

**Note of Wealden Local Strategic Partnership meeting 11th March 2009,  
Herstmonceux Village Hall.**

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**Present:**

Ian Chisnall – Chair, Churches Together in Sussex  
Lisa Compton – PCT  
Cllr Pam Doodles – Leader, WDC  
Kathy Fordham – NFU Representative  
Cllr Linda Francis – Willingdon & Jevington Parish Councillor  
Teresa Gittins – Action in Rural Sussex, Director of Policy  
Jeff Hart – Freedom Leisure, Managing Director  
Neil Honor - Sussex Police  
Cllr William King - Maresfield Parish Council  
Charles Lant – WDC, Chief Executive  
Peter Minshull - Highways Agency  
Sue Shoemith - South Downs CVS  
Ken Stevens – Federation of Small Businesses  
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  
Jeremy Leach - WDC, Public Health Development Manager (attended for AOB only)  
John Wheeler - East Sussex County Council, Transport Strategy  
Michael Oates - East Sussex County Council, Road safety  
Neil McGuire - East Sussex County Council, Passenger transport  
Penny Bentley - East Sussex County Council, Local Transport Plan  
Robin Reed - East Sussex County Council, Transport Policy

**Apologies:**

Alison Horan - East Sussex County Council  
Mark Rist - East Sussex Fire and Rescue  
Joanna Hodgson – Environment Agency  
Marie Tomblin – Eastbourne Association of Voluntary Services  
Cllr Di Phillips - WDC Councillor  
Martin Small – South Downs Joint Committee  
David Chaffey – Assistant Housing Services Director, Downland HA  
Adam Chugg - Eastbourne Association of Voluntary Services  
Cllr Roy Galley – WDC Councillor  
Debbie Matthews - South Downs CVS

## 1. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

No date had yet been set for the follow up to the CAA event. Ian Chisnall asked that this be chased.

**Action:** Alex White

Economic situation - see item 2 below.

Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) action plan - see item 3 below.

Sue Shoemsmith said that the consultation on the proposed VCS convergence had now ended. There were a mix of views but a common concern within Wealden seemed to be that locally specific issues and needs may be lost in a single larger organisation. Two EGMs have been arranged for 24 March, an afternoon meeting in Lewes for South Downs CVS and an evening meeting in Eastbourne for EAVS. Sue can provide further details if members wish to attend the EGMs.

Richard Watson had now discussed joint priorities on health issues with Wealden District Council (WDC) officers, these will be reflected in WDC plans as appropriate.

Charlie Lant and Neil Honnor are to send a joint letter to all WDC Councillors setting out their role as community leaders under the Prevent strategy. A copy will be sent to LSP members - suggestions on other community leaders who ought to be engaged would be welcome.

**Action:** All as appropriate; Charlie Lant; Neil Honnor

Ian Chisnall said that the LDF workshop on 18 February had stimulated useful discussion. It was clear that partners' participation and contributions are maturing as the process evolves. The next stage will be to consider the consultation document on the Core Strategy, due out towards the end of May. The special event programmed for 27th May is likely to focus on the options being examined in the consultation.

The second paragraph of item 6 of the last minutes should make clear that the issues raised there are separate from the LDF and relate to planning control. Kathy Fordham said that in light of the concerns raised at the last meeting she had had a helpful meeting with WDC which had helped to clarify matters for both sides and agreed a way forward.

## 2. Economic situation in Wealden

Charlie Lant circulated a paper<sup>1</sup> that set out the current WDC activities in support of the local community. The activities reflect Councillors' desire to provide support but not duplicate the actions of other agencies. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) are drawing together a task force to share best practice to help tackle issues across the county. The task force will comprise a range of members - including local authorities, Citizens Advice, Jobcentre Plus, and SEEDA - and be informed by ESSP, District and Borough LSPs, the Business Board and the Rural Forum. WDC will have officer representation on the task force.

Latest figures on Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claims show an increase of 114% in the number of claims from January 2008 - January 2009 (from 609 claims in January 2008 to 1,308 in January 2009). The number of claims equates to 1.6% of the District's working age population. Whilst this remains below the regional and national average the local increase is at a faster rate. WDC officers will try and obtain data on the length of JSA claims.

The role of Jobcentre Plus and the support it is able to offer business and the unemployed are increasingly important. New initiatives - such as financial incentives to recruit longer-term unemployed people - are of real value and benefit. There may be merit in running local advice clinics from time to time - though this may raise resource issues for the Jobcentre. WDC officers will seek to raise such issues with Jobcentre Plus through the county task force.

The task force should also be asked to explore whether current EU rules on state aid are mitigating against, for example, farmers' ability to access the Government's recent packages of financial support.

Ken Stevens welcomed WDC's overall approach and in particular the likely engagement with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Small Business Engagement Accord (SBEA). Although this was not itself developed in response to the recession - it is intended to formalise public recognition of the importance of small business and their relationship with local authorities - it could be a means to develop new initiatives. Ken is to meet WDC on 13 March to discuss this and other issues.

It was agreed that 'buy local' initiatives need to cover local procurement of goods and services by public bodies.

The East Sussex Rural Forum on 21 April<sup>2</sup> will focus on the impact of and potential responses to the recession.

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<sup>1</sup> **NB:** The bullet point in that paper on LABGI funding is incorrect - those funds are not earmarked for activities relating to the recession.

<sup>2</sup> 1.30 - 4pm Uckfield Civic Centre, invitation will be sent by AiRS shortly.

### **3. Sustainable Community Strategy: Action Plan**

Alex White introduced the draft action plan. This has been drawn up with the help of a consultant working with each of the theme champions. It is intended to reflect the key areas of the SCS where actions should be most focused over the next three years. At the November Board meeting members had indicated that they did not wish the plan to merely repeat targets that were already contained in partners' own business plans, but rather to highlight actions where working together could make a real difference. The plan will be a living document and subject to revision, as appropriate, over the next three years. All East Sussex LSPs plan to have agreed action plans in place by 31 March 2009.

In discussion the Board expressed a desire for the proposed actions and outcomes to be S.M.A.R.T. wherever possible. The outcomes related to the LDF within the Housing theme and aspects of the Culture, Health, Community Safety and Transport themes need to be tightened up. It was agreed that theme champions and Board members will forward amendments to Alex White who will make the necessary changes to the draft. Subject to this, members agreed the action plan.

**Action:** All

### **4. Transport**

Peter Minshull outlined the role and responsibilities of the Highways Agency: he stressed that it is a delivery agency, not a decision making body. Decisions on spending for large projects are taken by the Department for Transport on advice from the Regional Transport Board - for example, major improvements to the A27. National spending up to 2014 has already been allocated. After 2014 around £130m a year will be available.

The approach to transport generally is based on a hierarchy of: reduce; manage; invest - within an overall long term vision of creating self-sustaining communities. The Highways Agency has limited funds available for smaller scale investment and can spend a maximum of £10m per scheme. Given the cost of new build, in practice this means funds are generally used for a series of small improvements of up to £0.5m each.

There was general agreement that improvements to the A27 are required - particularly in the context of the LDF and new development. Highways Agency confirmed that no large scale improvements could start before 2014, and bids would need to be made to Government in June 2009 for funding beyond that date. It was suggested that the LSP liaise with the Regional Transport Board to explore how to ensure that the A27 remains high on the priority list and discuss ways in which small scale schemes can be best used.

Representatives from East Sussex County Council outlined the County's role in transport issues. Regrettably there was insufficient time during our meeting for the Board to fully debate the issues raised it was agreed that members would forward questions and concerns to Gill Cameron-Waller who will collate these creating a document that can be sent to the HA and ESCC and responses will be reviewed at our next meeting.

**Action:** All

**Note:** In future, the themed agenda item will be taken immediately after the welcome and introduction so that specialist guests are involved from the outset.

## **5. AOB**

Jeremy Leach updated the Board on the Wealden Youth Forum held on 3 March. The event had been arranged following suggestions from the current youth cabinet representatives. The Forum had been well received by attendees who had asked that the event be repeated in future. There were two main outcomes: the need for a clear step-by-step guide for young people on how to 'get things done'; and a guide on how to lobby Councillors and council officers to help 'get things done'. It was clear that in general young people had little grasp of the roles of parish, district and county councils or how to contact them.

Teresa Gittins circulated a background paper on the mid-Weald voluntary cars forum. She pointed out that the East Sussex Rural Forum on 21 April would also cover transport issues.

## **6. Next meeting**

Ian Chisnall thanked those present, and in particular Peter Minshull and those from East Sussex County Council for contributing to the debate. The next meeting of the LSP will be at **10am on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2009** at **Uckfield Civic Centre**.

## LSP meetings and special events 2009

### Board meetings

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

### Special events

<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Topic/Focus</b>
8 April, 11 - 3	East Sussex National	Links with local business
27 May	Deans Place, Alfriston	Housing
29 September	TBC	TBC
24 November	TBC	TBC