

## Minutes of the London Strategic Migration Partnership Board meeting

26 February 2009

City Hall

### **Present:** Board members

Richard Barnes (RB), Deputy Mayor of London (chair)

Hugh Harris (HH), London First

Chris Hayes (CH), Director, Government Office for London

Mike Reed (MR), Deputy Director, Migration Policy, Department of Communities and Local Government for Tom Wechsler, Deputy Director, Migration

Laurie Heselden (LH), SERTUC (South East Regional TUC), for Megan Dobney

Simon Tanner (ST), Director of Public Health, NHS, London Regional Director of Public Health, NHS and Health Advisor to the GLA

Jonathan Ellis (JE), Director of Policy and Development, Refugee Council, for Donna Covey

Noeleen Adams (NA), Third Sector Alliance

Tony Smith (TS), Regional Director, UK Border Agency

Belinda Porich (BP), Operational Head, National Housing Federation

Cllr Jason Stacey(JS), Executive member for crime and protection, London Councils for

Cllr Merrick Cockell (MC), Chair, London Councils

### Apologies

Alan Wood (AW), Association of Directors of Children's Services, Director of Children Services, London Borough of Hackney

Sarah Ebanja (SE), Deputy CEO, London Development Agency

Ian El-Mokadem (IM), Managing Director, UK and Ireland, COMPASS

Kathy Prior (KP), Job Centre Plus

Donna Covey (DC) Refugee Council

Megan Dobney (MD), Chair, SERTUC

Owen Tudor (OT), Head, EU & International Relations, TUC

Cllr Merrick Cockell (MC), Chair, London Councils

Tom Wechsler (TW), Deputy Director, Migration, DCLG

### GLA staff

Jeff Jacobs (JJ), Director, Communities and Intelligence

Muge Dindjer (MD), Joint Acting Head of Social Inclusion and Health

Jon Williams (JW), Principal Policy Officer, Immigration and Asylum

Roudy Shafie (RS), Senior Policy Officer, Immigration and Asylum

Dick Williams (DW), Senior Policy Officer, Immigration and Asylum

Amna Mahmoud (AM), Policy Officer, Immigration and Asylum

Wayne Lawley (WL), Deputy Mayor's Office

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## Action

### **1. Welcome and introduction**

1.1 RB welcomed Board members to the first meeting and invited them to contribute to an open and honest discussion that would shape an effective response to sensitive issues around migration, asylum and refugee integration.

1.2 RB explained that unfortunately it had not been possible to have community representation from the Migrant, Refugee and Advisory

Panel (MRAP) at this meeting. This had been caused by delays in appointing community members and he had asked officers as a matter of priority to ensure community representation at future meetings.

**Officers  
note**

## **2. Review of the current draft Refugee Integration Strategy and Supporting Documentation**

2.1 JW presented key elements from the draft Strategy. He emphasised the need for input and support from the Board, stated that the strategy was partly funded by UKBA and confirmed that individual meetings would be held with Board members. The strategy and implementation plan will be finalised following these 1-2-1 meetings.

**All to note**

2.2 RB stated that document needed to be shorter and have a clearer focus.. He explained that this strategy would develop over time to include the impact of non refugee integration in the city. He then invited an open discussion of the draft strategy.

2.3 TS commented that timing was a key issue, as UKBA had last week submitted their national strategy to ministers. This strategy had been developed jointly with the Refugee Council and was due to be made public on 26 March. The LSMP and UKBA needed to look at commonality and acknowledged that the strategy might contain similar caveats to those of the Refugee Council regarding the national strategy, such as the point at which integration services should begin.

2.4 MD stated that the London strategy would not be ready by 26 March, but that it should be referred to when the national strategy was launched.

2.5 ST commented that the strategy needed to be 'owned' by all stakeholders and clearer about process, particularly the role of the GLA in coordinating the work of other stakeholders. He further remarked that the health section could be further developed and offered to chair a subgroup on health. He commented that one-to-one meetings were not enough and too informal, as people around the table had much to contribute on many issues

2.6 CH raised a similar point, saying the strategy proceeded from the high level to detailed actions without setting out a clear ambition. CH emphasised that the strategy should explain the scale of the issue, seek to influence national and regional policy, highlight the need for proper access to services and raise awareness of the benefits refugees coming into the UK bring. He asked how the LSMP would influence national policy.

2.7 MR commented that the strategy needed to define what is meant by the terms *integration* and *cohesion*. In this context it should be recognised that integration was a two way process with duties and

obligations on both host and refugee communities. He mentioned that actions that needed funding could consider the opportunities under the Migration Impacts Fund.

- 2.8 LH remarked there was much to agree with in the Strategy. He asked how it would develop into a Strategy for all migrants. He stated that the employment section was too heavily focused on entry into employment and not enough on progression or issues of terms and conditions of overseas workers. He said the TUC could supply more information on issues of migrant workers in the workplace and it would like the Mayor to show leadership even on issues not within the Mayor's statutory remit, e.g.: exploitation of migrant workers.
- 2.9 JE welcomed movement on the strategy and its focus on housing, which he said was a major issue. JE put forward the Refugee Council's view that integration starts from day one and supported the delivery of integration services, particularly ESOL, and emphasised the role of Refugee Community Organisations. JE also welcomed the strategy's focus on asylum seekers, in common with strategies in Wales and Scotland. He emphasised that destitution was a major issue, with damaging effects on integration and community cohesion.
- 2.10 NA reported that she had not had time to consult other third sector partners on the strategy. She commented that the strategy needed a clearer vision of what it would look like if the strategy's aims were achieved and that the strategy needed to recognise the different status of different groups of migrants, emphasising that this was crucial to providing effective advice. She noted that Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in care and their treatment were a big issue. Issues of access to legal advice were important to highlight given it is increasing difficult for all migrants access these services. RB added that from the local authority point of view, part of the problem with regard to UASCs was the different approach of government policies.
- 2.11 BP noted that the Mayor now chaired the London Board of the Homes and Communities Agency so there was potential for contributing to the strategy. She also emphasised that the role of the private rented sector in housing needed to be integrated further into the work.
- 2.12 JS noted the length and complexity of the strategy, further work on definitions required, and the fact that elements requiring local authority delivery were being introduced at a time of increased pressure on budgets. He welcomed the focus on language, citing language as a big factor in underemployment and noting that investment in ESOL instruction paid off. Local authorities need to respond quickly to new communities, and one size does not fit all.
- 2.13 MD responded that the focus on refugees was agreed with

UKBA enabling agreement is wider-all migrants. It was recognised that substantive work on migrants would come later. She pointed out that later in the agenda the GLA was starting the process with the Board of identifying key migration issues, which would be taken forward alongside the refugee work. MD emphasised that the Mayor would show leadership on these issues. To sign off on the current Strategy GLA officers will meet with Board members individually to agree what could be delivered in Year 1 and the aim was to publish the Strategy in Spring 2009.

- 2.14 HH noted that the final document needs to include clearer definitions and address other missing elements. He stated that the Mayor's London Skills and Employment Board needs to look at what it contributes to the integration strategy. He also noted the significance of shifting responsibility for 14-19 provision to Local Authorities.
- 2.15 JJ responded to ST's comments on process by saying that the GLA would review its project management of the strategy. He invited members to tell the GLA which specific activities are not appropriate and where there are gaps.
- 2.16 TS pointed out the need for better information on the impacts of migration, not just refugees. He suggested the LSMP should do a report on the impacts for the Migration Impacts Forum, feeding to government London's view.

**2.17 Agreed: Officers would incorporate members' views and seek to finalise the Strategy with them outside the meeting.**

**All to note**

**3. LSMP Terms of Reference and Board Membership**

- 3.1 RB asked MD to introduce the LSMP Terms of Reference and Membership. MD invited the Board to comment and endorse the TOR, noting that some elements were required by the UKBA grant agreement.
- 3.2 HH suggested it needed to mention asylum seekers, which RB accepted.
- 3.3 LH suggested a clearer definition of migrants. He also emphasised a need to publish as well as gather information so to be seen to be leading. The ToR needed to include mapping barriers to integration.
- 3.4 ST asked for a clearer picture of the board's governance structures and accountability. He asked whether in fact the LSMP is a reference group.
- 3.5 JE acknowledged the need to look at wider migration issues but cautioned against losing sight of the specific needs of asylum seekers and refugees. TS reiterated the importance of clear

**Officers to review**

definitions. CH added that clarity on process was also needed on the status of the Board and its role.

- 3.6 LH expressed approval of London First and COMPASS presence on Board to represent business and suggested inviting the regional CBI as well. HH said CBI would be welcome but that London First, the CBI and the Chambers of Commerce come together as the London Business Board. The Mayor wanted to keep group small and strategic. RB said that funder membership would be reviewed.

**RB to consider membership**

- 3.7 Agreed: That the ToR are redrafted and the revised ToR would be agreed at the next scheduled meeting.**

**Officers to note**

#### **4. LSMP Selection of priorities in the migrant agenda**

4.1 The Board need to select three key issue for London for all migrants for to Board/GLA to focus on alongside the refugee integration work for the first year. JW delivered presentation on a range of options for the Board to consider (see enclosed presentation slides) noting that Section 2 should refer to the Migration Advisory Committee.

4.2 RB suggested 3 areas for the LSMP to focus on:

- Data collection, which the GLA's DMAG (Data Management and Analysis Group) could contribute
- ESOL, to address current patchy provision
- Rough sleeping A10 nationals in the context of the mayor's work on Rough Sleeping.

4.3 TS supported the focus on data collection saying that it was important to know what we know and don't know. With e-borders due to come on stream in 2011, we would then have better information but at present we know only how many migrants enter the UK, not how many leave. He gave some context on current national policy development. He explained that data would become more robust with the implementation of e-borders.

4.4 JE emphasised the key role of ESOL and the scale of destitution, saying housing was a fundamental challenge based on the RIES experience.

4.5 JJ requested a steer from TS on what advice UKBA wanted from the Board. TS replied that data was a key need and the need to coordinate research.

4.6 MR expressed a desire for information on the impact of migration in order to advise London bodies on resources such as the Regional Innovation and Efficiency Partnerships and Migration Impacts Fund. He also noted the ONS initiative to improve migration statistics.

4.7 CH used the example of ESOL to illustrate questions the board

needed to answer, i.e. does prioritising the issue mean giving more funding or what other specific actions are to be taken.

4.9 MD responded that the ambition was to increase the level and quality of ESOL provision, but that this would also involve bodies not on the Board, such as DIUS, with support from the Mayor and LSMP. CH supported that approach but emphasised the need for a strong evidence base.

**4.16 Agreed:**

- **That GLA officers develop a comprehensive approach to developing the LSMP position on migrant issues**
- **That ESOL, A10 Nationals rough sleeping and improving data were key issues for the LSMP to focus on.**

**Officers to note**

**All to note**

**5. Dates of meetings in 2009.**

It was noted that the LSMP schedule of meeting were:

**27 May 10-12:00**

**24 September 15-17.00**

**15 December 10-12:00**

**All to note**

**6. Any other business.**

6.1 HH asked whether the content of these discussions would be disseminated. RB responded that the Board needed to talk about what it was doing and disseminate this information in order for the work to be taken forward.

**All to note**