

Community Budgets

12:30 to 13:00 Thursday 24 March 2011, Committee Room 12, House of Commons

Note of the Meeting

The **Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government** welcomed the leaders and their representatives and Ministers from closely-interested departments.

Baroness Hanham updated the wider group on the creation of a small group of leaders to address key issues impacting delivery of ambitious Community Budgets. The following issues had been raised so far:

- Pooling of resources –particularly around police funding
- Availability of resources and the impact on pace
- Bringing service providers together locally

Cllr Bluh (Swindon) and **Cllr Hill** (Lincolnshire) said that Community Budgets were about more effective use of resources, focussed around families. Pooling was part of the solution to this.

Worklessness

Chris Grayling said localism was key to delivery of his priorities. Work Programme providers will be incentivised through payment by results to engage locally. DWP is establishing a framework so that the public sector can negotiate bolt-on services. Local government can be partners in commissioning with contractors. DWP was injecting £60m into families alongside its investment in the Work Programme. DWP were effectively 'buying' a personal budget for families so that services could be aligned around families. European rules prevented pooling of funding at source. For both areas of activity DWP wanted to work in partnership with local government to break down the barriers to employment. DWP wanted to get to a 'virtual pot' with the size of the pot negotiated locally. JCP discretionary funding could also be accessed through the virtual pot. **Cllr Barrow** (Westminster) and **Cllr Harper** (Barnet) supported the 'virtual pot' concept: knowing the funding available collectively in the area would enable partners to work together better.

Oliver Letwin commented that contributions in kind as well as money were important.

Chris Grayling proposed a half day workshop between the 16 areas and DWP officials to go through the Work Programme and ESF approaches and work through how to deliver the 'virtual pot'. **Eric Pickles** summed up by saying that a virtual pot was a very helpful approach and could bring down barriers and tackle accountability issues. A locally-devised 'protocol' might be needed to support this approach. The workshop would enable these issues to be worked through.

Health

Cllr Rudge (Birmingham) outlined problems in engaging health organisations with organisations being unclear on their roles and ability to commit. **Anne Milton** outlined the changes to health structures and urged areas to engage with GP pathfinders and directors of public health. **Oliver Letwin** commented that the issues crossed local authority/public health, NHS commissioning, PCT and GP cluster roles. **Cllr Harper**

(Barnet) said strong messages around expectations needed to go to local delivery organisations.

Cllr Barrow (Westminster) described a 'gold card' being held by families with delivery organisations agreeing to give them priority for all services.

Anne Milton agreed to hold a workshop between the 16 areas and DH officials to ensure clarity about which organisations areas should talk to on what issues and discuss how best to develop Community Budgets.

Education

Cllr Hill (Lincolnshire) sought a mechanism to encourage academies to engage. **Tim Loughton** agreed to produce a note on pooling budgets for schools & academies. He offered that DfE officials would be happy to attend meetings between local authorities and schools / academies.

Tim Loughton said he was aware that a number of areas were seeking greater flexibilities in processes around safeguarding etc. A meeting has been arranged with Eileen Munro for areas to discuss flexibilities and DfE will feed back on the outcomes.

Justice

Cllr Rudge (Birmingham) raised the need to secure cooperation from the prison governor to support resettlement. **Jonathan Slater** confirmed that MoJ will work with the newly appointed governor to secure positive engagement.

Taking Community Budgets Forward

Oliver Letwin said that Community Budgets were a 'prototype' for the localisation of public funding such that it can be applied effectively, locally.

Cllr Parsons expressed interest in developing further Community Budgets. **Cllr Hill** (Lincolnshire) for example mentioned tackling services for the elderly and will provide a paper on this.

The **Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government** said he was keen to ensure Community Budgets were a real game-changer. It was important, therefore to tackle the issues impacting on these Budgets and to get the Budgets right. Once done, he was keen that Community Budgets should be rapidly expanded into other priorities.

The **Secretary of State** said that the Group would meet again following the agreed workshops with DWP and DH. He thanked leaders for all the work they were doing; collectively we were getting to something that all could be proud of and that would also save money.

Attendance:

Rt. Hon. Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
Baroness Hanham, Parliamentary under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government leading on Community Budgets
Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling MP, Minister for Employment
Oliver Letwin MP, Minister for Government Policy advice
Tim Loughton MP, Parliamentary under-Secretary of State for Children and Families
Anne Milton MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health

Representing Ministers unable to attend:

Edward Twiddy, Treasury
Jonathan Slater, Ministry of Justice
Mandie Campbell, Home Office
Angela Donkin, Early Intervention Review [for Graham Allen]

Cllr Colin Barrow (Leader, Westminster), Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, Hammersmith & Fulham, and Wandsworth
Cllr Bob Bibby (Leader, Bury), Greater Manchester
Cllr Roderick Bluh (Leader), Swindon
Cllr Sarah Candy (Cabinet Member for Children's Services), Essex
Cllr Andrew Harper (Deputy Leader), Barnet
Cllr Kate Hollern (Leader), Blackburn with Darwen
Cllr Imran Hussain (Executive Member), Bradford
Cllr Martin Hill (Leader), Lincolnshire
Cllr David Parsons (Leader), Leicestershire
Cllr Alan Rudge (Cabinet Member for Equalities and HR), Birmingham
Cllr Catherine West (Leader), Islington

LGA: Joe Simpson, Paul Raynes

Supporting Officials

Apologies from:

Mayor Steve Bullock (Executive Mayor), Lewisham
Cllr Peter Callow (leader), Blackpool
Cllr Paul Carter (Leader), Kent
Cllr Mike Fisher (Leader), Croydon
Cllr Carl Minns (Leader), Hull