

WEALDEN LSP

Minutes of the meeting on Wednesday 8th March 2006 4 – 6pm at Hailsham East Community Centre

PART 1

1.1 Those present:

Tim Sparrow	SALC and Chair
Caroline Adcock	LSP Co-ordinator
Charmian Allcock	Wealden District Council
CI Anthony Blaker	Sussex Police
Cllr Pam Doodes	Chair of Safer Wealden Partnership and standing in for Cllr.
John Kelly	Wealden Association Voluntary Services
Kathy Fordham	NFU
Mike Fleming	Wealden District Council (Director standing in for Chief Executive)
Mike Rogers	East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service
	Nigel Coltman, Leader of Wealden District Council
Teresa Gittins	Action in rural Sussex

By special invitation:

Members of Statement of Community Involvement Panel:

- Cllr Bill Crittenden (Hailsham Town Council)
- Cllr Bob Sweetman (Wealden District Council & Wealden Association of Local Councils)
- Cllr Peter Bowdery (Buxted Parish Council and Wealden Association of Local Councils)

Apologies for absence:

Alison Horan	East Sussex County Council
Anita Murphy	Eastbourne Downs PCT
Charles Lant	Wealden District Council
Cllr Nigel Coltman	Leader Wealden District Council
Cllr Tony Reid	East Sussex County Council
David Palmer	Head of Policy and Review – Wealden District Council
Fiona Henniker	Sussex Downs and Weald PCT
Greg Falvey	Town and Country Housing Association
Ian Chisnall	Churches Together in Sussex
Jeremy Leggett	Action in rural Sussex
Jessica Britton	Sussex Downs and Weald PCT
Ken Stevens	Federation of Small Businesses
Rupert Clubb	Environment Agency
Sean Nolan	East Sussex County Council

1.2 Minutes of the meeting and matters arising

No comments

PART 2

2.1 Spend to date and future resources

Income and expenditure sheets were passed round for information and further comments invited.

Tim Sparrow expressed concern over reducing funds for the Wealden LSP. This was due to ESCC cutting their 75% share of second homes funding by half in the next financial year 2006 – 2007 and withdrawing any further funding after this. Sussex Police are also planning a similar approach.

In view of the tight budgetary constraints the Chair suggested that all further monies, and any monies carried forward which had not been allocated, should be used for the administration of the LSP as a top priority and any support for projects should be postponed until the situation changes. This was a cause for regret as there had been some excellent initiatives which had been supported by the LSP to strengthen partnership working and deliver excellent outputs, such as the Safe Drive, Stay Alive roadshows, the Wheels to Learn project, the Act on It project and a number of other recently launched activities.

Partners agreed that the Wealden LSP should lobby ESCC to continue funding at the reduced rate in future years, rather than withdrawing all funding completely.

The LSP members also agreed that all monies should be rolled forward to be used for the administration of the LSP. Although project funding had been difficult to administer there was still a wish to continue providing support for parish plans.

Teresa Gittins confirmed that the DEFRA allocation was now committed and no further funding was likely. The only source available to parishes in future being the Wealden LSP grants.

Caroline Adcock explained that approximately half of the total allocation of £10,000 was still available to parishes wishing to apply. The LSP are committed to the concept of parish plans and will continue to embrace them as an essential part of the process to review the community strategy. Additional funding is being sought by the LSP in partnership with Action in rural Sussex.

ACTION

LSP to channel all available resources to continue administration of the LSP. Project funding postponed until the situation changes with the exception of support for parish plans

2.2 Response to the LSP Consultation Document

Comments were invited on the paper produced by Wealden LSP as a response to the ODPM consultation document on LSP's Shaping their Future.

Wealden LSP members are concerned over the lack of clarity in relation to roles in two tier areas and are keen to embrace the added value, aggregation model. This would allow district and borough community strategies to be harmonised and coordinated in order to produce the county wide community strategy, rather than having a county CS imposed from above. Although this point was put strongly at the last ESSP meeting, no feedback had yet been received to indicate that any changes would be made to incorporate to this approach. Teresa Gittins confirmed that this was a sound approach which provided opportunities for using consultation at the grass roots level to be fed upwards. Each stage would form the building blocks for the one above as follows:

- Parish Plans feed into District Community Strategy.
- District and Borough Community Strategy feed into County wide Community Strategy

The ESSP are still talking about the need to revise their CS this summer and have not discussed this with the District and Borough LSP's to date.

ACTION

Wealden LSP to write to ESSP outlining the wishes of Wealden LSP in relation to the development of the county wide Community Strategy

This model favours the aggregation approach suggested by ODPM which means that the districts and boroughs provide the foundations for the county wide community Strategy – see Wealden LSP Report 21 for further explanation

The meeting also confirmed the need for all community consultation to be harmonised rather than carried out separately for the LSP and the LDF.

The LSP and WDC would work closely together to ensure close co-operation.

Wealden District Council have also provided a response to the consultation on the future of LSP's and this is in a question and answer format – copies of this to be circulated with the minutes.

The issue of sustainability was also raised since the Government are now asking for all community strategies to be sustainable. This is a difficult concept to define and there is currently no clear guidance on what sustainability actually means but the Wealden Community Strategy already includes significant references to sustainable objectives in many of the themes.

2.2 Discussion with Statement of Community Involvement Project Board

Charmian Allcock gave a succinct and comprehensive account of the Local Development Framework and what this entails. She explained the planning hierarchy which starts with:

South East Plan – This is about to be submitted to the Government and provides a general plan which is location specific but not site specific. Sustainability is a key theme and issues concerning the environment and infrastructure are key to successful development. The plan is subject to further examination over the next 12 months.

Local Development Framework – This builds on and develops the housing and business allocations in the South East Plan and works them up into meaningful, site specific requirements. The Framework includes a number of documents, the most important one being the core strategy, which lists key components on the use and development of land including site allocations for housing and employment. Supplementary planning documents are prepared in a similar but less prescriptive way.

Each plan must undergo a similar consultation process which includes 3 periods of consultation

- 1 Initial consultation with a statutory list of consultees including Government Departments, local organisations etc and others at the discretion of the Council.
- 2 Opportunity for organisations and individuals to comment on the draft document. The modifications are submitted to the Planning Inspectorate
- 3 Final document which is subject to further consultation

The consultation process is outlined in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and this document is also subject to the same consultation process. The timescales for the LDF are currently due for review and the draft document is due to be submitted by May 2006.

A project board has been set up to steer the SCI process, including Tim Sparrow as the LSP representative. Other members of the board were in attendance at the LSP meeting.

The LSP and the SCI board agreed that the SCI document should be clear and easy to understand. There is a danger that members of the public could be put off by a lengthy and complicated explanation of the process, which includes how the Council will consult on all planning issues from site development to detailed development control decisions.

Most councils have already embarked on submitting their SCI document but the first response was not good and did not conform with the guidance issued by the ODPM. Further guidance from ODPM is expected soon and Wealden will be in a position to benefit from this. Councillors expressed the wish to avoid the mistakes made in relation to the Local Plan review and feel there is a chance to get it right this time with the LDF.

Concerns were voiced that the dialogue with the county still needs to be improved and this is essential if we are to ensure adequate infrastructure is in place.

There is a need to inspire the public to comment at an early stage in the process. It is important to find ways to encourage early involvement rather than leaving it to work through to the planning application stage where the NIMBE lobby tends to squash proposals for new development. This may be achieved by using hooks such as parish plans to instigate interactive and meaningful dialogue. There is also a need to involve members in this dialogue to ensure they can play an influential role as community leaders, engaging with LSP partners as appropriate in order to lobby for adequate infrastructure from the outset.

The meeting agreed that issues must be broader than just housing allocation.

The view was expressed that it is important to engage all those with an interest, rather than those who present themselves for debate. Another key issue was how to get parish representatives to pass on the information to others who may not be directly involved in the consultation process

Maresfield have already demonstrated how to engage parishioners in the LDF process. They have held three meetings to explore what this means in their parish and 80 people attended the last meeting, which has raised the level of understanding and meaningful debate.

Councillors on the SCI board also wished to underline the importance and opportunity which parish plans provide in contributing to the consultation process.

Members of the LSP were keen to comment on the SCI document but some expressed the view that time constraints require that they must be selective and only engage in aspects of direct relevance to their field, rather be given a mass of paperwork or information to comment on .

2.4 Parish Plan Leaflet

A draft leaflet had been produced and was circulated at the meeting. This outlined the main issues arising from an analysis of parish plans to date (18 plans and appraisals received; and a further 18 out of the total of 42 parishes in the process of producing a plan- 36 Parishes in all).

The LSP has also come up with suggestions on how to respond to the key issues. These ideas have also been developed, bearing in mind the initial consultation carried out for the Community Strategy.

It is proposed that the leaflet is printed and circulated widely through parish councils and wider partners.

It could also be used to stimulate a consultation event(s) in June to confirm what the main issues are and develop appropriate ways to tackle these issues. Theme champions, members and others have an opportunity to use this event to gain feedback and ideas from the wider public which they can build into their action plan activity or priorities for the future. The leaflet and the event will also provide an opportunity for LSP members to demonstrate how they are responding to issues outlined in the parish plans.

Opportunities to explore cross partnership working should be highlighted e.g. prosperity, housing, leisure, health, transport, young people, safer Wealden etc.

Events which bring parishes together in clusters may also provide a fertile platform for meaningful dialogue and exploration of resolving difficult decisions through pay offs and brokerage

ACTION

Further work needed to finalise leaflet and organise associated promotional/consultation events.

2.5 Update Theme Action Plans

Since theme action plans were produced at the inception of LSP working they have become out of date and need efforts made to bring them in line with current activity. Before this is done the value of the action plans needs to be established. There is a lack of clarity concerning these documents and the LSP members were unsure how effective they were due to the lack of performance management

The organisation of the Safer Wealden Partnership is a model of best practice and it demonstrates how to achieve effective roles and functions. Action Groups carry out specific aspects of the work of the partnership and the chairs of these action groups meet on a regular basis outside the main meeting. This allows the work to remain focused and linked into the wider partnership. The Safer Wealden partnership is an exception in that it has its own budget and statutory requirements agreed with GOSE through the action plan. Other themes are very different and lack the tools and incentives available to the Safer Wealden Partnership. In a number of instances the partnerships have fallen apart due to lack of finance and clear role and function. Despite repeated efforts it has proved difficult to gather theme champions together as they have no statutory obligation to get involved in the LSP or report back. The question must be asked, "What is in it for them?"

The meeting agreed however, that action plans are necessary in order to focus future activity more effectively

ACTION

Tim Sparrow agreed to look again at the need to revive the theme partnerships and encourage them to report to the LSP on a regular basis in order to monitor and manage their action plans

PART 3

3.1 Developing our priorities

Reports were circulated at the meeting for the following project proposals:

De-Stigmatising mental health for young people in Wealden
Eco-Homes
Bio-Fuels

This was for information only since the LSP had agreed that no further project funding was likely at the moment.

3.2 Updates

There were no comments concerning updates.

3.4 Any Other Business

Cllr Pam Doodles, Chair of Safer Wealden partnership, invited those attending the LSP meeting to sit in on the Safer Wealden Partnership meeting which takes place on 13th March, 2pm in Committee Room 2 Hailsham Council Offices

3 Date, time and place of future meetings:

Details already circulated with Agenda as Report 25

**Next LSP meeting is Wednesday 10th May at Hailsham East
Community Centre
4pm – 6pm**