

DARTFORD AND GRAVESHAM LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: PARTNERSHIP BOARD

MINUTES of the meeting of the Dartford and Gravesham Local Strategic Partnership: Partnership Board held on Tuesday 12 December 2006 in the Council Chamber, Dartford Civic Centre, Home Gardens, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1DR

PRESENT:

Councillor J A Kite (Chairman)	– Dartford Borough Council
Councillor Mrs A D Allen	– Kent County Council
Chief Superintendent G Beautridge	– Community Safety Partnerships
Councillor J Burden	– Gravesham Borough Council
Mr V Hull	– Learning Steering Group
Ms V Miller (in place of Ms Peachey)	– West Kent PCT
Councillor M Snelling	– Kent County Council

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr G Harris	– Dartford Borough Council
Mr J Wintour	– Gravesham Borough Council
Mr C Woodley	– Gravesham Borough Council
Mr A Gowan	– Dartford Borough Council
Ms S Bourke	– Gravesham Borough Council
Ms J Gill	– Dartford Borough Council
Mrs P Jefford	– Gravesham Borough Council
Ms K Phillips	– Kent County Council
Ms K Paterson	– Sevenoaks District Council
Mr R Hardy	– Kent County Council
Ms C Martin	– Kent County Council
Ms W Liddiard	– West Kent PCT

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Patrick Conrad (Environment Group), Eddie Falvey (North West Kent Council for Voluntary Service), Anurag Kher (Government Office of the South East), Ian Martin (Environment Group) and Meradin Peachey (West Kent Primary Care Trust) for whom Ms Val Miller was substitute.

The Chairman noted that this was the first meeting of the Partnership Board to be attended by Ms Susan Bourke, the recently appointed LSP administrator. He welcomed to the meeting Robert Hardy (KCC), Ms Claire Martin (KCC), Ms Wendy Liddiard (West Kent Primary Care Trust) and Ms Val Miller.

17. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE 2006

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of 29 June 2006 be confirmed.

18. MATTERS ARISING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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There were no matters arising or announcements.

The Chairman noted that the recent launch of the Dartford and Gravesham Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership had gone well. He believed that matters were moving forward.

19. UPDATE ON KCC DIRECTORATES

Mr Robert Hardy, KCC Link Officer for the Dartford and Gravesham LSP, gave a presentation updating the Partnership Board on the organisation of KCC and its priorities and projects. He noted that about 80 % of the KCC budget went to children's, adult and education services. Government directives and targets were implemented in ways to make them Kent sensitive/Kent specific. The Community Strategy "Vision for Kent" had eight themes, six of which were very much partnership oriented and it was to be hoped that local organisations thereby felt more engaged than previously. The consultation process on the new LAA for Kent needed for 2008 would start in the New Year and the Kent Partnership Team would be involved actively in shaping matters. KCC had set out its headline priorities for the county in "Towards 2010" and the document reflected, in large measure, the Community Strategy themes.

The internal structure of KCC had been re-organised earlier in the year to provide greater integration of certain services and to acknowledge others in their own right. The result was four directorates, each with key issues and specific, detailed policies to develop.

Mr Hardy detailed key issues and projects in the area, such as Fastrack; Building Schools for the Future (the first round of which included Gravesham); progress on children's centres; work on independent living, where social services was engaging with the Local Development Framework process to see how communities should be regenerated and reshaped to support independent living for disabled and aging populations; the Old Rectory with its 90% occupancy of employment space but where the next challenge was for its small business occupants to move on to full scale commercial leases; and Shorne Woods Country Park whose new visitor centre showcased new construction methods and sustainable technology.

The Chairman asked whether present structures would be resilient to any two tier changes which might result from the recent White Paper on local government. Mr Hardy thought that it appeared to be more a case of looking to better working of the two tier system. The challenge lay with the next LAA, so as to provide greater engagement between the tiers, and greater flexibility. As to community engagement, while joined-up initiatives were taking place, joined-up engagement was less obvious.

Graham Harris expressed concern about an addition to the plethora of groups without inter-connection, when it would be better for everything to feed into the LSP. Mr Hardy agreed that it would be desirable to collapse the Joint

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Commissioning Forum into the LSP. Engaging the community with County services would be highly advantageous.

Councillor Burden asked how local government, KCC and the voluntary sector could work more effectively together. Mr Hardy replied that Compacts should be the means of shaping and bringing matters together although he was not certain where matters had got to on the Government document on how the County related to this. KCC was looking to create a pooled approach for the whole of Kent. However, districts were at different stages on their Compacts.

Patricia Jefford asked whether the LSP or individual districts only would be involved in consultations about the next LAA targets. The Chairman believed that there was a role for LSPs although he wondered whether the Dartford and Gravesham Partnership was sufficiently established to relate to a set of targets. Mr Hardy said that the timetable would invite organisations to submit ideas during January to March, to enable the Kent Partnership - not KCC – to formulate a draft list for consultation. The aim was to produce a draft, by October / November 2007, which would form the basis for negotiation with GOSE and Government. In the meantime, there were certain contradictions in the White Paper which required clarification.

Patricia Jefford thought that a response from the LSP, rather than from a number of individual organisations, would carry more weight. She suggested that the sub-groups might be asked to look at targets and report back to the LSP.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hardy for his presentation.

AGREED:

That the presentation be noted.

That the LSP administrator look into ways of formalising a process for getting targets in place.

20. SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME

Ms Claire Martin, KCC, gave a presentation on the Supporting People Programme. (The full details of the presentation were set out in the handout and she was happy to provide further information.)

SPP was a service partnership providing all the support (excluding health care and housing management) needed to enable vulnerable people across all sectors to maintain their housing situation. Those supported included traditional groups and others; support could be accommodation-based, or be floating or community support. The current grant was £31.9 million, rising to £32.2 million for the year to come.

All services had been graded and efficiencies achieved. Protocols were in place, or under construction, for client groups and the business plan included

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an Audit Commission inspection in the summer of 2007, reviews and a needs analysis.

The presentation detailed the groups assisted and the investment in them, the range of providers (a mix was desirable) and the services funded in Dartford and Gravesham. There had been a rise in the number of young homeless in Gravesham and, in Dartford, of young homeless families.

Assessment of, and working to improve, the performance of each provider was a continuous process. The LAA target was a reasonable level of move-ons, and in 2005/2006 ten per cent of all planned move-ons had been achieved.

As to the future, a Government consultation paper was due; management had taken action the previous year to ensure that both funding and budget were right and it was now looking at the possibility of growth; there was the challenge of meeting the diverse needs of twenty one service user groups; and the forthcoming Audit Commission inspection was not viewed with concern.

The Chairman said that the new arrangements imposed by the County Council for floating support had been badly received by residents in sheltered housing in Dartford. He noted that the total grant was not keeping pace with inflation and demand. Ms Martin said that it was a question of balancing the overall needs in a community and providing a reasonable level of funding. She believed that floating support was the right approach for Dartford. As to the danger of a broad client base resulting in the delivery's being spread too thinly, and specific groups being provided for regardless of need, it was a matter of making equitable provision. Needs analysis was not a precision tool and, if necessary, the Commissioning Body could be asked to re-consider its approach. The budget should hold steady until about 2010 / 2011; thereafter there would be some hard issues to consider.

The Chairman thanked Ms Martin for her presentation.

AGREED:

That the presentation be noted.

21. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Susan Bourke, LSP administrator, introduced the report, the first in a series setting out many of the key community development activities undertaken by the two borough councils.

The Chairman noted that many other initiatives were taking place in the boroughs which, while not branded as community activities, were undoubtedly part of such. The LSP, however, should examine how value could be added to initiatives - for example, by networking to use events in the community, or capital assets such as buildings, to tap into other community projects such as

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health campaigns. In this context, the report offered the initial basis of an asset register, which could drive initiatives and co-ordination.

Robert Hardy said that, if wished, the County Council could provide a second layer to such a register, with updates on schools and youth initiatives.

The Chairman drew partners' attention to the ending of the URBAN programme in 2008. The LSP needed to consider what would happen to schemes at that point, particularly those which were proving to be non self-sustaining.

The Chairman urged partners to give thought as to how practical use could be made of an ongoing register.

AGREED:

That the report be noted;

That a report be prepared for a future meeting of the Partnership Board about the implications and effects of the ending of the URBAN programme in 2008, and in particular the future of programmes proving to be non self-sustaining.

That the list of community activities be used as an asset register, be re-cast in a grid form (to assist such a function) and be kept updated.

22. CREATING AN NHS FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Ms Wendy Liddiard, Patient and Public Involvement Manager for the West Kent Primary Care Trust, introduced the discussion document "Creating an NHS fit for the future". Its discussion would be followed by consultation if major changes were required. Perceptions of, and needs for, health care had changed since 1948. The Health Service had to move forward and look to provide services differently, delivering them closer to home, using local services and facilities more effectively and in innovative ways, on a value-for-money basis. She urged people to attend one of the forthcoming local events, (15 and 22 January and 9 and 28 February, venues yet to be confirmed) and to let the Strategic Health Authority have their views. She thought that there would be advantages in working with the LSP to get the message across. Val Miller agreed that while cost was the catalyst for the discussion the issue was effective treatment.

The Chair believed that councils would be reluctant to be involved because of inconsistent messages about the Health Service emanating from Government. Val Miller accepted that the Health Service had not been particularly successful at partnership in the past but pointed to the introduction of a PCT directorate dedicated to public engagement as making partnership appropriate.

Robert Hardy thought that the time, rather than the distance, involved in travelling for treatment was the real issue.

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Councillor Burden noted that mental health appeared to be excluded from the debate. Patricia Jefford referred to the LSP's contribution to earlier consultations, on "Choosing Health", where nothing had come of the Partnership's work.

Graham Harris was concerned about the geographical disposition of services in the PCT which were counter to the transport arrangements of the Kent Thameside area. For example, it would be almost impossible for a patient from the district to reach Tonbridge by public transport and costs would be prohibitive. Vernon Hull noted that it was essential not to prejudice health care in the area for the future, given the huge population growth envisaged.

The Chair thanked Ms Liddiard for her presentation. He recognised that it was essential to help health colleagues to deliver their service. The LSP needed to debate how it could help to shape future provision as the health service belonged to its users and the LSP had an obligation to take part in consultations.

AGREED:

That the presentation be noted.

That the LSP consider its engagement in health service provision.

23. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - TO BE CONFIRMED

The date of the next meeting of the Partnership Board would be notified before Christmas.

The meeting closed at 4.58 pm

Councillor J A Kite
CHAIRMAN