

Minutes of Wealden Local Strategic Partnership 19th November 2001

Present:

Councillor Thornely-Taylor – Wealden District Council
Jennie Starr - (EACH)
Keith Ring - (ESFB),
Grenville Wilson - Sussex Police
Aprile Biggs - Environment Agency
Mark Sharman – Wealden Federation of Voluntary Organisations
Councillor Tidy - East Sussex County Council
Councillor Murphy – East Sussex County Council
Jessica Britton – Sussex Downs and Weald Primary Care Group
Ian Chisnall – Churches Together in Sussex
Christine Swan - (SALC),
Ken Stevens – Federation of Small Businesses
Carolyn Lambert & Jeremy Leggett – Action in Rural Sussex
Charmian Allcock - Wealden District Council
Charlie Lant - Wealden District Council
Joanna Hill - Wealden District Council
Kieran McNamara from Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council

Apologies:

Peter Midgley - Environment Agency
John Dransfield - Sussex Police
Denise Rendell - EACH
Melanie Hunt were represented by Aprile Biggs
Grenville Wilson, Jennie Starr and Carolyn Lambert respectively.
Apologies were also received from Michael Fordham - NFU.

Minutes of last meeting: One amendment required-Alison Horan did not attend the last meeting.

Presentation by Jeremy Leggett on *Local Peoples' Perceptions on Life in Wealden District*
(The Wealden District Social Exclusion Project):

This presentation outlined what an inclusive community was and stressed the importance of not confusing poverty and exclusion. This report did not attempt to address issues around those who exclude themselves, only those who had no choice.

Some of the issues which reinforce exclusion are: access to services, housing, employment, transport, cost of rural living, geographical isolation, community safety and crime. The social exclusion report looks at these factors and others which contribute to them.

Hailsham East is the 11th most deprived ward in East Sussex. Social exclusion is often disguised by:

- A perceived concentration of activity in Hailsham East.
- The small numbers involved although the consequences can be dramatic for the individual concerned.
- People's perceptions particularly regarding a feeling powerlessness in decision making processes.

Exclusion is not necessarily determined by geography but by:

system and process failures; transport issues; inappropriate attitudes and loneliness. When asked whether social exclusion had any effect on turnout at elections. Jeremy indicated this had not been examined as part of the project.

Charmian Allcock also highlighted the difficulties she knew researchers had in collating data because different agencies use different systems and boundaries. This had been encountered to some extent in the LSP process because data collection was carried out for the strategy/plan analysis.

Charlie Lant supported this with experience relating to Hailsham East funding for an extra Estate Warden.

Councillor Murphy felt it was important for the LSP to clarify if/how the findings of this report were to be fed into the Community Plan, he also expressed concern that poverty as an issue did not feature enough in the presentation.

Charmian Allcock indicated the full report was about to be circulated, including to LSP members.

General discussion followed on how these findings could combine with those from consultation and how they will influence the final strategy. Jeremy Leggett was not sure technically how this can be achieved. The report was originally commissioned by the Healthy Wealden Partnership (HWP) there several action points to be fed into the LSP and Community Plan endorsed by HWP on 26th November.

Councillor Thornely-Taylor suggested the differences in mortality rates across wards may need to be borne and Charlie Lant thought it might be possible to task HWP to identify why there are such variations. Jessica Britton confirmed that a considerable amount of work was being done to collect and analyse public health data relevant to tackling health irregularities.

Discussion concluded by expressing interest in developing the findings of the report alongside other cross-cutting themes such as sustainability and access to services.

There followed as discussion on the content of the 8 draft pages.

Education Learning and Skills was introduced by Carolyn Lambert on behalf of Melanie Hunt.

Broad Vision: *To provide everyone in Wealden with access to lifelong learning, education and skills training to fulfil their potential.*

This page was kept simple by focussing on the main areas chronologically in the left hand column, beginning with early years and ending with lifelong learning. Ken Stevens thought the top item was intended to be the top priority, Councillor Thornely-Taylor thought it important to be aware of what people will read into the layout. Charlie Lant reiterated the fact that pages are not currently in the format the public will see through the consultation process, but suggested priorities may be ranked in the order proposed by the public.

Councillor Mike Murphy felt that generally the pages need more consideration and consultation before they can be endorsed.

Aprile Biggs thought the focus was too narrow and needed to be more cross-cutting; for example there was no mention of increasing community responsibility.

Environment was introduced by Aprile Biggs on behalf of Peter Midgley.

Broad Vision: To develop a healthy, rich and diverse environment based on sustainable principles for everybody in Wealden.

Aprile Biggs proposed on reflection that flooding appear on the safety page; also that there needs to be more emphasis on raising awareness. Bob Herbert suggested targets for waste collection may need to be modified in the light of recent announcements on waste collection.

Councillor Mike Murphy questioned the extent to which the LSP could expect to sign individual organisations up to meeting targets and Councillor Thornely-Taylor reminded those present of their early view that the LSP is a body of representatives from decision making organisations not a decision making body. Councillor Tidy supported this, by saying partners will be accountable for targets they don't achieve; although partners may not be able to commit to every target, they should be able to say what they can do to work towards it.

Health was introduced by Jessica Britton on behalf of Denise Rendell.

Broad Vision: To provide everyone in Wealden with access to appropriate health and social care services and maximise their potential for good health and well-being.

A broad approach has been taken on this page. Four priority were identified; some targets are national whilst others are based on local needs. Consultation requirements had not yet been identified. Charlie Lant confirmed what was expected of consultation as follows:

Level 1-base exercise, main survey.

Level 2-further consultation in addition to 1 (ie. newspaper articles and radio discussions)

Level 3-as above with the addition of focus groups.

Jeremy Leggett questioned the style of this page relative to others suggesting many items in the right hand column actually belonged on the left. The need for consistency in the style and language of the visions was repeated as other pages were considered in order that the visions came across as one co-ordinated plan.

Jennie Starr felt there needed to be more reference to mental health and unpaid carers.

Housing was introduced by Bob Herbert

Broad Vision: To provide access to decent homes for all those who live or need to live in Wealden, suitable for their needs and sustainable within their means.

Housing is a key area for all. Vision is not confined to social housing. Bob Herbert has circulated this page widely and has feedback that targets have been set low. He suggests these are viewed as minimum targets. Generally speaking what is needed is more houses but no-one wants them in their village. New housing was on the top of the list so appears first. 'Decent' standard has changed over time and will continue to do so.

Jeremy Leggett wasn't sure the key worker approach was the best way forward, because again the target was low relative to the overall situation. Bob Herbert agreed there is no one single answer. Councillor Thornely-Taylor felt economic development was an important element in this area. Ken Stevens felt we ought to experiment with the key worker scheme and felt building in flood plains should appear on this page. Aprile Biggs was pleased to see environmental issues addressed.

Councillor Tidy questioned the definition of key worker, suggesting that teachers with young families rather than young single teachers should be prioritised. Councillor Murphy similarly stated that young fire fighters struggle to afford homes in the district. Ian Chisnall recognised arising from this theme there may be a dilemma when what is apparently needed is not necessarily what people want. The partnership would have some difficult decisions to make reconciling aspirations and what may seem to be morally right and necessary

Leisure was introduced by Ian Chisnall

Broad Vision: To provide the people of wealden with access to a broad range of opportunities including sport, leisure, recreation and the arts, to improve their quality of life, health and well-being.

There are clear links with many other themes, identification of what consultation is required. WDC appeared to have a clear strategic overview but this is not always appreciated by local groups who apply for/provide activities in isolation. He recognised there are not many quantifiable targets on this page.

Christine Swan raised the issue of village halls and the important role they play in leisure provision across the district. Many of these will need renovation to make them accessible for 2004 when changes in the Disability Discrimination Act come into force. She wondered whether now is the time for the Rural Community Council to carry out an audit to see what is required.

Councillor Murphy noted there is no mention of the specialist colleges in the district and the role they can play in increasing levels of participation.

Prosperity was introduced by Ken Stevens

Broad Vision: To create a prosperous sustainable economy that is dynamic, flexible and maintains the environmental qualities of the area.

Six clear needs have been identified, targets set are modest and work towards them has begun already. They are all achievable. A lot of work is needed in the business support area in a more proactive way to sustain and create prosperity.

Kieran McNamara confirmed the current base position of take up is 10% with regard to the take up of services offered by the small business service and EDEAL. Councillor Murphy expressed concerns about the commitment to broadband; ESCC are already pushing for this and a separate approach from the LSP may dilute the message. Councillor Tidy indicated that he believed ESCC's efforts were concentrated on the coast. Work by the LSP could compliment this but it would be important to collaborate in order to maximise effectiveness.

Aprile Biggs felt an environmental management system ought to feature here and could deliver cost savings. Jeremy Leggett believed this to be the most cross-cutting of the eight themes, and one which must be delivered in an integrated way which may require the page to be handled differently to the others.

Safety was introduced by Grenville Wilson

Broad Vision: *To enable everyone to live work or visit Wealden confident of their safety and free from the fear of crime.*

Grenville Wilson was not able to offer much supplementary information but thought the first point in the left hand column should read 'a reduction in the number of accidental deaths', He advised the LSP that Sussex Police have relevant data to establish baseline figures. This point may also need to have 'and flooding' added at the end.

Councillor Murphy wondered if the current scheme to have sprinklers placed in all Homes of Multiple Occupancy ought to be mentioned. It was noted that although relevant this highlighted the fact that the right hand column was by no means an exhaustive list of the activities taking place under each area. It was however, generally felt that this page needed some modification and some additions.

Transport was introduced by Ken Stevens

Broad Vision: *To improve accessibility for all and reduce the impact of traffic on people and places.*

The left hand column had put items in priority order. Ken was pleased that transport had featured in Jeremy Leggett's Big Issues. He felt the most important element of this page was finding out what people's real needs are. Councillor Murphy reaffirmed the need for more consideration and consultation before this page could be endorsed.

Consultation

Joanna Hill outlined the findings so far in relation to consultation. four companies had been approached in the initial stages: two of these (SSMR and Questions Answered) had met with her and Charmian Allcock to clarify what they believed was needed. Both had felt the starting point should be a workshop with the LSP to identify the overall objectives. The consultation exercise would be varied as there is a need for qualitative and quantitative data.

Charlie Lant stated there may be a role for District and County Councillors in delivering a face-to-face questionnaire. Most felt this was a good idea although Councillor Murphy expressed concern about the time factor involved. The role of Parish Councillors was considered and it was felt they need not be involved at this stage but will have an important role to play in subsequent Village Appraisals and other forms of more localised working.

Ken Stevens confirmed he has a database of 6-700 businesses who could be consulted as part of the process of consultation with organisations.

Jeremy Leggett stated participation and involvement are the most important elements of community strategies and the questionnaire is a basic requirement which should be done before moving onto the next stage.

Councillor Murphy expressed some concern that the focus so far appeared to have been on one-off questionnaire whilst the guidance states this must be an ongoing process.

The Way Forward

It was agreed the meeting scheduled for 6th December will focus on consultation, although it may not be necessary to have a consultant at this meeting, providing the objectives agreed are those of the LSP and are shared by all partners.

All felt a questionnaire (600 respondents) should be one component of the overall consultation strategy and invited a report back. The sample would need to be representative and have proper regard for hard to reach groups. A pilot questionnaire would be supportable with a process of quality checking built in as work progressed. Elected members would need training in order to undertake face-to-face visits. The funding of any work will also need to be agreed at this meeting.

A proposed timetable was distributed with future **LSP meetings to take place on December 6th, January 17th, March 21st, April 18th and June 27th**; a plenary session is planned for some time in or around week beginning 20th May.

Website

Mark Sharman had been working on the Community Plan website and a further update would be given in January when partners will be able to view the website. Partners have provided logos for inclusion. The website will form part of the communications armoury and is felt to be the best way to keep the wider partnership informed.

Ends