

MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

THURSDAY, 5 JANUARY 2012 2.30 PM



GROUP MEMBERS PRESENT

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

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

OFFICERS

Head of Environmental Services (David Banks)
Environmental Health Services Manager (David Price)
Principal Democracy Officer (Jo Toomey)
Community Safety and Licensing Service Manager (Mark Jones)
LSP Co-ordinator (Carol Drury)

PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Councillor Teri Bryant (Housing)
Councillor John Smith (Healthy Environment)

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Wootten declared a personal interest in agenda items 9 (Child Poverty Strategy Consultation) and 10 (Fire and Rescue National Framework for England Consultation) as a member of Lincolnshire County Council, which was the owner of the Child Poverty Strategy and responsible for Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue.

Councillor Mrs Taylor declared a personal interest in agenda item 10, as her husband was a former fire fighter and in receipt of a pension from fire and rescue services.

Councillor Morgan declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 (Updates from previous meeting – Rural Broadband), as a former employee of a broadband provider.

36. ACTION NOTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2011

The action notes from the meeting held on 10 November 2011 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the clarification that reports on the Localism Act “will be presented to Cabinet and full Council depending on the issue and policy proposal for change, or otherwise, as and when the relevant parts of the Bill are enacted and the Regulations are in force.”

37. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Skin piercing

- Of the authorities neighbouring South Kesteven, Rutland, Newark and Sherwood, and Melton were the only ones who had not adopted a skin piercing byelaw.
- The authorities that had adopted the byelaw had followed the model.
- Comments made at the Cabinet meeting on 5 December 2011 had been addressed.
- The PDG’s recommendations regarding record keeping and supervision would be incorporated in registration procedures that would be introduced alongside implementation.
- If possible, records should include the signature of the responsible adult accompanying a minor.

Localism Act

- Councillors requested an update on the Localism Act in respect of housing and planning.
- The PDG noted that while the Act had passed, parts had not yet been enacted nor regulations produced.

Rural Broadband

- Council had received a presentation on improving broadband across Lincolnshire at its meeting on 8 September 2011.
- Broadband Delivery UK had awarded £14m funding for Lincolnshire, which required match funding.
- The County Council had committed £10m and district councils were being asked to contribute the remaining £4m.
- District Councils were undergoing the budget-setting process, after which it would be apparent whether match-funding was available.
- It was hoped more information would be available for the PDG’s next meeting on 8 March 2012.
- PDG members suggested that budget preparations should include flexibility, so that the Council would be able to meet any tight deadlines on which funding was conditional.

38. FEEDBACK FROM THE EXECUTIVE

The Housing Portfolio stated that Lincolnshire County Council had received very few responses to the Child Poverty Strategy consultation and encouraged the PDG to consider the document.

39. ENERGY REDUCTION AND CARBON MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Environmental Health Service Manager gave a presentation on the draft Energy Reduction and Carbon Management Action Plan, which highlighted the key ways the Council would:

- Continue the internal work and focus on reducing the energy use and resultant carbon emissions of the Council.
- Deliver more sustainable services by integrating adaptation measures into the service planning process.
- Work with and support businesses on energy reduction and help them prepare for future possible impacts of climate change.
- Guide residents on saving energy, reducing their personal carbon footprints and saving money.

The draft action plan reflected comments made by the PDG at previous meetings. PDG members were keen that the strategy included measures to reduce vehicle fumes and environmentally responsible driving.

Councillors emphasised the importance of linking initiatives with education, for example using smart metering at schools and teaching children about energy consumption.

A Councillor asked whether ecology initiatives would be considered within the action plan. Ecological matters fell within the remit of the planning team.

Brief consideration was given to ways in which the district council could work with businesses and help them balance energy efficiency with convenience and appealing to consumers. The Council would be working with the Carbon Trust, which provided advice for businesses.

In questioning whether methods of measuring reduction were accurate, Councillors were advised that internal audit had reviewed climate change arrangements and were satisfied that figures were credible.

Action Point

Circulate the draft Energy Reduction and Carbon Management Action Plan to PDG members for comment before submitting to Cabinet.

15:29-15:35

Meeting adjourned

40. CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Lincolnshire County Council had produced a draft Child Poverty Strategy, which was undergoing consultation. The strategy was based on the joint strategic needs assessment and the child poverty needs assessment. The PDG received a presentation on the draft strategy:

- The definition of poverty on which the strategy was based came from the Child Poverty Act 2010.
- The strategy used the number of families with children 0-19 where parents were in receipt of out of work benefits to calculate a baseline for child poverty.
- Of the 15 wards in Lincolnshire ranked with the highest proportion of Child Poverty, two were in South Kesteven: Earlesfield and Harrowby.
- Green Hill Ward had the lowest percentage rate of child poverty in Lincolnshire.
- In Lincolnshire 63% of children living in poverty were part of lone parent families; in South Kesteven this was 69.8%
- Drug and Alcohol Action Team data showed that 5 of the top 10 wards in Lincolnshire for young people seeking treatment for substance misuse were in South Kesteven.
- Based on 2009 figures, 17.4% of households in SK were living in Fuel Poverty.
- Two of the worst ranking Wards for young people achieving 5 GCSEs A*-C grades were Earlesfield and Harrowby.
- Grantham St. John's Ward had the highest percentage of young people not in education or employment.

As part of the consultation, Lincolnshire County Council wanted stakeholders to identify any completed activities or projects that could help address child poverty.

The LSP Co-ordinator summarised some projects that the district council supported that would help meet the agenda (directly and indirectly), including Foodbank, funding the Citizen's Advice Bureau, drop-in sessions in partnership with the Jubilee Christian Fellowship. 100 new affordable homes were also achieved. SKDC had carried out a lot of work to address fuel poverty by promoting Warm Front and providing decent home grants; the Council was also part of the Lincolnshire Home Energy Partnership.

Other aspects of the strategy tied in with council priorities through the growth point and promoting economic development opportunities within the district:

- Increasing the number of apprenticeship opportunities for young people
- Increasing the availability of well paid employment opportunities
- Improving work readiness by providing high quality work experience
- Increasing number of young people setting up their own business

Discussion ensued around provision of affordable homes and people's ability to access a home the appropriate size for their family. Provision within the Localism Act would give district councils measures that could prevent under-occupation of larger properties.

Councillors expressed concern about the way the level of child poverty was calculated; they suggested that only looking at families in receipt of unemployment benefits did not give a true picture of the number of families living in poverty.

Members of the PDG stated they did not feel they had sufficient knowledge of the subject area to submit a response to the consultation and suggested a different approach might be more appropriate.

Recommendation:

The response submitted through the Portfolio Holder should include the following points:

- 1. The PDG did not agree with the way the baseline for child poverty was calculated.***
- 2. The consultation was not appropriate for elected Member stakeholders with no specialist knowledge of child poverty.***

41. FIRE AND RESCUE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENGLAND – CONSULTATION

A consultation document on the draft Fire and Rescue National Framework for England was circulated with the agenda. The document included four questions, to which Members were invited to discuss their responses:

Question 1: Is the content of each chapter clear, specific and proportionate?

Councillors agreed that the content was clear, specific and proportionate.

Question 2: Does the draft National Framework set clear and appropriate expectations of fire and rescue authorities? If not, how could it be improved?

The PDG agreed expectations seemed appropriately denoted. Councillors felt it would be beneficial to receive evidence from a senior member of Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue to provide context and guidance.

Question 3: Are the respective roles of fire and rescue authorities and the Government set out clearly? If not, how could they be improved or made clearer?

Councillors felt that clarity could be improved, suggesting that information be displayed more visually, for example in a tabular format.

Question 4: Do the requirements for fire and rescue authorities on scrutiny, access to comparable performance data and assurance go too far or not far enough?

PDG members did not think requirements were sufficient. Attention was drawn to page 20, paragraph 11, which indicated that governance arrangements had not been finalised. A member who sat on Lincolnshire County Council explained that monthly reports were taken to the relevant scrutiny committee and this worked particularly well. Members of the PDG thought this could be a good model to follow.

The suggestion was also made that the document should clearly stipulate minimum standards. Councillors felt the document implied that district councillors would not be involved in the next stages of development, but Members indicated that it would be appropriate for their involvement as public representatives.

Action Point:

- 1. Submit consultation response***
- 2. Invite a representative from Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue to the next meeting***

42. WORK PROGRAMME

- Update on the implications of the Localism Bill for planning and housing.
- Changes to neighbourhood policing arrangements
- Car parking
- Fire and Rescue Framework consultation – follow-up with a representative from Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue

43. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting was closed at 17:04.