

RURAL VOICES RURAL CHOICES

PARTNERSHIP MEETING NOTES

Thursday 13th January 2005

Present: Cllr Shirley James (Chair), Lewes DC
Dr Alex MacGillivray, Barcombe PC/LDALPC
Sally Harper, Lewes DC
PC Mark Cranley, Sussex Police
Insp Jeff Woodall, Sussex Police
Nick Lear, Barcombe PC
Christine Arbenz, Barcombe PC
Teresa Gittins (Vice Chair), Action in rural Sussex
Ieuan Sherwood, Action in rural Sussex
Rebecca Meitlis, Hamsey PC
Jill Holmes, Ditchling PC
Debbie Portchmouth, Lewes DC
Philip Tucker, Westmeston
Willie Edmunds, Rodmell PC
Marina Bury, East Chiltington PC
Melanie Cuttress, Falmer PC
Laura Treneer, Princes Trust
Graham Allen, Consultant
Jill Harrison, Southease PC

All were welcomed to the meeting and introduced themselves.

1. Apologies

Michael Kennedy, Iford; Rosemary Jeffery, Kingston; Brenda Watson, Plumpton; Tom Hawthorne, RDH; Jan Woollons Ringmer, Tom Jones, Ditchling and Tony Gedge & Tam Large, Streat.

2. Notes of the last meeting & matters arising

There was disappointment that the LSP did not want to discuss the planning application re the proposed landfill site at Hamsey Brickworks. At the LSP, ESCC had said that it was not the kind of topic to raise at the LSP. It was pointed out that Lewes District LSP was not unique to decline to talk about a waste management issue as a similar issue had arisen a neighbouring LSP meeting.. The Lewes District LSP needs to consider where it sits with these key issues

Action: SJ to express disappointment to the LSP about RVRC treatment of this issue

Action: Shirley/Alex to write a letter to ESCC

3. Parish Plans

Ieuan Sherwood from Action in rural Sussex (AirS) explained the support that AirS gives to small villages to towns in Sussex wanting to embark on the production of an action plan.

AirS can help with identifying the most suitable techniques for developing a plan to ensure that the process is as inclusive as possible and to best reflect the profile of the community. Then support can be given into writing the plan, to identify priorities and to determine "who, how & when" regarding actions. Next support can be given to produce a plan followed by support in realising projects and funding bids.

South Downs CVS are co-ordinating the employment of development workers to support the area partnerships. A Development worker will be assigned to jointly cover the Lewes Town Partnership and Rural Voices Rural Choices. The Development Worker's work programme will be based on the priorities of RVRC. Therefore it is important that parishes will be in a position to demonstrate through evidence what their priorities are in order to be ready to feed into the work programme. AirS will support those communities that haven't developed an action plan.

Several of the small villages represented at the meeting were rather cynical of action plans and felt that they already knew what their villagers wanted as part on a rolling process of consultation and direct action. They felt that the planning process would divert time away from delivering on existing projects.

Ieuan explained that action planning can be approached in different ways. Some communities don't produce a glossy document but have a website. He stressed the benefits of having a plan based on evidence. Those villages without one could be left behind when it comes to responding to strategic issues such as the Local Development Framework. If parish councils want to be quality controlled then the parish has to have a plan.

Hamsey highlighted how the action planning process has helped engage new participants in community planning and how AirS has provided support in particular in identifying gaps in current evidence. The whole process has brought a sense of pride to those involved. Sussex Police has also helped with regards to the installation of the village's new youth shelter.

4. Finalising the terms of reference

Graham Allen outlined the most recent comments that he had received on the terms of reference since the last meeting. Once parish felt that RVRC needs to be an incorporated body preferably with charitable status. Graham reiterated the driver for

being constituted would be the ability to lever in funds and to develop documents and action plans.

Amendments were agreed to the wording on the terms of reference that explains what RVRC is all about. New wording will make it sharper, focussed and imply that it is an action-based body.

Action: Graham to alter the wording

Barcombe Parish Council had not discussed the terms of reference at a meeting as it feels there is a need to rationalise the relationship between parish councils and RVRC. A reference was made to the Lewes District Association of Local & Parish Councils' meeting held in December to discuss this. The Chief Exec of Lewes District Council and Executive Officer of the Sussex Association of Local Councils' will be meeting soon to discuss the two bodies.

Action: SH to email RVRC partners with outcome of the meeting with a view to finalising the terms of reference

Action: Tenants groups still to be invited to RVRC meetings

It was felt that the section on membership in the document needs to be tightened, as it is not clear who can and can't vote or be a member of RVRC. There were concerns that pressure groups could become members and have a vote.

Graham explained that the details in the constitution can be sharpened once RVRC is constituted and suggested that current members are listed in the document as a starting point.

5. Princes Trust

Laura Treneer outlined her role at the Princes Trust and referred to the briefing paper that had been sent out in advance of the meeting.

One strand of her work is to encourage more young people aged 18-30 into self-employment. Money has been allocated from the Area Investment Framework to provide low interest loans and grants of up to £5,000 underpinned by a mentoring package for the young person.

She tabled some leaflets outlining the scheme and **asked that parishes display them in prominent places such as the village shop or give them directly to young people that may be interested.**

In addition, she would like to work with the new RVRC Development Worker, (when in post) to organise a promotional event to raise the profile of the project.

For more leaflets, posters or advice, Laura can be contacted by emailing laura.treeneer@princes-trust.org.uk or by calling 01273 723399.

6. Issues concerning smaller parishes

Willie Edmunds from Rodmell Parish Council felt that smaller villages are barely being heard by RVRC and outlined some of the key issues that face his parish:

1. Police - covered in next agenda item.
2. Action plans - covered earlier.
3. Important to cherish what already exists in the parish - although smaller parishes are reliant on some external services, it needs to be recognised that they also have a lot to offer the community.
4. Youth - smaller parishes don't experience the degree of problems that larger ones do. Generally there are no out of hand young people.. There are concerns that play areas being reduced and that the busy roads make walking to school hazardous.
5. Housing Planning - It's felt that planners don't give enough opportunity for smaller villages to have a say in planning decisions that affect them. The affordable housing scheme in Rodmell worked well. It wants to conserve but be vibrant which leaves little room for manouevre.
6. Countryside - farmers are struggling. The issue of the National Park has not yet been mentioned.
7. Travel & Traffic - smaller parishes are reliant on transport systems to get people into towns for services. Too many cars passing through the village is a problem.
8. Broadband - Rodmell would like help in giving access to Broadband for all.

Melanie Cuttress from Falmer highlighted a few issues that the village is facing:

1. Second public enquiry for football stadium begins 1st February which will have huge resource implications to the parish council
2. Parish has to again set a precept of £20,000
3. Weekday parking situation is not getting any better. There is funding from the University of Sussex to help resolve it but the schedule to paint yellow lines and install parking controls had been put back several months.
4. There is a proposal to install a Telecommunications mast in the parish.

It is clear that there are some major issues that all parishes face and there needs to be a smarter mechanism for ensuring that issues get fed up to the LSP to be addressed. In order for all parishes to be engaged better in RVRC, it was suggested that each meeting addresses a common theme for half an hour.

7. Potential sites for travelers

This agenda item was deferred until the next meeting.

8. Identifying sites for new housing

This agenda item was deferred until the next meeting.

9. CDRP/Youth Transport updates

Insp Jeff Woodall updated partners of the activities of the Police in the villages:

- He has received very positive feedback about the placement of PCSO's at Remembrance parades.
- Detection rate remains at 28% which is still best figures for districts in rural Sussex. Andy Ash, PCSO will be off for a few months. A Lewes town PCSO will be redeployed to cover his patch.
- The workshops held in Newick with young people went very well. Young people want a "place to hang out".

Insp Woodall requested that if there is anything pressing to report from parishes please feel free to call him directly on 0845 60 70 999 ext 63225.

PCSOs would also be able to attend parish council meetings to answer questions on issues.

Rodmell - small parishes don't recognise much of what the police speak about at RVRC meetings. Speeding along C7 road is the only main issue. The police have tried to get involved more but react to statistics on incidents and accidents. In future the Parishes of the Lower Ouse will have a dedicated PCSO.

SH updated partners on some of the issues arising from the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership. The new Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy will be produced at the end of March 2005, there is some new legislation around tackling anti-social behaviour, communities will soon have more involvement in ensuring that local crime is dealt with and LDC's planning department will link more closely to the CRDP when considering planning applications that could result in the generation of crime hot spots.

10. Town Councils' relationship to town based Area Partnerships

This agenda item was deferred until the next meeting.

11. Project ideas from parishes/partners

This agenda item was deferred until the next meeting.

11. Any Other Business

- The loss of village surgeries was raised. It was stated that the issue was raised at the LSP and Cynthia Lyons from the Primary Care Trust was sympathetic. There is now a more transparent system aimed at minimising the potential closure of surgeries.

- East Chiltonton is concerned about the large increase in bus fares since Regency Travel has been operating bus services.

12. Agenda & venue for next meeting

Thursday 17th March 7pm, Falmer Village Hall