

NOTES OF A MEETING OF SOUTH HAMS STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP HELD AT DARTINGTON HALL, ON MONDAY 21 JULY 2008

Present: Vaughan Lindsay – Dartington Hall Trust (SHSP Chair)
Steve Brown – Devon Primary Care Trust
Jill Davies – South Hams CVS
Hugh McCahill – South Hams VSF
Neil McMurray – Devon and Cornwall Constabulary (for Sarah Sharpe)
Alan Robinson – SHDC
Jo Rumble – Dartmoor National Park Authority
Paul Sadler – Environment Agency
Pete Tansey – business representative
Howard Toplis – Tor Homes
Cllr John Tucker – Leader, SHDC (SHSP Vice Chair)
Cllr Anne Ward – SHDC

Others also present and participating (non-voting):
Amanda Harvey – SHDC (for Kay Kilgallon)

Apologies: Matt Bell – Devon County Council (for Roger Grainger)
Cllr Julian Brazil – Devon County Council
Adele Dawson – South Devon College
Cllr Roger Croad – Devon County Council

1. Apologies and Minutes

The list of apologies was noted and the minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2008 were confirmed as a correct record.

2. Project Updates

- a) **Sustainable & Affordable Housing Demonstration Project.** The project aimed to demonstrate a range of housing options that were both sustainable and affordable. An area near to the Cider Press Centre, Dartington, had been allocated for the project and the next step was to go out to tender for the proposal.
- b) **The Skills Pledge.** Following the last SHSP meeting, the majority of Partners had now submitted a letter signing up to the Skills Pledge. Partners yet to submit such a letter **agreed** they would do so as a matter of importance.
- c) **South Devon Business Excellence Awards.** The Partnership was informed that Carol Trant, South Hams District Council's Business Support Officer, attended the group meetings and that the project was being progressed.

- d) **Community Planning & Engagement.** The Partnership was informed that the training workshop had taken place, demonstrating how to use the Communities in Action database, for four of the district's town and parish councils. The Partnership **agreed** to have a demonstration of the database at its meeting on 8 December 2008.
- e) **Community Initiatives.** The Partnership was informed that the Safe Access Routes project was progressing. Investigations were also being carried out regarding car pooling / car clubs in an attempt to reduce transport greenhouse gas emissions.

3. Information Sharing – Partner Updates

Each member was asked to provide a brief verbal update on their progress, issues and achievements from their briefing papers:

Environment Agency

The Partnership was informed that meetings were taking place regarding ways of helping deliver the Local Area Agreement (LAA) Delivery Plans, especially in relation to Green Infrastructure.

Furthermore, it was noted that following publication of the Pitt Review, the Environment Agency was to take a more strategic role in managing surface water flooding.

Tor Homes

The Partnership was informed that the credit crunch and its impact on shared ownership sales remained a potential issue.

South Hams District Council

Partners were advised that the Devon LAA had received ministerial sign-off. In relation to the Affordable Housing Development Plan Document, it was noted that the Inspector's binding report was expected during August 2008. Furthermore, the Council had begun streamlining its Local Development Framework documents to identify and allocate sites for housing, employment and community needs in a conjoined process.

South Hams CVS & Volunteer Centre

The Partnership noted the report.

South Hams Voluntary Sector Forum

The Partnership noted the report.

Devon PCT

Partners were informed that a Healthy Weight and Obesity Strategy was currently being developed.

Dartmoor National Park Authority

It was noted that the Local Development Framework was in place and that the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan was to be linked to the Local Area Agreement.

4. Local Area Agreement (LAA) Update

The Partnership was informed that the LAA had been signed on 30 June 2008 and would operate for a three year period. SHDC had identified a number of LAA streams which would benefit its community, with the delivery plans yet to be finalised.

It was recognised that, if Devon was to be reorganised into a unitary authority, the LAA would become a key document.

5. Local Government Review Update & Implications for SHSP

Following the recent submissions to the Boundary Committee regarding the proposals for a unitary authority solution for Devon, Partners were advised that the Boundary Committee's recommendation was to have a single Devon Unitary Authority, including all authorities in the two-tier area. There was now a consultation period from 7 July 2008 until 26 September 2008. It was then anticipated that the Secretary of State would inform of her decision early in 2009. If changes were to be implemented to the structure of the Devon authorities, it was expected to be by 1 April 2010.

The Strategic Director (Community) suggested five options which the District Council needed to consider. These options were:

- React to the Boundary Committee's report by responding to the consultation questions;
- Actively oppose the Boundary Committee's draft proposal and/or their alternative proposal;
- Continue to promote the Rural South Devon and Dartmoor Unitary Concept;
- Consider the impact on South Hams of other concepts which have been rejected by the Boundary Committee; and
- Promote the retention of an enhanced two-tier system i.e. Integrated Devon, in parallel with the response to the Boundary Committee process.

The Boundary Committee had suggested that the larger the authority, the better value it would be for its residents. However, in contrast, the Council questioned how a larger authority would engage with the residents and smaller organisations. Furthermore, the role of the rural towns and parishes was questioned.

During discussion, the following points were made:

- a) A representative queried the Government's rationale behind this initiative questioning what it was attempting to achieve from this process;

- b) In relation to the business case, a representative queried whether a business case for the South Devon and Dartmoor Concept could still be developed. In response, Alan Robinson noted that the case was a standard model and although the exercise could be carried out, the question of wasting resources was raised, especially in light of the Boundary Committee ruling out the South Devon and Dartmoor Concept. Furthermore, the District Council would need the assistance of Devon County Council to obtain statistics and DCC was, understandably, occupied with developing its own case study;
- c) The democratic deficit of the Devon unitary concept, from currently approximately 1 Member to 2,000 residents to approximately 1 Member to 7,500 residents, was highlighted;
- d) The role of organisations under a Devon unitary was questioned, especially in relation to voluntary services such as the South Hams CVS.

Following discussions, Partners **AGREED** that a response to the Boundary Committee's publication needed to be developed from the Partnership but due to the demographics of the Partnership, a response needed to be subjective.

Action: Alan Robinson and Vaughan Lindsay to draft a Partnership response to the Boundary Committee and to circulate the response to Partners.

6. **Potential New SHSP Members**

The Partners noted the report and **AGREED** that letters be sent to the Federation of Small Businesses and Ivybridge, Totnes, Dartmouth and Kingsbridge Town Councils inviting a representative from each (elected Member preferable) to become a Partner on the SHSP.

7. **Presentation by Jacqi Hodgson, Transition Town Totnes, on the TTT Energy Descent Pathways Project**

The Chairman welcomed Jacqi Hodgson who was in attendance to present to the meeting Transition Town Totnes' (TTT) Energy Descent Pathways Project. Partners were advised that TTT was established in 2005 in response to diminishing oil and gas supplies and the increasing demand of such resources. An Energy Descent Action Plan would assist Totnes in finding pathways for reducing the current 9 barrels of oil per person per annum (current UK average) use down to just 1 barrel (or less) per person by 2030. Realising this change would involve working closely with the local community to dramatically reduce energy usage. The project focus was to create a vision for Totnes in 2030 and then to translate that to the current way of life in an attempt to create a tangible and attractive road map to a lower energy world.

Partners felt that this was a positive response to important issues. Further information could be obtained from the TTT website:
www.totnes.transitionnetwork.org

8. Possible Future Agenda Items

- Review of SHSP Terms of Reference – 29 September 2008 meeting
- Community Partnership Forum – 29 September 2008 meeting
- Demonstration of the Communities in Action Database – 8 December 2008 meeting

9. Proposed dates of future meetings

- 29 September 2008 at 2 pm – Conference Call
- 8 December 2008 at 2 pm – Venue TBC

(Meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.00 pm)