- 1.14 The overall management of the budgets and performance data has vastly improved, with clear and accurate record keeping. Value for money has continued to be a key challenge to the Boards with all projects over £1k now looking to attract contributory funding. For every £1 of Council money the Boards have been able to generate an average of £1.02 in contributory funding, with some individual Boards attracting over £2 per Council £1.
- 1.15 Whilst the above is important, the unseen added value from engagement work should also be highlighted and there not just be a focus on the project budgets and operational costs. Details of more substantial engagement work are included at the end of the report. Going forward it is important this work is showcased and credited to the Boards, as often it is a local conversation linking the right people together to discuss mutual issues which result in not just change, but ongoing relationships and partnerships.
- 1.16 Many board meetings are taking place in person and directly engaging with partners and residents. Attendance at these meetings is growing, and those attending are made to feel included and provided with an opportunity to ask questions, contribute or offer views and opinions.
- 1.17 With the proposed boundary changes to electoral wards, a review will be undertaken in 2023 to understand the impact of these changes on the Board geographies. The review will also consider the overheads attached to the Boards as well as understanding the social value of the Board's work.

2. Other options considered

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

3. Legal and financial implications

- 3.1 No legal or financial implications are anticipated.

4. Corporate implications

- 4.1 The Community Board Annual Report highlights their achievements which supports the Council's priorities and delivers the organisations agreed outcomes. As a public document, the Annual Report also helps communicate to members, staff, partners and residents, a clear concise narrative of how the Boards have achieved this.

5. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 5.1 Councillors as members of the Community Boards are consulted on the projects and activity of the boards before these are agreed.

6. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 6.1 The projects and achievements have been delivered following engagement through the Community Boards and have been communicated locally as appropriate.

7. Next steps and review

- 7.1 The report will be published on the Community Board website pages.

8. Background papers

- 8.1 N/A

9. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 9.1 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.

