

WEALDEN LSP

Minutes of the Meeting which took place on Wednesday 12th October 2006

At Uckfield Civic Centre from 4pm

PART 1

1.1 Those present and apologies for absence:

LSP Members

Tim Sparrow	Chair
Cllr Nigel Coltman	Leader, Wealden District Council
Cllr Anthony Reid	East Sussex County Council
Jessica Britton	Sussex Downs and Weald PCT
John Kelly	Wealden Federation of Voluntary Organisations
Kathy Fordham	NFU
Mike Rogers	East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service
Sarah Boden	Town and Country Housing Association

Others

Jonathan Wheeler	ESCC
Philip Ayers	AirS – Rural Transport Partnership
Nicky McCrudden	Health Improvement Partnership
Cllr Norman Buck	WDC – Deputy Leader
Cllr Roy Martin	WDC and ESCC
Cllr Sylvia Martin	WDC
Cllr Chantal Wilson	WDC – scrutiny chair for Environment & Transport
Cllr Keith Whitehead	WDC – portfolio holder for Transport
Mike Fleming	WDC – Director of Technical Services
Charmian Allcock	WDC – Head of Exec Office
David Palmer	WDC - Head of Audit and Review
Gill Cameron-Waller	WDC - Policy officer
Janet Whitman	High Weald Unit
Michael Lunn	Resident of Uckfield

Apologies

Rupert Clubb	Environment Agency –
Aprile Biggs	Environment Agency
Charles Lant	WDC – Chief Exec.
C I Rex Matthews	Sussex Police
Ian Chisnall	Churches Together in Sussex
Fiona Henniker	Sussex Downs and Weald PCT
Di Writer	Eastbourne Downs PCT
Jeremy Leggett	Action in rural Sussex
Sean Nolan	ESCC
Alison Horan	ESCC
Cllr Jan Dunk	WDC

1.2 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes were agreed as a correct record

Local Area Agreement

The draft had now been submitted to GOSE and the Government were considering proposals through shared discussion between the directorates

South East Plan

A public meeting was due to take place in Uckfield, following the LSP meeting, and partners were encouraged to attend

The chair urged everyone to respond to the consultation process but will give some thought to the preparation of a joint response on behalf of the LSP which will be circulated electronically for members approval.

Local Development Framework

Wealden District Council is still waiting for the outcome of the judicial review which is due any day now.

PART 2

2.1 Transport and Access

Cllr Reid introduced the presentation and thanked Jonathan Wheeler ,Officer of East Sussex County Council, for all the hard work he had put into the action plan, both in terms of delivering actions and carrying out the review. Transport and access are fundamental to the quality of life issues and key to the success of the community strategy.

The Action plan includes six main objectives and many of these have now been achieved. Progress on each objective was outlined and this information was circulated with the agenda.

In addition to delivering the key objectives additional achievements included:

- Working with local communities to develop LATS
- Strengthening relationships with parishes
- Developing a partnership approach to introducing speed indicator devices

Future objectives for the Transport and Access Action Plan

Cllr Reid then introduced proposals for an updated action plan which included:

- Visibly better and safer communities eg reduction in accident rate, improvements to footways and pedestrian facilities.
- Managing demand and reducing need to travel by car eg through travel plans, walking buses for school trips
- Enabling better public and community transport
- Improved access to services eg by better use of electronic communications using broadband, local kiosks or service points

Challenges

The availability of finance was a major constraint . The Local Transport Plan only provides capital monies and revenue costs were under increasing pressure

Deliverability was another major challenge and there was a need to reconcile national and local priorities

Discussion

The meeting then raised a number of issues where they would like to see further action. These were dealt with under each of the Action Plan headings

Safe and convenient places for walking:

Concerns were voiced that cars parked on pavements and verges were making life difficult for pedestrians, especially those with mobility problems. Verges were damaged and gave the area an unkempt appearance. Good policing was the key to addressing this and may suggest an appropriate LSP project including input from the community and the CPSOs eg by placing polite notices on offending cars.

Bollards and uniform surfacing of areas to give the drivers the impression that they are entering a pedestrian priority zone was also mentioned, although this would inevitably be a more costly solution.

Simpler versions of the pedestrian first approach may also be considered eg where there is access over a footway to reach a car park.

Eastbourne have undertaken a pavement / footway audit to indicate areas which are pedestrian friendly. This could be repeated elsewhere. Twittens have always been a difficult issue in terms of who is responsible for upkeep. Wealden District Council have written to the County to establish a pattern of ownership across the district but in many areas this was unclear and could only be confirmed in relation to a particular twitten. There is a strong local feeling however, that these are important to pedestrians and improved maintenance, lighting and policing would make them more attractive and better used.

This issue should also be built into partnership working and linked to other theme groups such as Safer Wealden and Environment. It ties in with Wealden's "Strategy for Open Space" and the County Council's document, "Improving the Public Realm" Parish Plans are also key to engaging with partners by tackling issues which have been identified as a high priority by the community.

Investment in road and rail:

Much could be achieved by working in partnership with other organisations such as the Sussex Community Rail Partnership, which is keen to champion additional services on lines and at stations and represent existing and potential rail customers. There are clearly a number of unmet needs on rail services and this was confirmed by a Wealden resident who is not happy with the service due to overcrowding, delays and anti-social behaviour at stations

The train service needs to be extended to Tonbridge ie beyond Tunbridge Wells, to ensure strategic links with the Ashford – London line

Further comments included improving access to public transport such as better timetables and information about services, integrated transport links to buses and trains and ensuring services are not cut back, making public transport even less attractive and thus the victim of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Reducing the speed of traffic:

Where schemes have been introduced to reduce speeding, results show a degree of success, albeit only marginal.

Heavy fines and high profile policing is essential to bring about a meaningful change in culture.

The Safer Wealden partnership is also involved in behaviour and education to address road safety.

The LSP is currently funding projects to address this ie Safe Drive/Stay Alive Roadshow and Wheels to Learn which involves training in road safety.

Speeding on country lanes was also mentioned, since these were outside speed restriction zones and appeared to be a free for all. The Quiet Lanes scheme had been considered but no areas in East Sussex were appropriate as criteria for the scheme was very prescriptive. The parish of Mayfield however, has tackled this as an in house initiative to encourage more awareness amongst residents in relation to their driving habits.

Concerns were raised that too much emphasis was being placed on using parishes to link with communities. Many residents in rural areas lived in areas which were not parished and only had an annual parish meetings with no access to funds of their own.

A partnership approach to speeding was particularly useful, especially where parishes invest their own funds to install speed restriction signs and members of the community help to police the roads in their area.

This objective needs to be included in the Sussex Police objectives and the Wealden LSP have been asked to make a statement in response to the Sussex Policing Plan consultation which is due in the latter part of 2005

The Fire Service is also an interested partner in the Sussex Strategic Road Safety Group and, together with the Police, can speak on behalf of the LSP to raise the profile of these issues which are a key concern of communities in Wealden.

Traffic congestion

Since the population density of South East England is greater than Holland or Belgium there are concerns that this will place unacceptable burdens on our transport routes.

Better local public transport

Although the County Council felt they had little influence over many bus routes, there are requirements that private operators consult them on subsidised routes. The County Council is also a consultee for rail services and the LSP urged them to use this to make a strong case for rail services in East Sussex

Timetables which are easier to read and understand, especially for older people and those at school, information at bus stops and on the web and marketing of public transport options were all suggested as ways to promote greater use of public transport options.

Transport Direct does offer information on all services but is not always reliable and there is scope to improve information and marketing for relatively modest investment

Public transport options for school journeys were key to this objective . The County Council encourages schools to draw up school travel plans. 10 have been signed off in Wealden and more are underway. Most funding is used to provide transport for those living some distance away and doesn't stretch to providing services for pupils living closer. Contributions from parents may help towards funding better services which will be used more if they are tailored to the needs of pupils. Walking buses were also an option in some areas.

Providing Integrated services was also mentioned so that buses meet trains and trains meet buses.

Free bus passes were queried as being a clumsy approach to encouraging elderly people to use public transport. Many cannot access this if they have to walk to a bus stop and the benefits go unused. Despite this the District Council must still provide the bus company with a subsidy based on the number of bus passes issues, regardless of take up. A more flexible and acceptable solution might be to offer tokens which can be used for taxis or a dial a ride service which provides a service door to door.

More creative schemes are required which can be delivered through the Rural Bus Challenge funding but sustainability is an issue since these schemes only last 3 years.

Again the benefits of partnership working will help to achieve these objectives. The Rural Transport Partnership is key to accessing Rural Bus Challenge Funding and has experience of delivering these schemes elsewhere in the county

Improving Access to Services (new objective)

Health and social care were increasingly considering options to bring services to the people rather than people to the services. Transport is a big problem for many people, especially the elderly and those without a car. PCT's and Social Services are not sure how to open the dialogue with public transport providers and these providers are also uncertain how to establish contact with health agencies. The LSP offers the appropriate forum and should be making the links between these two themes

A review of community colleges and their catchment areas was also requested since many of these are out of date and are not co-ordinated with public transport routes and services. Many anomalies exist which cause hardship for pupils and their parents. This review should include rail services as well as buses since trains are frequently used by students to access college.

Access to services was frequently achieved through community car schemes using volunteer drivers. Wealden has at least 6 of these schemes which

should be given a higher profile in the Transport and Access Action Plan including links with Change Up and other initiatives for volunteers

ACTION

If partners have any further ideas these should be sent to Caroline for consideration and possible inclusion in the Action Plan

A small working group will be set up with the theme champion, officers from relevant authorities and representatives of organisations such as the Rural Transport Partnership and Community Rail Partnership to consider the ideas outlined above and how they might be integrated into the revised Transport and Access Action Plan.

Further thought will be given to setting up small working groups to deliver these actions

PART 3

3.1 Second Homes Funding 2006 - 2007

Projects funded in year one were now coming to fruition and members were pleased to hear that the Youth Matters website was going live within the next few hours. A high profile launch will be arranged towards the end of the year but in the meantime the website can be viewed on

www.w4Y.co.uk

If anyone has any comments or suggestions for additional material please feed them back to Caroline

A report was circulated with the Agenda proposing a new approach to use of second homes funding in the next financial year. Experience in the current financial year suggests that improvements could be made to address accountability and streamline decision making. Theme groups should be encouraged to be more pro-active and develop partnership working to deliver their objectives. The meeting agreed to adopt the approach outlined in the report and the LSP will work up a programme of activity based on this methodology.

Whilst most of the money comes with no strings attached there is a need to demonstrate that the contribution from the police (17%) should be used to deliver activity which addresses objectives of the Safer Wealden partnership

Tim Sparrow reminded everyone that the LSP budget was minimal compared to approx ¼ billion pounds of public money spent in Wealden each year (excluding education and many other non-statutory agencies). The LSP must use it's funding as a catalyst to lever in monies from the major players or align budgets to ensure a more joined up approach. Other agencies working on the periphery of the theme partnership must not be forgotten when seeking a more co-ordinated efforts to deliver theme objectives. A stakeholder meeting is planned for later this year or early next year and this will help to bring all relevant partners round the table. Awareness of grant applications to the Wealden Community Grants Fund will also develop these links by identifying activity which the theme group might otherwise be unaware of.

PART 4

4.1 Any Other Business

Jessica Britton, representing the Health and Social Care theme, invited members to respond to a national consultation exercise on the future of health and social care services.

Cllr Pam Doodes raised awareness of the flu pandemic which could be a major issue for all partners. PCTs and Wealden District Council are already dealing with this through the relevant officers who will use other partners in the LSP as appropriate

Caroline Adcock encouraged all LSP members to respond to her circular requesting availability for LSP meetings next year

Tim Sparrow also urged theme champions to respond to a similar circular in order to arrange a theme champions meeting in the next few weeks.

4.2 Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

Wednesday 23rd November

Green Room **Uckfield Civic Centre** from 4pm