

NORTH DEVON COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

Minutes of a meeting of the NORTH DEVON COMMUNITY ALLIANCE held at the Cedars Inn, Bickington Road, Barnstaple on Monday 2nd April 2007 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Representing:

Barnstaple Town Council: Councillor Hawes
Devon and Cornwall Constabulary: Chief Inspector Davies
and Inspector Puffitt
Devon County Council: Councillor Cann
Devon Primary Care Trust: Dr. K. Gronqvist
Environment Agency: Mr K. Baker
Ilfracombe Town Council: Councillor Swan
Local Community Alliances: A. Bacon, Councillors Pearson
and Mrs Webber
North Devon College: Mr B. Vines
North Devon Voluntary Services: Mr P. Hamilton
North Devon District Council: Councillors Ms Davis and Mrs
Shapland (Chairman)
Parish Councils: Councillor Geen
South West Regional Development Agency: Ms E. Farrell
Taw Torridge Estuary Forum: Mrs R. Day
Transform: Mr M. Taylor

Officers:

Devon County Council

Ms. A. Boyd - Assistant County Community Strategy Officer,
Ms S. Rook - Customer Services Policy Officer and L. Ward -
Transport Planning Officer.

North Devon District Council

S. Pitcher - Executive Director, Ms. A. Cowley - Assistant
Chief Executive (Policy and Performance Improvement), Mrs
E. Ingle - Customer Services Centre Manager, A. Austen -
Lead Officer (Planning Policy), Ms R. Allen - Community
Development Co-ordinator, Mrs H. Harrington - Community
Development Officer and Ms B. Greenslade - Member
Services Co-ordinator.

Also Present:

Mr A. Bell	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty/Countryside Development Officer
Ms J. Williams	Torridge Accessibility Action Plan

49 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January 2007 (circulated previously) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

50 MATTERS ARISING/CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Compact for Devon

The Alliance endorsed the appointment of Jerry Lee as the Champion for the "Statutory Sector" and agreed that the Voluntary Sector Forum consider the appointment of a Champion for the "Voluntary and Community Sector" on the Compact for Devon and that Patrick Hamilton act as the Champion in the interim period.

(b) Link Age

The Chairman requested that partners formally sign up to participating in the Link Age project by completing a paper that would be circulated during the meeting.

51 ATLANTIC BUSINESS SHOW 2007

The Chairman reported that Kevin Kelway was not yet present and therefore item 5 would be considered before item 4 on the agenda.

52 ACCESSIBILITY

(a) Rural Post Offices

Councillor Mrs Shapland reported that the Devon Strategic Partnership had invited the Alliance to work in partnership by taking part in the campaign to make representations to the Government in relation to the withdrawal of the Post Office Card Account. She stated that North Devon District Council had carried out a review of Post Offices and that this report had been circulated widely to other Local Authorities, Parish and Town Councils and utility companies and other interested parties. During the time that the Council was carrying out the review, the DTI issued a consultation paper on the future of post offices. The Council urged organisations and members of the public to respond to this consultation paper. She also reported that in her capacity as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee she had met with Nick Harvey MP to advise him of the outcomes of the review and he had stated that he would ensure that the outcomes of the review would be reported back to the House of Parliament. She further stated that the Local Strategic Partnership would need to carry out a piece of work following the outcomes of this review.

(b) Developing An Accessibility Action Plan

Councillor Mrs Shapland reported that an Accessibility Action Plan had been piloted in the Torridge area and it was now proposed that an Accessibility Action Plan would be produced for the Ilfracombe, Combe Martin and Bratton Fleming areas.

The Alliance received a presentation by Lewis Ward, Transport Planning Section of Devon County Council and Jane Williams who was responsible for preparing the Torridge Accessibility Action Plan.

Lewis Ward stated that the Government had requested each local transport highway authority to produce an accessibility action plan. The Government had stated that Local Strategic Partnerships were key to developing accessibility action plans. He explained that the purpose of an accessibility action plan was to look at improving access to employment, food shopping and social health care. The action plan would identify problem areas and recommend actions to address these problems. The action plan would also consider whether people could access services at a reasonable cost and ease. An accessibility action plan had been produced for the Torridge area and it was proposed that an action plan would now be produced for the Transform area covering Ilfracombe, Combe Martin and Bratton Fleming. The performance of the accessibility action plans would be monitored and would provide evidence of accessibility issues within the area. The outcomes of the accessibility action plan would be reported to the Alliance.

Jane Williams stated that she had been in post since November 2006. She has prepared an accessibility action plan for the Torridge area which had now been approved by the Torridge LSP. Her post was funded for 20 months and during this time she would concentrate on the key areas within the action plan. She was in contact with all Parish and Town Councils in the area and the Local Community Partnerships. She stated that there were various methods of transport in the Torridge area which would be joined up to make a comprehensive service. One of the actions from the plan was to link rural areas to transport services that were already in place. The voluntary sector was a major partner in the accessibility plan. She was currently looking at the feasibility of a taxi voucher scheme for a short term period to assist with finding out where people wanted to travel to and then set up a more sustainable means of transport in rural areas in the future. She reported that a Devonwide Wheels to Work scheme was now up and running which enabled people to borrow a scooter to travel to and from work for a minimal cost. This scheme was operated from Halwill Junction and was available for the whole of Devon.

(c) NDDC One Stop Shops - Update

The Alliance received a presentation by Anne Cowley regarding North Devon District Council's proposed One Stop Shops. She outlined the vision and key principles for the Council establishing One Stop Shops.

She stated that to improve accessibility to services was a core priority for the Council. The Council now had a customer contact centre in place which was located within the Civic Centre. The contact centre would also make it easier for members of the public to deal with the Council electronically. One stop shops would be located in Ilfracombe and South Molton and the Council was also looking at how it would provide services in rural areas. The Council had also invested in a Customer Relations Management system which would ensure that members of the public received a consistent level of response whenever they contacted the Council and a new telephone system. It was anticipated that the One Stop Shop which would be located in Amory House, South Molton would be open in June 2008 and the One Stop Shop in Ilfracombe would be opening in April 2008. The Council would also be looking at locating the One Stop Shop in an alternative location in Barnstaple.

She suggested that to add value to the action within the Community Strategy the Alliance could consider the opportunity for establishing a joint one stop shop, make more use of the community portal to improve websites, improve the provision of joint information and sharing consultation and evidence gained with other agencies.

(d) County Customer Service Centre

The Alliance received a brief presentation by Sue Rook, Devon County Council, regarding the County Council's Customer Service Centre. The Customer Service Centre went live in May 2006 and was now fully operational. The Council had reduced the number of telephone numbers that were published to 8 numbers. Advisors had been trained to deal with 80% of calls made and the centre was open between 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. The Customer Service Centre had the ability to transfer calls to other local authorities where appropriate. The Centre was located in Tiverton.

Councillor Geen stated that there was a major issue for people living in rural areas not having access to public transport and having to rely on cars to travel. The public transport that was available often did not coincide with hospital or other appointments.

Councillor Mrs Webber stated that there was a need for services to be provided at times and on days when members of the public required access to those services. She also stated that where Council services were contracted out, those organisations should be required to follow the same standards and guidelines as statutory organisations.

(e) Buzz Groups

The meeting adjourned to buzz groups to discuss how organisations could be partners in the above initiatives and how this would give added value to members of the public.

The meeting then reconvened.

**53 PROPOSAL TO CLOSE THE SATURDAY AND STANDBY
REMAND COURTS IN BARNSTAPLE**

Councillor Mrs Shapland reported that she had just been advised that there was a proposal by Her Majesty's Court Service to close the Saturday and Standby remand courts in Barnstaple and to centralise them on the Central Devon Magistrate's Court in Exeter.

Chief Inspector Davies stated that if the Saturday and Standby remand courts in Barnstaple were closed then it would cause logistical problems for the police and for the families. If people were released from the court in Exeter the police had no responsibility for transporting people back to Barnstaple.

It was agreed that a letter be sent to Her Majesty's Court Service to express the Alliance's concern regarding its proposals to close the Saturday and Standby remand courts in Barnstaple.

54 STRATEGIC DRAFT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS

Andrew Austen advised the Alliance of the strategic draft local development documents that would be published later in the year for consultation which included the Affordable Housing Code of Practice, Guidance on Agricultural Works Dwelling, Sustainable Design and Construction, On Site Sustainable Development and Renewable Energy for New Dwellings. He stated that he would advise the Alliance as and when the local development documents were published for consultation.

**55 DEVELOPMENTS ON LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP
WORK**

- (a) Proposed Joint Local Strategic Partnership for North Devon and Torrington

The Alliance considered a paper by Steve Pitcher regarding the proposed joint Local Strategic Partnership for North Devon and Torrington (circulated previously).

S. Pitcher agreed to produce a diagram detailing the groups that would report to the Delivery Board.

The Alliance agreed the following:

- (i) that a joint Local Strategic Partnership for North Devon and Torrington, in accordance with the terms of reference as detailed in the report be set up;
- (ii) that the programme and timetable as detailed in the report be noted;

- (iii) that the Local Area Agreement be delivered at the most appropriate level;
 - (iv) that the Federation meet on more than one occasion per year.
- (b) Progress Report on Sustainable Community Strategy for Devon

S. Pitcher gave a progress report on the preparation of the Sustainable Community Strategy for Devon and outlined the proposed timetable.

- (c) Progress Report on Sustainable Community Strategy for North Devon

Rachael Allen gave a progress report on the Sustainable Community Strategy for North Devon. She stated that the strategy was now complete and would be circulated shortly to members of the Alliance. The strategy would also be available online and hard copies would also be sent to Parish and Town Councils. Hard copies would be available upon request. She outlined the revisions that had been made to the strategy.

- (d) Biosphere Strategy

The Alliance received a presentation by Andy Bell regarding the Biosphere Strategy. The preparation of a Biosphere Strategy was a requirement of UNESCO. He outlined how the strategy would link to other strategies, the structure of the strategy, the proposed vision and the future governance arrangements for the Biosphere Reserve. The draft strategy would be out for consultation shortly. He also outlined how the Biosphere Strategy would link in to the Community Strategy for North Devon and with other Community Strategies for other areas in the Biosphere Reserve. He further stated that the Braunton Marsh Study had now been produced and was available on the Taw Torridge Estuary and Biosphere Reserve websites.

He circulated copies of leaflets entitled "Discover North Devon's Biosphere Reserve" and "Go Wild in the Garden".

- (e) Local Community Alliances

Councillor Mrs Shapland gave an update of the outcomes of the meeting held with Chairmen of the Local Community Alliances at Filleigh. She stated that there was a continued need for meetings to be held with the Chairmen of the Local Community Alliances. She stated that a different Community Action Plan would be presented to each meeting of the Alliance. The Alliance would, in future, receive an update on the work of each of the Community Alliances. The next presentation to the Alliance would be on South Molton.

56 BARNSTAPLE ACTION PLAN

Rachael Allen reported that the "Our Town Community Action Plan" had been published in 2006. The Plan set out proposals for the town as a sub regional centre and for the town for people that lived in the area. The plan was split in to three different sections: the vision, neighbourhoods in Barnstaple and priority themes.

Alison Boyd reported that the consultation was carried out on the plan during February 2005 and over 5000 consultation responses had been received. She outlined the different methods of consultation that were carried out. She stated that a newsletter was produced on a quarterly basis to give an update on progress being made. Young people would be helping to design the newsletter that would be published in September.

Rachael Allen reported that a Barnstaple Alliance Project Board had been appointed and Councillor Mrs Webber was the Chairman of the Board. She outlined the projects that were being undertaken. Each project had a Team Leader(s) and a Champion.

She further reported that five Question Time forums had been held whereby a guest speaker was invited to attend, which was then followed by a question and answer session. These forums were compered by a professional journalist. Action plans were produced following each of these forums. She stated that the "Our Town Community Action Plan" would be reviewed on an annual basis.

Councillor Mrs Webber expressed concern regarding the number of Street Groups that had been established and the amount of time involved for officers attending these meetings. She stated that if the groups continued to be established it would become difficult to manage.

57 ACCESSIBILITY - FEEDBACK FROM BUZZ GROUPS

Rachael Allen provided a summary of feedback from the Buzz Groups and stated that a summary of the feedback would be circulated to Members of the Alliance with the minutes from this meeting.

58 DEVON ANNUAL PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT

The Alliance noted that the Devon Annual Public Health report had been published and reinforced the messages within the North Devon Annual Public Health report.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 1.08 p.m.