

MINUTES OF TPT GROUP MEETING

County Hall, Bedford

21st June 2007

Present:

Sarah Hughes (Chair)	Bedfordshire County Council
David Brewer	Bedfordshire County Council (LAA Project Manager)
Len Simkins	Infotrain
Tanya Richardson	Website Consultant
Mark Smith	CVS Mid & North Bedfordshire
Sue Walmsley	Infotrain
Peter Doyle	Bedford Credit Union
Sutish Mahrra	Jobcentre Plus
Caron Brooks	GO-East
Steve Hill	Aragon Housing Association
James Hurd	Bedford Borough Council (Benefits & Community Welfare)

1. Apologies

Jill Dickinson	Mid Bedfordshire District Council
David Allen	Voluntary & Community Action South Bedfordshire

Action

2. Local Area Agreement - Refresh

- 2.1 The meeting started with a presentation by David Brewer (Bedfordshire County Council, LAA Project Manager) on Bedfordshire's Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement update. David distributed issue 1 of 'Partnership Bulletin' giving details of: the progress being made in refreshing the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS); Bedfordshire's performance against the targets contained in the existing Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the process of moving to a new LAA for 2008. A copy of this document is attached to these minutes.

David described the SCS as an over-arching strategic plan for public services in Bedfordshire and pointed out that it was not driven by a County Council agenda, but had been developed by Bedfordshire Countywide Partnership. David explained that economic underperformance is the driving force behind the Strategy and this needs to be addressed first and foremost. However, it is important that social inclusion, housing and poverty are referenced in the Strategy. David said that he would welcome practical advice as to the referencing and recognition of poverty issues within the strategy.

The consultation period on the draft SCS was due to end on 22nd June. A final draft of the refreshed Strategy will be presented to the Countywide Partnership for adoption on 25th July.

Len Simkins has already fed in comments relating to child poverty on behalf of the Bedfordshire Child Poverty Action Group and advice services on behalf of Bedfordshire Advice Forum. Individual TPT Group members were encouraged to send their feedback to David. Len and Sarah agreed to liaise on a formal TPT Group response to the document.

LS/SH

David also distributed copies of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) Outcomes and Targets Summary for 2007/08 (Year 2). The LAA has seen an expansion on Year 1 from 42 to 56 targets. Good performance on certain targets over the three years of the LAA can result in the award of a 'performance reward grant'. There is £11m of 'new money' available for Bedfordshire. Based on current performance, Bedfordshire is on track to secure around two thirds of this amount. There are presently no firm plans as to how this money will be distributed. The creation of a "community fund" for distribution to the voluntary and community sectors is being considered.

The next step is to construct an updated LAA to be in place by April 2008. From October/November 2007 to March 2008 the LAA will be re-negotiated based on a selection process from Central Government's targets (approximately 200). The Sustainable Community Strategy will help in this process. In effect, the LAA will become the comprehensive delivery plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy.

David agreed with Sarah Hughes that it would be helpful if the TPT Group put in suggestions for LAA targets addressing poverty issues. But, given that the LAA will be driven by the SCS it is of more pressing importance that the TPT Group feeds into the Strategy.

It was agreed that Len and Sarah will formulate a TPT Group response to the draft SCS on financial exclusion, debt and the benefits take-up.

Sarah thanked David for his presentation.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting (8th March 2007) were accepted as an accurate record.

3.2 Matters arising:

There were no matters arising from these minutes.

4. Future TPT Group Events

4.1 Len distributed an update report on the proposed TPT Group events. This report is included with these minutes. After some discussion it was agreed that a sub-group planning meeting would be held on Monday 23rd July at 9.30am at Aragon Housing Association, Ampthill. Len Simkins, Sarah Hughes, Steve Hill and Mark Smith will attend this meeting. For more information contact Len on 01234 360607 or len.simkins@infotrain.co.uk

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5. Action Plan 2007/2008 – Review & Update

5.1 Group Meetings

It was confirmed that the TPT Group will meet 3 times a year compared to 4 times in previous years.

5.2 Newsletter

Poverty news will continue to be produced 4 times a year. The next issue will be produced in August. Any items for inclusion should be sent to Sue Walmsley by Monday 9th July.

5.3 TPT Website

Tanya distributed the latest statistics for the Group website activity. Tanya reported that there had been healthy activity across all pages, but especially partners & links and the newsletter pages. There had been no activity in terms of the Mid Beds Credit Union consultation survey.

The forthcoming TPT events will be publicised via the website and an electronic booking system will be set up.

TR/SW

Following a suggestion from Sarah, Tanya will look into setting up email alerts to inform Group members when the website has been updated.

TR

5.4 Benefits take-up campaign in Bedford - update

James Hurd of Bedford Borough Council updated the Group on the progress of the Bedford Partnership Board-funded Benefits take-up campaign in Bedford. A consortium of Bedford CAB, Bedford Borough Council, Bedfordshire County Council Welfare Rights Service and the Disability Resource Centre was awarded the funds for a campaign to last 18 months.

The first event, Benefits Advice Week in Bedford, was held in May. A briefing session for advisers is planned for 18th September aiming to improve coordination between advice agencies. An Advice Fair will be held on 3rd October. In addition, a series of smaller events are planned around existing activities, e.g. at next year's River Festival.

For more information on this campaign please contact James on 01234 267422 or email jhurd@bedford.gov.uk

5.5 Mid Bedfordshire Credit Union - update

Len distributed a progress report on the feasibility study into the development of a credit union in Mid Bedfordshire. The final report from the feasibility study will be available in the next week or so.

The conclusion from the research and consultation event was very positively in favour of the establishment of a credit union in Mid Beds. However, to start a new credit union from scratch would be too time consuming, risky and costly given the size of the district. The recommendation is therefore to extend the common bond area of an existing credit union into the whole of Mid Beds.

In practice, this means that the next step for the Focus Group is to formally invite Bedford Credit Union to consider extending its common bond. Len raised the point that Bedford Credit Union would need support to achieve this goal.

Sue will update the Action Plan 2007-08 and will forward it to Tanya for inclusion on the Group website.

Infotrain
TR

6. Activity Update / Poverty News

6.1 Activity update details will appear in the next edition of **Poverty News** which will be distributed in August. Please forward any items for inclusion to Sue (sue.walmsley@infotrain.co.uk) by first week in July.

All

6.2 **EEDA** is trying to organise a regional meeting on financial inclusion. Caron Brooks will update the Group.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 There was no other business to discuss

8. Next Meeting

The date of the next Group meeting will be arranged shortly (Tuesday 16th October - as arranged at this meeting is no longer possible). The meeting will be held at 10.00am at County Hall, Bedford.

**Infotrain/
SH**

Documents discussed at this meeting can be found at www.tacklingpoverty-beds.org.uk

Tackling Poverty together Group meetings are facilitated by Infotrain (Contact: Sue Walmsley on 01234 360607)
Please contact Sue for further information or copies of any documents discussed at the meeting