

Accountable Bodies Group

Notes of meeting held on 15 June 2010



1. Present:

Michael Heap, Gloucestershire Voluntary Sector Assembly (Chair)
Cllr Peter Amos, Forest of Dean District Council
Tony Bray, South West Regional Development Agency
Peter Bungard, Gloucestershire County Council (Chair of CSEB)
Jane Burns, Gloucestershire County Council (Adviser)
Ruth FitzJohn, NHS Gloucestershire
Dr Melanie Gibbs, Gloucestershire Police Authority
Cllr Andrew Gravells, Gloucester City Council
Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Gloucestershire County Council
Cllr Steve Jordan, Cheltenham Borough Council
Cllr Keith Pearson, Stroud District Council
David Tate, Business Representative
Cllr Philip Taylor, Tewkesbury Borough Council

Apologies:

Cllr Rob Garnham, Gloucestershire Police Authority
Cllr Paul James, Gloucester City Council
Cllr Frances Roden, Stroud District Council
Cllr Carole Topple, Cotswold District Council
Cllr Robert Vines, Tewkesbury Borough Council

In attendance:

Sam Marsh, Gloucestershire County Council (present for item 4)
Nigel Riglar, Gloucestershire County Council (present for item 3)

Observer:

Richard Sheard, Government Office for the South West

Action

2. Chair's Welcome

The Chair welcomed Cllr Mark Hawthorne to his first meeting as Leader of Gloucestershire County Council and congratulated him on his appointment.

3. Notes of the Previous Meeting and Any Matters Arising

The notes of the previous meeting held on 23 March 2010 were approved as a correct record of the proceedings.

There were no items of matters arising which were not already listed on the agenda for the meeting.

4. Housing Update

Nigel Riglar updated the meeting on the progress made towards developing the “Single Conversation” process with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Nigel made the following points:

- The governance arrangements for Gloucestershire’s “Single Conversation” were now firmly embedded within the Gloucestershire Conference partnership arrangements at both the Community Strategy Executive Board and the Accountable Bodies Group level. The Leaders Group of local authorities was acting as lead commissioner.
- The Case for Investment paper was currently being re-drafted to reflect the changes announced by the new Government. Each district had drawn up a long list of potential housing sites and the prioritisation methodology had been agreed.
- The Local Investment Plan which combined both the Case for Investment and the agreed long list of sites would need to be signed off by each of the local authority councils and by the Gloucestershire Conference in the autumn.
- It was likely that the new Government would reduce the amount of money available under the National Affordable Housing Programme scheme. The criteria for funding could also change so it was therefore important that the Gloucestershire councils worked together to put forward those sites which most closely matched the criteria for funding.
- Consultation on the Countywide Housing Strategy would be postponed until there was further clarification about the new Government’s housing policy.

Cllr Andrew Gravells pointed out that at the political level it was important that there were mechanisms within each district to ensure that the cabinet member for housing was also consulted and kept up to date with housing related issues.

Action: Nigel Riglar to forward a note the District Chief Officers responsible for Housing to request that they build into the process consultation with their respective Cabinet Members for Housing.

5. Total Place Update

ABG are providing the strategic steer for Total Place in Gloucestershire.

A paper setting out the proposed governance framework for the Total Place programme, together with the project objectives, resourcing and risk management arrangements had been circulated. Jane Burns reported that the CSEB had approved the Gloucestershire Total Place Framework Document but had requested that further consideration be given to the governance arrangements for the Programme especially in the light of the current Gloucestershire Conference partnership Review. A further paper setting out options for the governance arrangements would be considered at the next CSEB meeting on 21 June.

Given that the next ABG meeting was not until September, Jane agreed to circulate a written update to members of the ABG over the summer to keep everyone up to date with progress.

Steve Jordan asked about the criteria that would be used to assess whether the two pilot projects had been successful and if they had been successful, how would the approach be expanded across other areas. Sam Marsh reported that both pilot projects would develop their own success criteria and that there was a clear expectation that the pilots would also be responsible for developing the methodology for delivering a successful Total Place project.

Ruth FitzJohn stressed that whilst she supported light weight processes, it was important that the pilot projects operated under an agreed set of principles to ensure that the £250,000 RIEP funding was well invested and represented good value for money.

Mark Hawthorne suggested that the public sector in Gloucestershire needed to develop a set of high level strategic objectives around identifying the drivers for change, cost reductions, future cost avoidance and developing better outcomes for the people of Gloucestershire.

Richard Sheard reported that it was likely that the new Government would continue to support the Total Place approach but may introduce some changes such as broadening the range of providers. Richard also reported that the Department of Work and Pensions was keen to be involved in discussions around developing the Total Place programme.

Actions:

Jane Burns to circulate a written update on the progress made towards delivering the Total Place programme over the summer.

Richard Sheard to contact DWP with a view to identifying a representative to be part of the Total Place Programme.

6. Feedback from the Community Strategy Executive Board Meeting held on 11 May 2010

a) LAA Year End Performance Report

The LAA Year End Performance Report for each of the thematic partnerships had been circulated. Pete Bungard reported that he had recently received notification from the Government that the LAA Reward Grant would be reduced by 50%. On current performance that would equate to £5m in Performance Review Grant rather than the expected £10m. In addition now that the Government had announced that it was going to abandon its Public Service Agreement targets. There was also a question mark around whether any reward money would be available for meeting the 31 designated LAA targets for the final year of the LAA. Richard Sheard confirmed that the ministers were still considering the future of the LAA process and that no decisions had yet been made.

For the future, it was anticipated that targets would be more local.

The ABG expressed thanks to all the staff who had worked hard to achieve the performance targets.

b) Short term Changes to the Gloucestershire Conference

A paper setting out the feedback from the discussion on the proposed short term changes to the Gloucestershire Conference at the last meeting of the CSEB had been circulated. Pete Bungard pointed out that a more fundamental review of the partnership arrangements would take place once there was more clarity as to the detail of the new Government's

policy agenda.

Ruth FitzJohn stressed that when it came to devising new partnership arrangements it was important to start from a zero base where any element had to be justified as adding value rather than trying to fit existing structures to meet changing demands.

The ABG agreed that the timescale for the implementation of a new partnership structure should be by December 2010.

c) Public Sector Employment Partnership

A paper setting out the feedback from the discussion at the last CSEB meeting on the future of the Public Sector Employment Board (PSEB) had been circulated. Pete Bungard reported that LAA pump priming money had been used to set up the PSEP in July 2008 for two years to bring together public sector organisations to address common employment, recruitment and skills challenges and to promote the sector as a career opportunity for young people. The CSEB agreed that the PSEB should continue its work for another two years to be funded through pro rata contributions from partner organisations amounting to £50,000 in total.

The ABG endorsed the decision of the CSEB.

7. Impact of the General Election

Mark Hawthorne pointed out that the new Government had hit the ground running and things were moving very quickly. This had resulted in uncertainty as regards a number of existing policy areas and also around the future shape of regional structures etc. Mark urged partners to continue to talk to one another and to maintain close working relationships.

Pete Bungard reported that the recent announcements about expanding the academy school programme could have significant implications for the county council.

Ruth FitzJohn said that the Health white paper which was due to be published in July would potentially have major implications for the PCT and county council. It was also noted that the outcome of the next comprehensive spending review was expected to be announced in October.

8. Key Messages

The ABG agreed the following key messages from the meeting:

- **Housing** – ABG noted progress with the Single Conversation. They wanted assurances that District Council Cabinet leads for Housing were briefed/consulted as appropriate.
- **Total Place** – ABG continue to be very interested in the outcomes and potential for financial savings from the Total Place projects. Whilst trusting others to deliver they will maintain a high level overview role. They are particularly interested in any wider learning give the scale of challenges facing Gloucestershire.
- **LAA** – ABG want to pass on their thanks to all those who have helped to achieve the LAA targets. They noted the reduction in levels of Performance Reward Grant, as part of the deficit reduction budget. For the future, LAAs should focus on local targets which help to deliver the high-level strategic objectives for Gloucestershire.
- **Partnership Review** – In view of rapidly changing circumstances, ABG asked for the partnership review to start from a “zero-base” and be completed and implemented by 31 December 2010.

9. Any Other Business

David Tate asked whether any consideration was being given to the potential effect on the local economy if the public sector pension scheme was changed and also how the Government’s recent announcement about significant cuts in the funding for the Ministry of Defence would impact on Gloucestershire.

Jane Burns pointed out that the Government had announced a review into local authority pensions and further consideration would need to be given when the review was completed. Richard Sheard reported that Brigadier Steve Hodder was keen to develop closer links between the military and the public sector.

Action: Jane Burns agreed to talk to Brigadier Steve Hodder about the proposed cuts in military funding and what effect this would have on the military presence in Gloucestershire.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Accountable Bodies Group will take place on Monday, 27 September 2010 at 2.00-4.00pm in the Members' Room, Shire Hall, Gloucester.