

Notes of a Meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership which took place on Thursday 3 June 2004

Present:

April Biggs, Environment Agency
Dr Richard Brighton, Eastbourne Downs Primary Care Trust
Mary Coburn, New Downland Housing Association
Ian Chisnall, Churches Together in Sussex
Cllr Nigel Coltman, Wealden District Council
Fiona Henniker, Sussex Downs & Weald Primary Care Trust
John Kelly, Wealden Federation of Voluntary Organisations
Cllr Tony Reid, East Sussex County Council
Denise Reynard, East Sussex Learning Partnership
Tim Sparrow, Sussex Association of Local Councils

Also Attending:

Charmian Allcock, Wealden District Council
Lesley Barakchizadeh, Wealden District Council
Cllr Pam Doodes, Wealden District Council
Diana Francombe, Wealden District Council
Alison Horan, East Sussex County Council
Laura Mason, Government Office for the South East
Sean Nolan, East Sussex County Council
Cllr Sylvia Tidy, Wealden District Council

Apologies:

Charles Lant, Wealden District Council
Chief Inspector Rex Matthews, Sussex Police
Peter Midgley, Environment Agency
Nicky Millward, Wealden District Council
Adam Vernon, Sussex Learning & Skills Council
John Veseley, Eastbourne Downs Primary Care Trust

Dr Richard Brighton was introduced as the new representative of Eastbourne Downs Primary Care Trust, replacing John Veseley.

1. Local Development Framework

Lesley Barakchizadeh, Director of Environmental Services at Wealden District Council, explained that the Government was changing the planning system in order to:

- Speed up the preparation of development and structure plans;
- Ensure those plans are kept up to date; and
- Enable more effective community involvement.

This was to be achieved by replacing 5-year Local Plans with 10-year Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). An important new part of the legislation was that the LDF must be consistent with the Community Strategy for an

area, providing a means of delivering those aspects of the Community Strategy that related to land-use.

The District Council currently had a Local Plan in preparation. In order that the development of the LDF was not delayed it had been decided that work on the Local Plan would continue only until May 2005, when it would be adopted as a non-Statutory Plan to guide development until the LDF was completed. Work on the new LDF would be started in May 2005 and would take three years to complete. However, two pieces of preparatory work had to be completed by the District Council before autumn 2004:

- A Local Development Scheme (LDS) which would act as a project plan for the production of the Local Development Framework, enabling the public to find out what the Council was proposing to do and when; and
- A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which would set out all of the organisations, groups and individuals who would be asked to be involved with the LDF process and how those would be engaged, for example through roadshows or focus groups.

The Local Strategic Partnership was a key body to both ensure that the LDF was consistent with the Community Strategy and to enable links with the wider community.

Agreed:

- That Fiona Henniker and Tim Sparrow form a sub-group to work, on behalf of the LSP, with Wealden District Council on the preparation of the Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement.

2. Report of the Environment Theme Champion

Aprile Biggs of the Environment Agency gave a presentation on behalf of the Environment Theme Champion, Peter Midgley.

Section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000 had required local authorities to "Prepare Community Strategies which are for the economic, social and environmental 'well-being' of their areas".

Promoting environmental well-being could be defined as:

- Enhancing the environment;
- Reducing our impact on the environment;
- Protecting resources; and
- Increasing knowledge and understanding, commitment and involvement.

The Environment Agency did not have a place on all LSPs in Sussex as this would be an unsustainable commitment. However, it did link with all LSPs through the Sussex Environmental Reference Group (SERG) which had produced guidance on how to incorporate environmental considerations. The main message that SERG wished to communicate was that a healthy environment is a benefit to both the community and the local economy.

Action that could be taken across the Themes included:

- Promotion of sustainable tourism;
- Promotion of jobs in the environmental sector;
- Introduction of environmental management systems in partner organisations and local businesses; and
- Support for local food growers and suppliers.

The Environment had been a key priority arising from the Community Strategy consultation exercise, with 53% of respondents saying that a clean and healthy environment was what was most important in choosing Wealden as a place to live. Some concerns raised, which were tackled in the Environment Action Plan, had been:

- Litter, fly-tipping and waste disposal;
- Bathing and river water quality; and
- Protection of wildlife.

Other issues of concern included dealing with the impacts of new housing development in the area, flood protection and working with farmers to reduce pollution incidents occurring as a result of agricultural practice. There were also problems caused by imported plant species which, having no natural competition, were spreading throughout the countryside and causing ecological damage.

It was very important that the LSP sought to gain public support for the environment and that impacts on the environment were considered in every project undertaken. A DEFRA document entitled "Incorporating Biodiversity in Community Strategies" had some good suggestions for activities the LSP could undertake to support the environment.

3. Urgent Item: Final Protocol for the use of `2nd Homes' Money by LSPs

Sean Nolan, Director of Corporate Resources at East Sussex County Council, explained that each of the authorities contributing 2nd homes council tax revenue to the LSP had now accepted the draft protocol. After collection costs, Wealden LSP would have £101,513 available for 2004/05.

The key points in the protocol were that:

- Wealden District Council would administer the monies on behalf of the LSP, providing quarterly statements of account to the Partnership;

- The LSP should budget at the beginning of the financial year for all the projects likely to be undertaken during that year;
- The projects selected should reflect both the overarching themes set out in the ESSP's Community Strategy as well as the more detailed objectives in the Wealden Community Strategy
- Any money unspent at the end of the financial year could be carried forward automatically, with the exception of the element contributed by the Police, where any carry forward was subject to agreement.
- The Police element of the 2nd homes money must be used for projects which contributed to Community Safety.
- Any costs being carried forward to the next financial year should not total more than 50% of the expected 2nd homes income for that year, to allow for any fall in revenue due to a changing tax base.
- For each approved project, a member of the LSP should be nominated as project manager to ensure delivery and to liaise with the District Council on the financial administration and reporting arrangements. Where this person is from the voluntary sector, one of the statutory agencies would act as the strategic lead.
- Any staff employed by the LSP should be hosted by a partner organisation with a payroll system in place.

4. Projects

(a) Village Action Plans Support Programme

Action in Rural Sussex proposed a three year programme to provide support to ten additional villages in Wealden to enable them to move forward from the development of Village Action Plans (VAPs) to implementation of priority actions. It would also enable a higher degree of co-operation and joint working on VAPs across the District to meet shared objectives than was currently possible. Costs were estimated at around £20,000 per annum for the duration of the project.

Agreed:

1. That the LSP are minded to undertake a Village Action Plans Support Programme, over a two year period, subject to the provision, by e-mail to all the LSP members, of satisfactory further information, as follows:
 - A budget breakdown over the two year period;
 - Detailed information about the implementation work that would be undertaken; and
 - A list of expected outcomes from the project.
2. That the final decision on whether to support the project be made by the Chair of the LSP, taking into account the opinions of the members of the LSP.

(b) Extracare Housing

The Wealden Housing Partnership proposed to develop an effective and cost effective model for delivering care to frail elderly, whilst enabling them to retain dignity and independence by developing an agreement on funding and building service specification and allocations criteria, with input and involvement of Housing, Social Services and Health to obtain greater independence and choice for frail elderly, and most effective coordinated use of resources. The project was one that required support and co-ordination rather than a financial input as funding for the housing would be obtained through capital bids to the Housing Corporation.

Agreed:

1. That the LSP will not undertake an Extracare Housing Project, as this is project best co-ordinated through the Housing Partnership.

(c) Wealden Youth Matters Website

Wealden District Council proposed a project to design and publish a website targeted specifically at young people living in Wealden. The project would involve:

- A consultation exercise with young people in the District to assess their thoughts on a website, including likely level of use and interest.
- The design of a website, based on young peoples input throughout the project.
- Going live with the website and associated publicity.

It was planned that the website would have a notice-board facility and could also be used for consultation with young people on a variety of issues. The site would act as a source of information for young people, including links to local activities, clubs, other sites of interest and on a broad range of topics. The website could also be used or have a separate area for use by the LSP with links to Partners' websites. The total cost for development of the site was estimated at £25,000.

Agreed:

1. That the LSP are minded to develop a Wealden Youth Matters website subject to the provision, by e-mail to all the LSP members, of satisfactory further information, as follows:
 - A budget breakdown over the duration of the project;
 - Information about expected ongoing maintenance costs and where those would be funded from; and

- Agreement to involve an LSP member in the Project Group, and to engage the Youth Service and Community colleges in the development of the site.

d) Environmental Axis Project

The Environment Delivery Partnership had suggested a project to develop Wealden, together with Lewes and Rother, as a destination of environmental interest for schools and the public. The project would be based on the development of the Ninfield Eco-Centre by National Grid Transco and would involve:

- Improving signage and information available on sites of environmental interest and education, linking them through the rural districts of East Sussex;
- Development of visitor routes and walks;
- Working with transport and accommodation providers to improve options for visitors to sites;
- Marketing East Sussex to schools and universities as an area for environmental education visits

The project was still in the early stages of development and links had not yet been made with the Leisure or Prosperity Theme Champions. Consequently costings were not available.

Agreed:

1. That the LSP are very supportive of the project in principle and would welcome a more detailed project proposal later in the year, possibly not directly connected with the Ninfield site.

e) Access and Citizenship Project for under 13s

East Sussex County Council proposed a project to engagement young people between the ages of 11 and 13 in positive activities that encouraged them to be good citizens. The project would aim to provide access to organised activities for young people in remote rural locations and to reduce underage drinking and anti social behaviour.

The project would involve a two stage process consisting of firstly a scoping exercise, option appraisal and planning and secondly the implementation phase. The current proposal was to use £5,000 to undertake the scoping exercise, which would include a survey of young people and would identify possibilities for involving existing voluntary and community sector providers.

Agreed:

1. That the LSP agree to undertake the first stage of an access and citizenship project for 11-13 year olds, which would involve a survey of young people at a cost of up to £5,000; and
2. That the LSP would welcome a further proposal for stage two of the project in due course, dependent on the outcome of stage one..

5. Any Other Business

a) Volunteer Placement Agencies in Wealden District

John Kelly introduced a summary of a report by Peter Lloyd, Emeritus Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Sussex. The aim of the study had been, through a network of key agencies, to:

- Map existing provision and to identify gaps in support and promotion of volunteering opportunities,
- Share existing knowledge and expertise
- Undertake joint publicity and training

The report had recommended that there was a need for an umbrella organisation to co-ordinate the work of local volunteering organisations. It was suggested that WFVO might play that role within Wealden.

b) Business Links with Communities

Councillor Reid proposed that the LSP needed to take more positive action in wealth generation for the area, linking businesses directly with their communities to foster positive and productive relationships. The LSP were supportive in principle of undertaking work in this area and looked forward to receiving more detail at a future meeting.

c) Area Investment Framework

Notification had been received of some potential AIF projects which would need the approval of the LSP before the next meeting. The details of the projects would be considered by officers within Wealden District Council and it was suggested that their recommendations be put before a sub-group.

Agreed:

1. That, a sub-group be formed to consider the recommendations of the District Council on the AIF projects, membership to comprise Councillor Nigel Coltman, Denise Reynard, Alison Horan and Ken Stevens.

The meeting ended at 7.00pm