

Wealden Local Strategic Partnership

Notes of the Visioning Exercise which took place on 12 January 2004
at Hailsham East Community Centre

Present:

Charmian Allcock – Wealden District Council
Adrian Barker – Improvement and Development Agency
Gina Brocklehurst – Eastbourne Downs PCT
Mary Coburn – Wealden Housing Partnership
Cllr Nigel Coltman – Wealden District Council
Solihin Garrard – Makesfive Ltd
Phil Griffiths – Wealden Housing Partnership
Fiona Henniker – Sussex Downs and Weald PCT
Alison Horan – East Sussex County Council
John Kelly – Wealden Federation of Voluntary Organisations
Charles Lant – Wealden District Council
Jeremy Leggett – Action in Rural Sussex
C.I. Rex Matthews – Sussex Police
Sean Nolan – East Sussex County Council
Cllr Tim Sparrow – Sussex Association of Local Councils
Ken Stevens – Federation of Small Businesses
Adam Vernon – Learning + Skills Council

Apologies:

Aprile Biggs – Environment Agency
Ian Chisnall – Churches Together in Sussex
Michael Fordham – National Farmers Union
Peter Midgely – Environment Agency
Cllr Tony Reid – East Sussex County Council
Mike Rogers – East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service

Outcomes for consideration at the next meeting of the LSP:

Adding Value:

- Maintain multiple streams of activity but focus on fewer actions, perhaps undertaking one or a small number of specific practical projects where partners can work together using a matrix approach.
- Use the LSP as a forum where the partners learn together, share experience, brainstorm new ideas and use their influence to guide activity in their organisations.

Measuring Performance:

- Use a mix of a few key cross-cutting indicators and regular perception measurement.
- Raise the LSP's profile by reporting successes and seeking feedback.

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Roles and Responsibilities:

- Set out clearly the roles and responsibilities of Partners, especially Theme Champions, and support staff.
- Provide adequate staff resource to support the Partnership itself and to help individual Partners with their contributions to meeting LSP actions.

Notes of the morning:

Fiona Henniker welcomed the members of the LSP to the exercise. The purpose of the day was to consider in general terms how the Partnership wanted to make and monitor progress with the Community Strategy. She reminded Partners that they were a group of decision makers rather than a decision making body which made it difficult to clarify who was accountable for what. It was particularly important at this stage to ensure that momentum was not lost.

Solihin Garrard explained that his organisation, Makesfive Ltd, had been contracted by the Improvement and Development Agency (IdeA) to undertake a project to look at the approaches to Performance Management of two very different LSPs, Wealden and South Tyneside. The IdeA would use the results of this study to draw up guidance and advice for other LSPs.

Towards Effective Joint Working:

Solihin went on to give a presentation about effective joint working. Partnership was a "favourite" word but the concept of joint working suffered from "Partnership Fatigue". The word was sometimes used when really what was being described was a contractual arrangement. It was important to use the word in its proper context. A good definition of "partnership" was a cross-organisational group working together towards common goals which would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve if tackled alone.

Solihin explained that relationships and communication were critical to success and described the 5 Cs of a successful partnership:

- Common purpose
- Communications
- Commitment
- Constructive behaviour
- Capabilities

There was a joint working continuum and Partnerships worked at different points on the continuum at different times:

<i>Co-existence</i>	"You stay on your side and I'll stay on mine."
<i>Co-operation</i>	"I'll help you when my work is done."
<i>Co-ordination</i>	"We need to adjust what we do to avoid overlap & confusion."
<i>Collaboration</i>	"Let's work on this together."
<i>Co-ownership</i>	"We both feel totally responsible."

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The Partners were then asked, in small groups, to consider:

- **What's going well in the way we are working together?**
 - Goodwill in consultation and community plan
 - Personal links and understanding
 - Networking and communications going well
 - Common purpose/communications/relationships/awareness of others in place
 - Specific achievable targets, not woolly aspirations
 - Clarity of structure and rules of engagement
 - Evidence of joint working e.g. affordable housing, environment

- **What's not going so well?**
 - Some fragmentation due to e.g. resource constraints, separation of objectives
 - Responsibilities outside Wealden geographic area can confuse
 - Communications from LSP to customers
 - Partnership working focused only at top level of organisations
 - Have not reached "collaboration" stage in JW continuum
 - Communities unaware/not involved; plans/strategies don't overlap; lack of clarity about partner contributions

- **What one thing would make a difference to our progress?**
 - Focus on fewer objectives
 - 1 or two projects to demonstrate "co-ownership"
 - Dedicated resource needed
 - Actively address 1 or two "wicked" issues that are hard but essential
 - Improve connectivity between themes and partners
 - Provide adequate staff resource to help partners with their contributions to meeting LSP actions
 - Raise the LSP's profile

Taking Stock... Moving Forward

Tim Sparrow of the Sussex Association of Local Councils then gave a short presentation describing the achievements of the LSP to date. He reminded the partners that, from the establishment of the Partnership in 2001/02, they had established very good working relationships. The LSP had undertaken an innovative and successful consultation which had won an award from the National Grid. Most significantly the LSP had, in December 2002, published its 15 year Strategy to improve the quality of life of Wealden residents. Since publication, the Partnership had developed its action plans for each of the Themes and had been developing a delivery framework in the form of appointed Theme Champions and Theme Partnerships.

There was still a need to make some of the targets in the action plans SMART (Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) and there was an awareness that future support requirements needed to be considered.

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The reason for this exercise was to consider how far the current action plans would take the LSP towards the “vision” for the District set out in the Community Strategy. Tim suggested that the next steps for the LSP were to:

- map out how to achieve the “15 year Vision” for the District;
- decide how to manage performance along the way; and
- to keep the public involved.

Performance Management for LSPs and Partnerships

Adrian Barker gave a presentation which looked at Performance Management in general. He explained that the IdeA were looking at two case-studies, in South Tyneside and Wealden, to focus on the performance management of LSPs. They would be following the learning of the LSP over the course of a few months and then sharing the experiences of those two areas through the IdeA Knowledge website.

Existing Government research on performance management in LSPs indicated that the most difficult challenges were behavioural and structural, not technical. Indicators were only as good as the performance management system in which they are embedded and ICT systems were not a panacea. Most importantly, good performance management needed to be integral to the LSP’s work, not an add on.

Important issues for the LSP to consider included:

- Recognising that all the partners come from different backgrounds and organisational cultures, that they have shared or conflicting aims, interests and imperatives.
- Ensuring that there was a driving force for the LSP, whether that was an individual, such as the Chairman, or an organisation.
- Being action orientated, to ensure that there are demonstrable outcomes.
- Developing good working relationships and building trust.
- Ensuring good communication, both internally and externally.
- Recognising that organisation is the key to success, establishing appropriate co-ordination and administrative support, and empowering staff to become “boundary spanners”, able to work across organisations.
- Allocating between the partners not only costs but contribution to outcomes and accountability.

Adrian went on to explain that performance management in partnerships is very complex because each organisation will have its own system which may not be compatible with others. To impose yet another layer of performance management needed to be sensitively done and it was recommended that the keys to success were to use existing indicators where appropriate and to use a mix of measures. Successful performance management hinged on a shared understanding of goals, the ability to prioritise, willingness to share information, high level commitment, understanding of each others’ pressures and, most importantly, trust.

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Challenges and Options

Charles Lant of Wealden District Council gave a presentation on the challenges and options before the LSP. The main challenge was to turn the LSP's vision into reality by ensuring, by 2017, that the Community Strategy objectives had been achieved. The questions for the day were:

- How could the LSP “add value” to what was going on already?
- How could the LSP manage performance to achieve the “15 Year Vision”?

The Partners were asked to consider whether the LSP's future role could be to highlight cross-cutting issues, identify barriers to the achievement of objectives and identify ways of tackling those issues and barriers to feed into key plans and programmes, such as the Local Development Framework.

It was important to develop a mechanism, and appropriate resourcing, for managing performance so that the LSP could determine its path to achieving the Community Strategy visions and to ensure it stayed on course. Potential methods included the use of annual measurement of short term targets, 3 or 5 year Milestones and/or Quality of Life indicators.

Workshops

The presentations were followed by two workshops:

Workshop 1 was asked “How can we build on the current co-ordinated planning between partners to deal with issues that cross organisational and theme boundaries?”. The recommendations which emerged from the discussion were that the LSP should:

- 1: Maintain multiple streams of activity but focus particularly on 1-3 themes or communities at a time through a cross-cutting MATRIX APPROACH.
- 2: Turn into a learning forum which does not measure performance but where the partners use their influence in their organisations – exerting CHALLENGE through Brainstorming.

Workshop 2 was asked “How are we going to measure progress towards the Theme “Visions” over the 15 years?”. The recommendations which emerged from the discussion were that the LSP should:

- 1: use a mix of a few key cross-cutting indicators and regular perception measurement.
- 2: undertake a few specific practical projects where partners can work together and measure outcomes – building on new opportunities by bringing learning together.
- 3: prescribe the roles and responsibilities of Partners, especially Theme Champions, and support staff.