

Notes of a Special Meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership which took place on Thursday 13 May 2004

Present:

April Biggs, Environment Agency
Cllr Nigel Coltman, Wealden District Council
Fiona Henniker, Sussex Downs & Weald Primary Care Trust
John Kelly, Wealden Federation of Voluntary Organisations
Jeremy Leggett, Action in Rural Sussex
Cllr Tony Reid, East Sussex County Council
Tim Sparrow, Sussex Association of Local Councils
Adam Vernon, Sussex Learning & Skills Council
John Veseley, Eastbourne Downs Primary Care Trust

Also Attending:

Charmian Allcock, Wealden District Council
Diana Francombe, Wealden District Council
Alison Horan, East Sussex County Council
Charles Lant, Wealden District Council
Nicky Millward, Wealden District Council
Cllr Sylvia Tidy, Wealden District Council

Apologies:

Chief Inspector Rex Matthews (Sussex Police), Ian Chisnall (Churches Together in Sussex), Ken Stevens (Federation of Small Businesses), Mary Coburn (New Downland Housing Association), Mike Rogers (East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service), Sean Nolan (East Sussex County Council).

1. Partnership Manager

A paper setting out identified activities for the proposed Partnership Manager was presented for discussion. It was noted that there was a heavy workload and consequently some consideration was given to the list to determine whether some activities should more properly remain with Wealden District Council or one of the other Partner organisations.

Issues discussed included:

- Whether the requirement to feed information from the Parish Planning process into the Community Strategy would be more appropriately carried out by one of the Partners. It was felt that Action in Rural Sussex should take a lead on this issue.
- Whether support needed to be provided to the Theme Champions through regular briefings and attendance at the delivery partnership meetings. It was decided that the Theme Champions should be supported by their own organisations, or by other partner organisations, rather than by the Partnership Manager.

- Whether co-ordination of activities related to the Area Investment Framework and Local Development Framework were better carried out by officers of the District Council. No firm conclusion was reached.

The level of accountability and responsibility of the post was discussed. It was suggested that the post-holder should co-ordinate activity by the Partners, rather than undertaking work themselves, providing the “glue” that joined up all the activities of Partners. However, while it was agreed that the Partnership did not want to build a new bureaucracy, it was pointed out that the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) had determined all the activities that it wanted to undertake and that there were issues around the capacity of Theme Champions to undertake those without proper support. It was, therefore, acknowledged that, as well as undertaking the significant amount of administration required, the post-holder would need to be at a level able to co-ordinate delivery using project management and influencing skills and to make certain strategic decisions without reference to the LSP.

Wealden District Council confirmed it was willing to host the post and to provide basic support in times of absence. The LSP asked that it be kept abreast of the full costs of support for the LSP including overheads and nominal costs of additional support, even where offered in kind.

Due to uncertainties about funding in future years, the post would need to be a short-term contract. Two years was agreed to be the optimum length of contract .

Agreed:

That Wealden District Council be formally requested to:

- draw up a Job Description and Person Specification for the post of Partnership Manager and to agree those with the Chairman of the LSP;
- advertise the post of Partnership Manager, as a two year secondment opportunity, within each of the Partner organisations.
- employ the Partnership Manager for the two year secondment period on behalf of the LSP, funding that post from the Second Homes Council Tax monies being made available to the LSP.

2. Projects

Partners were reminded that, at the meeting in February, they had been requested to provide the Secretariat with details of any cross-cutting projects that they would like the LSP to consider undertaking. Details of several were included with the Report.

It was suggested that communities should be asked to put forward ideas for cross-cutting projects but, on discussion, it was felt that Wealden communities had been approached on several occasions and that the emerging priorities were generally the same. However, it was highlighted that there was a need to provide more help to younger members of the community. Those up to age 20 were often neglected in considerations of service provision and it was generally agreed that the LSP should look for a cross-cutting project which would address issues of importance to young people. It was also suggested that such a project should explore greater involvement of the Voluntary sector.

Agreed:

- That the Partners be requested to consider potential cross-cutting projects for the LSP to undertake and to provide the Secretariat with a detailed summary of their proposals by **Friday 21 May**
- That a final decision on the project or project to be undertaken by the LSP over the coming year be made at the next proper meeting of the Partnership on 3 June 2004.

3. Area Investment Framework

It was explained that the Chairs and Co-ordinators of all the LSPs in East Sussex had attended a meeting with representatives from the East Sussex Economic Partnership (ESEP) to discuss the role of the LSPs in delivering funding through the Area Investment Framework (AIF) for East Sussex.

It had, through that meeting, become clear that the ESEP envisaged the LSPs taking a key role in determining which projects went forward for funding. In the current year, that left the LSPs with almost no time to take a view and the lack of involvement to date had given rise to some criticism of the ESEP. However, the LSPs would be in an influential position in future years if an appropriate mechanism could be devised for considering projects in light of the various Community Strategies. The ESEP would be setting up a Partnership Task Force to consider how that mechanism would operate and developments would be reported back to future meetings of the LSP.

4. Local Development Framework

Government guidance suggested that Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) were to be the spatial expression of those elements of the Community Strategy related to land-use, such as housing and infrastructure. As such, a close working relationship was needed between those officers working on the LDF and the LSP. In particular, it was explained that, as part of the process, a Statement of Community Involvement had to be produced by September 2004. The LSP, as the body which had determined the priorities of residents, was well-placed to work with the planners to ensure that the Wealden communities were able to get involved in the development of the LDF.

Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council were currently involved in an Action Learning Set with Hampshire Authorities which was looking at the role of LSPs in two-tier areas with special reference to the development of LDFs.

It was added that the new Development Frameworks represented a move from 5 year to 10 year plans and that there was a danger that local communities might feel overridden. Working with LSP could help reduce feeling of confusion amongst the public and help tackle the problem of finding locations for numbers of housing and providing adequate infrastructure. There was some concern that Parish Plans might not be taken into account in the LDF. It was agreed that the LSP had an important role to play in educating communities about the process, and the pressures on that process. It could also provide a link between the Parish Planning process and the LDF.

Agreed:

That a Planning Officer from Wealden District Council be requested to attend the next proper meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership on 3 June to:

- explain in detail about the Local Development Framework process; and
- initiate discussion about how the LSP can become meaningfully involved.

5. Any Other Business

The Chairman reminded the Partners that the position of Chairmanship was intended to rotate on an annual basis and that she had held the position for 16 months. She was happy to stand down and invited any nominations for the position. However, she also indicated that, in the interests of continuity, she was willing to remain as Chairman until the appointment of the new Partnership Manager, which was expected to be by September 2004.

Agreed:

That, in the interests of continuity, the Chief Executive of Sussex Downs and Weald PCT, Fiona Henniker, be requested to extend her term as Chairman of the LSP until the new Partnership Manager assumes his/her post.

The meeting ended at 10.40am