

**NORTH DEVON COMMUNITY ALLIANCE**

Minutes of a meeting of the NORTH DEVON COMMUNITY ALLIANCE held at the Cedars Inn, Bickington Road, Barnstaple on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2007 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Representing:

Community Council of Devon: Mr J. Talbot  
Devon and Cornwall Constabulary: Inspector V. Puffitt  
Devon County Council: Councillor Cann  
Ilfracombe Town Council: Councillor J. Swan  
Local Community Alliances: Councillors F. Pearson and Mrs  
Webber

North Devon College: Mr B. Vines  
North Devon Homes: Mr J. Davies  
North Devon District Council: Councillors Ms Davis and  
Mrs Shapland (Chairman)

Parish Councils: Councillor H. Geen  
Taw Torridge Estuary Forum: Mrs R. Day  
Transform: Mr M. Taylor

Voluntary Sector: Mrs M. Brace, Mrs D. Bracher and  
Mr P. Davey

South Western Ambulance Service NHS Trust: Mr K. Rollitt

Officers:

Devon County Council

I. Hobbs - County Community Strategy Officer

North Devon District Council

M. Mansell - Executive Director, J. Lee - Culture and  
Regeneration Manager, Ms R. Allen - Community  
Development Co-ordinator, Mrs W. Slater - Team Leader -  
Homelessness and Allocations, Miss J. Hendy - Policy Officer  
and Ms B. Greenslade - Member Services Co-ordinator.

Also Present:

Mr P. Noall	Freedom Trust
Ms. K. Evans	Empowering Communities
Mr D. Hess	Peter Fletcher Associates

**35 MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2006 (circulated previously) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**36 COUNCILLOR MRS JENKINS**

The Chairman reported that County Councillor Mrs J. Jenkins was unwell and it was agreed that a card be sent to her on behalf of the Alliance to wish her well.

**37 MATTERS ARISING/CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

(a) Withdrawal of the Post Office Card Account

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 in 2010. The Support Group to the Alliance had agreed that it would await the review by North Devon District Council and base its response on that.

I. Hobbs reported that he was co-ordinating this campaign on behalf of the Devon Strategic Partnership and would welcome any comments or feedback on this issue.

**38 DEPRIVATION AND HOMELESS IN NORTH DEVON**

(a) Voluntary Sector Presentations

(i) Citizens Advice Bureau

The Alliance received a presentation by Mrs M. Brace on the type of work undertaken and the role of the Citizens Advice Bureau (C.A.B.). A large amount of enquiries and advice related to deprivation and debt. In 2006, the Barnstaple branch of the C.A.B. dealt with £750,000 consumer debt. They also carried out social policy work and looked at anything that was unjust and then try to remedy the situation i.e. water companies no longer disconnect water supply when people were unable to pay their bills. The C.A.B. had received 3,265 new clients during the last quarter. She outlined the number of clients for each District Council ward in North Devon. She also outlined the numbers and type of queries that had been received during the last quarter. She also advised the Alliance of the amount of benefit and other income that had been generated for its clients by the Barnstaple C.A.B. This new money was benefiting the economy of North Devon and was a result of the work that had been undertaken as part of the Benefits Take Up campaigns.

Councillor Cann requested whether the information regarding the types of queries was made available by District Council ward level.

It was agreed that details of the number of clients for each District Council ward in North Devon, the numbers and types of queries received during the last quarter by District Council ward level, the amount of benefit and other income generated by the Barnstaple C.A.B. and information relating to the queries regarding benefits for disabled be circulated to Members of the Alliance.

Councillors Mrs Shapland and Mrs Webber declared personal interests in the above item as North Devon District Council representatives appointed to serve on the North Devon Citizens Advice Bureau.

(ii) Freedom Trust/Centre

The Alliance received a presentation by P. Noall, Freedom Trust/Centre. He stated that the Trust was registered as a charity in 1995 and worked with vulnerable disadvantaged people since 2000. He outlined the typical client types that the Trust worked with and the aims of the Trust. He advised the Alliance of the numbers of clients that the Trust had worked with during 2006. The Centre was open on a daily basis between 12.30 pm to 4.00 p.m. He outlined the types of the facilities that were available in the Freedom Centre. The Freedom Centre linked with other organisations that came in to the Centre to provide training for the Centre's clients.

(iii) Poverty Action Groups

The Alliance received a presentation by P. Davey regarding the work of the Barnstaple, Torridge and Ilfracombe Poverty Action Groups. He outlined the range of activities undertaken by each Action Group. Each of the Poverty Action Groups had developed in their own way based upon need. The Poverty Action Groups had worked more strategically over the past 18 months. The Barnstaple Poverty Action Group was currently working with 40 people who were homeless. It was becoming more difficult to work with those people that were homeless as they were moving further away from the town centre. He outlined the services that the Poverty Action Groups provided to homeless people. The Barnstaple Poverty Action Group was trying to carry out more preventative work. An "Intensive Tenancy Support Programme" had been set up which was funded by North Devon Homes and was a partnership between North Devon Homes, the client and the Barnstaple Poverty Action Group to prevent people from becoming homeless. The Barnstaple Poverty Action Group was also working with North Devon Homes to find alternative ways to intervene and work with clients before a crisis occurred.

A copy of statistics for each Poverty Action Group was tabled.

Councillor Mrs Shapland declared a personal interest in the above item as the North Devon District Council's representative on the Barnstaple Poverty Action Group.

(b) Empowering Communities

The Alliance received a presentation by Karen Evans regarding Empowering Communities. Empowering Communities was a project that formed part of Transform and covered the areas of Ilfracombe and Combe Martin. She outlined the aims of the project. The team consisted of three project workers. The funding for the project was for a two year period to the end of April 2008. One of the aims of the project was to overcome barriers to prevent social exclusion. The project was working

with Devon Pound. The project administered the Community Grants scheme which provided funding to small projects. The Community Enterprise Worker was responsible for helping to develop social enterprises. The Financial Inclusion Worker was responsible for helping people to access services and to give people a better financial understanding to help them to change their lives. The Project worked with a wide variety of people. The Financial Inclusion Work included a financial literacy programme, confidence building and a job club. The project also worked with the Ilfracombe Poverty Action Group, Healthier Homes, Pathfinder and Transform. The project also tried to assist organisations and groups to preserve the infrastructures that already existed. Following work that had been carried out in Ilfracombe £150,000 new funding has been achieved for the area. Funding sources for the area were beginning to diminish. Objective 2 funding ceased in 2008 and there would be no follow on funding to replace it. There was a need for further funding to enable the work with the community to continue.

(c) Health Inequalities Group

Councillor Mrs Shapland reported that Dr. K. Gronqvist was not present, therefore this item would not be considered.

(d) Buzz Groups

The meeting adjourned to buzz groups to discuss how organisations could work with the voluntary sector better, how do the issues relate to the priority actions in the sustainable community strategy and should the Alliance be taking action together in a different way.

The meeting then reconvened.

### **39 LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER AND IMPLICATIONS**

The Alliance received a presentation by Mr M. Mansell regarding the Local Government White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities". The White Paper was now a Bill and had its first reading in Parliament on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

He outlined the following main issues in the White Paper:

- The structures to support the changes to be either Unitary Authorities or improved two tier working.
- As part of the two tier working, there was a duty to prepare a Local Area Agreement, duty to consult with named partners, Council Leaders to have defined leading role on Local Strategic Partnership and more area based funding through Local Area Agreements.
- Local Strategic Partnerships: had a duty to prepare a sustainable community strategy in consultation with named partners, a Forum for area strategic vision, must have a comprehensive engagement strategy and be the strategic focus for community engagement.
- Strengthened role for Local Councillors in the work of LSPs.

- The role of Overview and Scrutiny Committees to be strengthened.
- There will be three choices for leadership; A directly appointed Mayor, a directly elected executive or a leader elected by fellow Councillors with a clear four year mandate.
- The making of bylaws will be fully devolved to local authorities.
- Efficiency gains will be required as part of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review and service collaboration between Council's and across all public bodies will be essential to achieve targets.

I. Hobbs reported that the Devon Councils had submitted a joint proposal to Government outlining their intention to work even more closely together in the future to improve two tier working and to deliver continuously improving and value for money services to meet the priorities of local communities in Devon.

Councillor Mrs Webber suggested that the Local Strategic Partnership should assist with the monitoring of how this would be achieved.

#### **40 JOINT WORKING WITH TORRIDGE LSP**

J. Lee reported that the steering group had met to discuss the issue of joint working with the Torridge Local Strategic Partnership. The terms of reference were currently being produced and would be reported to a future meeting for consideration.

#### **41 MONITORING OF PROGRESS MADE AGAINST ACTIONS CONTAINED WITHIN THE SUSTAINBLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

J. Lee reported that the Sustainable Community Strategy would be published shortly. The monitoring of projects within the Strategy would commence following the publication of the Strategy.

#### **42 LOCAL COMMUNITY ALLIANCES**

Ms R. Allen reported that each Local Community Alliance would be requested to present their action plans and give updates on progress made at future meetings of the Alliance. The Barnstaple Action Plan would be presented to the next meeting of the Alliance.

#### **43 COMMUNITY PLANNING DATABASE**

The Alliance received a presentation by I. Hobbs regarding the Community Planning Database, how it may look and the types of information that would be available on the database. The Community Planning Database project had been commenced by the Bridges Project and was now developing into a countywide database. Recommendations from all community action plans in Devon would be entered on to the database. Once this had been completed parishes, working with the Alliance Support Group, would be responsible for keeping the information up-to-date on the database. The countywide Project Group was chaired by I. Hobbs and Mrs H. Harrington was the Alliance's representative on the Group. It was

estimated that the database would become live during the summer/autumn of 2007.

The Alliance welcomed the database as a significant step in ensuring that the issues and projects in parish and town plans were captured and could influence strategic priorities in the community strategy.

#### **44 LINK AGE PLUS**

The Alliance received a presentation by D. Hess on "Developing the Senior Council for Devon". He outlined the reasons why a Senior Council for Devon should be developed and the proposed benefits that would be achieved as a result of developing such a Council. A Senior Council would give older people a voice in planning for themselves, their local community and Devon's future; partnership with older people to tackle the issues that matter to them; improve health, well-being and quality of life; provide a fundamental consultation route for all statutory agencies; and it would be formally constituted and may be a registered as a charity. The membership of a Senior Council would be open to anyone aged 50 years and over living in Devon and that particular efforts would be made to reach excluded older people.

The aim was to establish a Council in each of the 29 market towns around Devon and the Barnstaple Alliance has agreed to be a pilot area for North Devon. There will then be a federation at District/northern Devon level (whichever people think most effective) and it was anticipated that the Devon Shadow Council would be in place in September 2007 and that the Senior Council would be fully established in March 2008. He stated that a Senior Council would have potential benefits for the Alliance which would include assisting with consultation mechanisms, building a pool of people who could engage in both thematic and community based issues, filling a gap in participation structures, future proofing services and supporting the Community Strategy priorities.

The Alliance agreed the following:

- (a) That the principle of establishing a Senior Council for Devon be supported;
- (b) That advice be sought from the Barnstaple Alliance on models available that could be used in establishing the Senior Council;
- (c) That the North Devon Community Alliance Support Group be requested to contact partner organisations and invite them to participate in the project.

#### **45 DEPRIVATION AND HOMELESSNESS IN NORTH DEVON - FEEDBACK FROM BUZZ GROUPS**

Ms. R. Allen provided a summary of feedback from the Buzz Groups following the presentations on Deprivation and Homelessness in North Devon.

It was agreed that the summary of the feedback from the Buzz Group be circulated to Members of the Alliance with the minutes from this meeting.

**46                   DEVON LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT**

The Alliance considered and noted the paper on the Devon Local Area Agreement (circulated previously).

**47                   CHILDREN'S TRUST LOCALITY FORUM**

The Alliance considered and noted the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Trust Locality Forum (circulated previously).

**48                   DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Alliance noted the dates of future meeting of the Alliance during 2007/08 and noted the change of date of the next meeting:

- Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007 at 10.00 am (NOT Monday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2007 as previously stated)
- Monday 16th July 2007 at 10.00 am
- Monday 15th October 2007 at 10.00 am
- Monday 21st January 2008 at 10.00 am
- Monday 7th April 2008 at 10.00 am

Chairman

The meeting ended at 1.15 p.m.