

## WEALDEN LSP

**Minutes of the Meeting which took place on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2006 at Hailsham East Community Centre 4 – 6pm**

### **PART 1**

#### **1.1 Those attending**

Tim Sparrow – Chairman  
Nigel Coltman – Leader WDC  
Charles Lant – Chief Executive WDC  
David Palmer – Head of Policy and Review WDC  
Jeremy Leach – Public Health Development Manager WDC  
Greg Falvey – Theme Champion for Housing  
Cllr. Roy Martin – WDC and ESCC  
Ken Stevens – Theme Champion for Prosperity and Skills  
David Phillips – Head of Planning Policy and Environment WDC  
Mike Fleming – Director of Environmental Services WDC  
Rupert Clubb – Chief Executive of Environment Agency  
Teresa Gittins – Action in rural Sussex  
Kathy Fordham – NFU  
Mo Hemsley – ESCC  
Nicky McCrudden – Sussex Downs and Weald PCT  
Mike Rogers – East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service  
John Kelly – Wealden Federation of Voluntary Organisations  
Cllr Di Phillips - WDC  
Cllr. Pam Doodes – WDC

#### **Apologies for absence:**

Ian Chisnal – Theme Champion for Leisure  
Cllr Tony Reid – Theme Champion for Transport and Access  
C I Tony Blaker – Sussex Police

#### **1.2 Minutes of the last meeting**

These were approved as a correct record

### **PART 2**

#### **2.1 Closer working between LSP and LDF**

The Chairman explained how LSP's across the country were experiencing a time of change and re-focussing since the concept of community strategies was introduced in 2000. The LDF process was also underway with significant areas of overlap, namely the need for forward planning and developing a vision for the future, together with the need to consult widely with all sectors of the community and respond accordingly.

The LDF process must take into account the community strategy and should consider similar topics covered by the theme partnerships

Wealden Council is keen to see both the Community Strategy and the LDF move forward together and hopes that LSP members will be fully involved in this process.

Comments around the table were very supportive of this view.

Mike Fleming and David Phillips then explained the timetabling of the LDF in the light of GOSE requirements that the core strategy and spatial allocations must be addressed as the top priority. Statutory requirements for the public consultation process pose a considerable challenge to the Council if they are to achieve meaningful and widespread community involvement in the time allowed. The LSP and its work with parish plans can certainly assist in this process. A copy of the LDF timetable will be circulated with these minutes. This will allow theme champions and other LSP partners an opportunity to consider their input into the LDF process within the timescales already agreed.

Other LDF documents must be put on hold unless resources can be identified outside the planning team. Wealden District Council is very keen to see the development of a Design Guide which would become a supplementary planning document. Since the concept of a Design Guide is also a top priority for the LSP, further endorsed by feedback from the parish plans received to date, the resources of the LSP ie co-ordinator time, have been offered to the planning team as a contribution towards the preparation of this document.

The first document in the LDF which will be presented to GOSE for approval is the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This was put together by a project board chaired by Tim Sparrow and explains how the Council will consult with members of the community in relation to planning policies and development control issues. The draft document was circulated to LSP members prior to this meeting and will be considered by the Cabinet in June.

Comments from LSP members round the table:

A précis of the document may be more user friendly to the wider stakeholders and may encourage a response.

Partners seek reassurance that the new system will even out inequalities and reduce the power and influence of those with money and vested interests over and above members of the local community, including those who live and work in the countryside and contribute to the rural economy. David Phillips commented that a more flexible approach was being considered in AONB's which was less restrictive and more sensitive to the needs of the agricultural sector.

Partners were encouraged to see a high priority given to the environment alongside economic and social interests. This should not preclude development but ensure a balance is achieved. Environment is not just about open space but should consider the wider agenda including waste, water consumption, climate change and patterns of behaviour which impact on the environment.

Some partners were concerned that the more traditional consultation routes would be lost but reassurance was given that this would continue as before with all statutory consultees being contacted as part of the consultation process.

There is clearly a keen interest in planning issues and Wealden hopes to get the best out of the LDF process within constraints such as limited time and

resources. The LSP and its links to wider partners can certainly help to make this a more robust exercise by providing a strong evidence base which will allow the Council to take a firm approach when facing the more difficult decisions which may arise in the future..

Partners were keen to support the concept of up front involvement at an early stage rather than relying on consultation once the new planning documents have been produced.

#### **ACTION**

Partners and all those they represent are invited to comment on the draft SCI as this document will shape future consultation on planning issues in Wealden. Printed copies are available on request. Opportunities will also be available via the Wealden web site for further comments and updates .

Partners will also have an opportunity to comment during the statutory six weeks consultation period from June onwards but early feedback is welcome

### **2.3 Reports from Theme Champions**

Since there was general agreement that theme groups could provide useful input into the LDF, each of the theme champions were asked how they might achieve this.

Some themes were meeting regularly and could build this into their existing programme whereas others might find the LDF a major incentive to re-activate their group. Comments from theme champions or their representatives were as follows:

#### **Housing**

Greg Falvey (Theme Champion) confirmed that the Housing Theme Partnership will comment on the SCI at their next meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> June. The group will also re-affirm their main priorities and feedback to the LDF. The Wealden Design Guide is of particular interest and should include issues of environment, safety, sustainability etc.

Affordable housing is another key concern for the theme partnership.

#### **Prosperity**

Ken Stevens (Theme Champion) suggested that the Prosperity Theme is likely to highlight key issues including:

Urban business sites;

Rural businesses and support ;

Access and communications;

Links between housing and jobs (site allocations).

He also welcomed the design guide and felt businesses would be keen to contribute.

#### **Environment**

Rupert Clubb (Theme Champion) confirmed strong commitment to Wealden and the LDF process. Since the Environment Agency covers 13 LSP's, LAA.s, and other similar organisations resources were stretched and it was suggested that the best method of receiving input from key agencies with an interest in the environment is through the Sussex Environmental Partnership

(previously known as the Sussex Environmental Reference Group). This brings together a wide range of expertise to consider and advise on environmental issues with relevance to local authorities in East and West Sussex.

### **Transport and Access**

Mo Hemsley (representing Cllr Tony Reid, Theme Champion) agreed that she would contact the theme champion to discuss the best method of consultation in relation to providing input for the LDF

### **Health and Social Care**

Nicky Mc Crudden (representing Fiona Henniker, Theme Champion) explained that the next meeting of the Health Improvement Partnership was scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> June but the membership of this group may not be the best reference for spatial issues of relevance to the LDF. The PCT are considering setting up a special meeting to include primary care commissioners and others who may have more to contribute to the LDF in terms of spatial allocation of health resources. The LSP and LDF would certainly welcome such an arrangement

### **Safer Wealden Partnership**

Cllr Pam Doodes (Chair of the Partnership) would be happy to work on LDF issues with key partners in advance of their next quarterly meeting in July as the partnership likes to be pro-active in their response. If necessary they could bring their meeting forward.

### **Leisure**

Tim Sparrow explained that he had spoken to Ian Chisnall (Theme Champion) in advance of the LSP meeting and was pleased to hear that Ian will be arranging a meeting of the Leisure Theme Partnership to consider input into the LDF.

### **Learning**

This theme had been absorbed into the Prosperity theme since it had not been possible to engage with key agencies. However, access to educational facilities are an important element of the spatial strategy and it may be useful to revive the theme in order to provide input into the LDF.

<b>ACTION</b>
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Tim Sparrow and Caroline Adcock to give thought as to how this theme could be revived to ensure input into the LDF.
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Tim Sparrow made a special plea to all theme champions to review their action plans in order to re-affirm their priorities which would then be part of their input into the LDF

This could be achieved by considering the following

- What has been achieved to date
- What is no longer relevant

- What is still relevant and should be taken forward as key issues in the revised action plan
- What are the priorities for the future and how can these be achieved through the planning process eg spatial allocations, development control.

If there is a demonstrable need for certain functions the LDF process will translate this into spatial allocations such as the provision of community facilities eg village halls. A sound evidence base will allow the council to take a stronger stand in supporting this infrastructure and/or making decisions where opposition is likely .

**ACTION**

Theme Champions to engage wider stakeholders in a Theme Partnership meeting to review their priorities and feed back to LDF. The Planning Department have agreed to provide officers as appropriate to attend where possible .

**2.2 Launch of new LSP Leaflet Your Views: You Choose and follow up event on 21<sup>st</sup> June**

There was general agreement that it was timely for the LSP to explain how parish plans are feeding into the Community Strategy and therefore influencing the LDF.

The content of the draft leaflet “Your Views...You Choose” was welcomed but references to specific actions should be re-badged as suggestions only, with a view to receiving comments from wider stakeholders as to how they think the LSP could best deliver on the issues highlighted from parish plans received to date.

It was therefore agreed that the event on 21<sup>st</sup> June should be changed to a broader consultation on these ideas in order to re-affirm and re-focus the priorities of the themes. It will also provide an opportunity to explain the LDF process and raise awareness of how organisations can comment on and feed into the LDF documents

An exercise such as this will validate the existing Community Strategy (published in 2002) and bring it up to date without the need for a major consultation exercise which could conflict with the LDF consultation process and confuse the general public with consultation overload.

**ACTION**

Caroline Adcock and David Phillips to revise the draft leaflet with more input on the LDF and SCI.

LSP and Planning to invite wider stakeholders to the event

Caroline to contact theme champions in order to confirm workshops

## PART 3

### 3.1 Updates

**East Sussex Local Area Agreement:** The document is now available . Tim Sparrow made the point that the LAA is in no way a replacement for the Wealden Community Strategy as this has a greater focus on environmental issues and covers a wider range of issues which are of concern to the people of Wealden.

Discussion about some of the key targets in the LAA took place including the need to encourage local democracy and quality parish councils. AirS are supporting this initiative and working on targets to increase quality councils in East Sussex from 6 or 7 to around 32 or 34

#### **East Sussex in Figures**

The launch of this initiative has been arranged for 24<sup>th</sup> May at Pelham House, Lewes, prior to the ESSP meeting which takes place at the same venue Wealden LSP will have an opportunity to try out the web site and we have arranged for EsiF staff to be on hand in the ICT suite of Hailsham East Community Centre from 2pm on Wednesday July just before the next LSP meeting. Further details circulated with the next Agenda.

#### **LSP Initiatives:**

**Wheels to Learn** – Additional publicity has been arranged and a press release is due to be circulated shortly

**Biofuels** – The report of the meeting on bio fuels generated much interest and partners are urged to come up with appropriate pilot schemes to test out the idea in Wealden. These schemes should not be too ambitious as it is best to start slowly.

Concerns were raised that Wealden might suffer adverse environmental effects if extensive areas of oil seed rape were cultivated for biofuel production but Kathy Fordham reassured the meeting that crop rotation, and the ability to grow a variety of oil producing crops, would minimise this threat. She confirmed that farmers were certainly interested in the idea and would take the supply side forward providing a regular demand could be established.

Rupert Clubb reminded us that Environmental enhancements schemes and grant support should be used where possible.

Partners may find the additional papers attached of interest in relation to this topic..

#### **ACTION**

Partners encouraged to contact Caroline with any further ideas for pilot projects

Mike Rogers from the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service confirmed that his organisation were looking into it

3.2 **Any Other Business**

John Kelly informed partners that the East Sussex COMPACT is now available. He has hard copies for those who would like one and the electronic version is attached with the minutes

**ACTION**

Wealden LSP recommends that all partners should adopt the COMPACT in their dealings with the voluntary sector.

3.3 **Date time and place of next meeting**

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2006 4pm at Hailsham East  
Community Centre**

The meeting will be preceded by a hands on introduction to the East Sussex in Figures website.

This will take place in the ICT suite at Hailsham East Community Centre from 2pm