

**Note of Wealden Local Strategic Partnership meeting 21st January 2009,
Heathfield Community Centre.**

Present:

Ian Chisnall – Chair, Churches Together in Sussex
Jessica Britton - PCT
David Chaffey – Assistant Housing Services Director, Downland HA
Adam Chugg - Eastbourne Association of Voluntary Services
Nigel Cusack - East Sussex Fire and Rescue
Cllr Pam Doodles – Leader, WDC
Kathy Fordham – NFU Representative
Cllr Roy Galley – WDC Councillor
Teresa Gittins – Action in Rural Sussex, Director of Policy
Jeff Hart – Freedom Leisure, Managing Director
Joanna Hodgson – Environment Agency
Neil Honor - Sussex Police
Alison Horan - East Sussex County Council
David James
Cllr William King - Maresfield Parish Council
Charles Lant – WDC, Chief Executive
Debbie Matthews - South Downs CVS
Sue Shoesmith - South Downs CVS
Ken Stevens – Federation of Small Businesses
Marie Tomblin – Eastbourne Association of Voluntary Services
Richard Watson - PCT
Cllr David White – WDC Councillor
Cllr Chantal Wilson – WDC Councillor

In Attendance

Gill Cameron-Waller – WDC, Policy and Partnership Manager
Alex White – WDC, Policy Officer
Nigel Eveleigh – WDC, Planning Policy Manager

Apologies:

Lisa Compton – PCT
Mark Rist - East Sussex Fire and Rescue
Cllr Linda Francis – Willingdon & Jevington Parish Councillor
Peter Minshull - Highways Agency
Cllr Barrie Murray - Uckfield Town Council
Cllr Di Phillips - WDC Councillor
Martin Small – South Downs Joint Committee

1. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

Item 3 of the minutes should have made it clear that climate change issues will be on the agenda for a *future* meeting. A request was made for acronyms to be spelt out at the first time of use as not all partners are familiar with these. The minutes were otherwise agreed. Points arising were addressed as follows:

Alex White explained that the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) action plan was in the final drafting stages. Jo-Anne Kett would discuss the plan with the Chair and theme champions, the final draft would then need to be agreed by the Board as a whole at the next LSP meeting on 11 March.

Ian Chisnall explained that the proposed follow-up to the CAA event held last October is to be postponed pending further discussions between Council officials across East Sussex. It will now probably be held towards the end of March.

Economic situation - see item 2 below.

Local Development Framework - see item 6 below

Future planning - see item 7 below

2. Economic situation in Wealden

Charlie Lant informed members that a report had been presented to Wealden District Council (WDC) Cabinet in December. Cabinet had asked officers to continue to monitor the impact of the recession on Wealden and report back regularly. He highlighted some areas in particular where WDC was taking action - such as support for small businesses, involvement in the mortgage rescue plan and advice to staff of Woolworths following the firm's recent closure. The impact upon the Council itself is twofold - increases in workload through rising benefit claims, enquiries from the public and so on; and reduction in income from, for example, falls in planning applications and the cut in interest rates.

Pam Doodles pointed out that financial times were tough for local authorities - the cumulative effect of the recent cuts in interest rates on WDC income was equivalent to a 6% rise in Council Tax. The Council saw its main role as providing advice and 'signposting' - pointing people in the right direction for help - rather than trying to duplicate help and support that was already available elsewhere. Amongst other initiatives, a press release highlighting advice the Council is making available will be published shortly and the WDC website will have new pages added relating to the recession. She suggested that LSP partners could have a role in helping to signpost advice - perhaps using the WDC website to publicise any initiatives they are pursuing.

Members welcomed the approach that WDC was taking and discussed ways in which action may be further joined-up - for example, by using NHS staff working in the community to help pass on advice. Members recognised that the recession was starting to bite and had diverse impacts across different groups - farming was being particularly hard hit and this would have knock-on impacts for the wider community. The possible closure of Hailsham livestock market could also have serious implications for local agriculture and the environment.

There are issues about the impact on and of home-based working but this is difficult to assess due to lack of data. The recession also has a double impact on voluntary and support organisations who see their income reduced at the very time their support is in increasingly high demand. A key strategic issue would be to coordinate action now that enables businesses and local people to be best placed when the recession eases and the economy begins to pick up.

Ian Chisnall pointed out that the LSP was planning to discuss rural issues at its July meeting; special events were also planned for March on housing and links with local business. These forums may help take debate forward and develop concrete proposals.

3. Feedback on Voluntary and Community Sector convergence

Debbie Matthews introduced Sue Shoemsmith who has taken on the communications role at South Downs CVS. Sue is in the process of preparing a newsletter, members are welcome to send items for inclusion. A networking event is to be held at 2pm on 9 February at Heathfield Community Centre - this will provide advice and information sharing on issues such as funding opportunities and also stage a discussion on the future plans for coordination of VCS support across Wealden. Adam Chugg explained that this was an opportunity for groups across Wealden to have their say on the proposed amalgamation of South Downs and EAVS. Final decisions will be taken in light of consultation.

4. NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald – Annual Public Health Report 2008

Richard Watson gave a presentation on the latest public health report. This has a focus on children and young people and gives an overview of issues for East Sussex Downs and Weald as a whole. Richard's presentation picked out key issues for Wealden. The high level recommendations set out in the report will be considered by the Health Improvement Partnership (HIMP) who will narrow these down to firm issues and actions at district level - this will feed in to the SCS action plan. Members are welcome to feed in to this process, contact details are available through Gill Cameron-Waller. Richard will also be discussing future action with WDC officers in particular.

5. The Prevent Strategy

Neil Honnor gave a presentation on the strategy to reduce the prospect of people from vulnerable groups seeing terrorism as having a legitimate role. Whilst it was recognised that this was possibly a low risk within Wealden, lessons could be learnt from handling of issues in the past. In particular the need for all members of the community to remain alert and communicate concerns. The role of community leaders was also important in ensuring community cohesion in the long term.

6. Local Development Framework (LDF)

Roy Galley explained that work had been going on over the last few months to take forward the LDF. A series of workshops had been held, involving some LSP members, to discuss broad issues. The task now is to narrow down the range of options on the overall vision and then to consider development issues - such as housing and infrastructure. A further workshop is planned for 18 February to involve all LSP members and allow them to give their input on the vision and development options. This will be a crucial part of the process leading to wider public consultation in May.

Gill Cameron-Waller informed members that the workshop on 18 February will be held at Pilgrim Hall, Halland, from 9.30am - 12.30pm. Further details will be sent as soon as possible.

Turning to planning policy in general, Roy said that the national trend for future planning is likely to be less prescriptive and respond more flexibly to local needs. Currently decisions are constrained by national policies though Roy, with officers, will endeavour to make WDC especially responsive to the needs of farming and business in light of the recession.

7. Forward look 2009

Ian Chisnall, Pam Dodes, and Gill Cameron-Waller had met to plan out the issues that the LSP should address during 2009. Future Board meetings will have a thematic focus and some topics for the planned special events had been set. The next meeting on 11 March will focus on transport issues. Details of future meetings and special events is set out in the attached note. **(NB: the time of the meeting of 16 September has been changed from 10am to 2 pm)**

8. Next meeting

Ian Chisnall thanked those present, and in particular those who were at their first meeting, for contributing to a very fruitful debate. The next meeting of the LSP will be at **2pm on Wednesday 11th March 2009 at Herstmonceux Community Centre.**

LSP meetings and special events 2009

Board meetings

Date	Venue	Topic/Focus
11 March, 2pm	Herstmonceux Community Centre	Transport
13 May, 10am	Uckfield Civic Centre	LDF
14 July, 2pm	Heathfield Community Centre	Rural issues
16 September, 2pm	Herstmonceux Community Centre	To be confirmed
10 November, 2pm	Uckfield Civic Centre	Review of year

Special events

Date	Venue	Topic/Focus
18 February, 9.30 - 12.30	Pilgrim Hall, Halland	LDF
5 March, 11 - 3 TBC	East Sussex National	Links with local business
10 March, 10 - 4 TBC	Deans Place, Alfriston	Housing
27 May	TBC	TBC
29 September	TBC	TBC
24 November	TBC	TBC