



Thanet Local Board

Tuesday, 5 July 2011

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

Present: Bill Hayton (Chairman), Robert Bayford, Robert Burgess, Charles Hibberd, Michael Jarvis, Chris Wells.

Apologies: Elizabeth Green, John Kirby

KCC Officer: Anne Charman (Community Engagement Manager, Thanet)

1. Welcome to the meeting – Mr Bill Hayton, Chairman
Mr Hayton welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health and the other county councillors on the Thanet Local Board. There were no declarations of interest.
2. Notes of Local Board meeting held on 15 March 2011 and progress on any actions agreed
The notes were agreed as a true record.
3. Kent Youth County Council / Thanet Youth Council
Hannah McGill gave apologies for the member of TYC who had planned to give a presentation that evening but was unable to attend due to illness. (This has been postponed until October's meeting.) However, Hannah had stepped in to give a brief presentation on how she became involved with TYC and the opportunities being a TYC member has given her, describing it as her 'second family'. Hannah first became interested in TYC during citizenship classes at school and since joining has been to the British Youth Council in London as well as other planned excursions and a residential course. These have given her more confidence enabling her to become Deputy Mayor of Thanet, a post she thoroughly enjoys. Currently TYC is working on two campaigns; the development of a District Youth Forum to encourage greater inclusivity and a campaign against the proposed cuts in youth provision in Kent. The O2 project has awarded TYC some money which it will use to undertake a photography project that will show young people in Thanet in a more positive light. Other activities include a residential course in Rochester planned for August, participation in the Margate Carnival this year, an entry for the Animation Festival

	<p>and a Lottery bid to provide funding for TYC.</p> <p>For more information about TYC please contact Becci Barraclough, Youth Engagement Officer.</p>
4.	<p>Charges for Adult Social Care Services Consultation – Graham Gibbens, Kent County Council (KCC) Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health</p> <p>Mr Gibbens began his presentation with an overview of the reasons for KCC's consultation on charges for Adult Social Care and then introduced Michael Thomas Sam, KCC Head of Policy and Service Standards who would provide more detail on the proposals.</p> <p>Mr Gibbens gave assurances that no decisions had yet been taken on the proposals. However, KCC like all other authorities was receiving less money from central government which has required it to consider how it will make savings and still keep services in place. This consultation was to determine the impact of implementing the strategy proposed and was fully endorsed by KCC's Cabinet at its Budget meeting in February 2011. .</p> <p>KCC has kept the view for many years that its Adult Social Care eligibility criteria should be kept at moderate and is the only county in the South East that has chosen to do this. (West Sussex was moderate but has now moved to substantial.) This means that KCC provides services to people earlier, for example providing befriending and shopping services to elderly people, enabling them to stay independent and in their own homes for longer. However this policy is expensive and therefore choices need to be made in as fair a way as possible.</p> <p>Mr Gibbens said that once the consultation was finished, the public's views would be taken back to Cabinet for its consideration and further recommendations. Clearly increasing charges was never going to be a popular decision, but he reconfirmed that the consultation was not a closed process. If a number of people feed back that implementing this strategy was going to create significant disadvantages then the Cabinet would seriously reconsider its position.</p> <p>Michael Thomas-Sam then described the proposed charges in more detail. The main purpose of the consultation was to inform the public about these charges and find out how these policy proposals may affect people. Michael explained that there was a statutory requirement to consult about such changes and that the consultation period ran from 9 May to 31 July 2011.</p> <p>As background KCC provides domiciliary and home care support to around 7,000 to 8,000 people. Currently from this group, four out of ten people are not required to pay any contribution for the services they receive, five out of ten are required to make some contribution and one in ten pay in full. During the consultation KCC has written letters and sent questionnaires to over 25,000 people who receive a service or who might act on behalf of someone who does, and representative and carer groups. It has also provided a free phone telephone number, on-line facilities and public meetings for people to feedback.</p>

	<p>There are three principal points to remember that underpin the charging policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the greater your need, the higher your support package is likely to be (ii) it is based upon your ability to pay, and (iii) if someone believes their allowance is insufficient they can ask for an independent assessment. <p>The proposed changes are; charges for people who use mental health services, day care and transport as part of the services that can be charged, to increase the amount of available income that is taken into account from 85% to 100% and to reduce the standard amount allowed for the Disability Related Expenditure Assessment from £21 to £17 per week for everyone. The intention is to phase the implementation of these changes.</p> <p>Michael then provided examples demonstrating how these charges might affect individuals in different circumstances (please see the accompanying PowerPoint presentation).</p> <p>There are 16 public meetings in all planned for across Kent, and all key points from the feedback received would be provided in a report to KCC's Cabinet meeting on 19 September. All papers for this meeting must be published and available on 12 September and if anyone requires a copy of the full analysis of this report it will be available on the website. Michael gave assurances that if the proposals were agreed, new services charges would not take effect until people had been notified in writing.</p> <p>Q. Please can you explain why this consultation does not appear to comply with the Cabinet Office Code of Practice on Consultation? You do not provide enough information to make a reasonable decision on the proposals suggested. Also in your letter to service users and this meeting's agenda you state that the county council has already decided to make changes to its non-residential charging policy.</p> <p>R. (Mr Gibbens) This is a genuine consultation and a decision has not been made. While the council has made a decision on the route it would like to take any change made is a decision for the Cabinet Member. (Mr Thomas-Sam) There is a very fine balance between too much and too little information within a consultation document. I am familiar with the document you refer to and this consultation sits well within the minimum requirement for public consultation set by standard case law. A local authority is allowed to make a pre-consultation decision and by consulting the authority seeks to understand the impact of its decision. If feedback received suggests that the impact is too damaging, then this will be reflected in the report to Cabinet. Please also keep in mind that Kent's policy will take into account individual hardships through the independent assessment process.</p> <p>Q. Who will pay for the Independent Assessors? KCC or the client?</p> <p>R. This is an individual assessment undertaken by finance and benefit officers, not individual assessors.</p>
5.	Kent Children's Services update – Chris Wells, KCC councillor for Margate and Cliftonville
	Mr Wells said that one of the questions he and other Kent county councillors

frequently have been asked is; what happened in the run up to the critical Ofsted Children's Services Report of October 2010? And how and why did things decline so rapidly over such a short period of time between 2008, when in its Joint Area Review Kent was considered to be equal first in the country and 2010 when Ofsted had put Kent in the bottom 12?

Most people would be aware that since this report there have been significant changes to the way Children's Social Services is run. However in order to understand how this situation arose, it is useful to examine the situation from 2008 onwards and what the key contributing factors were.

In 2008 there was already mounting concern about how social services interacted in this country. In addition, many authorities, including KCC, were very good at attracting high inspection scores but clearly there were gaps developing between how good a service looked and what was actually happening on the ground.

KCC were aware that there was an imbalance in services; it had fewer preventative services and fewer social workers out in the areas than it would have liked. There was a 15%-20% vacancy rate across the county and, combined with few preventative services, this meant that if a child was referred the only place it could go to was a Social Work assessment rather than other services resulting in overload in late 2008. In addition most councillors didn't understand what happened at the front line of social work and so there was a huge sense of shock when the Ofsted Report came in. Members had put faith in a fundamentally flawed inspection rating involving social work professionals inspecting other social workers with misplaced judgements.

Five things happened from that time forward:

- (i) The inspection regime itself changed. Between 2003 and 2008 it had been relatively relaxed and easy. For example an inspector would pick 11-15 files to inspect from 100 files that KCC was allowed to nominate; but this of course provided an opportunity for files to be looked at before they were put forward. From 2008 the inspection looked at things properly and investigated practice. An example of where things went wrong with this approach was the Baby P case which led to a shocking report on Haringey and the sacking of Sharon Shoesmith; yet Haringey had been given a good Ofsted inspection only months' beforehand. So other authorities had been caught up in this too.
- (ii) Post Baby P era there was a huge surge in referrals. Throughout the first two months after the report came out, Social Service referrals from the public and other professionals went up 47%.
- (iii) Limitations of our work with our partners, for example in Health and Education who felt that once they had referred the work to Social Services then their responsibility for the problem stopped.
- (iv) 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Prior to this we were working with a limited number of children in vulnerable circumstances, but after this files and notes were kept on all children, numbers increased making vulnerable children less easy to identify.
- (v) In 2008 the government was very keen on computer led solutions and KCC was required to put in a large computer system to manage the case loads. KCC picked ICS which proved unreliable and failed resulting in senior

	<p>managers being unaware of the problems about to unfold.</p> <p>In 2009 the KCC's Chief Executive Peter Gilroy, an experienced social worker himself commissioned a report, fearing that something may be wrong. However this report reassured members that the 'service was under pressure but coping'. So the shock when even greater when the Ofsted report came in, particularly as even solutions that had been put in place, for example, recruiting social workers from abroad, were criticised as being ineffective.</p> <p>Ofsted have to return a year after its inspection and are due anytime between August and October this year. As a result of this inspection KCC now has an external overview body put in place by the government to ensure that it properly addresses the problems, issuing challenging targets that have to be put in place this year. KCC has established Interim Directors, an Improvement Plan and a group of members known as the 'Awkward Squad' which includes Chris Wells, to ensure that these improvements are made. Thirty extra Social Workers have been drafted in on six month contracts to tackle backlogs and progress is being made. The Improvement Plan itself has been designed to ensure that all progress is sustainable and to ensure that Kent will not just pass the Ofsted Inspection.</p> <p>It has been a salutary and difficult twelve months during which time Kent has had to seriously reconsider the way it has delivered Children's Social Services, but things are going well and there is confidence in the solutions that have been proposed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Q. You touched on the impact of the Every Child Matters agenda and the inability to tackle the huge number of caseloads. However shouldn't you really be monitoring those children that are vulnerable and in need? R. Prior to the Every Child Matters agenda management systems focussed only on those children who had been referred to them. So if the number of referrals amounted to 12% of the population then files were held on only these children. However the new system required files to be kept on all children which was too big an 'ask' and meant that vulnerable children got lost in the paperwork overload. Q How many children are we talking about? R. Children Social Services work with a minority of children for obvious reasons because most children go through life without being part of the system. So it is a minority in Kent but unfortunately I do not have the figure to hand. I will find out and get back with a figure at the next meeting.
6.	Beth Denning, Co-ordinator of the Kent Community Organisation
	<p>Beth Denning described two new projects that the Kent Community Organisation has set up with support from the Migration Impact Fund; the Job Club aimed at EU Migrants and the Ambassador Project.</p> <p>KCO was founded to make social integration with the local community a reality, not just an aspiration. It achieves this through a series of practical programmes often run with statutory and voluntary partners, designed to bring all races, creeds and colours together working for community wellbeing. Projects have included Street Dance at the Quarterdeck, a Youth Group every Friday to promote integration</p>

	<p>again at the Quarterdeck, Step by Step English at the Children's Centre and Advice Clinics.</p> <p>The Job Club is aimed at EU migrants to help get them regular and steady work so that they don't have to rely on agency and seasonal work and helps to avoid them getting into debt. KCO works with local and national employers and helps with CVs, suggesting that they undertake volunteering work as a first step. Research shows that 70% of employers have said they would rather employ people who have volunteered first.</p> <p>The Ambassador Programme is called this because Eastern Europeans don't have in their culture the idea of volunteering. Ambassadors are signed up and found work in host organisations for at least 40 hours, for example the Police, Kent Fire & Rescue, SureStart and Rethink who are going to train a group of Ambassadors as community champions. More host organisations are needed and if you are able to help please contact Beth on 07854 160 663.</p>
7.	<h3>Opportunity to ask questions about local public services</h3> <p>Q. Why has KCC allowed Highways to undertake road works at the entrance to Margate Old Town during July/August which is at the busiest time of the year for local traders? There appears to have been a lack of pre-planning and consultation with local businesses that are losing trade because of this. This is the busiest time of the year for tourism in Margate, a very busy seaside resort. Why is this not being undertaken out of season?</p> <p>R. (Mr Hibberd) Contractors do need to get permission from Highways before they can undertake road works and often there is a consultation process beforehand. There is sympathy with the point being made and every effort should be made to undertake road works outside of the busy Summer season. Hopefully these are emergency road works. (Mr Bayford) In Broadstairs consultations have taken place that have resulted in timings of road works being changed, so it is very likely that similar consultation has taken place here.</p> <p>Q. What is confusing is that the buses are taking a different route and no information was given about alternative bus stops along the seafront. So it was impossible to get off at the seafront when on the bus. Why haven't we been better informed?</p> <p>R Sympathise with this situation. Please give details to Anne Charman who will provide answers after the meeting.</p> <p>Q. Margate High Street is experiencing flooding problems due to blocked gullies. Have there been cutbacks to the gully cleansing programme?</p> <p>R. Will get back to you with the answer.</p> <p>Q. There are 2ft weeks growing in the Westgate area – is there an ongoing programme to clear these weeds?</p> <p>R. (Mr Burgess) There is a planned programme of weed clearance that should be available on the website. Phone the Contact Centre if there's a problem on 08457 247 247.</p>

	<p>Q Please can we have more cycle paths in Thanet so that we can ride in safety from cars and lorries.</p> <p>R. There are funding difficulties unfortunately.</p> <p>Anne Charman said answers to the Highways questions raised would be emailed out to everyone as soon as possible (please see the attached note sent out on Friday, 8 July).</p> <p>Mr Bayford suggested that Highways should be on the next Thanet Local Board meeting's agenda.</p>
8.	Any Other Business notified to the Chairman prior to the meeting.
	<p>Mr Hayton highlighted the Vision for Kent consultation that began on 20 June 2011 and finished on 22 August 2011. The Vision for Kent 2011-2021 is the new community strategy for the County which has been developed by the councils and organisations that deliver services in Kent. In this strategy three big ambitions have been identified to make Kent a better place over the next 10 years: (i) to grow the economy, (ii) to tackle disadvantage and (iii) to put citizens in control. Views are sought on the consultation and response forms were available.</p> <p>Q. May we have an update on the Big Society? There was a big conference in Dover late last year, organised by the East Kent Local Strategic Partnership which I believe no longer exists. How will this now be taken forward in East Kent, particularly in Thanet?</p> <p>R. (Chris Wells) Big Society is something that many people talk about but few of us have a clear idea of what it means in practice. At a recent briefing by the Senior Cabinet Office official most were left more confused. However Thanet has had Big Society around for some time, volunteering and I suspect the answer in Thanet is to build on what we've got. There will be a Big Society Fund and it's still uncertain how this will come to fruition but we will try and get these funds down to Thanet where they will be best used.</p> <p>Mr Hayton also reminded the group that the Thanet Local Board still has funding available for projects of local community benefit and, if interested, to speak to Anne Charman at the end of the meeting.</p>
9.	Close
	Mr Hayton thanked all the speakers for their presentations and the public for attending and closed the meeting.