

WEALDEN LSP

Notes of the meeting on Wednesday 8th November 3 – 6pm at Hailsham East Community Centre

PART 1

Present

Partners

Cllr Nigel Coltman	Leader, Wealden District Council, Acting LSP Chair
Cllr Chantal Wilson	Wealden District Council
Cllr Laura Murphy	Wealden District Council
Cl Neil Honnor	District Commander, Sussex Police
Mark O'Brien	District Commander, East Sussex Fire and Rescue
Kathy Fordham	NFU
Jessica Britton	East Sussex Downs and Weald PCT
Teresa Gittins	Action in Rural Sussex (for Jeremy Leggett)
Paul Smith	Environment Agency
Alison Horan	East Sussex County Council (for Cllr Tony Reid)
Philip Ayers	East Sussex Rural Transport Partnership
Trevor Leggo	Sussex Association of Local Councils
Greg Falvey	Town & Country Housing Group
Ken Stevens	Federation of Small Businesses

In attendance

Charles Lant	Chief Executive, Wealden District Council
David Palmer	Head of Policy and Review, Wealden District Council
Jacqueline Watson	Planning Policy Manager, Wealden District Council
Caroline Adcock	LSP – LDF Liaison, Wealden District Council
Gill Cameron Waller	LSP Policy & Admin, Wealden District Council

Apologies for absence

Ian Chisnall	Churches Together in Sussex
Cllr Tony Reid	East Sussex County Council
Sean Nolan	East Sussex County Council
Karen Crozier	Community Network Steering Group
Cllr Pam Doodles	Wealden District Council
Jeff Hart	Freedom Leisure

1.1 Notes of the last meeting

These were approved as a correct record

1.2 Matters arising

In the light of the resignation of Tim Sparrow, LSP Chairman, due to unforeseen circumstances, Cllr Nigel Coltman, as deputy, took the Chair. He has agreed to continue until a new Chair emerges, probably after new government guidance for LSPs is published in January.

1.2.1 Membership profile

As agreed at the previous meeting, new partners from the following organisations had been invited to take up seats on the LSP Board:

- Community Network Steering Group
- South Downs Joint Committee
- South East Water
- Highways Agency
- Rural Transport Partnership
- Youth Parliament Member
- Freedom Leisure

Cllr Coltman welcomed those who had so far accepted and were able to attend.

1.2.2 Biomass

The Rural Transport Partnership is in contact with an organisation in Oxford which has some experience in this area and a visit is to be organised, probably in January. Timing is critical as

there are issues around the use of bio fuels in cold weather. Discussions are taking place locally to establish the feasibility of local production of cold-pressed rapeseed oil, and a potential storage facility has been identified in Berwick.

1.2.3 Road Safety

The issue of speed limits in villages had been raised with the Safer Wealden Partnership who have it as part of their action plan. Government guidance was published over the summer which, under certain circumstances, allows for a speed limit of 30mph through villages.

1.3 Matters for AOB

1.3.1 Local Government White Paper

A Local Government Information Unit briefing paper was circulated covering the implications for Local Strategic Partnerships. This will be amplified by guidance expected in January next year. Key new developments proposed in the White Paper are:

- creating a statutory duty on local authorities to prepare a Local Area Agreement in consultation with others, and a legal duty on specified public organisations to co-operate with this
- emphasising the leadership role of councils in the LSP and its thematic sub-partnerships
- extending local authority scrutiny to a wide range of other local agencies
- clarifying the need to integrate strategies and the community engagement which contributes to strategies.

These changes will strengthen the council's community leadership role. There were some notable omissions such as 'double devolution', and no major shift towards unitary councils. The White Paper was much heralded and long-awaited, but in the end was generally cosmetic, and the view was that it would not stand in the way of activities, particularly in terms of community leadership, partnership working and deeper community engagement, which are currently in progress.

There is a fundamental tension between the requirement for Gershon efficiency savings based on economies of scale, and very local, customised service delivery based around maximising individual choice. Although the final report from Sir Michael Lyons' Inquiry is due at the end of the year, it is likely that next year's Comprehensive Spending Review will have the strongest impact on local government.

1.3.2 National Compact Week

The PCT had flagged that this LSP meeting was taking place during National Compact Week. Due to time constraints it was not possible to discuss this item. However, at its meeting on 10th May 2006, Wealden LSP recommended that all partners should adopt the East Sussex COMPACT in their dealings with the voluntary sector.

PART 2

2. Updates

2.1 Wealden Community Strategy Revision

Principles

The evidence base for the original Wealden Community Strategy (published in December 2002) was strong, with high-level, aspirational outcomes, to the extent that these are unlikely to have changed significantly. However, as the community strategy is taken into account in the LDF process, it must be recent enough and robust enough to be a valid representation of the local community vision and highlight key priorities for the area.

Process

Original Community Strategy

+ input from analysis of Parish Plans

+ input from the Wider Partners' Meeting (21st June 2006)

+ comments from LSP Theme Champions

Apart from the Health & Social Care theme, the process was generally felt to be adequate for an interim revalidation of the strategy, focusing particularly on spatial aspects given the needs of the Local Development Framework. New guidance from Government on the development of Sustainable Community Strategies is awaited, and it is envisaged that the local authorities in East Sussex will explore ways of working together to achieve locally distinctive district / borough strategies which link into an over-arching East Sussex-wide strategic vision.

Timeframe

Comments were received from theme champions for Transport & Access, Health & Social Care, Housing and Prosperity, and these will be taken into account. Contextual language, an introduction etc will also be added, and a new draft circulated shortly. Although the timescales for the Local Development Framework are being reviewed, it is vital that the revalidated Community Strategy is presented to Wealden's Full Council on 21st February 2007. This means that further comments from partners will need to be made outside the main LSP meeting schedule.

Monitoring

In order to be able to monitor progress on implementation of the community strategy, it will be important to agree some measurable outcomes. As many partners are already collecting data against a wide range of performance indicators, it should be possible to identify a 'basket' of indicators for the Wealden Community Strategy which can be tracked without too much additional effort. In some cases these indicators are likely to derive from the Local Area Agreement, as a key delivery mechanism, although some may not easily be disaggregated from an overall county figure.

2.2 Carnegie UK Trust grant – 'Wealden Links Project'

A document setting out the timescales and methodology for the project was circulated, with a brief oral description of the project. Essentially it is an action research 'bridging' project to explore the routes by which actions from parish plans are drawn through into wider implementation mechanisms. The methodology stems from the 'Main Street' community planning model which has been successful in the USA. The Wealden project is unique in the UK because it involves an entire district.

AiRS are in the process of identifying which parishes and / or groups of parishes they will work with, and partners' views are encouraged – by 30th November, to teresa.gittins@ruralsussex.org.uk please.

[Note: The original bid document was circulated to partners by e-mail on 10th November 2006 with a similar request from Simon Kiley, Policy and Research Officer at AiRS].

The project team will be contacting partners to discuss the extent to which they may be able to give a commitment to contributing to the project. It was highlighted that there might be a risk of confusion between the LDF process and the Wealden Links Project because of the focus on parishes and consultation. It was noted that Caroline Adcock's role in LSP – LDF Liaison would be important in ensuring clarity on this.

2.3 LAA

The East Sussex LAA is unique in the South East because all its targets are partnership-based. The East Sussex Strategic Partnership (ESSP) which oversees the implementation of the LAA, was due to meet the following week to discuss Quarter 1 monitoring data, and there were some concerns about GOSE's expectations for Quarter 2. 80% of the Q1 targets are on course, although in some cases it is early days and there are some gaps in baseline data.

The 'annual' refresh is also under way, just six months after signing the agreement. This involves some additional mandatory indicators and amendments to improve some performance indicators. A more fundamental refresh is envisaged next year in the light of Sustainable Community Strategies, Local Development Frameworks and developments from the Local Government White Paper. It will be important to negotiate a balance of local and national priorities and manageable performance monitoring arrangements.

PART 3

Local Development Framework (LDF)

Wealden Design Guide

The Design Guide is being developed with direct support from the Wealden LSP as it was the most frequently appearing element in village and parish plans. There had been several early consultation workshops with developers, agents, architects, town, and parish and district councillors. Partners had the opportunity to comment on the topics which will be covered in the guide, and the LDF team will take these into account in their continuing work:

Wealden Character	New industrial buildings
Site planning principles	Landscape and ecology
New development	Sustainability
Alterations and extensions	Shop fronts and signage
Listed buildings	Telecommunications masts
Conversion of rural buildings	Nature and format of the Design Guide

Any partner who would like to discuss any aspect of the Design Guide in more detail is invited to contact Caroline Adcock in Planning Policy and Environment at Wealden District Council on 01892 602882, caroline.adcock@wealden.gov.uk . There will be another opportunity for the LSP to comment on the draft guide when it is more fully developed, with illustrations etc. This is likely to be in the early part of 2007.

Introduction to the Core Strategy

The Core Strategy will articulate a strategic long-term, evidence-based vision for Wealden. It will be a delivery mechanism for Government policy and the spatial aspects of the Community Strategy. It will set out 'broad locations' for development and address a range of broadly related topics to be finalised. These are likely to include housing and other strategic development needs, employment, leisure, public services, transport and social cohesion.

The Core Strategy will focus on outcomes, but with sufficient flexibility to respond to changing circumstances. There are clearly some potentially challenging tensions between the different requirements. Substantially involving the LSP from the early consultation stage is seen as a real source of added value in that it is a body which brings together the key stakeholders in the district in a format with the potential to explore differing views and objectives and possible accommodations. The Core Strategy needs to develop a framework within which to balance competing issues, with a consensus around the relative weightings of economic, social and environmental aspects. Sustainability is a fundamental principle underpinning the LDF, but part of the development process for the Core Strategy is to establish what it does and doesn't mean in the Wealden context – for example, no development is not a sustainable option.

Future LSP – LDF involvement

Caroline Adcock is the key link between the LSP and the LDF, and she is now based in Wealden District Council's Planning Policy department. It was agreed that as an initial 'next step' she will contact and meet with individual partners to discuss their existing strategies and forward plans. This will enable her to identify areas of commonality, areas of difference, sources of evidence to support different options and gaps, or potential gaps in provision. It was agreed that Caroline will prepare a report on this initial scoping exercise for the next meeting.

Partners were also asked to think about whether / how they want to interact with paperwork prepared for Wealden District Council's Cabinet Sub Committee on the LDF. There are often copious reports circulated at short notice, and this is difficult to reconcile with achieving a collective LSP view. Pending the outcomes of Caroline's research, the Acting Chair proposed to reorganise the agenda for the next meeting so that LDF items are taken first, to allow them more time.

Date, time and place of next meeting

Wednesday 10th January 2007 at Hailsham East Community Centre.