



**LSP Board Meeting, 18 June 2013
Daventry District Council
10.10am – 12.05pm**

Partners Present (* denotes voting member)

Carella	Davies* (Chair)	Daventry Volunteer Centre
Anne	Bamfield	Citizens Advice Daventry & District
Victoria	Boulton	Groundwork Northants
Simon	Bovey	Daventry District Council
Ellen	Buttler	Northampton College
Allyson	Carter	Jobcentre Plus
Alan	Gillham	West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit
Cllr Elizabeth	Griffin*	Daventry District Council
Cllr Alan	Hills	Daventry District Council
Ciara	McMillan	Daventry & District Housing
Anne	Newman	Jobcentre Plus
Suzanne	Shead	Bromford Living
Tom	Thompson	Northamptonshire Police
Sarah	Wilson	Bromford Support

Also in attendance

Alan	Schofield	East Midlands Ambulance Service (for item 3)
Alison	Harris	Daventry District Council
Roz	Tidman	Daventry District Council (LSP Support)

1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Declarations

Carella Davies welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from: Marie Brown (NCALC)

There were no declarations of interests.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 19 March 2013

a) The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

b) Matters Arising

Strategic Update on Policing and Crime – The Police & Crime Commissioner would be invited to attend the September Board meeting.

ACTION: Simon Bovey

Falls Prevention – RT advised that the event at Weedon had gone very well. A tea dance was scheduled to take place at Daventry Leisure Centre on 19 June.

3. EMAS

Alan Schofield, Corporate Affairs Director at East Midlands Ambulance Service gave a presentation on the Service's 'Being the Best' consultation.

Reference was made to the National Audit Office report of 2010 which looked at the performance of the ambulance service. EMAS had historically been underfunded by approx. £5m/year. This underfunding had continued until the current year. AS commented that when the level of funding for the service was examined it became apparent why the targets had not been met. The Being the Best plan would improve the situation.

There were 66 stations in the East Midlands area. Many built on planning assumptions in the 1940's and 50s. These were not particularly located in the best places and were, in addition, costly to improve.

The plan for Daventry was to close the current station and co-locate it with the Fire Station as a Community Ambulance Station. Discussions on this proposal were still ongoing and, if not successful a number of alternative locations would be explored – Daventry Police Station, Danetre Hospital or Abbey House Surgery. Crews would use the Community Ambulance Station to rest during their shifts.

For the region there would be three ambulance station hubs where crews would start and finish their shifts, and maintenance of vehicles would take place.

AS emphasised that there would be no reduction of service in Daventry.

In terms of the funding the Commissioners had indicated a good settlement for the following year. However funding was re-assessed on a year by year basis.

A lot of work had been carried out in changing staffing structures and work practices to make savings.

In 2012/13 the service responded to 68% of urgent calls and 95% of non-urgent calls within the target time. A 4% and 2% improvement respectively on 2011/12 figures. This had been achieved by simply changing working practices.

CD commented that it was a relief to hear that more resources were being put into the service.

Cllr Griffin reported on commentary she had heard that Police and Crime Commissioners may become responsible for holding the Fire and Ambulance services together, and asked AS for his view on this. AS commented that anything to bring the three services together would be beneficial. EMAS was already working closely with the Fire and Police services on two projects – increasing the provision of defibrillators, and first responders. TT advised, at a tactical level, the emergency services worked well together, adding that the Police and Fire chief officers were co-located in Northampton.

AS advised that there was a central government commitment for the three services to work together, and DCLG funding was available to find ways for this to happen. Given response times were still unsatisfactory, SB suggested the LSP would wish to help EMAS access such funding. AS advised he would be happy to support a bid being submitted for Daventry and offered to assist the LSP. **ACTION: Alan Schofield/Roz Tidman**

4. Welfare Reform

AH, AC, SW, AB and CM gave an update on the impact of Welfare Reform.

AH summarised the four areas of welfare that had changed:-

Council Tax Support Scheme – A locally funded scheme, with council tax liability being capped at 8.5% for working age customers. Residents who have previously not been required to pay any Council Tax now had to do so. This change affected just over 2000 people in the District. Approximately half of those had paid; those who hadn't would receive a 'soft reminder' to do so. Of those who had not yet paid it appeared that many were making arrangements to do so. For those who had not yet made arrangements they would be given longer to do so, but if no payment was forthcoming then the liability route would be followed. Those struggling with the new arrangements were signposted to support agencies.

Under Occupancy ('bedroom tax') - This was an area of great concern due to the numbers involved. In November 585 households were affected, this had now reduced to 508 households. It was estimated that there were approximately 200 people finding it difficult to move to a suitable property.

Discretionary Housing Payment – In the past there had been a small Government grant (£7k) the Council could use to help people on benefit meet funding shortfalls for a short time. This fund had now increased to £74k, with the Council setting aside another £70k. In 2012/13 50 applications for Discretionary Housing Payment had been received. Since April 2013 103 applications had been received and half of the grant budget had been spent. The majority of those applying had been affected by the Under Occupancy rule. Funding top ups were automatically available for foster carers and disabled people living in adapted homes, other applicants were required to meet the Council's policy. Discretionary Housing Payments usually lasted three to six months.

Benefit Capping – From 15 July benefits would be capped at no more than £500/week for couples and £350/week for single adults. There were eleven households that would be affected by this in Daventry district, mainly those with large numbers of children. It was down to the local authority to administer the cap.

TT drew attention to the link between financial hardship and crime, domestic violence and anti-social behaviour. There had been good success reducing crime levels in the long term involving troubled families, who often relied on benefits. It was important that that positive trend continued. The concern was that the reduction in benefits may prompt more into offending.

CMc advised that this had been raised at the Health & Wellbeing Board, and questions had been asked as to what actions could be taken to rectify this. TT advised that the crime figures would be reviewed after six months to see if there had been an increase in low level crime.

Cllr Hills commented that the Food Bank situation was also linked to welfare reform. The promotion of Credit Unions should also take place.

SW added that, since the move of the Social Fund to NCC, a number of changes had been put in place, including the issuing of tokens instead of cash. This would also be a factor in how people sourced money.

AC advised that, in terms of the JobCentre, there had been very few enquiries related to the welfare reform changes. Some customers had commented that they had 'better get a job' so, for some people, the changes were having a positive impact.

In respect of the implementation of Universal Credit later in the year, Centre staff were preparing customers now.

A couple of enquiries had been received on the Personal Independent Payment (PIP) which replaces the Disability Living Allowance.

Some in-work benefits were ending, so there would be no support mechanism for people moving from benefits to a wage.

AC added that JobCentre Plus did outreach work via Sure Start Centres to raise awareness of the changes and the support available for claimants.

SW advised on the work Bromford Support did in the community in terms of mental health support. Many people with mental health issues worried a lot, and one particular worry was PIP. There were numerous case studies indicated that those with mental health issues were getting very concerned about the changes and may be un-manageable for some people. Help will also be provided for people setting up payment arrangements for Council Tax, downsizing to smaller properties or looking at alternatives to enable them to stay in their existing houses eg. lodgers. SW commented that encouraging people to be responsible and pay was ok, but some people did not have the funds to do so. Most of Bromford Support's customers would go into work if they could be brought up to a work ready level. The organisation is working with a specialist to get people back to work, with a very good level of success, however this needed to be sustained and employers needed to be involved in the process.

AH commented that it was important to gather as much information as possible of how people were coping with the changes. SW advised that Bromford were preparing an impact questionnaire in Buckinghamshire to do just that, and felt this could be replicated in Daventry. She added that around 200 people were affected in the area.

CMc added that the agencies that would make a difference to residents may no longer be operating after March 2014 because of funding cuts. There would be a need to look for alternative ways forward if those organisations could not continue.

SS reported on the number of Bromford households affected by the new Under Occupancy rules. 50 had one spare room, nine had two or more spare rooms. 85 households had been contacted in Daventry in total. The majority of those were choosing to pay and stay. Tenancy agreements had been relaxed to enable tenants to take in lodgers. In the medium to long term, in terms of development, there needed to be an understanding of what needed to be built and make these attractive for people to want to live in.

AB considered that, in terms of Citizens Advice, they were anticipating a large number of appeals once claimants were taken off Disability Living Allowance. The potential impact of Universal Credit was unknown. Nearly 40 tenants had been helped to apply for Discretionary Housing Payment. There were more people coming to them for advice on rent arrears, both social housing and private tenants. Advice had been offered to tenants considering taking in a lodger, with some tenants finding they were no better off by doing so.

In respect of changes to the Social Fund, AB considered that the new support from NCC was not helpful. She added that it was difficult to find any information, or an application form, on their website. However the short-term advance of benefits by the Job Centre was helpful.

Referrals to Food Banks had increased substantially, with five times the number of referrals than in previous years.

Citizens Advice have funded a Fuel Poverty Advisor and were also successful in getting Lottery funding for a Financial Capability Worker due to start in September.

In terms of DDH, CMC advised that out of a total of 3,100 properties 300 households were affected by the Under Occupancy rules. 69 affected by the 25% reduction in support, 231 by 14%. Tenants had been advised of the changes by DDC and DDH in 2012 and DDH had delivered a follow up letter. Home visits had been made to the 69 households, to discuss help available to them, including signposting to Citizens Advice. Of the 231 households, 221 to date had received either a home visit or phone call to make sure they were aware of the changes. A total of 113 households were staying in their current accommodation and were happy to make up the shortfall. 31 households had indicated they would prefer to downsize, and DDH have been assisting them to make that move. Following a review of the details of 41 households, it had become apparent that they were no longer affected by the changes.

There was an agreement with DDC that where there was a clear need tenants could move, which made better use of the housing stock. Home Swapper and mutual exchange were also being encouraged. A local Facebook page for swapping homes had also been set up by residents in the town.

Futures Housing Group, which DDH is part of, has also looked at the impact of welfare form and funded a debt advice project. 111 people had been seen in the last three months. Out of 300 tenants, 70 had received Discretionary Housing Benefit.

Right to Buy figures were increasing, with 20 live applications on DDH's books.

With regard to support for tenants, DDH currently had one in-house Tenancy Support Officer, however an additional officer was due to start in July. Their role was to act as mediator to ensure people could sustain a tenancy. A Hardship Fund was also being launched, with £250 grants available for tenants. This would operate in a similar way to the crisis loans.

The Strive Programme, recently launched, would start in September with the aim to help people start their own business. This would be a 12 week programme running in partnership with Daventry College.

CMc commented that there would be an increased need for partnership work because of welfare reform.

RT noted that the combined contributions were indicating a priority for the Sustainable Community Strategy of support network development.

RT suggested this be discussed further outside of the LSP Board, via a sub-group of the Health & Wellbeing Board. **ACTION: Roz Tidman**

5. 2012/13 Annual Report

The report, currently being finalised, would show progress against a total of 32 Indicators.

Alcohol remained a major issue, particularly for women.

In terms of the economy, footfall in Daventry town had decreased by 20,000/week, the number of void premises in the High Street had increased and the number of market stalls had decreased.

There had been an increase in the number of people unemployed for more than a year.

Household recycling had increased but had not met the contract target.

The Annual Report also highlighted some of the projects carried out by the LSP, including the Wise & Well Campaign, Cyclefest, Canal Volunteer Scheme and Bulk Oil Purchase scheme. Projects in progress in the current year included Wildflowers and Slips, Trips & Falls.

SB commented that it was important to publicise the Annual Report, as this was a good example of the joint working in place. **ACTION: Roz Tidman**

6. Sustainable Community Strategy

Work was continuing to build up a picture of partners' plans that fed into the Strategy. It was anticipated that a draft document would be produced for September's meeting.

Daventry District Area Profile – RT advised that she was in the process of compiling the various pieces of information available. The Profile would be a living document, available on the District Council's website.

Theme Group Priorities (**attached**) – The priorities would be the focus for the Partnership over the next three years, and feed into the Strategy. Those for the Health & Wellbeing Group had been taken from Northamptonshire's Health & Wellbeing Strategy. Any comments on the priorities to be forwarded to Roz. **ACTION: ALL**

7. Any Other Business and Information Exchange

Cllr Hills reported on a recently issued Government paper stating that Daventry was 60% below the national average for pedestrian accidents.

In relation to participation in sport, Daventry was top of the table in Northamptonshire, with 36.2% of people taking part in a sporting activity. Adult participation stood at 25.6%.

A competition would take place inviting artists to design a piece of work to be installed on the Abbey Street/South Way roundabout. The design should have a historical element to it. Funding for this project had come from Ashford Developments and an Arts Council grant.

VB advised of two workshops taking place on the Investors in Environment (IiE) accreditation. There would be an opportunity to learn more about IiE along with networking opportunities for organisations considering going through the accreditation process. SB advised that Daventry District Council were looking to move from ISO14001 to IiE.

CMc advised that the Daventry Arts Festival would be taking place the first two weeks of July. This had been organised by a variety of partners, including DDH, Northampton College and Cummins. Though on a smaller scale than last year there would still be plenty of activities and workshops.

CD reported on the launch of Northamptonshire Analysis, a 'one stop shop' for providing information and intelligence about the county. The County Council were looking for more data, particularly from the voluntary and community sector, to populate the site. Partners were asked to contact NCC for more information/to supply data (email: placeinformation@northamptonshire.gov.uk).

ACTION: ALL

SB advised of the appointment of Akeem Ali as Director of Public Health for Northamptonshire. He suggested that it would be useful to extend an invitation to him for the December meeting. **ACTION: Roz Tidman**

The Police and Crime Commissioners office had agreed the appointment of Ian Britton as Chief Executive.

8. Dates of Future Meetings

17 September 2013 and 17 December 2013, 10am – 12 noon, Committee Room 1, Daventry District Council offices, Lodge Road.