

DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

DARTFORD LOCALITY BOARD

MINUTES of the meeting of the Dartford Locality Board held on Monday 10 December 2012.

PRESENT: Councillor Jeremy A Kite MBE (Chairman)
Councillor Patrick F Coleman
Councillor A R Lloyd
Councillor Anthony R Martin
Councillor Chris Shippam
Mrs Ann Allen
Mrs Penny Cole
Mr Jan Ozog
Mr Avtar Sandhu MBE

ABSENT: Mr Richard Lees

Dartford Borough Council Officers:-

Graham Harris	–	Managing Director
Sheri Green	–	Strategic Director
Adrian Gowan	–	Policy and Corporate Support Manager
Teresa Ryszkowska	–	Planning Services Manager
Alan Twyman	–	Member Services Manager

Kent County Council Officers:-

John Burr	–	Director of Highways & Transportation
Nigel Smith	–	Head of Development
Simon Webb	–	Area Education Officer for West Kent
James Pearson	–	Project Manager (Libraries, Registration & Archives)
Steve Horton	–	Road Safety Team Leader
Jennie Edwards	–	Community Engagement

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Mr Lees.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

22. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2012

The minutes of the meeting of the Locality Board held on 10 October 2012 were confirmed as a correct record.

23. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

24. KENT COMMISSIONING PLAN FOR EDUCATION

The Locality Board considered the aspects of the Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision which related to Dartford. The Plan was published in October 2012 and detailed the requirement for places in early years provision, and in primary, secondary and special schools until 2017. It identified the areas where providers would need to match supply with demand, provided the context for the future organisation of school places in Kent and the principles that need to be given serious consideration when commissioning school places. It was intended that the Commissioning Plan would be re-published annually.

In addition to managing supply and demand the Plan also aimed to ensure that there would be a good choice of local schools within reasonable travelling distance and that the number of parents who are satisfied with the school places offered for their child increases whilst ensuring that there was enough spare capacity to deal with increases in the number of pupils requiring places in future years.

The data within the Commissioning Plan would be used to decide where new schools should be built and where existing schools should be either expanded or reduced in size. The importance of accurate forecasting and modelling was recognised and the County Council was reliant on close partnership working with other agencies, such as the Borough Councils and the Health Agencies, in order to be kept informed of new housing developments and changes in live birth data. A new modelling methodology had been commissioned from the University of Leeds which it was hoped would deliver even greater accuracy than the 90-95% currently achieved but this would never be a precise science. It was also recognised that other providers were now emerging, such as social enterprises, and Kent County Council (KCC) was keen to work with as many people as possible to deliver an effective education service which met pupil needs.

KCC was already working closely with Dartford's planning department to identify projects which might impact upon provision. Any new school builds required would be funded primarily from section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy. As Borough Councils determined the level of section 106 agreements through their planning committees partnership working was vital to ensure the section 106 contributions for educational purposes were set at appropriate levels. In addition to this contact with planners the Commissioning Plan sought to determine short and medium term

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requirements. The County was therefore keen to work closely with Dartford on Education provision and to maintain good communication with the Council. Whilst the Commissioning Plan would be published annually the County Council wanted to work with the Locality Board on a six monthly basis, either reporting to the full Locality Board or a sub-group.

Members asked whether the feedback from the 7 public consultations on expansion proposals for local schools had been supportive and were advised that they had been, although many responses had focussed on concerns other than expansion. Members asked whether KCC wanted any specific input from the Locality Board and were advised that KCC were keen for there to be open dialogue and clear communication. Members felt that this should be directed through the main Locality Board rather than a sub-group and it was felt that the most critical periods for there to be consultation were in January and April when key statistics would be available to inform the decision making process. The Board was keen to work closely with KCC and to be an active participant in the planning of future education provision in Dartford and for the regular contact between KCC and the Planning Department to continue.

Resolved:

(1) That the Locality Board continues to work closely with KCC on future education provision and to receive reports at future meetings where it could make a meaningful contribution to this work; and

(2) That the ongoing communication between Kent County Council and the Planning Services Manager on development projects which could impact on future education provision should continue.

25. FUTURE LIBRARIES

The Locality Board received a presentation of the options for the provision of future library services across Kent. The Library Service in Kent needed to deliver a £1m budget saving spread across the financial years 2014/15 and 2015/16 and was engaging in a broad “conversation” with local Councils, Parishes and Community groups across Kent in an effort to identify new ways of providing library services to continue to provide a high quality service whilst delivering the required savings. It was noted that the way in which this service was provided across Kent differed considerably and that library building stock was very diverse. Libraries were no longer just about providing a book lending service but were community hubs and meeting places. It was stressed that no decisions had been made about how the future services would be delivered and that this was not about cutting the number of libraries or staff but about delivering the service in new and improved ways. There were many options available including partnering with charities, social enterprises, districts and parishes, commercial sponsorship, volunteer groups, joined up working to maximise the use of the buildings by offering more services or longer opening hours, or finding better locations. KCC invited feedback from the Locality

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Board as part of this wide conversation and highlighted the detailed information on library usage available on the KCC web site.

Members highlighted the difficulties that Parish Council's would have in running local libraries due to lack of funding and staffing. The library at Sutton-at-Hone was given as an example of a small library where there was limited potential to combine this with other uses or commercial operations but the library was of great value to the local community in terms of supplementing the mobile library service.

The Chairman asked whether KCC would be seeking savings in excess of the £1m if this was achieved and was advised that there was currently no plan to seek additional savings over and above this figure and that there weren't any targets for individual districts within the £1m figure as there were different dynamics across Kent. The point of having a conversation with as many organisations and people as possible was to open up the opportunity for innovative solutions and to encourage the community to take ownership. KCC confirmed that there was a commitment not to close libraries but to continue to look at other options until the saving target had been achieved. Members asked whether there could be opportunities for savings by tapping into wider contracts for the provision of services and it was confirmed that KCC had already introduced integrated IT systems and participated in a central purchasing consortium for book stock. Partnering with agencies such as Job Centre Plus, hospices, CAB's etc had also been looked at and might be suitable in some cases. The possibility of offering some form of "turn-key" library service was also discussed and could be considered providing it delivered the specification for library services agreed by KCC. A member highlighted a community library operation in use at a location in Bexley and suggested that Bexley Council should be contacted to see how this operated.

The Board asked how other locality boards were approaching the consultation and were advised that some had established "task-and-finish" groups to provide direction and assist in consulting local groups before reporting back. The Board felt that providing it was made clear that the consultation was about identifying ways to deliver and improve library services, and that this would not involve library closures, then it would be prepared to sponsor and endorse the process of discussion with the parishes and other local organisations and report on the outcomes. The Head of Corporate Policy and Support was asked to prepare a letter which the Locality Board would endorse to initiate the discussion with these organisations about developing library services for the future. It was agreed that where KCC arranged consultation meetings with local groups the relevant Ward members should also be invited so that they were aware that the meetings were taking place and could respond to any enquiries from constituents.

Resolved: That the Head of Corporate Policy and Support should prepare a letter on behalf of the Locality Board to initiate discussion with the parishes and other community groups on the future of library service provision in the borough, within the parameters agreed by the Board.

26. TRANSFORMATION OF YOUTH SERVICES IN DARTFORD

The Locality Board received an update on the implementation of the new delivery model for Youth Services in Dartford. This included an update on the recruitment of staff to posts within the directly delivered aspect of the service and the outcome of the tendering process for new commissioned providers. In terms of the organisations awarded contracts to deliver each of the “lots” across Dartford, Lot 1 (Central Dartford) and Lot 2 (reducing Health Inequalities) had been awarded to YMCA Thames Gateway whilst Lot 3 (Improving Emotional Health) had been awarded to Walk Tall.

The Chairman explained the encouraging progress that had been made with identifying providers to bid for Lot 4, small commissioning projects to be awarded by the Dartford Locality Board. It was expected that these would be awarded twice a year.

Members expressed their support for the new delivery model and their interest in monitoring future performance and visiting the new providers.

Resolved: That the update on the implementation of the new delivery model for Youth Services in Dartford be noted.

27. DARTFORD ROAD SAFETY INITIATIVE

The Locality Board received a briefing on the Road Safety Initiative being developed for the Dartford area in response to the request made by the Board at an earlier meeting. Members were advised that this focussed on the development of an interactive tool to help parents and those responsible for children to raise awareness of the vulnerability of young people and how they could prepare them to use roads more safely. The initiative was primarily aimed at children of primary school age and the tool would take the form of a development booklet that would help parents to identify a child’s current level of road safety knowledge and ability and set out the key aspects of safer road user behaviour that parents should be encouraging their child to achieve at various stages in their development. There would also be an awareness campaign to support the initiative and it was hoped to have the Dartford pilot ready for launch in April 2013 with a view to possible roll-out to other boroughs/districts later in the year.

The Locality Board welcomed the initiative, the development of the booklet and arrangements for launching the pilot. Members expressed a desire to have further input to the booklet at the creative stage to ensure that the right messages were delivered. It was noted that the campaign was unlikely to deliver an immediate reduction in the number of accidents but should have a long term impact as awareness and behaviour of young people were shaped. Although the initiative was focussed on children of Primary school age it was noted that the advice it contained was also relevant for younger and older

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children as well. Members asked how much the initiative would cost and were advised that the budget for the creative aspects was £8,000 with a further £7-8,000 for the campaign.

Resolved: That the Locality Board welcomes and endorses the pilot road safety initiative for Dartford and looks forward to inputting to the content of the booklet.

28. STREET LIGHTING

The Chairman commented on the recent proposals by Kent County Council to turn off street lighting during the early hours of the morning and the consultation process on the proposals. He felt that the consultation of Joint Transportation Boards in Kent had been inappropriate as it had not been made clear that the decision for the proposed turn-off had been taken by KCC and the only aspect on which other agencies and the public were being consulted was points of detail over which lights should be turned off. It was important to recognise that the turning off of the lights was being undertaken for positive reasons, to avoid unnecessary light pollution at a time when roads were hardly used, and not purely as an economy. The Chairman noted that the report to Joint Transportation Board's had been withdrawn and hoped that when the item was reconsidered this would be after there had been proper consultation and with emphasis on the reasons why the decision had been taken.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm

CHAIRMAN