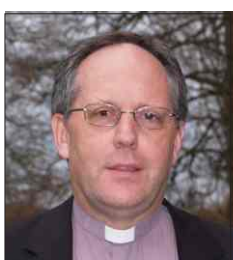


# Wiltshire Assembly Conference Report

November 2008



## A Word From the Chair . . .

**Venerable John Wraw,  
Archdeacon of  
Wiltshire**

The first meeting of the Wiltshire Assembly on 3 October had a real sense of energy and purpose. We were fortunate in securing Matthew Taylor as our keynote speaker. His address was both challenging and encouraging. "Integrate, insight, innovate" might well become our mantras over the coming months as we work together in developing vibrant and sustainable communities across the county. The contributions from so many partners through the workshops were rich and perceptive.

I was struck by the wide range of factors identified in the workshops that you thought needed to be part of a wider description of what 'Strong and Resilient Communities' are. This is understandable as such communities are complex. At the same time you also felt that one of the key roles of the Assembly is to gain agreement on a single vision for these communities that could be communicated widely.

We already have a description in the Sustainable Community Strategy,

and we also have a statement of seven ambitions which informed the focusing of the Local Agreement for Wiltshire. We must build on this, using your workshop suggestions, but we must end up with something which is simply expressed and comprehensive. Work will be done on this between now and Christmas, which we will share with you all. We need to get this right as it is so fundamental to the purpose of the Assembly.

We will continue to regularly communicate with you, and seek your comments, support and involvement. One key issue raised was the economic downturn and how it affects the people of Wiltshire. We would be very interested in hearing from you with how it is affecting the people that come into contact with your organisation and any ideas you have for taking remedial action in Wiltshire to help those individuals, families and businesses that are worst affected.

We will devote a large part of our next all day meeting on 26 March 2009 to agreeing practical ways to assist local people who have been affected by the economic downturn in Wiltshire. Please put the date in your diaries. Let's keep the momentum going, and together we will make the Wiltshire Assembly a vital part of Wiltshire life.

John



# Are we in a social recession?

## Keynote speaker:

### Matthew Taylor

Chief Executive of The Royal Society of Arts

Matthew offered a framework which he hoped would assist our thinking.



Many are asking 'where has society gone', and are concluding that we are experiencing a 'social recession'.

Much survey evidence shows that, while we are positive about our own lives and appreciative of the particular services we use, but we are pessimistic about society in general, and the prospects for national issues and services.

“ **How can we enable people to lead the lives they need to live in order for them to have the future they say they want?** ”

## Why are we feeling like this?

### Matthew pointed to a number of factors including:

- People leading their lives in a more individualistic way.
- Consumerism as the key description of our relationship to the wider world.
- A natural psychological tendency for us to overstate the extent to which we control our lives, and for us to justify the decisions we make as being the 'right ones' for us.
- A failure to admit that we often want contradictory or competing things, for instance, we want to tackle climate change but we also want cheap petrol; we want affordable housing for our children, but we don't want such housing built near us. We even object to mobile phone masts, but conduct the protest campaign using our mobile phones!
- We find it easier to define, in broad terms, the kind of society we want to live in (fair, cohesive, sustainable, etc), but we find it harder to convert this vision into actual ways of living. Matthew called this the 'aspiration gap'.
- Many are tired of the old ways of doing things together – committees, political parties, unions, and even churches. Matthew gave as examples cinemas and football matches, saying that 20 years ago many thought they were doomed, but by reinventing themselves, they have remained popular forms of entertainment.



# What's the solution?

Matthew is convinced that hundreds of thousands of years of evolved sociability does not just disappear in a few decades, and so the answer must be that we need to create new spaces and opportunities for this need for community action to express itself.

## The Wiltshire Assembly needs to:

- Sustain and continue to develop the work already undertaken to **INTEGRATE** the work of agencies in Wiltshire.
- Provide **leadership** by agreeing clear and consistent messages to the public about the sorts of lives we want them to lead, namely, that they must become **more self-sufficient** (i.e. take more responsibility for their own health, lifelong learning, carbon footprint and pension, etc); that they need to become **more other regarding**, giving more back to society; and they need to be **more engaged**, and share in making the hard choices that society has to make.

- Develop more **INSIGHT** into the way people are actually leading their lives in Wiltshire, what motivates them and what aspirations they have.

We also need to identify who the movers and shakers are in each community, and start by reinforcing their work (eg. in Lambeth it was residents improving their local parks). Be wary of imposing new structures over this network of activity, but rather try and extend the interest and mandate of these people.

Also we need to organise our working and personal lives to create the time to be open to others and their concerns and aspirations.

- Continuously **INNOVATE**. We need to help people create new ways to organise community action, so that it meets their need to do good, but to have fun and grow at the same time (doing good shouldn't be seen as painful). We need to ask people to

do things that they feel confident and competent to do. We need to adopt approaches which normalise positive and constructive behaviours, not focus on the negative and damaging, which we want to reduce or eradicate. We need to find new and interesting ways to communicate, and we should try and involve the press as partners in our projects, if possible.

Finally, we need to understand, and incorporate into all our policy design and interventions the finding that there are four main ways in which people think about what motivates change in society:

**individualistic** – pursuing own interests, competitive;

**egalitarian** – pursuing collective good, solidarity;

**hierarchy** – emphasis on being led by the great and powerful;

**fatalist** – nothing ever changes, just get on with your life.

These four motivations are all present at any one time in any society, and each needs to be taken into account.



Matthew's full talk and the question and answer session are available to view at:  
<http://media.kennet.gov.uk/wiltshire-assembly/index.html>

# Strong and Resilient Communities

## Workshop outcomes:

How can the Assembly drive new ways of working within and between organisations to produce benefits for Wiltshire people?

## The workshop discussions identified the following broad roles for the Wiltshire Assembly:

### Create a Shared Framework for Joint Action

This framework would include defining a shared vision, and inclusive joint principles and values. We should dare to be ambitious. It also needs to have a clear definition of what we mean by strong and resilient communities, which is supported by all organisations, and resonates with what the public want.

The workshop discussions identified a long list of factors and considerations which would need to inform the development of this definition. This definition, once agreed, needs to drive cultural and behavioural change, and inform the way we plan and deliver projects and initiatives.



### Identify, Share and Celebrate Examples of Success and Good Practice

We need to identify ways to help people to get out of their silos and to work across organisational boundaries. We need to keep the Assembly's way of working fluid and open to change. We need to limit processes and meetings (minimise bureaucracy) and concentrate on 'doing' and fostering a willingness to make things happen, i.e. on delivering outcomes for communities and individuals, and on empowering local people to take action.

The Assembly could consider producing 'how to' guides. The Assembly could become a central store or resource bank where everyone can access information, resources and knowledge. We need to offer ideas, not impose them.

Every year, before its Annual Meeting, the Assembly must give organisations enough time to feed in information on what they are doing to achieve the Assembly's ambitions. We could consider setting up an awards scheme.

## Be an effective Communicator

The Assembly, and each of its members ("it's everybody's job"), need to communicate upwards, downwards and sideways.

We need to consider sharing our communications resources.

We must use plain language not jargon. We need to present information on choices in an accessible (fun?) way, and promote the values, attitudes and behaviour we want to see.

Consideration should be given to branding and marketing the work of the Assembly, and to the development of a website. We must find 'compelling stories' which illustrate the concept we are promoting, not just use the short strapline 'strong and resilient communities'.

Frontline staff need to understand the 'big picture' so that they can communicate with the public – be 'staff ambassadors'. The Assembly needs to produce organisational contacts lists to promote easier communication between members.

The Assembly also needs to clarify who its target audiences are. For instance, is its key audience decision-makers, partnerships, communities, etc?

## Develop and Maintain a Robust Evidence Base

This evidence base needs to include both statistics and wider evidence of community need and aspiration. It also needs to bring together and coordinate (where appropriate) all consultation and engagement to ensure there is no duplication, and to reduce consultation fatigue.

We need to ensure we hear all voices, especially those that are marginalised. We could consider using the 20 community areas to present this information.



## Localising Strategy

The Assembly needs to ensure that strategy is driven by community needs, and that service delivery is focussed on communities.

The Assembly must clearly assign individual and collective responsibilities and roles. The Assembly needs to be able to influence the co-ordination, sharing and targeting of resources. It also needs to influence the Local Agreement for Wiltshire, which incorporates the Local Area Agreement with Government.

## Monitor and Scrutinise

The Assembly needs to be able to monitor progress to assure itself that its ambitions are being realised. The Assembly could use a Strategic Assessment of the county to assist in this. Such an Assessment would summarise progress, risks, opportunities and problems.

**“ We need to keep the  
Assembly's way of working fluid  
open to change...  
limit processes...  
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on 'doing' ”**

# Latest News

## Big Lottery 'Advice Plus' Grant to Wiltshire to promote greater joint working delivering legal advice services

Projects needed to demonstrate how specialist organisations in local areas could collectively pool resources and information, particularly during this increasingly tough time, to develop their essential legal advice services that so many more people now need, covering areas such as housing, employment, debt and welfare benefits in the most disadvantaged communities.

Wiltshire Advice Partnership led by the Wiltshire Citizens Advice Bureaux will receive **£459,141** for a three-year project involving 12 advice partners across Wiltshire. The Partnership will ensure that the client receives the most appropriate advice irrespective of the organisation they first contact; resolve problems between the partners; raise the quality standard across the county.

The partnership will also collect evidence from partner organisations and their clients on how national and local policies affect them. The partnership will campaign to bring about changes in policy. The Partners include the Wiltshire CABx, Will Rolt Solicitors, Age Concern Wiltshire, Age Concern Salisbury, Alabare Christian Care Centres, Action for Blind, Sarsen Housing Association, and Sylvester Mackett Solicitors.

Sarah Cardy, Bureau Manager of West Wiltshire CAB, said "this funding will enable us to establish and build a strong partnership working between the 12 advice agencies in Wiltshire. This is a new and exciting project and we are very much looking forward to working with our partners in making the service a success".



## Wiltshire Winners at National Justice Awards 2008

The Community Safety and Drugs Team are delighted to announce that Wiltshire's Domestic Violence Local Public Service Agreement Working Group won the Partnership of the Year Category at the National Justice Awards in London on October 21st hosted by the broadcaster Kirsty Young. The group was nominated due to the huge amount of work they had done towards achieving 100% for two of their LPSA targets and making substantial improvements towards another.

Wiltshire County Council staff in the group included Hayley Mortimer, Pippa McVeigh and Emma Harrold from Community Safety and John Stoddart from Children and Families. These individuals have been working alongside the rest of the group of partners including police, health and the voluntary sector. The group was chaired by Chief Inspector Paul Williams.

For more information visit:

[www.cjsonline.gov.uk/justiceawards](http://www.cjsonline.gov.uk/justiceawards)

or contact Hayley Mortimer,  
Domestic Violence Reduction  
Co-ordinator, Court Mills, Trowbridge  
01225 776773

# Next Steps for The Wiltshire Assembly

## **Developing a shared description of the sort of communities the Assembly wishes all Wiltshire organisations to promote.**

As mentioned in the Chairman's introduction, the Conference workshop notes show that there is not yet a consensus on what we all mean by 'Strong and Resilient Communities'. In response to this, work will be going on between now and Christmas to integrate the various descriptions that are currently being used in the county. We will need a shared description which is both comprehensive in scope, but simple enough in content for it to be easily understood and used by a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations. [Watch this space!](#)

## **Tackling the Economic Downturn**

As mentioned at the Conference, the Assembly is going to devote its next meeting on 26 March 2009 to agreeing practical ways to lessen the impact of the economic downturn on people, communities and businesses.

**Mrs Scott asked that all organisations should consider what information they have on the impact of the economic downturn on the people they come into contact with.**

**Please send this information to David Maynard (see contact details on back page) so that it can be integrated, analysed, and used to focus thinking.**

The County Council has engaged George Bright, former Principal of Wiltshire College, as a consultant to lead and co-ordinate the County's joint response to the economic situation.

## **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next Wiltshire Assembly meeting has been set for:

**26th March 2009**

Please put it in your diaries. We will let you know about the venue later, but please allow for the meeting to last from 9.00am to 3.30pm.

## **Sustainable Communities Act 2007**

As discussed at the Conference, the Government has passed an Act which allows anyone to suggest ideas about how Government could change the way it does things so as **to create more sustainable communities** (i.e. the way Government allocates funding, assigns responsibility for particular issues and services, makes regulations, etc.). Ideas have to be channelled through a broadly-based Panel (we consulted on a draft list at the Conference for a single Panel for the County), which will advise the five councils in Wiltshire. The ultimate choice of suggestions to be put through to the national level will be made by the Implementation Executive for the new Wiltshire Council.

**Please publicise the opportunity offered by this Act as widely as possible through your networks and contacts in Wiltshire, and encourage people to discuss and debate, and to send any ideas they have to [davidmaynard@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:davidmaynard@wiltshire.gov.uk).**

The government has set a deadline of 31 July 2009 for ideas to be submitted to the national level, but clearly we will need ideas much in advance of that date so that we can ask the Panel and the Implementation Executive to discuss them.

# Useful links

## on the Sustainable Communities Act

The Secretary of State's invite to submit ideas at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/firstinvitation>

The official guide to the Sustainable Communities Act:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/sustainablecommunitiesact>

The LGA will create a shortlist on which ideas from local authorities the Government should consider. It's first Selector Newsletter:

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageId=1007116>

**For further information on any article in this newsletter or general enquiries about the Wiltshire Assembly, please contact:**

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