



LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP
Quarter 2 update: Regeneration
Date: October 2011
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1.0 Overview

In July 2011, the LSP Board participated in a formal consultation regarding the creation of a locality board in Maidstone. As a result of the consultation with members, the general consensus supported the establishment of a Locality Board. The LSP Board formally voted to dissolve the Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership on 28 September 2011 to make way for the establishment of a Maidstone Locality Board.

Locality Boards are a key part of the new county partnership architecture that will bring more democratic accountability to local services and increasingly contribute to the delivery of the county's three ambitions.

The existing LSP delivery groups will remain operational for the time being, with a review of all groups being undertaken over the coming months to emphasise the desire for a project based approach to achieving outcomes with task and finish groups focussing on the agreed priorities. Until the completion of the review, the delivery groups will report directly to the Locality Board once established.

The Maidstone Locality Board will set out the long term plan for Maidstone in its key strategy, the Sustainable Community Strategy 2009 – 2020 and oversees the delivery of its priorities. The Strategy is being refreshed and will be prepared jointly by Maidstone's Locality Board and Maidstone Borough Council.

2.0 Quarter 2 delivery group update

- 2.1 A presentation of the draft MBC Housing Strategy was given to the June 2011 delivery group by the Head of Housing, with feedback invited from group members as part of the wider consultation which would subsequently be reported back to MBC's Cabinet prior to adoption of the Strategy.

To encourage a full discussion, the Economic Development team arranged consultation including a dedicated workshop organised by the Scrutiny team, at which a joint written response was presented on behalf of the delivery group. There was considerable interest in the Housing Strategy and the response highlighted a number of key concerns regarding the challenges of future housing delivery given the economic climate and structural changes of recent years.

A further outcome of the workshop was agreement that the Chair of the delivery group would support the establishment of a bi-annual forum at which MBC will receive 'real time' feedback from local agents and others regarding the current state of the housing market in terms of demand, supply and price.

- 2.2 The Economic Development and Regeneration delivery group organised a series of stakeholder presentations around the group priority of

Worklessness, with a focus on 16-24 year olds NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training) in the borough. An outline of the presentations is detailed below;

Amanda McCarthy (AM), Sue Mortley (SM), Connexions

Connexions is a charitable organisation based in Maidstone. They provide personal advisors in all schools, colleges and training providers (foundation learning). They are responsible for and track all young people (13-19 yr olds) in the borough. AM reported that there are currently 244 unemployed 16-28 yr olds in the Maidstone borough.

One to one and group support is offered to young people from career and CV advice, further education or training, personal budgeting, transferable skills, interview skills, developing business proposals etc. AM wants to encourage Maidstone-based employers to promote their vacancies through the Connexions vacancy list to ensure more employment opportunities are being offered directly to young people.

AM agreed that Connexions needs to develop further links with SMEs (Small to Medium Sized Enterprises) in the borough – particularly around promoting/making the process for apprenticeships and staff development easier for SMEs.

Emma Dudley (ED), South East Apprenticeship Company (SEAC)

SEAC is the main provider for co-ordinating apprenticeships across the South East. ED provided an overview of apprenticeships - what is an apprenticeship, changes in training qualifications, provider benefits of work placed learning, funding available to training providers through the government's Skills Funding Agency, employer responsibilities and obligations and services provided by South East Apprenticeship Company.

ED is undertaking to develop an apprenticeship job share programme with Town Centre Management, where similar retail businesses work together to provide joint apprenticeship opportunities. MBC Economic Development team will work with ED at SEAC to take forward.

Trevor Wilson (TW) and Juliet Shand (JS), Think 3E

3E operates across the South East and has expertise in supporting individuals, families and communities, through developing employment and training opportunities, social enterprises, improving environmental quality and reducing in re-offending rates. 3E's work focuses on empowerment (through learning courses) and developing relationships (family and life long learning). Partners include local authorities, Department of Work and Pensions, Ministry of Justice, JobCentrePlus, colleges and many third sector organisations.

3E is currently working in Park Wood, Maidstone's most deprived ward in the borough. Phase I supports a reprocessing centre and employment and training base in the ward to develop more opportunities for local residents. Phase II will support the development of social enterprises in the borough and the potential for a community café and hub. Connexions is seeking to establish an outreach programme in Park Wood and will link to 3E.

Sue Harrison (SH), Job Centre Plus (JCP)

SH provided an update on 'Get Britain Working' and the Work Programme. The changes support more flexibility and responsibility for JobCentre advisers. Maidstone has four work experience advisers who can support

young people into routes to work experience opportunities. JCP has established links to Connexions and the South East Apprenticeship Company.

New Enterprise Allowance: JCP is keen to work with Federation of Small Businesses to develop mentoring opportunities and business support for business start ups through the New Enterprise Allowance. JCP now offers a flexible support fund, which includes a grant for non-profit making organisations

All organisations would support a more efficient way of working together and explore opportunities to get the business community to respond more positively. There is a need to understand where current new vacancies are coming from (large employers or SMEs) and then engage. The proposed Business Forum may provide a good support mechanism.

3E and Maidstone Borough Council are happy to host any future partnership meetings/networking events to help take the issues and actions covered within the presentations.

Delivery Group stakeholder/public event

The group suggested a one day Locality Board hosted event around Worklessness in February 2012, with stakeholder speaker presentations and afternoon workshop sessions. The Community Partnerships team will take the lead on organising the day.

3.0 Summary of activity facilitated by the Economic Development team since 12 September Delivery Group meeting:

- A worklessness forum bringing together business representative organisations with skills and training providers has been set up for 9 November by Golding Homes and Think 3e, following agreement among the group for regular contact to jointly address worklessness by better co-ordination and increased referrals.
- The South East Apprenticeship Company (SEAC) which is a new company offering flexible options for small as well as larger businesses to take on Apprentices has been widely promoted by the Economic Development Officer – for example, via Maidstone Town Centre Management, rural business forums/associations internally within MBC as well as through other communications channels.
- Initial discussions have been held with various organisations regarding the possibility of a high profile promotion of Apprenticeships (aimed at smaller employers in particular) to help Maidstone break the 500 barrier locally.
- Several members of the group joined Community Partnerships' 19 September visit to Mid Kent College, to learn about their future plans for FE and HE provision in Maidstone and support to gain qualifications for learners who don't meet traditional minimum entry criteria. The College raised the issue of insufficient funding for adult learners given the increasing number of 'career changers' owing in part to the impact of the recession.
- ***Public event***

It was suggested that since worklessness is disproportionately prevalent amongst the young, there could be a link to the Maidstone Youth Forum's

(MYF) launch of the 'In the Stone' website in November 2011. Created by young people for young people, the website will provide information on events and activities, sexual health, positive mental health etc. MYF is very keen to develop links to training and employment opportunities. The event will include a formal launch, stallholders and presentation. The Youth Forum would like to engage with all Locality Board partners to support the launch of the website.