

MAIDSTONE LOCALITY BOARD MEETING

28 March 2012, 2.00 - 3.20 pm, County Hall, Maidstone

Present:	Adams	Kent Fire and Rescue Service
	Cllr Beerling	Maidstone Borough Council
	Cllr Chell	Kent County Council
	Cllr Chittenden	Kent County Council
	Cllr Cooke	Kent County Council
	Cllr Daley	Kent County Council
	Jay Edwins	NHS West Kent
	Cllr Garland	Maidstone Borough Council
	Cllr Hotson	Maidstone Borough Council
	John Hughes	Kent Association of Local Councils
	Cllr D Mortimer	Maidstone Borough Council
	Cllr Mrs Ring	Maidstone Borough Council
	Cllr Mrs Stockell	Kent County Council
	Cllr Mrs Whittle	Kent County Council
	Cllr J.A. Wilson	Maidstone Borough Council

MINUTES	
5.	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>Cllr Chris Garland, Leader of Maidstone Borough Council.</p> <p>Cllr Garland welcomed everyone present to the second meeting of the Maidstone Locality Board.</p>
6.	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr Malcolm Greer, Cllr Mike Fitzgerald, Cllr Paul Carter, CI Adrian Futers, Cllr Malcolm Robertson and Abi Jessop.</p>
7.	<p>Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 January 2012</p> <p>These were agreed as a true record, with the exception of Cllr Eric Hotson who is listed as being in attendance, but did not attend on that occasion.</p>
8.	<p>Matters and Actions Arising</p> <p>Locality Board Priorities</p> <p>Agenda Item 200112/3.1 Review and update (LSP) Delivery Group Action Plans – On this agenda.</p>

MINUTES

Agenda Item 200112/3.2 A Task & Finish Group be set up to develop the work programme – On this agenda.

Agenda Item 200112/3.3 Further analysis of teenage conception and school exclusions to be carried out – To be prepared as part of the priorities group work.

Agenda Item 200112/3.4 Proposals for an Information Dashboard to be presented at the next meeting – To be prepared as part of the priorities group work.

Agenda Item 200112/3.5 Circulate the presentation on Locality Board priorities with the minutes. – Completed.

Youth Services

Agenda Item 200112/4.1 Present local youth service provision needs to be mapped – Completed.

Agenda Item 200112/4.2 A special Locality Board meeting to be arranged to consider the shape of Youth Services in Maidstone to take place mid/end March – Completed.

Nomination of Substitutes:

Cllr Hughes, KALC Representative, asked what arrangements were in place regarding nomination of substitute members of the Maidstone Locality Board. His concern was that in the case of small organisations such as KALC there was often no-one able at short notice to attend meetings. He was informed that whilst substitutes are allowed for the two main bodies of the Locality Board (MBC and KCC), the position concerning substitutes for other bodies was unclear. It was agreed that the issue would be discussed by the Chair and Vice-Chair outside the meeting, and would be brought back to the meeting at a later date.

9. **Locality Board Priorities - Recommendations from Focus Group**

Update by Councillor Gary Cooke, Deputy Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills, KCC (Vice Chair, Maidstone Locality Board)

GC introduced the item. The priorities Focus Group met on 2 March, and agreed that the following priorities be recommended for approval by the MLB:

1. Community Budgets

This important area of work was agreed as the MLB's key work stream at its 20 January meeting.

2. Tackling Worklessness

This meets both MBC and KCC corporate priorities to grow the local economy and ensure that residents have the skills and abilities to enter and remain in the workforce. This priority has two themes:

- (a) Youth employment
- (b) Adult employment

MINUTES

3. Tackling Poverty

This priority is clearly interlinked with Priorities 1 and 2, and to MBC corporate outcome (*Residents are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced*), but also enables a more detailed focus on tackling poverty as it affects particular groups. The priority will focus on three specific groups:

- (a) Families with children under 5yrs
- (b) Older people
- (c) People with disabilities

4. Local Environmental Improvements

This links to MBC's corporate outcome (*Is a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit the borough*), and is vital to change residents perceptions of deprived areas of the Borough. This priority will necessitate close working with housing associations operating in the area.

Discussion:

JT – Expressed support for the priorities. He drew attention to the fact that several things were already in the pipeline e.g. Business Incubation Unit, Worklessness Forum.

MR – Supports all the priorities, in particular Priority 4. MR drew attention to the high cost of travel into the town centre, and that more needs to be provided locally in the outlying areas.

IC – There is a need to improve local facilities e.g. Ringlestone.

CG – The recent Worklessness event was good, but there were few local employers and the business sector was under-represented

JT – Was very disappointed at the lack of employers at the event, and we need to think hard about how to engage with the sector.

CG – All the priorities are sensible, but we need to develop practical actions and solutions, with agreed joint actions with KCC and other partners.

JH – The priorities give rise to some key connections – Education performance in Kent, and improved links between education and the business sector.

GC – KCC is working hard to raise standards at KS2, so that pupils are secondary school ready. The Future Schools Trust are keen to build job opportunities with the tertiary sector.

SB – Concerning employers – is there no employer contact at senior MBC officer level? Apprenticeships, what do they mean now, do they suit employers?

ZC – Christmas recruitment is starting now, identifying young people through JC+ and Connexions, this would be an action to be taken forward. We need to adopt at least one deliverable action per priority.

JAW – Also, young people were missing from the worklessness event.

SB – We must not forget that housing associations have large community/ neighbourhood budgets

GC – We still need to apply pressure to housing associations operating in the borough to employ local people and to ensure that housing associations' community spend is maximised in Maidstone.

Agreed:

1. The Maidstone Locality Board adopts the four priorities, and associated themes of:

	MINUTES
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Budgets 2. Tackling Worklessness <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Adult (b) Youth 3. Tackling Poverty <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Families with children under 5yrs (b) Older persons (c) Persons with disabilities 4. Environmental Improvements. <p>2. A second (and final) meeting of the Priorities Focus Group be arranged to refine objectives and actions and to develop a suitable set of actions.</p> <p>3. Following the refinement of objectives and actions, the Locality Board approaches all housing associations operating in the borough to encourage them to make the best use of the local skills and when maintaining their properties to employ locally.</p>
10.	<p>Tackling Worklessness</p> <p>Presentations by Dave Ashdown (DA), Kent Jobcentre Plus District Manager, and Sarah Gow (SG), Area Manager, CXK (previously Connexions)</p> <p><i>Introduction – Dave Ashdown:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DA is responsible for the whole of Kent. He has over 900 staff in 16 Job Centre Plus (JC+) offices across Kent. • 55 staff are located in the Maidstone office. • 25% of staff are focussed on youth unemployment. • In Maidstone, all unemployment has risen by 17%, from a very low base. • Youth unemployment has risen 22%, same as Kent average. • 77% of young unemployed have been unemployed for less than 6 months. • 91.3% of young people are in work after 9 months. • 23% of Maidstone claimants make their claim on-line. • JC+ advisors have much more local flexibility than before. • Advisors can do one-off payments to overcome barriers to work e.g. a suit, childcare. • Family intervention workers engage the families and JC+ advisors. • Work Experience scheme – gives many benefits, enhances a young persons CV, gives them new networks etc. In Maidstone in 2011/12, 289 participated and 29% were retained by the employer. • Employer has greater flexibility – e.g. can take on 4 work experience, then offer 2 apprenticeships. <p>Main barriers to employment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of experience 2. Poor literacy and numeracy 3. Poor attitude & motivation 4. Travel time to work i.e. No more than 60 mins travel time <p>Discussion:</p> <p>CG – As an immediate action, MBC could place an advert in the Downs Mail to</p>

MINUTES

call for employers to offer apprenticeships.
ZC – We will be looking at publicity budgets for the new financial year. DD – There is a KCC apprenticeship initiative about to be launched.
DA – JC+ will link in to the KCC initiative, and pick up hard to place young people.
SB – What about part-time work?
DA – Has checked the rules, and they would allow a part-time employee onto the Work Programme.
MR – Intergenerational worklessness, complete lack of skills, how will JCP+ address these?
COF – Volunteering brings many benefits. JC+ does have a far more flexible approach. VAM has a volunteer in JC+ once a fortnight.
DA – JC+ often work co-located, will do outreach and joint working.
JE – Are JC+ engaged with the public sector?
DA – Public sector is contracting, although there are vacancies in colleges

Sarah Gow – Connexions

- Connexions is a charity
- There are 267 unemployed 16-18 yr olds in Maidstone
- This is 6.26% of all 16-18 yr olds
- The highest concentrations of unemployed 16-18 yr olds are found in Parkwood, Shepway & High Street
- NEETs in Maidstone peaked in October 2011
- Connexions provides information and advice
- Although Connexions have moved out of Earl Street, they are in the gateway, Fusion Café, Switch Café.
- Connexions do not lose touch with their clients, and eg do house calls to check whereabouts etc.
- Princes Trust is still popular with young people.
- National Citizen Service – offers a week away on a team-building exercise in North Yorks.
- Jobs go Live – <http://www.facebook.com/JobsGolive>
- Connexions regularly test labour market intelligence in terms of knowing what employers are wanting and what clients need to do to prepare.

Discussion:

JH – What does a young person get at the end of an apprenticeship?
SG – They will have an NVQ Level 1 or 2, although they can go higher. They will have much improved literacy and numeracy skills.
AB – What else are JC+ doing to remove barriers to working?
DA – There are over 12,000 people unemployed across Kent, 1,100 in Maidstone. JC+ does target areas.
Motivation can be tackled by outward bound courses e.g. Friday's People <http://www.fridaypeople.org.uk/>
GC – Welcomes the changes in JC+ philosophy and outreach. Do any aspects of JC+ and Connexions work overlap?
SG – If aged under 18 can go to Connexions as well.
GC – The raising of the participation age will probably raise NEET numbers – need to pick them up
DA – JC+ are co-located with Connexions which engenders close working.
IC – How are Connexions dealing with budget cuts and the impact of careers advice in schools?

MINUTES

SG – Cuts have been tackled through reductions in overheads, and more flexible working. Schools can purchase services from Connexions, who may develop a schools career service.

IC – Requested a report in 6 months time on the schools careers service.

GC – Schools can commission independent careers advice

Useful links:

<http://jobseekers.direct.gov.uk/homepage.aspx?sessionid=21f9082d-09da-429b-9ab5-3aef2ab10782&pid=2>

<http://www.connexionskentandmedway.co.uk/pages/common/Connexions.aspx?pg=1626>

11. **Libraries - Future Service Proposals**

Presentation by Sue Sparks (SS), Strategic Manager, KCC Libraries, Registration and Archives

SS – This is the beginning of the debate on library services.

KCC Libraries want to engage with any interested parties who want to partner with KCC.

No libraries will close, and no decisions have been predetermined.

IC – What encouragement is there for community groups to come forward to engage?

SS – New models of service delivery are already in operation in Kent e.g. Ashford Gateway, Stanhope, Sandgate. Some groups are already coming forward.

MR – There is a need to engage with ward councillors who have libraries in their wards.

SS – This will be done.

AB – What is the scope of this review? What are the property implications? Are there any non-negotiable red lines? What is the minimum level of service provision?

SS – Her department is linked closely with KCC Property. Nothing is ruled in or out. The review also includes central functions e.g. book stock, IT etc.

JH – Welcomes the opportunities in principle, but transferring services to parishes could result in double taxation.

SS – Parishes could use volunteers, make better use of assets.

IC – Concurrent funding changes, what about non-parished areas?

Agreed:

1. The Maidstone Locality Board supports in principle the proposal from the KCC Libraries Service in relation to the transformation and modernisation agenda.

2. The Maidstone Locality Board will create a sub-group to progress community engagement, consider current service delivery and future service delivery options and make recommendations to the full Locality Board.

	MINUTES
12.	Information Item - Broadband Update The report is attached to these minutes for information – all members were asked to promote the target to maximise the numbers supporting broadband investment in the borough.
13.	Duration of Meeting 2.00 p.m. to 3.20 p.m.