



**Minutes of a meeting of the Kent LINK Governors' Group held on  
Wednesday, 15 December 2010 from 10.00am until 1.30pm, The Osborne Room,  
Lenham Community Centre, Groom Way, Lenham, Maidstone ME17 2QT**

**Present:**

John Fletcher (Chairman)  
John Ashelford  
Mike Eddy  
Mark Fittock  
Cate Jackson  
Bose Johnson  
Roger Kendall  
Stan Richardson  
David Swaffer

**Also present:**

Alex Burnand, Contracts Manager, Kent County Council  
Clive Brock, West Kent LINK Development Worker, Kent & Medway Networks (KMN)  
John Gallimore, Authorised Visitor and External Representative, Kent LINK  
Lyn Gallimore, Priorities Panel member and Authorised Visitor / Mystery Shopper, Kent LINK  
Brenda O'Neill, Contracts Manager, KMN

**Opening of meeting**

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Ray Harris and Sally Keverne. Some members expected to be delayed due to traffic problems on the M20 motorway.

**2. Declarations of interests** – there were no declarations of interests.

**3. Any Other Business** – one item of additional business identified.

**4. Chair of the meeting – to review and select a Chairman and Vice Chairman**

The Chairman, John Fletcher, pointed out that he and the Vice Chairman, Roger Kendall, had been elected for a 12 month period only. He was now seeking guidance as to the future election and terms of office and he invited views on election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

Due to the uncertainty between now and March 2011, it was proposed that the current situation should continue as there was a need for some continuity.

Roger Kendall was prepared to continue in office until September 2011 and John Fletcher expressed his willingness to continue at least until March 2011.

However other Governors would ensure support for the Chairman to 'spread the load' and the Chairman expressed his thanks not only for the vote of support but for the practical support which is always available. It was **AGREED** that John Fletcher continue as the existing Chairman until at least March 2011.

5. **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 November 2010** – The minutes were approved subject to the following changes:

5.1 Accuracy: under 4.3.1, 'Priority one becoming one', this should in fact have read 'Priority two will become priority one.' **ACTION: Becky Alvey**

5.1.1 The meeting with Cate Boland had been cancelled, although a letter to the councils had been drawn up in draft form. The delay in dealing with this matter was caused by problems in contacting the main office but these were being resolved.

5.1.2 **Equality and Diversity Strategy** - It had been **AGREED** that contact would be made with Kent Police but it was unclear who had taken responsibility for this action.

5.1.3 **Letters to MPs** - The letters sent to MPs have been acknowledged; Mark Fittock had received a letter from Michael Fallon MP for Sevenoaks referring to a number of general NHS issues. An acknowledgement had also been received from Roger Gayle, MP for Thanet North.

5.1.4 **Personal attacks on KMN staff** - KMN staff can find themselves on occasions facing intimidating and aggressive behaviour when carrying out work in the community and working in the office at the front line of public enquiries. Staff need support and protection as well as clear guidance on where the line is drawn. Written guidelines and policies are required. A meeting needs to be organised between Graham and the Governors' Group; clarification required 'staff should not be shot for being the messengers'.

5.1.5 **White Paper consultation** - 'Equity and excellence – Liberating the NHS' notes were tabled from Mark Fittock as agreed at the November meeting in particular for the Department of Health's White Paper for which the consultation period closes on 14 January 2011. Mark's notes would be used as the basis of the Kent LINK response. A hard copy of these notes was handed to the note-taker of the meeting who has since handed the notes to Brenda O'Neill. An electronic copy of Mark's notes will also be requested by Brenda for circulation and communication. **ACTION: Graham Hills**

5.1.6 **Eastern and Coastal Kent Community Health NHS Trust** - The Trust met in early December and it was reported that, whilst mistakes had been made (availability of nursing and delay in referrals etc), it was important to move on with a 'wipe the slate clean' approach.

- 5.1.7 11.1.2: A question was asked if any action had been taken on this point. The request for a response and information had been repeated – however a response remains outstanding.
- 5.1.8 A request had been passed to Graham Hills and the response had come back that it was top of the priority list. Partly the action was prompted by a letter from a GP in Ham Street who had been critical of the annual report.
- 5.1.9 **11.1.3: The Mental Health Consultation Report** - The report was sent to Kent County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) but no action had been taken as Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care NHS Trust (KMPT) appear to be reluctant to accept that a problem exists. Kent LINK Governors had pointed out that the situation was not as 'rosy' as they initially described. Cate Jackson had been asked to attend but she had no opportunity to comment, only to respond to questions.

## Items for Decision / Action

### 6. **Additional Item – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and Ofsted report**

The response to the Ofsted report was discussed at length. There was an issue regarding transition and the impact this might have on an already poor situation. There is a substantial piece of work to be undertaken in this high profile area including the letter to Paul Wickenden, Chairman of the HOSC, and a decision is due to be taken in July 2011.

The HOSC and others are looking at the implications of the Ofsted report, particularly issues such as the staff shortages in West Kent.

There remains a requirement for the LINK to look at the Ofsted report in more detail; not only is it a worryingly poor report but it clearly states that Kent is now the second worst county in the UK in this important area. The potential for considerable risk continues; the question is will there be a requirement for a Kent LINK Governor to be appointed to specifically look at issues concerning children and young people, including disabled children, special needs and access to care, such as 'looked after' children often do not have access to a GP surgery.

Meeting considered that, if no existing Governor is able to take on the role, that LINK should consider approaching a retired teacher for example.

### 7. **360 Degree Performance Review**

Attachment 2 to the agenda showed a list of possible actions and items identified as a result of the review:

#### 7.1 **Away Day / Info Exchange / Education Day**

For those Kent LINK Governors and others involved in LINK, the recommended objective is to have a clearer understanding of roles and expectations, especially in times of turbulence and change. Example topics might be Ofsted, funding and other changes that require a broader understanding of the continually shifting environment. A day of this type might also help in terms of prioritisation of

workloads and would offer an opportunity to build relationships with staff. It would provide an opportunity to step away from the detail and focus on the bigger picture. The date could be set so that knowledge is available of the Kent County Council (KCC) funding / budget setting issues. It was **AGREED** that a date should be set towards the end of January and there might be a requirement for a third party facilitator, such as Stuart Gibbons from KCC.

- 7.2 The second item was training needs for the Governors' Group but these will be met and addressed during the 'away day.'
- 7.3 Date setting and scheduling of minutes – the Priorities Panel and Budget Sub Group will be moved forward to leave more space between that and the Governors' Group meetings. **ACTION: Graham Hills**
- 7.4 The issue of a new Governor for social care will be postponed for now, although the pressing need for a response to the Ofsted report may mean that this will have to be a priority for the next meeting.
- 7.5 Regarding Governors' non attendance at meetings, the view expressed was that a procedure had been established and this should be enforced. Some new members were yet to attend a meeting and the procedure should be used in these cases.

## 8. **Additional Item – Publicity for LINK and role of Purple Edge**

An email had been received from Graham Hills, Operational Director for the Kent LINK (KMN) emphasising the statutory duties of the Governors to promote LINK and the services it offers. The challenge was to bring the work of the LINK alive with the public, using real and practical examples.

Graham had suggested that the role that Purple Edge plays in supporting the marketing and promotion of LINK should continue as they are able to bring the right mix of skills, newsletter production, bulletins etc, and they have delivered on all promises made and to a good standard. He suggested that Purple Edge can also be commissioned to undertake special projects but their role at the moment does not include the Kent LINK website.

In discussion it was suggested that the act of using Purple Edge does not mean that 'everyone knows' – far from it. Publicity and promotion is an incremental process and it was important to build links and be able to initiate and personalise stories and Purple Edge do have excellent contacts to help 'make this happen'.

Concerns were however expressed about the services that Purple Edge provides – for example the change of logo which some felt unnecessary, the number of press releases issued appears to be limited and not regular and consistent. It was pointed out that the working relationship between KMN staff and Purple Edge is critical in order to increase the effectiveness of publicity efforts.

A question was asked about the messages which LINK wants to send: is it clear what those messages are and does the LINK / Governors' Group know whether the messages are reaching the public or not? It was commented that 'getting into the media is a double-edged sword', but in order to maximise the LINK's efforts, a plan was needed to be very clear on how direct the messages are and where they are being sent on behalf of LINK.

The Purple Edge contract is due for renewal at the end of December 2010. Publicity was raised as a significant issue in the 360 degree review feedback and it was agreed that production of a communication strategy would help to address the issues raised.

Brenda O'Neill pointed out that some of the work Purple Edge is currently undertaking was previously done by KMN staff and she was concerned about the number of erratum corrections that now need to be issued.

It was **AGREED** that a communications sub group be established, comprising of Roger Kendall, John Ashelford, Mike Eddy, Graham Hills and Brenda O'Neill, who will meet at the earliest possible date, consider a three month contract extension for Purple Edge and agree the way forward. **ACTION: Brenda O'Neill**

## 9. Consultations

18.1 **The Department of Health's White Paper – 'Healthy lives, healthy people White Paper: Our strategy for public health in England'** – Clive Brock was congratulated for producing an excellent paper for consideration by Governors; well written, and a clear and concise summary. Consultation on the White Paper continues until March 2011 and the LINK will now need to consult more widely with the public. Clive's work provides the opportunity to be proactive, publish a summary on the website and possibly create a discussion blog. It was **AGREED** it was essential to widen the net and obtain more detailed views. Clive's paper will be promoted and publicised and all comments be coordinated by LINK in good time for an effective, formal response. **ACTION: Graham Hills**

18.2 **The Department of Health's Liberating the NHS – 'An Information Revolution: a consultation on proposals'** – Mark Fittock had, as promised, drafted a response with some proposals for the way forward and these have been added to the minutes in hard copy format. However the hard copy is now held by Brenda O'Neill who will request an electronic copy for circulation. **ACTION: Brenda O'Neill**

Mark commented that the concept of 'no decision about me without me' was not currently being followed in terms of implementing budget cuts in Kent. In the meantime, an urgent discussion was required as the consultation deadline is 14 January 2011. It was agreed that Mark's notes would be used as the basis of the LINK Kent response, emphasising the mixed messages that are being sent. **ACTION: Brenda O'Neill**

10. **Priorities Panel** – Those attending the last meeting of the Priorities Panel held on 8 December 2010, were not happy with some of the outcomes of the meeting, in particular the complaints concerning the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford and keyhole surgery; these complaints are now being followed up with the Ombudsman.

Strategies for older people and dementia patients are now being followed up and a further meeting is scheduled for February 2011. Complaints from the community nursing sector have been addressed but Priority Panel members were astonished at the 'no surprises' clause. 'No surprises' appears to be a surprise and members state it did not appear in the original memorandum.

The Chairman commented that 'no surprises' appears to apply to the end product – the finished piece of work and not to the work undertaken along the way. The Community Services (Health Care) document included a reference to 'no surprises' but the approach appears to Governors to have 'crept in by the back door.'

It was stated that the concept of 'no surprises' was introduced to address particular problem areas (eg lack of staffing) and to emphasise the need for open communication.

Members agreed to reinvestigate and review the Memoranda of Understanding to clarify the possible impact of the 'no surprises' clause as the requirement must be mutually agreeable.

**ACTION: Graham Hills**

Other issues raised with the panel included:

- Vulnerable adult threatened by drug takers now under care
- Threat to withdraw Darenth Valley minibus – letter to Sevenoaks District Council
- Availability of hearing aid batteries
- Access to limb fitting services moved to Gillingham
- Ambulance stacking and related safety issues.

## 11. Financial Report

Roger Kendall reported that the overall surplus had come down, an indication that projects were well underway. An overspend was indicated on some staff costs but this is due mainly to a 'blip' regarding employment of a PA.

Surplus is largely due to Christ Church University funding; their research bill not yet received, and the research project with Greenwich University - £12 000 to be paid by the end of March 2011. Some of the delay in the Greenwich project is due to problems in recruiting participants (Authorised Visitors) - an update will be requested on progress in recruitment.

Roger projected that the majority of significant project funding would be paid before March and this he expected would leave a surplus of around £7000. It was also agreed that in the balance sheet summary committed funds on project work should be shown as accruals or committed spend to ensure these funds are safeguarded. Any projected underspend will also be shown.

**ACTION: Roger Kendall**

## 12. Questions for proposed meeting with Kent County Council

Main headings and topic areas had been tabled by Mark Fittock focusing mainly on transition and the new White Paper on Public Health. It was pointed out that a community and local government web site does in fact disclose the latest funding situation and this could be extracted and included in a bulletin. However the comparison figures were not 'like for like'. No details of the meeting appeared to be available in terms of HealthWatch and for example how KCC is proposing to take the transition forward.

The consultation deadline is until the middle of March 2011 but a LINK meeting has been set up with Alan Marsh on Friday, 7 January 2011 in Folkestone to discuss KCC's approach.

### 13. Project Updates

- 13.1 Age Concern Day Centres. It had proved difficult to identify the relevant day centres as we had no knowledge of the homes affected. Detailed Mystery Shopper reports would be sent so as homes involved could be more easily identified.
- 13.2 Visits to Residential Homes – see Item 14.1
- 13.3 Cervical Cancer screening project had established three focus groups in Riverside (Gravesend), Parkwood (Maidstone) and Ightham (Sevenoaks).

### 14. Reports of Meetings

- 14.1 **Visits to Residential Homes** – Stan Richardson reported that this activity needed to focus not just on the residents but also on management structure and staffing (including training and qualifications). Some 19 questions had been proposed that would be addressed during the visits. A meeting with the Customer Care Manager had been postponed but a teleconference was held during which, Stan Richardson reported, they were told they were not authorised to ask ‘management questions’ as proposed, eg numbers of staff and use of agency personnel, staff training etc. Only five questions were approved. Another serious concern was that residents will not complain about poor treatment because of fear of reprisals.

Asking the ‘normal’ questions will not address these issues.

A meeting had been scheduled for the following day to discuss the protocol for on site inspections and visits to residential homes. KCC had originally invited the LINK to actively participate in this project – but now they have real concerns about not only the threat in terms of level of staffing at a number of homes but also the quality of staff. It was essential that LINK followed its statutory duties in this critical area.

- 14.2 **Transport for Health Working Group** – the original heading for this item was incorrect. A report had now been submitted by Dave Townsend and this was noted.
- 14.3 **Health and Overview Scrutiny** – everything was working well; example given of angioplasty service for prisoners, possible issue of prisoner transport to William Harvey Hospital.
- 14.4 **LINK transition to HealthWatch** – national meeting attended by Roger Kendall; Government thinking explained but although a lot of consultation was taking place there was little feedback on progress; reference to public and patient involvement proposals.
- 14.5 **West Kent Steering Group** – a letter had been sent regarding reductions in services and signed by Mark Fittock; concern again expressed about the lack of consultation

## 15. Any Other Business

Issue raised regarding reports back from PCT Board meetings; most issues are 'technical' – meetings rotate around the county at different venues to maximise the opportunity for public attendance. Although PCTs are winding down, it was reported that staff continue to work enthusiastically and much work is being done to ease the transition and changeover.

Three way mechanism needs establishing so there is better communication between LINK and the public and LINK and the PCT. Prior notification of meetings and possible issues need managing more effectively. This should be included in the Purple Edge discussion as it concerns communication and PR issues. Providing information on choice is an excellent basis for action for HealthWatch going forward. One different approach might be to use for example TV facilities in GP surgeries. Current availability and costs will be investigated.

**ACTION: Graham Hills**

<b>Items for Noting</b>
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## 16. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Kent LINK Governors' Group will be held on Wednesday, 19 January 2011 from 10.00am until 1.00pm in the Osborne Room, Lenham Community Centre, Groom Way ME17 2QT.