

MINUTES OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

9th December 2009

9.30 am, Hereford Room, Plough Lane, Hereford

List of Attendees:

Cllr. Roger Phillips – Leader, Herefordshire Council (Chair)
Chris Bull – Herefordshire Council & NHS Herefordshire
Joanna Newton – NHS Herefordshire
Will Lindesay – Voluntary Sector
Philip Talbot – Voluntary Sector
Richard Gething – HALC
Lucy Philips – Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service
Sharon Menghini – Children’s Trust
Rob Garner – Environment Policy and Delivery Group
Geoff Hughes – Stronger Communities Policy and Delivery Group
Dr Akeem Ali – Health and Wellbeing Policy and Delivery Group
Angela Smith – Economic Development Policy and Delivery Group
Kevin Purcell – Safer Communities Policy and Delivery Group
Philip Weaver – Job Centre Plus
Mike Ashton – Chamber of Commerce
Helen Braithwaite – Government Office West Midlands
Ian Edwards – Advantage West Midlands

Apologies:

Mark Turner (Kevin Purcell representing)
Cllr Brig Peter Jones – (Lucy Phillips representing)

In attendance:

Chris Bucknell – Herefordshire Partnership Support Team
Jane Jones – Herefordshire Partnership Support Team
Gaby Wright (Strategic Partnership Manager, West Mercia Police)
Cllr J Jarvis – For item 4
Peter Yates – For item 4
Alan Ronald – For item 6

1. Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

Cllr Phillips welcomed everyone to the meeting and proposed that Item 5 (Comprehensive Area Assessment) should be brought forward to be the first Item on the Agenda.

5. Comprehensive Area Assessment

The CAA press release in respect of Herefordshire was circulated. There were no red or green flags. The CAA reflected the position of where we are as an organisation, which was a huge credit to partnership working in Herefordshire.

Board members were urged to visit the Oneplace website (www.direct.gov.uk/oneplace) which provides an independent overview of local public services across the country.

Children and Young People's services were particularly noted for their achievement in improvement. It was also noted that Herefordshire was one of the few authorities where the Fire and Rescue service were included and mentioned at this level and this had been recognised nationally.

Members were reminded that CAA is work in progress and the requirement for continual self-evaluation was reiterated. Members were also advised to look at other areas to see how they compare and what can be learnt.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

These were agreed as a correct record. It was agreed that they would now appear on the Herefordshire Partnership website www.herefordshirepartnership.com under Herefordshire Partnership / Minutes of Meetings.

3. Matters arising not on the agenda

Appointment of Vice Chairs

The two Vice Chairs were announced as Mike Ashton and Will Lindesay.

Will Lindesay wished it to be noted that it would be appropriate for the new Chair of the Third Sector Board (to be appointed) to take his seat on the HP Board.

4. Local Development Framework (LDF)

Cllr Jarvis and Peter Yates presented an update on the LDF consultation document, the options therein and the significance of the LDF to all Partners. It was noted that there needs to be full engagement and understanding of the process. A briefing schedule was circulated, but it was explained that this is being updated almost daily. The importance of engagement with public / community and business sectors was emphasised.

Hereford will grow, and how this is communicated will be vital. The links between homes/jobs and infrastructure were stated, particularly the opportunities for employment. However, the need to resolve the issue of traffic congestion in the City remains a priority.

Appropriate membership for the LDF was important, and those who had previously expressed an interest (Fire, Environment) reiterated their enthusiasm to support. Additionally, expressions of interest to be involved were voiced by Children & Young People, Chamber/ FSB and Health and Well-being.

Cllr Jarvis suggested that it would be beneficial to invite certain people at certain times, so that the group does not become too large and remains focussed on specific issues at any one time.

The importance of re-aligning strategies to dovetail with this process was noted. There were also questions around population planning and whether this might attract more younger people to the County. It was agreed that this remains an unknown factor. West Mercia offered a variety

of up-to-date information, which could prove useful, for example an understanding of where vulnerable people live locally.

The consultation period ends on 12th March 2010.

BREAK

6. Broadband in Herefordshire and Economic Update

Phil Weaver presented some statistics in relation to the local economic situation, which generally appear favourable for Herefordshire. The most recent County employment rate is 79.2% (West Midlands 71%). Recorded redundancies have decreased. The vacancy rate in Hereford remains fairly stable, in Leominster it has increased, but in Rodd it has decreased. There is a continued need to concentrate on unemployment in the younger (16-25) age group, and a number of initiatives be directed at this (e.g. Young person Guarantee which offers a job / training / placement and will be mandatory from April 2010).

The Chair commented on the welcome investment for young people in terms of acquiring a work ethic.

Jo Newton reported on the increased use of the Apprenticeship Scheme in the NHS.

Philip Talbot asked for the over 50's to be remembered, as it is increasingly difficult for those who are made redundant to gain re-employment at that age.

Kevin Purcell commented that, contrary to what might be expected during a downturn in the economy, the crime rate in Herefordshire continues to fall.

Alan Ronald presented a paper designed to open up a debate on future Broadband provision for Herefordshire. A coloured map had been circulated indicating prevalence across the County. The need for good Broadband as a tool for businesses was emphasised, particularly for smaller businesses wishing to market their product. The views and comments of Board members were welcomed.

Mike Ashton commented on the two vital issues for the Herefordshire economy – transport and communications. Responding to a question from Angela Smith, Alan Ronald commented that BT is only obliged to rectify crowded exchanges. Lucy Philips asked whether, if Broadband was now viewed as a basic utility, whether BT representation shouldn't be included in the LDF process. Ian Edwards reported on a European funded programme involving Tenbury, Leominster and Ludlow. Should this prove successful it may be used as a future model.

Realistic expectation of what can be achieved in a sparsely populated County was acknowledged. Dr Ali asked that business consider possibilities beyond BT, and the Chief Executive pointed out that BT is only likely to undertake commercially viable options.

It was reported that there is a shortlist of three suppliers to provide Rotherwas with its required standard. This should be "live" around March/April 2010.

7. Herefordshire Local Access Forum

Richard Gething gave a presentation on the work and duties of a Local Access Forum which is a statutory body and comprises a wide membership including users and landowners.

The positive impact of access to open spaces on the County's health and economy were stated.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan had been produced which suggested, amongst other areas, greater access to water, e.g. River Wye. The Fire and Rescue Service commented on the potential dangers posed to the public by increased access to a dangerous river, and this as reiterated by the Chair. The Fire and Rescue Service would wish to be included on any discussions which may lead to greater river access.

The poor equestrian provision in the County was noted (e.g. lack of bridleways). Other counties cash in on this and recognise it as a potential source of income, e.g. through tourism. A similar comment was made in respect of mountain biking.

8. Items for Information

Will Lindsey distributed information regarding the Third Sector Forum on 10th February 2010 to be held at the Kindle Centre www.thevsa.org.uk

Mike Ashton stated that the Chamber organise a number of events to which Partner organisations might like to make the use of opportunities to promote their work through the business community.

Connecting Communities

Chris Bucknell reported on a recent submission for funds under the Connecting Communities scheme, involving South Wye Regeneration Partnership, Herefordshire Housing Limited, West Mercia Police and Herefordshire Partnership for community projects in the South Wye/Golden Post areas. Chris reported on the impressive speed with which the application had been dealt with by Government Office. Specific information on the nature of the projects was discussed.

Note: Subsequent to the Board meeting we have received notification of success in respect of this bid.

The Chair thanked Chris Bucknell for all her hard work throughout the previous sixteen months, and acknowledge the substantial strides Herefordshire Partnership in general and the Board in particular had made during that time. Julie Gethin would take up her post on January 4th and would therefore attend the next Board meeting.

9. Any other business

There was none declared

10. Date of next Meeting

2.00pm Monday 8th February 2010, Hereford Room, Plough Lane, Hereford.