

MINUTES OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

8th February 2010

2.00 pm, 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
Cllr Mrs June French - Cabinet Member
Will Lindesay – Voluntary Sector (Vice Chair)
Philip Talbot – Voluntary Sector
Richard Gething – Herefordshire Association of Local Councils
Lucy Philips – Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service
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
Kevin Purcell – Safer Communities Policy and Delivery Group
Mike Dzioba – Job Centre Plus
Mike Ashton – Chamber of Commerce
Ian Edwards - Advantage West Midlands
Helen Braithwaite – Government Office West Midlands

Apologies:

Mark Turner - (Kevin Purcell representing)
Cllr Brig Peter - Jones – (Lucy Phillips representing)
Angela Smith – Economic Development and Enterprise Policy and Delivery Group
Sharon Menghini – Children and Young People Policy and Delivery Group
Phil Weaver – Job Centre Plus (Mike Dzioba representing)

In attendance:

Julie Gethin - Head of Partnership Support
Chris Bucknell - Herefordshire Partnership
Jane Jones - Herefordshire Partnership
Natalia Silver - Herefordshire Council (for agenda item 4)
Philippa Lydford - Herefordshire Partnership (for agenda item 5)
Sheila Thompson - Herefordshire Council (for agenda item 5)
Mark July - Natural England (for agenda item 6)

1. Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

Cllr Phillips welcomed everyone to the meeting and requested that attendees introduce themselves

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting, held on 9th December 2009, were agreed as a true record.

3. Matters arising not on the agenda

The Board was given an update on the Local Development Framework and the consultation being undertaken. Organisations wishing to have a presentation on the LDF consultation should contact Geoff Hughes. The strategic significance of the LDF and its implications for the future of Herefordshire to 2026 were reiterated, and communities across Herefordshire are encouraged to comment as the LDF will define the future development of Herefordshire.

The Chair emphasised the need to create more and better paid jobs for the county and for this to happen successfully the infrastructure needs to be right.

4. Economic Recovery Plan

Mike Dzioba briefly updated Board members on the most recent employment statistics, which appeared to be showing some positive signs. Applications for Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) had decreased, even allowing for seasonal trends. Vacancies appeared to be increasing.

A number of employment initiatives, particularly aimed at the younger unemployed, were detailed including Backing Young Britain which offers the opportunity of a job, or work experience, or an apprenticeship, and the 18-24 Initiative which takes effect when someone has been unemployed for more than 6 months. This also offers the guarantee of a job or training, or meaningful activity, and participation will be mandatory from April this year.

Natalia Silver gave a brief overview of the Economic Recovery plan which had previously been circulated. A separate sheet – Fighting the downturn achievements – was tabled. The emphasis was very much directed at *enabling* business and the organisational power of the partnership was noted, particularly through planning, payments and procurement.

Sheila Thompson reported on the success of the Jobs Fair which 800 people had attended. The cross-partner agencies involved had provided valuable support for those seeking employment and a similar event had been requested, to be held in the Spring. Support with skills such as writing a c.v. and interviewing techniques had been well received. It had not been possible to gauge the number of attendees who had subsequently gained employment, but this would be tracked in future.

A discussion took place around promoting the “good news” stories of those who had gained employment, to encourage others and to promote employment initiatives. Job Centre Plus had used this approach previously, but consent needs to be obtained from individuals and, for whatever reason, that is not always forthcoming.

It was noted that partner agencies need to align key media messages to ensure consistency, particularly around “perception”. It was also suggested that alternative methods of communicating with the public (other than the local press/radio) might need to be pursued, and the target audience examined, to ensure the most appropriate methods are used.

The Fire and Rescue service reported a slight rise in factory fires in the last quarter. This is unusual activity and will be monitored closely.

NHS Herefordshire reported success in implementing swift payment times and the promotion of the Apprenticeship scheme.

A question was raised in relation to the figure for those claiming out of work benefit in the County, not just Jobseekers Allowance. It was reported that 10.2% of working age population is on some sort of out of work benefit, which has risen from 8.6% in February 2008.

The requirement for a continued and sustained effort relating access to and capacity of Broadband in Herefordshire was emphasised.

The effects of the economic downturn had not been experienced in health, as might have been expected. Although there had been a slight increase in GP and hospital contacts, the usual “worklessness” illnesses had not been reported locally. The resilience of local people was noted.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce Business Expo will take place on Wednesday 3rd March at Hereford Leisure Centre from 8.30 – 6.00.

For more information visit www.hwchamber.co.uk/bizexpo

5. Pride of Herefordshire Awards 2010

Philippa Lydford and Sheila Thompson explained the background to the Awards and that, having run the Awards ceremony for three years, it was time to review and evaluate, prior to embarking on this year’s scheme. There was recognition that although the Pride of Herefordshire Awards were Herefordshire Partnership badged, there had not been a great deal of scope for the Board to get involved. However this year it was hoped that Partner organisations, through Board members, might feel able to engage more fully, and Philippa and Sheila would welcome comments and suggestions to develop and improve. With Board approval, a provisional date of 20th October 2010 had been set.

Board members were unanimous in their support of the Awards scheme, although Cllr French commented that she did not feel that a raffle or auction might be appropriate at what was essentially a community event. Discussion took place about opportunities for promoting the scheme through Partner organisation buildings and staff, and a request was given in respect of suggestions for “performers” and a key speaker. Herefordshire Partnership would be pleased to receive any such suggestions.

The Chair asked if everyone was happy to accept the 5 Recommendations.

The Board accepted the Recommendations set out in the Paper, with the exception of the development of charitable fundraising opportunities.

6. Carbon Reduction

Rob Garner and Mark July gave a presentation on Carbon Reduction. Herefordshire Partnership is overtly engaged with the carbon reduction agenda, but there is poor data available on the subject and, despite the lack of clarity of data, there is clear evidence to suggest that N.I. 186 (Per capita reduction in CO2 emissions) will not be achieved.

Increasing resources are being directed to the Carbon Reduction agenda, but additional resources may need to be identified in order to “tap into” that wider availability.

Co-ordination of activity has not been achieved thus far and although there are individual targets, there is a lack of data assembly. There is a need to engage communities and businesses, and one route to rectify this is through the Chamber of Commerce and a list of questions to be directed towards Chief Executives was tabled.

The impact of farming and other land-users is particularly significant in this County.

A Paper was tabled and discussed. The Transition Movement, Peak Oil and Herefordshire's New Leaf Initiative were explained. For more information on these please visit the following websites:

www.transitiontowns.org

www.peakoilfordummies.com

www.herefordshirenewleaf.org.uk

A roundtable discussion ensued and it was agreed that larger organisations, including those present, must work more collaboratively to reduce carbon emissions. Although there may be a perception that the subject is too big for any individual to make a significant impact, collective, practical solutions would make a difference.

The Chair commented that the increasing cost of fuel might prove to be the significant driver towards a decrease in consumption by business.

The PCT commented that the desire to do the right thing environmentally was not always an easy option, and cited a recent healthcare development which had been thwarted in its attempts to use environmentally-friendly equipment. The need to ensure involvement by HHT was reiterated.

The voluntary sector also cited difficulties which had arisen at a local scheme which, whilst at face value had appeared beneficial, had in practical terms presented problems for the very people it had aimed to serve. The need to refer to those "at the coal face" was reiterated.

West Mercia Police commented on the value of running a staff suggestions scheme, through which front-line staff make valuable observations on the capacity to adopt environmentally-friendly procedures.

This was reiterated by the Chief Executive who commented on the options of (for example) reducing travel miles by implementing telephone conferencing.

The importance of participation in the forthcoming Climate Change workshop to be held on Tuesday, 16th March starting at 1.00 pm in the Council Chamber at Brockington, Hereford was emphasised.

It was suggested and agreed that each Policy and Delivery Group should bring three offers of action to the Climate Change Workshop.

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7. Community Led Planning

In the absence of the presenter it had been agreed to defer this presentation to a subsequent Board meeting.

8. Sustainable Community Strategy

Julie Gethin outlined the rationale behind the subsequent work which had taken place to the document previously seen by Board members. In particular, the document now contained significantly more detail regarding "story of place". With the approval of the Board, the timetable for completion of the Sustainable Community Strategy would be for it to go to Cabinet in February and full Council in March.

The Board agreed the Recommendation that the document, with its recent updates, should proceed as per the suggested timetable. In addition the document should stand for 12 months only, until it is significantly reviewed.

9. Partnership Development Plan

Julie Gethin talked through the paper which had previously been circulated. In particular she asked the Board to agree that the Partnership should focus on the following key areas:

- Responding to the recession
- Community engagement and empowerment
- Climate change
- Third sector
- Health and well being
- Reputation management

The Partnership should concentrate on what it is doing collectively and collaboratively. In addition consideration needs to be given in respect of how the work of the Partnership is supported, both by the Support Team and other sources.

The Partnership Development Plan was agreed and accepted.

10. Item for Information – Report on HP Management Group

Chris Bucknell offered a brief overview of the most recent HP Management Group. It was agreed that reporting performance should continue to be by exception.

A discussion took place around the commitment of future funding, and a request was made for clarification regarding the arrangements for delegation of authority to Management Group in respect of the Area Based Grant.

It was agreed that a Report on the Management Group should be a regular item for information and that Red and Amber Indicators should be circulated to Board members.

Note – Red / Amber indicators circulated as agreed on Tuesday 9th 2010.

11. Any other business

The Chair wished to draw to Board members' attention the forthcoming Blind Football Championships 14th - 22nd August 2010 to be held at the RNC, Hereford.

For more information please visit www.blind2010.com

Jo Newton raised the success of the recent Change Champion programme, and suggested this might be rolled out as a cross - partner initiative.

12. Date of next Meeting

2.00pm Monday 24th May 2010, Hereford Room, Plough Lane, Hereford.