

Minutes

The Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership

Tuesday, 20th September, 2011, 02.00 p.m. at Aspen Gardens, Whessoe Road, Hardwick, Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 8GB

DRAFT: SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Chair:

Dave Pickard (Vela Group)

Members:

Paul Thomas (Central Area Partnership); Janet Stubbs (Jobcentre Plus); Helen Dixon (ASB Team SBC); Jane Edmends (SBC Housing); Michelle Street (Stockton Flats); Steven Walton (Anchor); Phil Toal (Frank Haslam Milan); Julia Cherrett (SBC); Lesley Wardle (Places for People); Janine Browne (Stockton Advice Service); .

Advisors:

Beccy Brown (SBC); Linda Stephenson (SBC Benefits); Julie Higgins (SBC Benefits); Emma Bingham (Time2Buy)

Apologies**Members:**

Andrea Ainsley (Places for People); Chris Fixter (Jomast); Stewart Tagg (Fabrick); Tracy Bradburn (Stonham); Catherine Andrews (Hanover); Simon Callaghan (Habinteg); Val and Jim Scollen (Northern Area Partnership); Kathryn and Steve Nelson (SBC)

Advisors/ Observers:

Carol Straughan (SBC Planning); Melanie Howard (SBC Housing)

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ITEM/ISSUE	ACTION
1. Welcome and apologies for absence	
2. Declarations of Interest	
3. Minutes HNP 19.07.2011 Agreed as a true record Contact: Simon Rogalski Telephone:(01642 528359) Email: simon.rogalski@stockton.gov.uk	
4. Early Years Services Consultation Beccy Brown presented "Consultation on Proposed changes to Early Years Services in Stockton" and gave an explanation as to why the review is taking place. The Government's introduction of a new grant to Local Authorities which came into place in December 2010 called the Early Intervention Grant (EIG; this grant replaced a number of separate grants which helped to fund a wide range of activities including Early Years Services. As the new grant is 25% less than the grants it replaced it is necessary to look at all services covered by the grant to determine the best way to deal with this reduction in funding. Beccy explained that support to those families in areas most in need would be the focus of the review, as well as developing partnership working with individuals and organisations who would like to work with us to deliver the best Children's centres. Beccy explained the different options which had been looked at for various areas of the Borough where we currently have 11 Children's centres and explained which centres were likely to be used in the 7 areas where centres are located. The consultation document was issued and those present were asked to complete the questionnaire in this document about the proposals and to return it by 7th October.	

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<p>A question was raised as to where the 25% cuts will be made from, and it was explained that some of this will come from reduction in staffing at the centres, as well efficiencies through using the buildings with partners as well as options for getting more use out of the buildings.</p> <p>A further question was asked about a partnership model and would be of interest to other agencies, it was felt that the buildings would be of interest to other partners or individuals so long as it was not going to be used to provide services as another type of childrens centre.</p> <p>With regard to the delivery of services the point was raised that if the main centre was to be on Thornaby Road then people in central Stockton would find it difficult to access services, Beccy confirmed that 2 centres are to be kept in central Stockton and she was open to suggestions for buildings that could be used for Children's centre.</p> <p>Contact: Beccy Brown Telephone: (01642) 524309 Email: beccy.brown@stockton.gov.uk</p>	
<p>5. Welfare Reform Update</p> <p>Julie Higgins provided an update on the proposals on Housing Benefit Reform for Supported Housing and who will be affected by these changes.</p> <p>It was explained that the change was necessary as the rules are very complex and the Government wishes the rules to be more simplistic but also provide a flexible system that can better target those who most need help, at the moment rules vary according to clients care and support needs. There also needs to be compatibility with Universal Credit in the future and the cost to local authorities is high.</p> <p>Changes will affect people in conventional supported housing such as the elderly, ex-homeless, young people, substance misusers who have use of personal rooms with shared facilities, also affected are people with more</p>	

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<p>specific housing needs who need more intensive levels of personal care and support.</p> <p>Proposals for people in conventional supported housing include a flat rate addition to the LHA rate and meeting the additional costs by alternative funding streams or from other resources available to the client. Proposals also include a separate rate for different types of accommodation to reflect their costs or to base any addition on actual costs, Private Sector housing would also be included in the new rules. For people with more specific housing needs the proposals include meeting the additional housing costs based on LHA levels plus Supported Housing fund, the fund to be administered by the local authority but decisions to be taken away from housing benefit service; funding of supported housing to be brought within local authorities broader responsibility of commissioning care and support.</p> <p>A question was asked as to how the changes will impact on people living in Stockton and Julie responded by telling the group that more clarity on proposals of service charges and what will be paid for is necessary, issues will be whether people will need to apply for funding and will they actually apply. A further question was asked as to when the guidance will be available, and what it will mean to residents of sheltered housing in Stockton. Julie's response was that there is not enough information in the present guide to confirm and we do not want to create unnecessary concern or fear in elderly/vulnerable people.</p> <p>Linda Stephenson gave a presentation on Localising Support for Council Tax in England to the partnership. Items covered related to why support is to be localised and this included giving local authorities a greater stake in the economic future of their area, opportunity to reform the system of support for working age claimants and a degree of control over the impact of the 10% reduction, also to reinforce local control over council tax.</p> <p>Linda explained that the principles of the scheme were that local schemes should support work incentives and in particular avoid disincentives to work, that there would be no change in the level of awards for pensioners and in particular that it is a local authority's duty to run a scheme to provide support for council tax in their area. It was also explained that it was expected that joint working between authorities will be encouraged when calculating administrative funding. Local authorities are free to configure services as they see fit but level of consistency between schemes must reflect the key points of universal credit. The timetable for the implementation of local schemes to be in operation is by the Spring of 2013 which means that there is only 6 months between regulations and start of scheme. The options of how savings can be made were outlined and explanations given</p>	

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<p>of those protected from any extra charges, and a suggestion that people who currently make no payment towards council tax will have to pay in order to meet the 10% saving required. Other discounts such as single person discount not included in consultation although consideration will be given to requesting a 20% minimum charge for working age claimants in order to meet the savings target. Issues around these charges are that 75% of council tax claimants also receive housing benefit and the housing benefit restrictions will impact on the ability for them to pay a contribution. At present both benefits are administered together but a separate council tax benefit scheme will increase admin costs.</p> <p>A question was asked around the proposals that there are to be no increase in charges for present pensioners and future pensioners but how long would this be for? Linda explained that this had not been stipulated at the moment.</p> <p>A further question was asked about unringfenced funding and what sort of evidence will be accepted to get the required funding, Linda explained that the government will look at what benefits were paid in a previous year and will estimate from that.</p> <p>Contact: Linda Stephenson (Benefit Manager) Telephone: (01642) 526245 Email: linda.stephenson@stockton.gov.uk</p> <p>Julie Higgins (Assistant Benefit Manager) Telephone: (01642) 526662 Email: julie.higgins@stockton.gov.uk</p>	
6. Refreshment Break	
7. Time2Buy Update Emma Bingham (Affordable Housing Manager) gave the group some background information as to how	

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<p>Time2Buy and HomeBuy were set up and the variety of products that are covered. Emma also explained what the eligibility for obtaining access to these products would be and gave a more in depth explanation of each product and how they differ from each other and explained that there are currently 15 sites in Stockton and various developers offered different packages. It was noted that it is often schemes such as this that currently keep many housing sites going.</p> <p>A brief explanation of the Mortgage Rescue scheme was given. It was asked what the demands for the scheme currently are. Emma stated that it could be filled many times over. Local Authorities decide who they will refer to the scheme.</p> <p>Contact: Emma Bingham (Affordable Housing Manager) Telephone: (01642) 526478 Email: emma.bingham@stockton.gov.uk</p>	
<p>8. Preparation for themed November meeting on housing challenges for young people</p> <p>Jane Edmends gave a brief recap on a previous Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership meeting where Caroline Wood had spoken on the issues around housing for young people. It was suggested at that meeting that a follow up meeting should be arranged which would include registered providers and agencies and it was hoped that they could give us an update on what schemes they operate and what they can do, this would give us an idea how we can help each other.</p> <p>One suggested option was that a separate meeting date was arranged for this as a stand alone topic outside of the agreed dates for future Housing and Neighbourhood partnership this year.</p> <p>Contact: Jane Edmends Strategic Regeneration Manager (Housing) Telephone: (01642) 52668</p>	<p>Members of the partnership to suggest items or areas of good practice around housing and young people for a themed meeting around this.</p>

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Email: jane.edmends@stockton.gov.uk	
9. Stockton Renaissance Update Dave Pickard covered some of the topics discussed at recent Renaissance meeting including Health and Wellbeing, Learning Disability review/STEPS programme encouraging people with LD into the workplace, this may be on the agenda for future meeting, and Planning for Housing (which came to the partnership in the July meeting).	
10. Any Other Urgent Business Jane Edmends spoke about the JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) which gathers together all the health needs against a range of themes (including housing) and determines what will be needed in the future. The partnership will be used to see if we agree with what would be required, information to be circulated by email to seek comments. Jane also gave a brief overview of the Strategic Housing Needs Assessment which looks at housing need in the four boroughs (not Darlington) this includes all sectors of housing need and all tenures. Members of the partnership might be contacted to find out if they are happy to be interviewed by the consultants (Arc4) as part of the assessment.	Draft housing submission to the assessment to be circulated to partnership members for comments.