

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL BOARDS

### NOTES OF MEETING GRAVESHAM EAST NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Date: Tuesday, 20 January 2009

Venue:

#### **Present:**

##### **GBC Members**

Cllr John Cubitt – Chairman

Cllr Bronwen McGarrity

Cllr Greta Goatley

Cllr Leslie Hills

Cllr Pat Oakeshott

Cllr Lyn Milner

Cllr Richard Smith

Cllr Lee Croxton

Cllr John Caller

Cllr David Hurley

Cllr William Lambert

Cllr Samir Jassal

##### **KCC Members**

Mrs Maureen Newell - KCC member for Gravesham East

Mrs Jane Cribbon – KCC member for Gravesham East

##### **Officers present (presenters)**

Debra Exall Head of Strategic Policy, Kent County Council

Vicki Hubert Senior Transport Planner at KCC

Palminder Sandher, Public Transport Planner KCC

Sarah Knight Gravesham Borough Council

Liz Read Gravesham Borough Council

Mick Maynard Gravesham Borough Council

Michelle Bridges Gravesham Borough Council

Vinay Sanga, locality manager KASS

Carol Infanti, planning manager from West Kent Adult Social Services

**24 others** including local residents and representatives from the volunteer centre, KCC Libraries, Age Concern, Northfleet Active Retirement Association.

<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome - Cllr John Cubitt (Chair)</b>
	The Chairman, Cllr John Cubitt welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave some background on the Forum meetings
<b>2.</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
	None
<b>3.</b>	<b>Any declarations of interest</b>
	None
<b>4.</b>	<b>Later Life Strategy</b>

Tuesday, 20 January 2009

**Debra Exall, Head of Strategic Policy, KCC**, gave a presentation on Kent's Later Life Strategy. It is out for consultation and summarises how people in Kent want to live their later lives and what they want from public and community services and facilities. People are living longer, healthier lives and we have more old people. Old people are the backbone of our communities, such as volunteers, carers and some still in paid employment. Some worry about the demographic time-bomb. The population is ageing but there are lots of good things about that. We need to grasp those opportunities and look at the implications and make sure we are preparing for people who will need support but understand that many older people do not need care and support and in fact they are giving the support.

Within the community, the council, fire, police and volunteer sector, we have been talking to residents in Kent about what should be in our strategy for later life and we are about to publish the over-arching strategy. Seven things have come out of the consultation:

1. Ensuring communities are designed to be strong and sustainable so people are included and have opportunities.
2. Transport and accessibility – this was a major issue for a lot of older people who are no longer car drivers.
3. Leading healthier lives and better access to healthcare.
4. Supporting older people's citizenship, learning and part in community life.
5. Ensuring those people who need support can live independently.
6. Encouraging people to plan for future life i.e. financial planning and looking ahead.
7. Perception and how to promote positive image of old age and more respect and encouraging inter-generational activities.

The process the public services are going through is identifying what activities we already have and identifying any gaps of what we need to do more of, to come up with an action plan over a three year period. We have not defined the age of an older person, but the government talks about older people being 50+.

Older people's services are across the board and through the strategy we wanted to highlight to all service providers the particular needs and requirements of older people rather than setting up something separate. We are raising the profile of older people's champions and how we can evidence that older people are being heard and listened to. The older people's champions will feed into this. Each district will have its own champion who will meet with chairs of pensioners' forums etc. An older people's handbook is being worked on.

Within a week or so we will publish the design draft strategy and that should not change that much.

The more specific interest for this Forum will be the action plan as that will be done on a district by district basis. This is the beginning of a process and will carry on and we are getting better at listening to the voices of older residents.

How is it going to be funded? Public services in Kent spend huge amounts of money so it is not about identifying additional resources as particularly in the current economic climate local government will have less money. This is about making sure we are getting the best out of the resources we have rather than additional resources,

Tuesday, 20 January 2009

	<p>but that does not prohibit us doing different things – we can re-focus things on what we identify as a need in the area we are living. It is an opportunity of communicating with the local constituents and getting their input to shape the way in which the finances we have can address the needs.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Keeping active and engaged</b>
	<p><b>Topic 1 – Keeping active and engaged</b> <b>Sarah Knight and Liz Read from Gravesham Borough Council</b> and the Volunteer Bureau were available to discuss how to encourage older people to keep active and involved, including volunteering, life long learning, healthy living activities, leisure opportunities. were present to answer questions.</p> <p>The group were advised of the various activities available to encourage people to keep active and get out of the house.</p> <p><b>Issues raised</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Many believed that swimming should be free for older people/retired. It was stated by GBC that this was coming soon.</li><li>• Information sent to the Northara (Northfleet Active Retirement Association) often arrives too late to get out for their monthly meeting. Most ARAs meet monthly.</li><li>• ‘Your Borough’ needs a new section that is always put aside for information on leisure activities and keeping active e.g. when there is free swimming will be good. Everyone thought a newsletter for the elderly would be useful, showing people what is on i.e. bingo, trips and exercise groups. We could use people who visit the elderly, such as wardens, to be proactive and spread the news of what events are taking place.</li><li>• In Westcourt area, for example, not everyone can actually read. A magazine is good but not very helpful for people who cannot read. Word of mouth is often more effective.</li><li>• Many people actually do not want to get involved in activities – what can you do? Gravesham Borough Council is looking at subsidising and promoting activities for those who are not active.</li><li>• What about simple things like ‘Whist drives’ and scrabble matches? Northara do play Wrist and scrabble for example</li><li>• It was agreed generally that there were plenty of activities going on in the Borough but that transport was an issue, e.g. to Country parks e.g. Shorne, Jeskins were not accessible and difficult from rural areas.</li><li>• Gyms -reduced costs for use of these facilities would be an added incentive.</li><li>• The possibility of self help walking groups who walk in country parks (naturally active groups) are very helpful. However, this may only work for those who are already active.</li><li>• The price of food at Shorne Country Park was brought up – do older people get a subsidy as the food is expensive?. The response was that you got a free cup of tea if you go walking at Shorne.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crime and fear of crime and personal safety was also an issue as some older residents are scared to leave their houses. Perhaps activities should be taken to people in their houses and where they are. The issue of crime was linked to this – if someone has been burgled this can stop them wanting to leave the house. The Westcourt newsletter was mentioned and the use of schools to make activities more community based was suggested.</li> <li>• It was agreed that there was a need for community based activities. Important for hard to reach groups but that this could not always be provided by commercial provision.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Transport and accessibility</b></p>
	<p><b>Topic 2 Transport and accessibility</b>  <b>Vicki Hubert, Senior Transport Planner at KCC</b> talked about how transport and accessibility can be improved to help older people access vital local services. In particular, the following questions were asked;          Does public transport in this area get you to the key services you need access to, such as healthcare, food stores and social activities? Can you walk to the bus stop easily? Are there enough drop kerbs, benches, bus shelters etc?</p> <p><b>Issues raised</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorne Country Park was discussed. The group were disappointed that no public transport goes there. The officer from KCC explained that there will be a new service, the 416 and the 417, which is a KCC subsidised route and will start on 1 February.</li> <li>• Concerns were raised about difficulty in getting to hospital. The group were advised that they could use the North West Kent Dial-a-ride service. This service can be used if the passenger has a medical condition that makes travelling by public transport difficult, or by anyone that lives more than 500m from a conventional bus route. Many people had not heard of the scheme and someone raised the issue that many people would not fit the criteria and that the service was still too expensive for many. Access to the travel websites was also raised as an issue, as many older people do not have access to the internet.  <i>For queries about the Dial-a-ride service, please call KCC Transport Integration team on 01622 605349.</i></li> <li>• The Volunteer Centre also has drivers who charge per mile.</li> <li>• Several issues were raised about bus passes, and how safe bus shelters were. Some older people were afraid to go out because of the behaviour of some young people at the bus stops.</li> <li>• The general consensus was that the frequency of buses was in itself bad, but also that many buses were cancelled without any notice or they just did not turn up. Many older people could not get onto the buses easily because of a lack of raised kerbs at the bus stop. This issue also affects parents with pushchairs. A lack of services back to villages later in the day was also an</li> </ul>

Tuesday, 20 January 2009

issue. For example, the latest return service for route 455 from Singlewell Road is 2:45 pm.

- Concerns were raised about the lack of public transport to and from Higham and the poor state of pavements in the village.
- The bus service to and from Chalk was also mentioned as being poor, unless you are willing to walk virtually out of Chalk and down to the Lion Garage to catch the bus. The bus service does not run on Sundays and stops early in the evenings. When people do not have access to private cars, public transport is the only option. Officers were asked whether KCC and the bus operators worked together to improve services. Officers responded that KCC do have an input and do assist in funding some services that would not be commercially viable to run otherwise.
- The group felt there was a poor transport service in some of Gravesham's more rural areas. Enjoying an evening at Woodville Halls is not possible for many, as the last bus leaves Gravesend long before performances finish. Even though a lot of older people still drive, many do not like driving in the dark. Also there is no Sunday service. One member of the public felt that the buses on a Sunday were always old and dirty, and that people in rural areas were treated badly. They asked for someone from KCC and the bus company to ride the bus at these times to see how bad it could be.
- Comments were made about the fact that the bus service for older people was free and that this was a good thing. Fastrack was agreed to be an improvement. Minibuses were not popular as people with mobility problems were unable to board easily.
- Bus shelters were seen by the group as outdated and often vandalised or in a poor state. Many people said that the bus shelters should be updated or replaced and that any bus shelters that had been removed, (i.e. in Valley Drive) should be replaced, as some older people found this unnerving. Shelters were also a concern for the residents of Chalk.
- Someone asked about concessionary prices on trains and if KCC had any influence here. The response was that KCC approach the train companies regularly about this issue, but so far have been unsuccessful.
- Other concerns and suggestions:
  - Pavements should be repaired so that people can walk safely for all or part of their journey.
  - People at work have problems getting the bus from the station after 6pm.
  - Cars parked at bus stops make it difficult for the bus driver to bring the vehicle right to the kerb. KCC are working on this by installing bus clearways which prevent any vehicle but the bus parking in that location
  - One person commented that they lived in the town and there was no problem with public transport

<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Housing and accommodation</b></p>
	<p><b>Topic 3 - Housing and accommodation</b>  <b>Mick Maynard and Michelle Bridges from Gravesham Borough Council</b> talked about what the housing of the present and future needs to be like, to ensure people can live independently and for longer. Working closely with KCC Occupational Therapists to assess needs, working with home improvement agency, dealing with energy efficiency matters, government grants etc.</p> <p>Also GBC are responsible for looking after the estates side of needs, residents living in council housing and also sheltered housing, some have resident wardens or visiting wardens. GBC are looking closely at adaptations to encourage people to stay in their own homes and live independent lives. Working with KASS Social Services to assess where homes can be adapted.</p> <p>The ‘Warm front’ scheme offers up to £2700 for replacement boilers. We do offer Warm front top-up scheme. If 65+ the Gravesham scheme is non-means tested but there is limited funding at this time of year. We also have a handyman service.</p> <p>Choice Based Lettings scheme starting on 27 April 2009– people will be able to bid for properties.</p> <p><b>Issues raised</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there any intention to increase the sheltered housing schemes? GBC are not looking at building any more but as things change and we will look at sheltered housing services, as reviews come up. If GBC were to establish there was a greater need they would look to address this</li> <li>• The problem is trying to help older people keep their independence but ensuring they are safe. With the advancement of technology GBC now have Telecare alarm systems and radar detection installed which enable a community care person to be contacted in the event of an emergency. Personal alarms for older people helps to enable them to live longer, but the provision of equipment is needs based only.</li> <li>• Older people are sometimes proud and unwilling to move, making them reluctant to ask for support.</li> <li>• There is a fine line between adapting larger houses so people can remain independent and providing alternative but more suitable accommodation. Sheltered accommodation can be good as it provides a community hall and social contact. Older peoples’ gated communities can be in the form of blocks that are assigned for older people, some have managers or wardens.</li> <li>• People were scared of bringing transfer up as they might be taken off the list. However it was made clear that anyone can apply for a transfer. How can a more effective two way dialogue be established between Council and people?</li> <li>• How to reach isolated or hard to reach people? Could there be opportunities to improve contact and dialogue at places such GP surgeries, medical centres, libraries, Post Offices and vet surgeries.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A suggestion was made about cutting down on the amount of paperwork that was required to get any form of help as this was beyond many older people.</li> <li>• Local and central government grants for energy efficiency measures are complex and in a muddle. There are so many and it is very complex.</li> <li>• Kent energy centre now known as ESTAL. There is a free phone number for advice.</li> <li>• Home insulation and boiler replacements – it seems like the left hand doesn't know that the right hand is doing at Gravesham Borough Council.</li> </ul>
<b>8.</b>	<b>The future of care services</b>
	<p><b>Vinay Sanga, locality manager and Carol Infanti, planning manager from West Kent Adult Social Services</b> discussed services to care and help older people stay in their own homes and stay independent.</p> <p>Vinay Sangar introduced why KASS is changing and how          There is a range of government legislation and factors that is leading to the modernisation of social services. UK statistics          £8 billion is spent in the UK on personalised care          £3 billion on long term care          36% increase in elderly population          55% of older people will need high care and have long term conditions .          Society has moved on and public expectations have changed. It is right that everyone should have a choice over their our lives. KASS is changing in a major way, in the way we are structured and the way we deliver services to our customers in the community. The team here all part of a larger area in West Kent. KASS will have three localities in North Kent. Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley will become one locality and everything will be done in a more inter-agency way in order to make the service quicker.</p> <p>KASS have created a new team called “Kent Contact Assessment Team” who will be able to provide you with what you need almost straight away. A visit will be arranged afterwards to see if things are working. Small basic needs items will be sent out quickly. If the need is greater it will come down to the locality to a team called the “Assessment and Enablement Team”. They will then send qualified professionals to do a detailed assessment and then decide what the person’s needs are. Previously the care manager would do the assessment and arrange the care package and it would carry on. What the government wants to do is minimise dependency of older people and maximise their independence (enablement). KASS will give them as much service as they need to make them as independent as possible, say within six weeks, to try and make them functional so the person becomes independent.</p> <p>At this stage assessment will include provision of an individual budget. You have the choice to take that money and spend it on the open market and buy the homecare from wherever you wish. Your normal benefits are not stopped. After your budget is sorted out and enablement has been done, if you need on-going care from social services it goes to the next team, “The co-ordination team”. They will help you on a long-term basis by continuing to support you through that period, however if things become drastically different it can be sent back to the Assessment Team, so there is</p>

	<p>flexibility.</p> <p>KASS are aiming to support people at home, so they do not need to go into long-term residential homes, to give them choice, dignity and control over their lives. It will be in place by September/October 2009.</p> <p><b>Issues raised</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The new system needs to be simple, easy and gentle and hopefully tailored to meet the needs of those applying. Call centres needed to be easy to use and understand, some people were likely to ‘switch off’, especially with push button options. The response was given that it was based on real people in real time.</li><li>• If someone was assessed and found that the assessment could the process be stopped and a review started straight away? The answer was given that the main emphasis of the changes was that people did not get lost in a jungle of bureaucracy.</li><li>• Doctors surgeries should provide services for preventable medicine in Gravesham however in some places it is difficult to see a doctor</li><li>• Mental health issues – lady herself won’t call. However KASS say that she needs to come in and ask for help, but she won’t call. This is a real difficulty as when you are not well choice is the last thing on your mind.</li></ul> <p>Will every person on street know what is on offer and where will the directory of services be? KACAS will have information on the web</p>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Any other business</b>