

MINUTES OF THE MAIDSTONE LOCALITY BOARD PRIORITY FOCUS GROUP

2 March 2012 1.00 – 3.00pm, ROOM 1C, MAIDSTONE HOUSE

Present:	Cllr Gary Cooke (GC)	Vice-Chair Maidstone Locality Board, Deputy Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills, Maidstone South East Division, KCC
	Cllr Marion Ring (MR)	Cabinet Member for Environment, Shepway North Ward, MBC
	Cllr Steve Beerling (SB)	Fant Ward, MBC
	Cllr Mike Fitzgerald (MF)	Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton Ward, MBC
	John Taylor (JT)	Director of Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and Chair of Economic Development and Regeneration Delivery Group
	Zena Cooke (ZC)	Director of Regeneration & Community Services, MBC
	John Littlemore (JL)	Head of Housing and Communities, MBC
	Duncan Bruce (DB)	Community Partnerships Officer, MBC
	Abi Jessop (AJ)	Community Engagement Officer, KCC
Apologies:	Martin Adams	Area Manager, Kent Fire & Rescue Service, Chair of Safer Maidstone Partnership
	Keith Abbott	Director – School Resources, Education , Learning and Skills Business Partner, KCC

	MINUTES	ACTION	DEADLINE
1.	<p>Welcome by the Chair for the Meeting Cllr Gary Cooke, Vice-Chair Maidstone Locality Board, Deputy Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills, Maidstone South East Division, KCC</p> <p>Cllr Cooke welcomed everyone present to the first meeting of the Maidstone Locality Board Priorities Focus Group.</p>		
2.	<p>Apologies for Absence Two apologies notified – see above</p>		
3.	<p>Review of existing priority areas Cllr Gary Cooke, Vice-Chair Maidstone Locality Board, Deputy Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills, Maidstone South East Division, KCC</p>		

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	<p>Zena Cooke, Director of Regeneration & Communities, MBC</p> <p>In a wide ranging discussion, the following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worklessness – must make inroads into constant ‘flow’ of 16-24 yr olds not ready for work • MLB must not reinvent wheel, build on what has been achieved with the LSP to date • Assess what has been achieved in the past 3-5 yrs • MLB must add value, and bring projects in on time. All projects must have a ‘home’ and lead Member • Many community groups (32 in Park Wood alone) all competing for limited resources • Routes into work – apprenticeships are often misunderstood – complex link between low pay and loss of benefits • Ask young people what they see as their routes into work – routines/skills/life planning • Raising of school leaving age to 17 and then 18 • Re-draw the local regeneration architecture – too many silos • Type of employment in Maidstone has changed radically over last 20 yrs – no longer a manufacturing centre. • Bring in partners and hold them to account • Housing Associations must be part of the solution • Working with local partners – including housing associations operating in the borough – to employ local people and to take on apprentices etc. • Infrastructure investment must be considered • Need to address measures relating to poverty. Take one tangible aspect of poverty e.g. families with children under 5yrs, older persons poverty, in receipt of pension credit, benefits campaign • Rural issues – housing, jobs, cost of travel <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The full Maidstone Locality Board to agree priorities • A report presenting the Focus Groups recommendations for priorities and the reasoning for selecting them to be prepared for MLB 28 March • The Focus Group to meet once more following MLB meeting 28 March. • Data requirements to be finalised at that meeting • A verbal update is given to MLB 28 March on the Worklessness Stakeholder event 12 March at Senacre Skills Centre. 		

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That this MLB calls upon local housing associations to better recognise the potential of the local labour force and help create employment opportunities in the Borough • 		
4.	<p>Review of existing delivery groups Cllr Gary Cooke, Vice-Chair Maidstone Locality Board, Deputy Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills, Maidstone South East Division, KCC Zena Cooke, Director of Regeneration & Communities, MBC</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review of the existing delivery groups should take place, once the full MLB has agreed its priorities • It was recognised that the SMP is statutory • The five delivery groups (one of which is a virtual group), will continue to meet and progress their action plans, until the review has been completed. <p>Summary of information requirements:</p> <p><u>Employment:</u> Employed by ward Length unemployed 16-24 NEETS and 18-24 Young People, year by year cohorts, time series trends Vacancy details, availability by sector/location Urban v rural unemployment analysis</p> <p><u>Poverty:</u> IMD maps, benefit claimant rates Transport costs and Fuel poverty Older persons on pension credit House repossessions, VAT registrations/deregistrations Homelessness applications Free school meals Car ownership & usage Rural crime – ASB, heating oil theft</p> <p><u>Environmental improvements:</u> Perception data, residents surveys Fly tips Missed collections Abandoned cars Empty houses and empty office/business/retail units Complaints House price and rent data</p>		

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	All above to be shown as far as possible by ward/families/older persons/disabled		
5.	<p>Focus Group recommendations to Maidstone Locality Board</p> <p>1. Community Budgets This important area of work was agreed as the MLB's key work stream at its 20 January meeting.</p> <p>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 remain in the workforce. This priority has two themes: (a) Youth employment (b) Adult employment</p> <p>3. Tackling Poverty This priority is clearly interlinked with Priorities 1 and 2, and to MBC corporate outcome (<i>Residents are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced</i>), but also enables a more detailed focus on tackling poverty as it affects particular groups. The priority has three themes: (a) Families with children under 5yrs (b) Older persons (c) Disabled persons</p> <p>4. Local Environmental Improvements This links to MBC corporate outcome (<i>Is a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit the borough</i>), 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.</p> <p>Although not a priority, the following is part of MLB's role, and a mechanism for engaging all sectors. Communication and engagement with the business sector The Maidstone Locality Board must ensure that businesses and local employers are engaged with locally agreed key priorities, and that it enables economic development by addressing barriers to</p>	All to note	

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	growth. The Maidstone Locality Board will lobby at the highest political level on behalf of those living and working in the Borough.		
	Close – Meeting ended 14.30pm		