

**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Thanet Local Board**

**Wednesday, 31 March 2010**

**Margate Media Centre, 11-13 King Street, Margate, Kent CT9 1DA**

**Present: Local Board Members:** Robert Bayford, Robert Burgess, Bill, Hayton (Chairman), Elizabeth Green, Charles Hibberd, Michael Jarvis, John Kirby, Chris Wells

**KCC Officers:** Anne Charman (Community Engagement Manager, Thanet)

Apologies were received from Roy Wade

<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome to the meeting – Mr Bill Hayton, Chairman</b>
	<p>Mr Hayton welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>All county councillors present introduced themselves.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Notes of Local Board meeting held on 19 January 2010 and progress on any actions agreed</b>
	<p>The minutes were agreed as a true record.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Kent Youth County Council/Thanet Youth Council. Buses in Thanet and general update</b>
	<p>Two Thanet Youth Council members, Arthur and Lauren gave a presentation on bus services in Thanet and then went on to talk about recent work they have been involved with.</p> <p>The Thanet Loop is a good way for people to travel to around Thanet and the buses are very environmentally friendly. However they felt there are problems that need addressing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ A few drivers are unaware of the room available on their bus and turn passengers away and others drive erratically and dangerously causing people to fall over when turning corners or hitting curbs. It was suggested that the bus company could have plain clothed inspectors to monitor their drivers.</li><li>■ The Thanet Loop needs to widen its evening service to include Kingsgate, as currently it's difficult for people living there to get around.</li><li>■ Late buses are often cancelled causing problems for young people getting back home and concern for their safety.</li><li>■ There needs to be an awareness campaign to encourage young people to give up their seats to the elderly. Perhaps using posters on buses.</li></ul> <p>Thanet Youth Council has been very busy recently. It held a Safety and Citizen Conference in November at the Winter Gardens, attended by 220 young people. Elections have just taken place for the next Thanet Youth Mayor to replace the outgoing Mayor, Nathan Long. This is an opportunity for young people aged 11-19</p>

that live, work or study in Thanet to vote for someone to represent their views. Five schools have taken part and the polling stations have been very busy with results to be released in the local papers shortly.

Apologies were given by Amy Wright from KYCC who was unable to attend the meeting but asked Arthur to mention the work KYCC are doing on the introduction of community seats and the rethinking in the system of campaigning. Amy, who is also a member of the UK Youth Parliament and, together with Arthur is campaigning to the next Thanet Youth Mayor, hoped to attend the next Thanet Local Board meeting in July.

Mr Hayton thanked the TYC members for their interesting presentation and was sure that Mr Bayford, as councillor for the Kingsgate Ward, would look into the issues raised. Mr Hayton was aware that elderly people in Kingsgate had similar transport issues.

**4. Colin Maclean – Interim Director, Margate Task Force**

As well as being Interim Director of the Margate Task Force, Colin explained that he has also been Chairman of the Safer Stronger Communities Fund (SCCF) programme, Director of Thanet Works and Kent County Council's Interim Head of Partnerships. These positions have enabled him to develop an excellent network of partners in the area.

Colin outlined the purpose of his presentation which was to give an overview of the origins of the Margate Task Force, future plans for the area and the opportunities that will be available for local people to get involved.

The Margate Task Force specifically works in two wards, Cliftonville West and Margate Central and covers the same area as the Margate Renewal Partnership. The area is divided up by geographical location and assets into four Quarters; the Seafront, the Town Centre, the Cultural Quarter and the Residential Quarter.

The Margate Task Force heralds a fundamental change in the way services are provided, working closely with the Derek Harding, the Programme Director of MRP and SCCF to challenge the public sector to work together better and in a more joined up way.

The Margate Renewal Partnership undertook a study of the area in 2008 which identified the reasons why Margate has not been prosperous in recent years. Formerly a successful seaside holiday resort, its decline in recent years has led to an oversupply of accommodation which has been taken up by a succession of low income groups as rented HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation), B&Bs, and flats. As property is relatively cheap, this has led to a cycle of increasing provision of private rented flats. This is the area where Kent district councils and London local authorities seek to place their homeless people, particularly vulnerable adults and looked after children because of the accommodation available. This has put a strain on public services which have not been able to adequately respond to need.

In response to this, the Margate Task Force was set up to look at Kent County Council (KCC) could work better with other public sector agencies which together

were responsible for billions of pounds of services. Working at a high level, KCC, Thanet District Council (TDC) and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) have set up a steering group to look at policies to address the key issues of housing, employment and health in the area.

As one strand of the Kent Total Place pilot, a government initiative and one of 13 Total Place pilot areas nationwide, the Margate Task Force has also put a spotlight on Margate, with visits from senior government ministers further raising the profile of Margate's issues.

One of the key aspects of the work has been to address the poor quality of housing in the area. The statistics show the area has unusual set of circumstances; 88% of properties privately rented, 60% of properties are flats (Kent average 16%), 45% single home occupancy and 16% of all dwellings remaining empty.

Clearly the potential lies in getting empty properties back into use and encouraging people to take buy property and invest in the area, reducing the number of vulnerable people in the area and halting the downward spiral of deprivation. This will inevitably encourage further investment to the area and employment, help to address health inequalities and reduce crime.

The current economic backdrop also requires the public sector to make better use of resources. Currently the public spend per person in Margate is £8943 compared to a Kent average of £5918; if this gap could be closed there would be significant savings to be made.

Arising from the work of the Margate Task Force is the Margate Agreement which recognises that local agencies cannot do this work without a good relationship with Central Government. The Agreement asks for Margate to have 'Special Intervention Status' and powers which allow them to remove any barriers in order to address the area's problems. For example, better control over placements for individuals from out of the area, permission to reduce benefits payable where property condition is poor and raise a levy from landlords to fund the costs of regulating this.

Integral to this will be the work of the Sustainable Communities Team at Thanet District Council, who will be consulting and involving the local community to tap into local knowledge. There will be a series of focus groups and informal workshops over the coming months recognising the importance of community led solutions helping public agencies to provide better services.

The next step will be to appoint a Task Force Co-ordinator and a team to start implementing this work; to improve housing standards, create employment opportunities and secure a better environment and quality of life for the people in Margate in the future.

**Q.** The fundamental improvements needed to local housing are at odds with national housing policy. Which takes precedence?

**A.** National and local policies need to be more closely aligned. The Margate Agreement looks at addressing this with central and local government and other partners working more closely together.

**Q.** There is concern that if the big agencies are now getting together to start making decisions without involving the local community, will we be asked to ratify what is already happening?

**A.** The developmental work has brought all the big decision makers together from KCC, TDC and the PCT and it has been a significant piece of work to create this step change in approach. The time is now right to involve the local community.

**Q.** The majority of housing is owned by private landlords. How can KCC/TDC control this housing if it is privately owned?

**A.** Work currently being undertaken by Brendan Ryan, TDC's Director of Community Services to look at a system of accreditation for private sector landlords. There would be minimum legal standards imposed with enforcements in place. Embedded in this will be a need to work with people who want to invest in the area and local government will need to ask central government for the authority to move away from its national framework and priorities. Agencies may need to switch responsibilities, for example in Liverpool the PCT paid for 11 housing officers.

**Q.** I run a B&B in Margate and have had five couples to stay recently who are looking for homes in the area. But local estate agents say that there are very few large houses and only small units available. Current renovation schemes like the KCC 'No Use Empty', do not guarantee that buildings will be occupied. Some properties are left only partially renovated and standing empty. Property developers can attract money without providing housing. Who is checking that these renovated buildings are now occupied? We already have too many empty properties in the area. Why are developers given money to convert key historical buildings into small flats and bedsits and why isn't more help given to people who want to return these beautiful buildings back to single occupancy? This would attract people to the area who want to settle and help to re-balance the current social in-balance.

**A.** There are currently 880 empty properties in the area. The public sector agencies are looking at how to do things differently as clearly there is potential for investment in the area. Schemes similar to Homestead that operated in London 25 years ago offering mortgages on empty properties. There needs to be in place different ways that people can get on the property ladder.

**Q.** The resources are already in the community. Why not ask local people for their ideas? Let local people get involved and help provide the solutions to these problems.

**A.** Chris Wells will contact TDC about this.

**Q.** Part of the problem is who to contact to talk about issues. There are so many different departments dealing with different strategies. There needs to be one person at director level, either at KCC or TDC who is directly responsible.

**A.** There is agreement to this in principle but the Margate Task Force does have an overview as it consults with all agencies. Communication is vital and it is recognised that we must work in partnership with the community.

**Q.** Does the Task Force have any local people who actually know this area and preferably live in it? We need to provide a channel for engaging different parts of the community, particularly young people. Young people's views are not taken into account enough. You need to have someone on the Task Force from the local community who understands the acronyms and strategies and can then talk in plain English to the communities that you represent. Perhaps one of the young people here tonight?

**A.** Colin will feed this back to the Steering Group.

**Q.** Part of this problem has been caused by planning policies in the past that allowed developers to convert houses into as many small flats as possible. The minimum square area needs to be raised. Bigger units are needed for holiday flats and families.

**A.** Bill Hayton said many of the Board are Thanet District Councillors and confirmed that the policy proposed in the local development plan for no more one bedroom flats in the area, either converted or new build, has just been approved. A motion is planned to be put through full council to make this policy Thanet-wide. Thirty years of national guidelines had resulted in chaos for the area, which is why local authorities need to talk to central government and take from them this responsibility.

**5. Jonathan Bryant – Project Director, Dreamland Trust**

Jonathan described the purpose of the Dreamland Trust which is to set up a 21<sup>st</sup> Century tourist attraction based around the listed Scenic Railway and Cinema Building; 'the world's first Heritage Amusement Park'. He has held many roles in the heritage and leisure sector, including: establishing the UK's first brewing museum, setting up Henley's River and Rowing Museum, Project Director of Birmingham's Think Tank Science Centre, a trustee of Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust, Chief Executive of the City of Dundee's Renaissance Discovery Project and has served as chairman of the Association of Independent Museums.

Jonathan thanked Nick Dermott from Thanet District Council and Derek Harding for all the work that they and other major stakeholders such as KCC, the Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company, English Heritage, the Arts Council and others had done to make the Dreamland Trust project happen. Dreamland has been a very important part of Margate's life for the past 150 years.

Dreamland's origin began with the arrival of the railways in Margate. An unsuccessful attempt to provide Margate with a second terminus resulted in the already built station remaining empty and it was later turned into a restaurant. The 'Hall by the Sea' was bought by the Mayor of Margate, Thomas Reeve who went into partnership with an entrepreneur, George Sanger in 1870 and developed the site further with pleasure gardens and a few rides. In 1911 after Sanger's death, the site was bought for £40,000 by John Henry Iles who renamed the site Dreamland and brought rides, such as the Scenic Railway, onto the park. The Dreamland Cinema was built in the 1930s and the amusement park remained in the Iles family until 1968. Since this time Dreamland has had a succession of owners including Bembom brothers and local entrepreneur Jimmy Godden, until it was sold to Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company in 2003.

Dreamland will open in 2012 and the first phase of the project will cost £12.5m, with funding from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's 'Sea Change' programme and the Heritage Lottery Fund (phase two is planned in 2012). The whole 18 acre site is owned by the Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company (MTCRC). However 9 acres of this area will become the new Dreamland site which will be owned by TDC and leased back to the Dreamland Trust, a non profit making organisation. Plans include rebuilding the Scenic Railway and utilising rides rescued from across the UK. The Grade II listed Cinema Building has also been integrated into the development, with cafes, restaurants, shops and park ticketing. Nick Laister is the Chairman of the Dreamland Trust Board and its board members reflect the local community.

Work has already begun on appointing the key people necessary to undertake the necessary structural and architectural work and it is hoped that local people will be involved.

The Dreamland Trust's vision is to take the spirit of Dreamland and create a 21<sup>st</sup> Century theme park, using a series of rides that have been collected from around the country. The layout will be different than in the past and it is planned to regularly bring attractions into the park, for example the Carter's Steam Fairs.

Dreamland will create good business opportunities for people working locally and it is intended to employ local people wherever possible. It will attract thousands of visitors to the area every year, and together with Turner Contemporary, be one of the catalysts to the vital regeneration of the area.

**Q.** People have higher expectations of amusement parks than they did in the past? How will you attract people? Have you made provision for coach parking space?

**A.** The park has to be commercially viable and to date I have set up nine attractions that have all been self sustaining without public money. There are lessons to be learned by looking at other fairgrounds, for example Peter Pan's Playground, now called Adventure Island in Southend is a very successful commercial operation with free admission. Many of the rides have been donated and are being restored at no charge. They have a nostalgic value, but in addition the park will offer excellent facilities, with good food and other attractions.

**Q.** Has the land be signed over yet?

**A.** Negotiations are almost completed.

**Q.** Children and young people need a re-configured 21<sup>st</sup> Century Dreamland. One of the biggest issues will be affordability and travel fares. Are you linking into schools?

**A.** Jan Leandro, Dreamland's Audience Development Officer has begun this working on setting up a young people's panel to discuss these issues. But there needs to be a balance as the park will need to pay its way.

**Q.** Are there any charges on the 9 acre site? Will they be released when TDC

	<p>owns the land and Dreamland takes over the lease?</p> <p><b>A.</b> The total 18 acre site is owned by MTCRC, of which Dreamland will occupy half. A condition of transfer of ownership of the 9 acres will be that the land is unencumbered and work is well advanced on this.</p> <p><b>Q.</b> Will you restore the Dreamland Cinema?</p> <p><b>A.</b> Not in Phase 1 which is the restoration of the amusement park itself. The external façade will be refurbished but the rest of the work will take place in Phase 2.</p> <p><b>Q.</b> Will my 12 year old grandson be interested in the heritage rides? Young people are more demanding and want scary rides similar to those found at Thorpe Park and Alton Towers? How will Dreamland attract these young people?</p> <p><b>A.</b> Wooden rollercoaster rides are scary, but yes the excitement element must be included. However Dreamland will operate differently and offer a unique experience, integrating into the wider Margate area with its sandy beaches and fish and chip shops.</p> <p><b>Q.</b> Congratulations, this is a very positive move for Margate, we should all support this and make it a success. With HS1, the train journey has been cut down and Dreamland will attract families to the wider area, including Broadstairs and Ramsgate. Will local people be able to get involved and will you be offering young people jobs?</p> <p><b>A.</b> We are looking at a similar scheme to the one operated in Southend where young people act as ambassadors for Adventure Island.</p> <p><b>Q.</b> What will happen to the other 9 acres?</p> <p><b>A.</b> The landowner will develop a scheme which is likely to include residential development, subject to planning permissions.</p> <p><b>Q.</b> This is a good project, but dislike Turner Contemporary.</p> <p><b>A.</b> This was the reaction at Henley. Local people were very upset with the museum's architecture, but then it was short listed for the Stirling Prize for the work of its architect David Chipperfield and now local people love it. David Chipperfield's work on Turner will have the same effect. See the finished project and then make a judgement.</p>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Opportunity to ask questions about local public services.</b>
	<p><b>Q.</b> The railings on Margate Sea front need painting. Can I ask the board to look into this work being undertaken soon?</p> <p><b>A.</b> Mr Hayton agreed.</p>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Any Other Business notified to the Chairman prior to the meeting.</b>
	There were no questions raised.
<b>8.</b>	<b>Close</b>
	Mr Hayton thanked all the speakers for their interesting and informative presentations.

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The Board announced that all its three funding streams; Member Community Grant, Small Community Capital Projects and Local Schemes Grants were fully committed for 2009/10. From 1 April 2010 there will be similar funding available and Mr Hayton invited the public to apply to the members for their support for projects.

Mr Hibberd also invited the public to enquire about another funding stream, the Member Highway Fund.

Mr Hayton thanked the public for attending and closed the meeting.