

Minutes of Wealden Local Strategic Partnership meeting
Tuesday 21 June 2011
Heathfield Community Centre, Sheepsetting Lane, Heathfield

Present:

Ian Chisnall (Chair)	– Churches Together in Sussex
Monica Akehurst	National Farmers' Union
Adam Chugg	3VA
Dick Coates	Sussex Police
Sarah Dyde	ESCC
Tracy Evans	Affinity Sutton
Godfrey Fitzhugh	FSB
Linda Francis	Willingdon & Jevington Parish Councillor (on behalf of Wealden parish and town councils)
Cllr Roy Galley	WDC, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning & Housing Delivery
Teresa Gittins	AiRS
Bethan Hampson	ESCC
Lee Hawkins	Job Centre Plus
Mark Matthews	ESFRS
Sheila O'Sullivan	East Sussex Downs & Weald PCT
Cllr Bob Standley	WDC, Leader of the Council
Cllr David White	WDC, Councillor

In Attendance:

Charlie Lant	WDC, Chief Executive
Gill Cameron-Waller	WDC, Policy and Partnerships Manager
Jeremy Leach	WDC, Public Health Manager
Tom Stuart	WDC, Policy Officer
James Aldred	WDC, Policy Officer
Martin Ellis	UK Start Up Partnership
Frances Conway	Tomorrow's People
Ruth Waller	Heathfield Street Pastors

Apologies:

Jeff Hart	Freedom Leisure
Cllr Johanna Howell	WDC, Portfolio Holder for Community & Voluntary Sector
Hannah [...]	Environment Agency

1. Welcome and introductions

Ian Chisnall welcomed all present and thanked everyone for their attendance. Introductions were made around the table.

2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

Tracy Evans' name had been accidentally left off the list of those attending and was added as an erratum.

Item 4: Sheila O'Sullivan had circulated GP contact details as requested in the minutes.

Item 7: David Kemp, based at Eastbourne Police Station, is the new co-ordinator of Community Safety (Support Officer) for Rother, Wealden and **Eastbourne** (not Lewes as previously minuted).

3. Community21 project: asset mapping and community planning

Teresa Gittins gave an introduction to and overview of the Community21 project. The core service is to help with neighbourhood planning, with a three-stage model: assessing neighbourhoods' needs and collating evidence for them; identifying priorities; and drawing up an action plan to meet them.

The site enables residents to collaborate and communicate, and has a Google maps interface which allows residents to map their community - everything from businesses and wifi hotspots to tree protection orders and emergency planning information. There is a consultation/questionnaire function, a knowledge base and a volunteering section.

The project is currently being piloted with 6 communities across East Sussex, with Barcombe currently being the most advanced.

<http://www.community21.org/>

4. Heathfield Works! project: rural deprivation and NEETs

This project will be the first of its kind in a rural area and will focus on 16 - 19 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEETs) with the ultimate goal of helping them to secure and maintain employment. It is due to commence shortly and despite having lost its original funding is now funded through until April.

Heathfield has been identified for this rural pilot due to its high levels of rural-based deprivation. There are few full-time employment opportunities in the town, and transport to other locations is difficult, especially since the withdrawal of EMA. There are no leisure facilities in Heathfield, no careers guidance, and no post-16 support closer than Eastbourne, 17 miles and an hour-long, expensive bus ride away.

20 NEETs have already signed up and 12 will be selected for the 10-week programme, with support continuing for a year afterward. Figures from similar work elsewhere show a 79% retention in employment after the end of the programme.

5. Heathfield Street Pastors

This service has been running for just over 3 years and, like the Heathfield Works! project, is a rural pioneer. It has 20 volunteers aged from 30 to over 70 (all referenced, CRB checked and trained), who go out at night to listen to, care for and help the young people they encounter with issues including alcohol, drugs, homelessness, etc. The service is supported by local churches and some council funding, and liaises with the police and local schools and colleges where appropriate. The project has been widely praised and is regarded as having had a positive impact on levels of antisocial behaviour and community safety.

<http://www.streetpastors.org.uk/>

6. Rural broadband projects

Tom reported that contracts are being finalised on the Upper Dicker project; the Heathfield West project's tendering phase has closed and the tenders received will be evaluated this week; and that the Isfield project's invitation to tender was published on June 20th.

While there was originally a training project planned alongside the infrastructure projects, this was deemed ineligible for SEEDA funding and has had to be scaled back. However, the remaining project still requires a steering board and WDC are requesting volunteers to serve on it.

ACTION: Any volunteers to contact Tom.

Tom also reported that the government's Broadband UK programme (separate from SEEDA's European-funded programme) has recently changed focus - authorities are no longer being asked to bid for pilot funding; instead the remaining funding will be divided amongst them, in a manner yet to be determined but likely to involve between 30 and 50 projects, probably led by county councils or possibly LEPs.

(please see appendix for discussion notes and resulting action point)

7. LEPs and the economy: update on current developments

Originally the fledgling LEP Board was composed of some 40-45 members which was felt by some to be cumbersome; an executive group has now been formed with a membership of 22. However, Bob Standley reported that he feels the LEP still lacks clear priorities and hasn't yet determined what it can do that councils can't. It has not been awarded any Regional Growth Fund monies, but may be awarded one or possibly two enterprise zones; six proposals have been put in (two per county) but none will be in Wealden.

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Broadband is a key priority for the LEP, being important for the rural areas and for small and medium businesses. Ministers are very positive that funding will be made available.

Subgroups are beginning to emerge around particular geographies and topics, e.g. coastal concerns, ports; a cross-county-border group of rural/market town areas is taking shape around Wealden / Tunbridge Wells / Sevenoaks districts.

In general the picture is of a work in progress!

8. 21/06 Business event / LinkedIn

Roy Galley reported that representatives from some 30 businesses - ranging from a nursing home to an IT business - attended the business breakfast that morning and received a presentation on employment law.

Martin Ellis spoke to the usefulness of [LinkedIn](#) as a business-oriented social networking tool, noting that each of Wealden's towns has over 10,000 people living within 10 miles of them registered on the service. A Wealden-based LinkedIn group would allow the LSP and Council to consult businesses, encourage them to network and find local suppliers; businesses in turn would benefit from sharing expertise and resources, reaching a wider community, and having a route of influence to decision makers.

[Skype](#) is also a useful tool which allows free face-to-face video communication and conferencing, which reduces the need to travel to attend meetings and could therefore help take traffic off Wealden's roads if widely used.

<http://www.linkedin.com/>
<http://www.skype.com/>

9. Localism

Gill Cameron-Waller gave a brief introduction to the Localism Bill and the agenda which informs it, noting changes to governance arrangements; community rights to buy, build and challenge; possible local referenda; planning reform and neighbourhood plans, etc., and asked around the table what partners' views were on the localism agenda and its likely impact on their areas.

Tracy Evans noted the changes to social housing and rent regimes, including the move to an 'affordable rent' model charging 80% of market rates, voicing the opinion that this would have a negative impact on new social housing

schemes in the north of the country as this would not be as 'affordable' as current social housing models. Existing tenants are likely to 'silt up', staying in their current houses in order to maintain their current rent levels rather than move to more appropriate accommodation and get hit by rent increases. There are also uncertainties regarding the cross-effects of changes to the benefit system, as it is unclear whether the new universal benefit will include housing benefit.

10. South Coast Ambulance service changes

Jeremy Leach was not available to give the update so this will be given via written update when the minutes are circulated.

11. Fire Service changes: possible service merger

Mark Matthews reported that three options are being considered at this point:

- i) Do nothing;
- ii) Seek shared back office services;
- iii) A full merger of East and West Sussex Fire & Rescue Services. This would be complicated by the fact that ESFRS stands alone organisationally while WSFRS sits within their county council, so working out costs becomes difficult. The two services are similar in size but roughly half the size of Kent or Hampshire services.

A final decision will be made by September 2011, for implementation by September 2013.

Change issues: discussion

Sheila O'Sullivan updated on the continuing changes to the healthcare system:

- PCT clustering will continue, with Area Management Teams being formed at county level.
- A GP consortium, Coastal Community Healthcare, is taking shape and will include the south of Wealden (including Hailsham); another for Lewes and the Havens is currently forming and may include the remainder of Wealden.
- Sheila's team are now sitting in County Hall and the Chief Exec is leading the development of the new delivery service.

Charlie Lant voiced WDC's desire to be represented on the new public health board, given its functions with regard to leisure, food safety, etc.

Godfrey Fitzhugh asked whether businesses might be represented; Sheila replied that it would probably be for the LSP to ask, and Ian Chisnall promised to do so. Gill Cameron-Waller volunteered to look at the ongoing consultation into board composition and draft a response on behalf of the LSP.

ACTION: Gill to draft response for circulation; Ian to ask regarding business representation.

Teresa Gittins noted that ESCC should have completed their exercise in adult care & health commissioning from the voluntary sector by the time of the next LSP meeting, and that it would be good to have this reported on.

12. Safer Wealden Partnership update

Mark reported on the SWP's recent meeting, where priorities for 2011-14 were set as: burglary, non-building arson, theft, anti-social behaviour and road safety. The SWP's Local Partnership Plan has been released detailing these priorities and success measures.

Joint Action Groups will rotate locally and attempt specific local actions to target these priorities. The SWP's budget has been reduced in line with many other public agencies but some surplus was held over from last year in anticipation to lessen the impact.

13. Winter maintenance: pilot programme update

Charlie Lant reported on the meeting between the LSP, WDC, Uckfield Town Council and Uckfield Chamber of Commerce, at which an outline snow clearance scheme was discussed and agreed. Contributions from the voluntary and business sectors are anticipated and we are currently working out responsibilities and sourcing kit and bodies.

The objective is to have the pilot scheme in place by winter, and hopefully to use its success as a model for the rest of the district.

A further meeting is expected to take place to sort out the details of the scheme and will be reported on thereafter.

14. AOB

None.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the LSP will be at **10 am on Friday 22 July 2011** at **Uckfield Civic Centre, Uckfield TN22 1AE**

Appendix - discussions

Rural issues

Why was Heathfield selected for the Tomorrow's People project when there are seemingly more deprived areas in Wealden's larger towns?

The focus is on smaller towns and on deprivation as a result of lack of access to services, e.g. transport issues.

What will success be for the Tomorrow's People project? Job creation?

Employment for the young people is the primary goal, but job creation - possibly through the setting up of a social enterprise - might be one way of achieving this.

Might there be the possibility of combining the broadband training programme and the Heathfield project - getting the young people to teach IT to older people?

This was actually one of the concepts put forward for the proposed social enterprise. The project is looking at acquiring space on the High Street and should be able to source equipment relatively easily, so it's worth looking at.

Dick Coates voiced his support for the Street Pastors initiative and gave his thanks for the support it gives to the police, the community and its young people.

Tracy Evans noted the difficulty of delivering services to rural areas and the prohibitive cost of static facilities to do so. Affinity Sutton are procuring a van instead, to be outfitted mobile-library-style with 9 computers to take services and access to rural areas, and Tracy volunteered spare capacity if any partners wanted to link in their services.

Partners around the table voiced praise for this approach and several voiced interest in linking in - 3VA, AiRS, health services and Job Centre Plus among others. Job Centre Plus previously offered a similar service using ex-police vans but had to withdraw it due to lack of funding; Lee volunteered to provide information on this service (including testimonials on its usefulness).

ACTIONS: Lee to provide info, Tracy to facilitate links with partners

Economic issues

What does Skype cost to use?

Nothing for computer-to-computer audio or video calls; calls to 'normal' phone numbers are charged for.

Can services be delivered over Skype?

Theoretically, though this would require a reliable broadband connection - sadly rarer in the rural areas which would benefit from such delivery!

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Charlie Lant noted that most economic development work occurs at the county level and WDC's role is therefore quite limited, but there is definite potential in the tools mentioned.

Bob Standley expressed the opinion that LinkedIn could prove a useful communication tool - traditional business structures tend to be somewhat one-way, and councils do want to hear what businesses have to say as it helps them in their work to enable economic activity.