

3 August 2010



**Draft minutes of a meeting of the Kent LINK Priorities Panel held on
14 July 2010 between 2.00pm and 4.00pm at Salvation Army Centre,
74 - 80 Union Street Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1ED**

Present

Ray Harris
Doug Tutton
David Dye
Junetta Whorwell

Also present

Mike Eddy, Kent LINK Governor
John Fletcher, Kent LINK Governor, Chairman
Roger Kendall, Kent LINK Governor
Mark Fittock, Kent LINK Governor
John Holloway, Kent LINK Governor
Cate Jackson, Kent LINK Governor
Alex Burnand, Kent County Council Contract Manager for Host contract
Graham Hills, Kent LINK Operational Director, Kent & Medway Networks Ltd (KMN)
Sophie Swain, Kent LINK Project Worker, KMN
Brenda O'Neill, Governance Lead / Contract Management Director, KMN

Opening of meeting

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Lyn Gallimore and Robin Ridsdill-Smith.

2. Minutes from previous meeting

The decision was made to adjourn the approval of minutes from last meeting in view of the purpose of this meeting.

Items for discussion

3. Priorities Panel proposal from the Governors

3.1 Background to meeting

- 3.1.1 The Group was informed that a proposal for changes to the system had been put together by a small group of Governors in light of the problems which had been experienced with dealing with issues coming into the LINK with the intention of coming up with a solution to these, not to criticise the current Priorities Panel.
- 3.1.2 There was also a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Governors and the Priorities Panel. It was acknowledged that the Governors needed to have a closer working relationship with the Priorities Panel. Now that a Governor is fully installed on the Panel it was hoped that this would improve.

3.2 The roles of the two groups

- 3.2.1 The Governors' original intention was for a group of LINK participants to serve as 'moderators' to consider issues coming into the LINK and identify projects from these. The process needs to be further refined to ensure that issues coming into the LINK are being dealt with effectively, including closure.
- 3.2.2 The Kent LINK is unique in that it is set up to be democratic with a system of divided responsibility with the Priorities Panel operating independently of the Governors.
- 3.2.3 As well as governance, Governors have responsibility for allocating resources for work to be carried out by the LINK.
- 3.2.4 Responsibility for the decision made as to action to be taken by the LINK (via the Priorities Panel) will ultimately fall with the Governors, even though they are not involved in making the decision.
- 3.2.5 A query was raised with regard to the involvement of the Governors in the process of dealing with issues, referring to the terms of reference which states:

“The Group will NOT be partisan or become involved in the issues being addressed by the LINK”

The Chair of Governors confirmed that the Governors were not looking to become involved in the issues from a day to day basis, rather to ensure that the process for dealing with issues was working well. This is an issue of governance which does come under the Governors remit.

3.3 Changes to the system

- 3.3.1 As with the changes to the proposed changes to the decision making framework, any further changes would be taken to the LINK membership as a whole. The LINK governance states that this could be done via a consultation period of 12 weeks in which participants would have the opportunity to comment. The changes to the decision making framework were taken not

approved by the Annual General Meeting so these will also need to be subject to a consultation.

3.4 The current process

3.4.1 Improvements have been made in recent months. The Chair of the Governors has met with the Chair of the Priorities Panel on several occasions to discuss the process and identify how previous problems, such as the need for clear definition of what the LINK is being asked to do, could be improved. Issues are now going out to the wider LINK via the Bulletin and an email distribution list to gain input from more people in advance of the issues going to the Panel.

3.4.2 The Priorities Panel were asked for feedback as to strengths and weaknesses of current process. The points raised were as follows:

- **The system itself:** Members of the Panel felt that they were working to the best of their abilities within the current system, but acknowledged that there had been a learning curve. During discussion members of the Panel questioned the purpose of the Panel and requested that the aims and objectives of the Panel be re-examined.
- **Decision making process:** Scoring is intended to rationalise decisions and to make the LINK accountable to the public. It should be carried out prior to the meeting in the first instance, and then moderated at the meeting as a result of discussion taking place. This does not always happen at present. Each member of the Panel should score so that all scores are fed in and if a member of the Panel is not at a meeting then they should be able to send in their scores in their absence. It was felt that the current scoring process did not work as well as it could and was misleading.
- **Discussion:** The Panel felt that the discussion element was important and would be lost under the proposal for the new system. However, the Panel conceded that at present discussion does not change the scores, so a question was raised as to what purpose the discussion serves.
- **Recommended actions:** The Panel are provided with a recommendations sheet to allocate actions to each issue. However, under the current system the Governors have responsibility for resourcing, which does not correspond with what the Panel is being asked to do.
- **Decision making:** The function of the Panel is to consider issues from a lay perspective. Concern was raised that on occasion the majority of members scored an issue highly but a decision was made based on the lowest scoring member. There was also an instance where the Priorities Panel made a decision that an issue should not have any action taken, when a LINK project group had made recommendations to the contrary.

- **Lack of information:** The Panel felt that they could not make evidence based decisions at present, as often the information comes in which is not detailed enough. KMN staff should provide enough information to make a decision. One option was proposed that the Panel could identify where gaps are, but could advise Governors where resources are needed to fill these in, as opposed to waiting for the gaps to be filled before the issue is considered and scored or carrying out an in depth investigation before the issue has been approved by the Panel to take forward.
- **Initial actions:** There is also the need to establish a formal process for dealing with items on which action could initially be taken by the Host organisation, rather than it needing to go to the Panel.
- **Feedback to Governors:** At present the total scores are given, but no information as to how the Panel came to the decision. Discussion could be documented eg through adding a paragraph to explain the scores.

3.4.3 Following the discussion, the following actions were **AGREED**

- As the system has now been in place for a year and members have been working with it, it is a timely opportunity to review – this could become an annual review.
- That another session be held with both the Governors and the Priorities Panel to identify a suitable process moving forward with the aim of:
 - Carrying out a SWOT analysis using the current model to look at how it could be improved to enable everyone to have some input on the process moving forward
 - Clarifying the principles and objectives of the Priorities Panel so that these are clearly understood by everybody.

4. LINK Community Engagement Event

A report from the Priorities Panel will be put to the Community Engagement Event identifying activity since the last meeting in February.

5. Date of the next Priorities Panel meeting

The next meeting of the Priorities Panel will be held on Wednesday 11 August from 2.00pm to 4.00pm at Salvation Army Centre, 74-80 Union Street Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1ED