



**LSP Board Meeting, 17 September 2013
Davertry District Council
10.00am – 11.55am**

Partners Present (* denotes voting member)

Carella	Davies* (Chair)	Davertry Volunteer Centre
Lynn	Aston	Davertry & District Housing
Simon	Bovey	Davertry District Council
Barry	Hanson	Northampton College
Mary	Higginson	Bromford Living
Cllr Alan	Hills*	Davertry District Council & Northamptonshire County Council
Ciara	McMillan	Davertry & District Housing
Tom	Thompson	Northamptonshire Police

Also in attendance

Mike	Harkins	Rundle & Co (for item 4)
Roz	Tidman	Davertry District Council (LSP Support)

1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Declarations

Carella Davies welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from: Cllr Liz Griffin, Dr Matthew Davies and David Hemmett

There were no declarations of interests.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 18 June 2013

a) LA advised that her apologies for the last meeting had not been recorded. The minutes were amended accordingly and then agreed as an accurate record.

b) Matters Arising

Strategic Update on Policing and Crime – SB advised that an invitation had been extended to the Police & Crime Commissioner to attend the September Board meeting, but no formal response had been received though he had verbal encouragement. The invitation would be made again. **ACTION: Simon Bovey**

EMAS – RT advised that, following investigation into potential DCLG

funding, it was considered it would not be appropriate to submit a bid. With regard to the 'Being the Best' consultation, results were expected shortly and would be circulated to partners.

3. Welfare Reform

Consideration was given to the Subgroup report.

A Welfare Reform Subgroup had been set up to identify issues and deliver initiatives to support those affected by welfare reform. The subgroup had held two productive meetings, gathering information, looking at processes and working on developing a coordinated action plan.

Under-occupancy ('bedroom tax') – 550 households affected at the beginning of April, reduced to 479 at the end of August.

Discretionary Housing Payments – Administered by DDC, 166 claims had been received between April and the end of August. £51,000 had been allocated from the budget, leaving £29,000 for the remainder of the year. A further £30,000 had been allocated to top up the fund if required. Most claims relate to the under-occupancy shortfall. Payment can be awarded for between 3-12 months. Applications have been reducing, however it was expected there would be a slight increase due to repeat requests.

Council Tax – 1020 soft reminders had been sent to those households now required to pay council tax. Of those 365 had not paid, nor made an arrangement to do so. Reminders had been sent and the process had now reached the summons stage. Cllr Hills referred to discussions at the Subgroup about housing associations receiving more advance notification of the issuing of reminders etc. so they could take action to assist their tenants. RT advised that DDC (via Alison Harris) had indicated that it was open to working closer with registered providers on this.

Housing Benefit Cap – Only a small number of households in the district were affected, however those families could lose between £10 and £96 per week.

Disability Living Allowance move to Personal Independence Payment – Changes were already in force for new claimants. From October residents currently on Disability Living Allowance would be reassessed for Personal Independent Payment.

Universal Credit – No roll out date confirmed for Daventry district, however the Pathfinder process had been rolled out in Rugby. LA advised that DDH had links with Rugby and would share information on this at the next meeting.

Action: Lynne Aston

Concerns had been raised about residents being able to access the internet to apply for Universal Credit. Jobcentre Plus had advised that 83% of those on job seekers allowance were encouraged to apply online, however this still left a large number of people who could not access the internet. There would be benefit in mapping where people were in receipt of benefits and publicising courses etc. to help them access the internet.

The Net Effect of Welfare Reform Changes – Research from Sheffield Halam University's Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research indicated a £16m loss in the district in terms of money going in to the economy.

What is being done to support residents - The cumulative effect on families was the main concern of the Subgroup. Individually organisations were doing significant work, providing support, signposting etc but a lot more could be done collectively. One issue due to be considered by the Subgroup was data sharing and potentially the development of an information sharing protocol.

TT asked if there appeared to be a link between troubled families and welfare reform. CM considered a link would be likely.

Progress on understanding the impact of welfare reform was being made by the Subgroup and it was important that this work was supported. CD commented that she found the Subgroup very useful as a networking forum. SB commented on the Terms of Reference, in particular the development of an action plan, suggesting this should take place as a matter of urgency. He also questioned whether the Police should be a core member of the Subgroup rather than co-opted. TT considered that if the Police were represented on the group this needed to be at the right level. He referred to plans to dovetail the Early Help Forums with similar meetings to avoid duplication and was concerned that the Subgroup may be duplication. TT would mention at his team meeting later in the week.

TT to be included on the circulation list for the meetings. **ACTION: Roz Tidman**

LA considered there would be benefit in overlapping benefit and crime trends to see if there was a correlation. Cllr Hills advised that overall crime was down in the district, though theft from vehicles remained an issue. TT added that the two main areas of focus for the Police were Anti Social Behaviour and Domestic Abuse. First reporting of Domestic Abuse was increasing, which was positive. RT advised that the Subgroup would look at using the Community Safety Partnerships crime statistics.

MH commented that the implementation of Universal Credit could lead to an increase in domestic violence as this was paid to one person in the household, usually the woman.

CM anticipated that the Subgroup would be a task and finish group.

4. Debt Recovery

MH from Rundle & Co gave a presentation on small debt recovery.

With the requirement for residents who had previously not been required to pay any Council Tax now having to do so, there was a need to consider debts smaller than the average referred to bailiffs. These debts were around the £100-£200 range. Bailiffs would be coming into contact with a different type of debtor and there was a need to be aware of the potential vulnerability of those people. It was important that the fees charged on a debt were not disproportionate to that debt.

Before Rundle & Co were called in the debtor would have been issued a number of warnings by the local authority. DDC would issue up to seven notifications before referring the matter to them. DDC would also look at alternative ways the resident could pay the debt eg. deductions directly from benefits, before referring to the bailiff. This was the preferred method. Debts

went to the bailiff as a last resort.

The approach by Rundle would be tailored to each individual. There were statutory fees that were charged by bailiffs plus reasonable fees. Only statutory fees would be applied for first and second visits. No enforcement fees. Arrangements would also be made to enable debtors to pay over a longer period than normal. Regular contact with the debtor would be made during the collection process.

Some authorities were not changing their debt recovery processes to take small debtors into account. Others, like Daventry, had taken a new approach.

Bailiffs were aware of vulnerable debtors, and there were national standards that provided guidance. Rundle had a specialist team to deal with these debtors, and bailiffs on the ground would look for signs of vulnerability and liaise with that person appropriately. Often goods were not removed if it was obvious that the person had very little property and could not genuinely afford to pay. The bailiff would also advise the local authority of a vulnerable resident.

Help was available for debtors via a variety of payment options, capping fees at the statutory level, direct contact etc. Rundle also worked with CABs, offering workshop type events to raise awareness of the role of bailiffs with support agencies. 20 sessions had been held since March 2013. Direct contact details for senior managers and back office staff could also be provided to CABs, so they can contact them direct rather than via the bailiff on the ground.

MH commented that she would like to see Rundle working with support providers, such as Bromford Housing and DDH, to set up payment plans with tenants. Information sharing with the local authority would also be beneficial to avoid the trauma of engaging with bailiffs or going to court. She added that it was important to set up payment plans for all debts, not just council tax.

CD asked whether Rundle's staff were trained to recognise mental health issues. MH advised that bailiffs, though their experience, could make a judgement, though it was harder to identify mental health issues.

TT requested confirmation that Rundle's employees had the necessary identification. MH confirmed that their bailiffs had the necessary certification and carried documents advising they were authorised to act on behalf of the District Council. Certificates were valid for two years and bailiffs had to re-apply via the courts. Certificates could also be reviewed by the court if complaints against a bailiff were received.

5. Health & Wellbeing Partnership Board

The Board (the LSP's theme group), which met on a quarterly basis, chaired by CM, were continuing to progress action against three priorities. In addition, the recording of all work being carried out by agencies was also being undertaken.

During the last quarter the Board looked at how the local Health & Wellbeing Partnership Board linked to the County Board, particularly in light of the launch of the Government's Integrated Transformation Fund (£3.8b nationally) and the importance of raising awareness of local priorities and accessing the Fund. CM was attending County meetings, as an observer. Cllr Millar (DDC) and David Kennedy (KBC) represented district and borough councils on the County Board and were keen to ensure priorities from local boards were fed through to county

level, however they did not represent local boards as such. There was no direct representation for local boards on the County Board.

At the last local Board meeting Cllr Chris Long spoke about the work of Danetre Hospital and the Board were supportive of his efforts to promote the hospital. An update was also received from Nene Commissioning. The Board responded individually and as a group to consultations on the Podiatry service and Favell House.

The December meeting would look again at the Board's priorities and a meeting with all agencies was being planned to see what key activities could be done together, as a project. The Board was well represented by key partners, but it was disappointing that there was no representation on the County Board.

CD suggested communicating with Cllr Millar and David Kennedy to get things raised, but acknowledged that there was no direct link or standard template for local Boards to feed in to the County Board.

One local issue was around the proposed closure of Longlands in Daventry. There was no guarantee that this would be discussed at county level as it may not be considered a key issue. It was hoped that Cllr Millar or David Kennedy may take this up. The consultation on Longlands, which was due to close at the end of September, had been forwarded to the Board.

6. Draft Sustainable Community Strategy

Consideration was given to the draft Daventry District Community Strategy 2014-18. The 2010 Strategy had been used as the starting point, retaining the Vision and Priorities, building on the existing content and using the latest data from the census, surveys and information from key partners. Actions Plans would be separate as these were updated regularly during the life of the Strategy.

Public consultation on the document was key. It was intended to engage parish councils and the wider community, as well as stakeholders. The consultation period would run from 1 November 2013 to 24 January 2014, reporting to the March LSP Board meeting, then to the District Council's Strategy Group meeting in April, then Full Council in May.

It was recognised by partners that organisations were suffering from consultation fatigue, and it was requested that the consultation take the form of a very simple questionnaire. CM suggested that partners commit to getting a specified number of questionnaire completed and returned from their organisations, however SB expressed caution as such narrow targeted responses could be sent back just for the sake of it. He added that he did not want to see anything unduly biased. Instead the positive promotion of the consultation by partners was suggested by CD and supported by SB.

7. NCC Consultation Voluntary and Community Sector Support and Development (Infrastructure) Provision

In July the voluntary and community sector were consulted on their views on how infrastructure services should look in the future. Information from that consultation generated this subsequent one, which outlined the proposed structure and framework for new infrastructure support and service delivery for the county. The results of the consultation would see different arrangements for infrastructure support in the future, with one central county-wide organisation commissioning services. One concern about this new arrangement was that NCC could be tempted to cut its budget, meaning less could be delivered locally.

The consultation closes on 18 October, and individuals as well as organisations could respond. Cllr Hills suggested that the LSP respond, in addition to partners. This was supported. **AGREED: Comments on the consultation to be forwarded to Roz Tidman for collation/circulation/submission by the 14th October. ACTION: ALL**

8. Any Other Business and Information Exchange

Cllr Hills reported on the following:-

Following the NCC Youth Ambition Awards in July a celebration campaign had just been launched to inspire young people to achieve their potential. Fronted by winners of the awards the campaign would include billboard and bus shelter adverts and posters.

A Stay Strong Go Steady event would be taking place on 19 September at Moulton parish church.

DDC and Daventry Town Council held a very successful family cinema event at Daventry Country Park on 27 July.

The Skate Park and New Street play area recently opened.

The second Daventry Triathlon took place on 1 September, with 300 participants attending. The winner completed the course in 59 minutes and 17 seconds.

This year's Sports Awards are taking place on 17 October at the Leisure Centre. Rob White, Captain of the English Handball Team, will be the guest speaker.

LA advised that DDH's schemes to replace a number of Airey houses at Barby and Crick had been completed and were being handed over to tenants.

DDH's offices would be closed on 20 September as they were holding their Make a Difference Day. All staff would be taking part in community events.

Following the removal of NCC's Supporting People Fund, all elderly DDH tenants had been invited to a number of consultation events to make them aware that they would now be responsible for funding their own support. Around 1000 tenants were affected.

DDH's Star Awards would be taking place on 11 December at the Daventry Court Hotel. The awards were a way of recognising the work people were doing in the community; unsung heroes. Nominations close on 30 September.

RT reported on this year's successful Cyclefest, held on 3 August at the Country Park. Over 240 people attended.

Development of the Wildflower Project was continuing, with a possible link to World War I commemorative events. Potential areas of planting were being explored. Cllr Hills advised that commemoration events would run from 4 March 2014 through to Remembrance Day.

Environment Theme Group – It was noted that this Theme Group had struggled with attendance and direction over recent months. SB commented that a solution needed to be found to maintain the future of the Group, and called for a proposition to be provided to the next meeting. **ACTION: Roz Tidman.**

8. Date of Next Meeting

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