

NOTES OF A MEETING OF SOUTH HAMS STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON MONDAY, 11 JUNE 2007

Present: Cllr Michael Saltern, SHDC (Chair)
Matt Bell – Devon County Council (for Roger Grainger)
Cllr Julian Brazil – DCC
Steve Brown – Devon Primary Care Trust
Adele Dawson – South Devon College
Alan Robinson – South Hams District Council
Jo Rumble – Dartmoor National Park Authority
Tony Steer – Devon and Cornwall Constabulary
Pete Tansey – Business Representative
Howard Toplis – Chief Executive, Tor Homes
Cllr Anne Ward – SHDC
Laura Whitehead – South Hams CVS

Others also present and participating (non-voting):

Amanda Harvey – SHDC (for Kay Kilgallon)

Apologies: Cllr John Tucker – Leader, SHDC
Cllr Roger Croad – Devon County Council
Kay Kilgallon – SHDC
Paul Sadler – Environment Agency
Hugh McCahill – South Hams VSF

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chairman welcomed the group to the meeting and noted the list of apologies received.

2. Minutes of meeting 12 March 2007 – any matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2007 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to it being recorded that Steve Brown's organisation title should be 'Devon Primary Care Trust'.

The group also considered item 5: 'progress updates on actions agreed' under this item. During discussion, the following points were raised:

a.) Confirmation that the Council's draft Climate Change Action Plan had been circulated to all members for comments. None had been received to date. In acknowledging the implications of the current capacity issues at Teignbridge, a member expressed disappointment with regard to the lack of progress and the delay in the Action Plan being finalised. In particular, the previously agreed joint appointment had not been resolved, and a different solution was likely to be proposed by Teignbridge.

b.) Confirmation that there was now a clear link to the SHSP webpage found under 'Useful websites' on the homepage of the South Hams District Council website (www.southhams.gov.uk).

c.) The social inclusion document had been adopted by the Council. The partnership needed to get a sense of what all partners were striving to achieve around the social inclusion agenda. The idea was to try and avoid duplicating services and cover areas that could be lacking in service provision. The adopted document was a series of actions as opposed to performance targets.

3. Membership matters: Independent Chair

At the previous SHSP meeting it was decided that an independent Chair should be sought. This would not preclude an existing member of the Partnership from being the Chair but in that event it might be necessary to invite a further representative from the same sector to join in order that the Chair could remain impartial.

The role of the Chair varied according to their inclination, their existing role, commitments, organisation's focus, expectation and capacity. The previous Chair was helped by having access to and assistance from lead staff within SHDC, personal capacity and administrative support.

There were four nominations submitted. These were:

- a) Isabelle Steer who was a South Hams councillor for over eight years and led on the housing agenda. The advantage with appointing Isabelle was that she knew how local government operated and was also involved with Supporting People. She would bring no professional background to the role but a good working knowledge of the public sector;
- b) Vaughan Lindsay who had been with the Dartington Hall Trust for three years and had been appointed to revive the Trust's performance. He had a professional business background and a wide portfolio, especially as the Trust covered such a wide range of activities, and would bring experience of different funding regimes. He was very busy but had excellent time management skills and was felt to be an excellent Chair who would be a truly independent Chair.
- c) Laura Whitehead stated that she would prefer not to be the Chair, as she would lose her independence as a partner representative, and instead supported Vaughan Lindsay;
- d) Peter Tansey felt that his current commitments were such that additional responsibilities of becoming the Chair could cause his business to suffer. As a consequence, he also expressed his support for Vaughan Lindsay.

The group unanimously **Agreed that Vaughan Lindsay be formally asked to Chair the SHSP.**

4. Local Government White Paper: Strong and Prosperous Communities

Within the Local Government White Paper there were some key points for Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) to consider. The role of the Local Authority in the LSP was strengthened in the White Paper, particularly that of the District Council.

It was highlighted that county wide LSPs must 'take full account' of the priorities of District based Sustainable Community Strategies in preparing their own strategies and, by implication, their Local Area Agreements (LAAs). In turn, the LSPs had to consider the needs of the whole county in drawing up their specific priorities.

The statutory 'duty to co-operate' placed upon key statutory partners involved in LAAs, including local authorities, PCT, Police, Probation, Learning and Skills Council was also highlighted.

The White Paper placed a great deal of emphasis on citizen engagement and 'empowerment' of neighbourhoods.

During discussion of the report it was felt that the government viewed strategic partners as being very important, but uncertainty was expressed as to how LSPs and their increased importance fitted in with two-tier working.

The group felt that, as a thematic partnership, more effort should be made to encourage representation from the Children's Trust. The CVS representative advised that she was in the position to provide Kay or Amanda with the Children's Trust Bulletin.

It was felt that the most challenging issue facing the public sector was the proposed Gershon saving of 3% per annum with the agenda being to reduce public expenditure. This saving was not easy to achieve when efficiency savings had been in place for a number of years. This would increase the impetus for shared services either with other authorities or partner agencies. Members expressed concern that the system discriminated against those authorities which were more efficient in the first place and would therefore find it harder to make more savings. It also made it more difficult to find resources to support new partnership initiatives within the Community Strategy.

5. Progress update on actions agreed

This item was covered under Item 2: 'Minutes of the Meeting of 12 March 2007 – any matters arising'.

6. Progress on the Sustainable Community Strategy Themes

a) Environment South Hams

A letter offering support for environmental projects had been sent to 22 Parishes at the beginning of May. So far the response had been slow but some projects had been identified. Environment South Hams recommended to the group that a media campaign be used to publicise the help that was available to community groups.

The recent World Environment Day TLC for Trees event went very well with 22 volunteers taking part, including 8 from partner agencies which was very encouraging. A press release had been sent to the local press.

The group was informed that Ross Kennerley (Landscape and Recreation Manager, SHDC) would like to present the draft Public Space Strategy at the next meeting for members' comments. **Action** Ross Kennerley to be invited to present at the next meeting.

b) Competitive Local Economy

SERCO and Business Link Somerset won the tender to deliver business support across Cornwall, Devon and Somerset. The service would commence in January 2008, with the current arrangements continuing until November 2007. The concern was felt that the new contractors would be delivering advice and brokerage for the three counties from a call centre in London.

There was much discussion surrounding the Dartington Arts Park as a model to which the Council had broadly signed up to, especially as its aspirations would fit with the LDF. However, it was stressed that the Arts Park was not the only economic development being looked at within land owned by the Trust.

The proposed closure of Dairy Crest was of great concern but also presented an opportunity for a high quality brown-field site to be released for higher job density development.

A procurement officer had been recruited in a shared working agreement with Teignbridge District Council. There was a drive to help enable local suppliers to compete in the e-procurement market. In addition the Council and its partners needed to encourage their own staff to buy local products and services wherever possible.

c) Community Vibrancy

I. South Devon Rural Transport Partnership

The group met to discuss the outstanding actions and looked at the Shopmobility project which provided support to the Devon Wide Transport Partnership. A bid to the Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund had been unsuccessful and the Shopmobility Steering Group would be meeting before mid July 2007, to decide the next course of action.

Devon Wheels to Work project was almost a Devon Wide stand alone organisation from which South Hams District Council had received a funding bid. A report had been produced and would be presented to the Executive Committee in the near future.

Patient Transport continued to be discussed and the Devon Wide Transport Partnership was requested to feed back to the partnership issues surrounding rural patient transport.

II. Community planning

The tendering packs for the Community Planning Database had been sent, work was due to start on the prototype in September 2007 and information on progress made would be fed back.

In acknowledging their lack of funding, a member expressed concern with regard to the performance of some of the MCTI's in the South Hams.

For clarity the Devon Towns' Forum was actually to be held on the 14 June 2007 and not 14 July 2007 as stated in the presented report.

III. Volunteering

The Volunteer Centre was progressing well and had placed its 100th volunteer. Lloyds TSB were interested in possibly putting their staff forward to become volunteers, which was encouraging, and would send a positive message to other large employers.

IV. Active South Hams

The Healthy Walks Scheme had historically paid leaders but due to funding issues the leaders had kindly volunteered to lead for free to enable the scheme to continue.

Discussion was raised as to whether insurance was required when the leaders were no longer paid and whether, on occasions when vulnerable adults participated on these walks, the leaders needed to be CRB checked. The lead partner agreed to check these issues and report back to the partnership.

Close working was continuing with Tone Leisure and currently the action plan for the forthcoming year was being reviewed with particular attention being paid to projects which could add value through joint working.

V. Awareness Raising

The next Community Partnership Forum would be held on Tuesday 2 October 2007, a volunteer was sought amongst the partnership members to Chair the forum.

On Wednesday 13 June 2007, there was training for new town and parish Councillors which would cover issues including community planning and the South Hams Sustainable Community Strategy.

d) Affordable Housing

The mapping of assets for Totnes had been completed. SHDC was now looking at how best to implement a master planning exercise in partnership with DCC, Tor Homes and third party landowners.

It was considered appropriate to ascertain what land and buildings were held by the Town and Parish Councils and added to the database.

There were two areas of opportunity firstly Bridgetown where the idea would be to jointly develop partner assets and potentially third party land, to provide a scheme delivering affordable housing and wider regeneration. The second opportunity involved linking phase 2 of the Totnes Southern Area project with new uses of the Grove School site. However, this proposal was only possible if a formal decision on the future relocation of the school was determined.

The Beacon Peer Support Fund awarded to the Council had meant that research into the 'impact of second and holiday homes' had been commissioned, with David Couttie Associates being appointed to undertake the research.

The original proposal for Project 3 was to undertake research around the issue of sustainable construction in rural areas and the local procurement of labour and materials. Consultation on the draft brief had suggested that the proposal was beyond the scope of the research budget. Consequently the group was looking for a new project in which learning could be shared and disseminated. All ideas were welcomed.

The partnership was informed that the BBC Today Programme was looking to talk to local people who could not afford to purchase a property in the South Hams. Members were advised that if they knew of any potential participants for the programme, to pass on their contact details to Pat Nettleton at Tor Homes.

7. Updates

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

The first formal meeting was held on the 24 May 2007, 50 representatives attended and were updated on what had been achieved and what was being proposed for the forthcoming 12 months.

A sub-group was due to meet on the 28 June 2007 to prioritise spending for 2007/2008 budget, despite the budget not yet being confirmed. However, it was expected that there would be a 10 to 14% budget cut. Following Ruth Bagley's recent departure, the issue of a new Chair would also be addressed at this meeting.

PCT Agenda

The top tier structure was now in place and the remaining vacancies would be filled by the end of June 2007.

Devon Compact

The new Compact Development Worker had been recruited and was based in Exeter CVS. Examples of where the compact had been used were sought. Members were asked to contact Laura Whitehead, SHCVS, with any examples.

The previous Chief Executive, Ruth Bagley, was the public sector's champion for the Devon Compact, and therefore suggestions for a replacement were sought and Kay Kilgallon was put forward as a nominee.

8. Possible Future Agenda Items

- Issues from the Local Government White Paper: Strong and Prosperous Communities (including a possible emphasis on employment and skills);
- Update from PCT to be replaced as the re-structuring is largely resolved with an update from the Children's Trust. For interested members bulletins were found at www.devonchildrenstrust.org.uk;
- South Devon Enterprise Week to be incorporated into the Competitive Local Economy heading.

9. Proposed dates of future meetings

- 17 September 2007 at **2 pm**
- 3 December 2007 at **2 pm**

(meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.15 pm)

