

MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

TUESDAY, 7 JUNE 2011 2.30 PM



GROUP MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Kelham Cooke
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor John Nicholson (Chairman)

Councillor Mrs Jean Taylor
Councillor Jeff Thompson (Vice-
Chairman)
Councillor Raymond Wootten

OFFICERS

Strategic Director (Ian Yates)
Acting Head of Housing and
Neighbourhoods (Jane Booth)
Head of Environmental Services (Dave
Banks)
Head of Development and Growth
(Mark Williets)
Principal Democracy Officer (Jo
Toomey)

PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Councillor Teri Bryant (Housing)
Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright
(Economic Development)

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Griffin.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Morgan declared a personal interest in topics for discussion under updates from the previous meeting, as she used to work for British Telecom with responsibility for delivering broadband provision for businesses, and she had served as a member of the Grantham Community Heritage Association.

3. ACTION NOTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2011

The action notes of the meeting held on 27 January 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

4. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Housing Allocations Policy

The review of the Housing Allocations Policy was on hold as the council was looking at moving to a choice-based letting scheme. Any future work on the policy would need doing in conjunction with the development of the choice-based letting scheme.

Rural Broadband

Following discussions at previous meetings about accessibility of high speed broadband in the district, Members were given an update on the progress of work:

- South Kesteven was in the lowest quartile in England in terms of fixed line and mobile connectivity (broadband speed)
- Lincolnshire has one of the lowest BT upgrade investment rates – only 2 of 125 exchange areas were identified for upgrade
- A recent survey revealed Lincolnshire as the worst county for broadband connectivity with 3 of the top 20 slowest connection speeds, 2 of which were in South Kesteven
- The government had launched the Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) project, which committed £530m to communities with poor broadband to guarantee up to 2mpbs coverage by the end of this parliament
- Upper tier authorities were responsible for co-ordinating bids to BDUK. Consultation with lower tier authorities and communities was required, and bids had to be backed with a broadband delivery plan
- Lincolnshire County Council had a broadband connectivity board, which set up a group to produce a BDUK bid
- Lincolnshire did not enter the first bidding round (April 2011). A bid was being prepared for the second bidding round in July 2011
- South Kesteven District Council was also looking at what it could do as an authority, speaking to several broadband service providers

Members of the Group were pleased that the Council was looking at ways to improve broadband provision, recognising the benefits it could bring attracting new business and supporting more efficient and environmentally friendly ways of working. These effects had been particularly noted with the development of the high-speed broadband infrastructure in Cornwall. It was suggested that the bid could include evidence of the number of IT-based companies operating within Lincolnshire. The group also recognised the benefits of good connectivity for those in education.

Further discussion ensued, including the possible advantages and disadvantages of seeking better broadband connectivity on a regional basis.

The group was keen to receive ongoing updates on broadband work, and it

was suggested that the item could form part of the group's work programme.

Grantham Museum

Negotiations between Grantham Community Heritage Association and South Kesteven District Council were ongoing.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

The Strategic Director gave Members a brief summary of the services covered by the Group (economic development, housing, environmental services and planning). From these service areas, a number of potential work streams had been identified. Suggestions were invited from officers and Members.

Any work programme suggestions would be considered by the Policy Development Co-ordinating Group, comprising chairmen and vice-chairmen of all the PDGs, together with Portfolio Holders, for approval and addition to the work programme.

Broadband – Looking at broadband provision across the district in conjunction with the Engagement Policy Development Group

Car parking – Carrying out a full review of car parking in Grantham, in conjunction with the Resources Police Development Group

Carbon Management Plan – The Carbon Management Plan needed refreshing and developing to fit in with the climate change agenda. It would focus on how the council works as a business, how the council could act as an exemplar to businesses in the district and how the council could influence and guide members of the public

Health and well-being boards – the government had consulted on proposed changes to the delivery of health. Health and well-being boards would oversee delivery. South Kesteven District Council had already submitted a response to consultation however future input would be required. It was suggested the group invite a representative to attend and provide a full briefing on the proposed changes, to which all other members could be invited.

Localism Bill – The Localism Bill proceeding through Parliament included a provision for the production of Neighbourhood Plans. The Council would need to look at how it could support these and how it would work with local communities in the development of the plans. The Bill also proposed changes to the way private sector housing is managed, which could lead to a further piece of work for the Group. To address the impact of the changes, the group might also choose to look at job creation.

Supporting People Policy – Reviewing South Kesteven District Council's

Policy to reflect any changes coming from the supporting people board at Lincolnshire County Council. This work could include a review of the delivery of care services in the district.

Decriminalisation of parking – Work was underway on the decriminalisation of car parking, with a view to its implementation in June 2012.

The Chairman stated that the work of the Policy Development Group should include a public focus, and suggested that Members could seek permission to hold informal drop-in sessions in public places. They could ask members of the public for their suggestions of policies that should be developed. Suggestions could be discussed with the Cabinet and proposals considered to have merit could be tasked to the relevant Policy Development Group for further work.

Members supported the idea of involving the public more. Given the number of items that were already proposed for the work programme, some concerns were expressed about capacity for additional items. Other suggestions included experimenting with the time and venue of meetings.

There was no consensus amongst Members, and it was suggested that it might not be the right moment to test them however they could be considered at a later date.

6. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting was closed at 16:15.

Dates of future meetings as agreed at Council on 19 May 2011:

- Thursday 28 July 2011
- Thursday 1 September 2011
- Thursday 10 November 2011
- Thursday 5 January 2012
- Thursday 8 March 2012