

Meeting Notes

Wednesday 2 March 2016
Council Chamber, County Hall
Lewes, East Sussex County Council

IN ATTENDANCE

ESSP Members present:

Bruce Campbell
Cllr. Chris Dowling
Cllr. Kim Forward
Steve Manwaring (Chair)
Rosie Ross
Kamini Sanghani

Cllr. Bob Standley
Keith Stevens
Mark Streater

Michael Turner
Gary Walsh

JobCentre Plus
East Sussex County Council
Hastings Borough Council
SpeakUp Representative
Sussex Police
Kent, Surry & Sussex Community
Rehabilitation Company (Seetec)
Wealden District Council
Sussex Association of Local Councils
Office of Sussex Police and Crime
Commissioner
Environment Agency
East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service

Also in attendance (official observers):

Shabana Bayjou
Sarah Feather
Jane Hartnell
Beth McGhee
Paul Rideout
Becky Shaw
Jon Wheeler (speaker)

Hastings Borough Council
East Sussex County Council
Hastings Borough Council
East Sussex County Council
East Sussex County Council
East Sussex County Council
East Sussex County Council

Apologies for absence:

Katy Bourne
Cllr. Keith Glazier (Vice-Chair)
Michael Gough-Buijs
Graham Peters
Andrea Saunders
Cllr. Andy Smith
Cllr. David Tutt

Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner
East Sussex County Council
JobCentre Plus
Team East Sussex
National Probation Service
Lewes District Council
Eastbourne Borough Council

NOTES

1) Welcome and Apologies

Steve Manwaring welcomed ESSP members, delegates, observers, guests and speakers to the meeting. Apologies were given and those attending on behalf of others were identified. Steve gave a tribute, and a minute silence was held for John Hodges, long standing ESSP member and County Councillor for St Helens and Silverhill, who recently passed away.

2) Urgent items of business

None

3) Notes of the meeting held on 21 May 2015 and Matters Arising

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and actions confirmed as completed.

Steve thanked colleagues for contributing to the paper, which was circulated with the agenda, containing partners' response to questions on how they think a smaller public sector will impact their work and residents.

4) Devolution Update – Becky Shaw

Steve introduced Becky Shaw, Chief Executive of East Sussex County Council (ESCC), to give a presentation on the Three Southern Counties (3SC) Devolution Bid.

Central Government is committed to, and had now legislated for, devolving funding and powers to a local level. The county, borough and district councils across Surrey, West Sussex and East Sussex considered that it was important that they submit a devolution proposal so that local residents could benefit from any localisation of powers. Brighton & Hove had submitted a separated bid, but were working with the 3SC on infrastructure and would continue to collaborate where appropriate.

3SC produced a regular newsletter to keep all stakeholders updated on developments. Becky encouraged members to sign up at 3SCdevolution@eastsussex.gov.uk and share the newsletter with colleagues across East Sussex.

A discussion followed the presentation in which Michael Turner, Environment Agency Sussex Installations Team Leader, welcomed the partnership, as the environment and abundance of outstanding natural beauty is important in all three counties and they will therefore need to be mindful of building environmental resilience into infrastructure plans. It was clarified that no governance arrangements would be imposed without agreement from all parties involved; and that as devolution deals around the country progress, clearer indication of the Government's approach to governance would emerge.

Steve requested that devolution remain a standing item on the agenda so that updates could be provided to the ESSP when further substantive developments had taken place.

ACTION: Devolution to remain a standing item on the agenda

5) Public Sector Post-Budget Discussion – All

The ESSP had discussed in September how partners could work together to mitigate the challenges created by a shrinking public sector, and partners outlined how they were approaching their budget setting in light of the current financial situation. Six months on, Steve asked members to feed back on their budget setting process and what lessons they had learned for future years.

East Sussex County Council (ESCC)

Becky reported that in the lead up to setting this year's budget, ESCC undertook a much higher level of partnership working than they had previously, holding multiple engagement events with stakeholders. During consultation it was observed that in all sectors there was less debate on whether savings would have to be made and instead there was a certain level of acceptance of the new reality.

Partnership working will remain vital for ESCC moving forward. The East Sussex Better Together (ESBT) partnership will enable ESCC, Hastings and Rother CCG, and Eastbourne, Hailsham and Seaford CCG to make the best use of limited resources, and partnership working will also be required for effective joint lobbying of Government in the upcoming consultation on needs and proposed changes to local government funding.

A question was raised on how ESCC judged the impact savings would have on different communities across East Sussex. Becky explained that detailed impact assessments were carried out on all proposed savings, and extensive consultation provided ESCC with a good understanding of the potential impacts and mitigations were made where possible in response.

Wealden District Council (WDC)

Cllr. Bob Standley, Leader of WDC, fed back that the process of making savings over the last 6 years through prioritising services, the sale of assets and partnership schemes, had produced surplus and thereby made this year's budget setting much easier than it otherwise would have been. Principally, WDC had raised significant revenue from house building and the New Homes Bonus.

Environment Agency (EA)

Michael Turner, said that for the first time the EA had received a four year budget settlement from the Treasury which would enable longer term planning. In addition, the EA were undertaking a review of national fees and charges, one of their key sources of revenue, so that the charges businesses pay reflect the resources they require.

The EA have transformed the way they work to ensure funding they receive is used to solve problems by flexibly directing funding and resources towards areas and incidents around the country that require focus. Flooding, water regulation and waste disposal continue to be key areas of work so work continues, through schemes such as Pollution Assessment Volunteers, to ensure communities and the EA can respond to flooding and pollution incidents in the most efficient way possible.

Sussex Association of Local Councils

Keith Stevens, East Sussex Association of Local Councils Chairman, anticipated that as residents begin to feel the full effect of cuts, Parish and Town Councils would increasingly recognise the potential in raising funds. Keith also agreed that partnership working is vital but that partnerships must be open and foster inward and outward communication.

East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS)

Gary Walsh, ESFRS Chief Fire Officer, reported that the ESFRS were in a broadly reasonable position and had set a balanced budget for the next four years. Looking ahead, ESFRS were aware that new housing would create pressures that would require planning and renewed partnership working; proposed changes to business rates were creating considerable uncertainty around future grant funding; and the change in Government departmental home from DCLG to the Home Office was anticipated to bring positive change. ESFRS were also looking to review the services they offer.

Kent, Surrey & Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company (KSS CRC)

Kamini Sanghani, KSS CRC Director of Partnerships, fed back that the KSS CRC's budget setting had recently been adjusted by the Ministry of Justice. The KSS CRC benefited from using internal monitoring to evidence service user volume to prevent the move to a markedly detrimental funding band. The KSS CRC will continue to provide core services and also plans to commission support for women, accommodation support and some finance benefit and debt support.

Hastings Borough Council (HBC)

Jane Hartnell, HBC Director of Corporate Services and Governance, fed back that HBC had not made any significant savings or service reductions this year as a three year budget was set last year. However, changes to business rates and the potential loss of EU funding following the referendum were both creating significant financial uncertainty. An increase in the concentration of poverty in Hastings has also added pressure to services. In response, HBC considered how to make the best use of digital technology and potential methods of income generation. Looking ahead, Jane encouraged partners to share information as early as possible in future years to enable informed budget decision making in all sectors.

6) Report of the ESSP Assembly – Steve Marwaring

Steve introduced the report from the East Sussex Annual Assembly. Steve celebrated the good level of attendance and engagement at the Assembly; the presentations on work currently going on at a local level to build community resilience; and the opportunity to learn about the range of issues facing communities in East Sussex.

Steve directed members to page 12 of the report which outlined the suggestions, given by assembly attendees, for next year's assembly theme and asked members to narrow the suggestions down. It was agreed that the proposed themes would be included in the minutes and members would feed-back to Sarah Feather their top three suggested themes.

ACTION: members to pick their top three themes for this year's annual assembly and feed-back to Sarah Feather at essp@eastsussex.gov.uk by 31st March 2016

The themes proposed by assembly attendees were:

- 1. An update on the progress of Community Resilience – e.g. 'Community resilience one year on'**
- 2. Mental Health**
- 3. Income generation**
- 4. Doing more for less**
- 5. How communities can successfully inform statutory agencies**
- 6. Working Age**
- 7. Working with Local Enterprise Partnerships**
- 8. Rurality**
- 9. The connection between authorities and community organisations**

- 10. Community Health**
- 11. Transport**
- 12. Data/information sharing between groups in the future**
- 13. Equal working between voluntary, public and private sector**
- 14. Equality and Diversity**
- 15. Supporting volunteering**
- 16. Capacity building in communities**

7) ESBT Community Resilience Engagement Work – Steve Manwaring

Steve gave a presentation that provided an update on ESBT's community resilience engagement work. ESBT had commissioned a project team, composed of an East Sussex Community and Voluntary Sector Partnership (Hastings Voluntary Action, Rother Voluntary Action and 3VA), Nick Wates Associates and Asset Based Consulting, to undertake engagement work to find out the issues facing communities in East Sussex and the actions required to build resilience. ESBT would use the findings to formulate a comprehensive 'asset based approach' to building community resilience to improve health and wellbeing in East Sussex.

A discussion followed the presentation. The training of community facilitators was praised as it brings statutory officers and grassroots volunteers together to share learning. The importance of directly linking people in communities together to build capacity, rather than managing relationships and responses, and creating a 'safety net' to ensure resilience is enduring, were all noted as vital. It was raised that comparable work is underway across East Sussex to determine how communities could be resilient in emergencies such as flooding: Parish and Town Councils had developed resilience/ emergency plans and ESFRS had mapped community assets to inform their work. ESBT would build on existing work and experience.

It was agreed that Steve would provide an update on any substantive developments at a future ESSP meeting.

8) Update on the Local Transport Plan – Jon Wheeler

Steve invited Jon Wheeler, Team Manager of Strategic Economic Infrastructure at ESCC, to give a presentation which provided an update on a range of strategic transport developments in East Sussex, ESCC's Strategic Economic Plan and Local Transport Plan, and sources of future transport funding.

Following the presentation there was a discussion. Cllr. Bob Standley established that Wealden District Council, along with a number of other councils surrounding Gatwick, did not support an additional runway at Gatwick and Cllr. Chris Dowling welcomed the work underway to reduce the noise from flightpaths. Steve praised the Bexhill-Hastings link road and the difference it had made to journey time. Becky fed-back that ESCC had recently entered into a new highways contract with Costain who would be responsible for delivering an improved pothole repair service in East Sussex.

9) Any Other Business - All

Cllr. Chris Dowling suggested that due to the growing importance of businesses in East Sussex and many partners' reliance on business rates, the ESSP should consider adding a further voice of businesses to the partnership. It was agreed that the voice of business

currently provided by Team East Sussex was vital on the partnership. Consideration would be given to whether another body representing businesses in East Sussex should be added.

10) Future meetings:

- Monday 9 May 2016, 10.00-12.00pm, Venue TBC
- Tuesday 13 September 2016, 9.00-12.30pm, East Sussex Assembly, Venue TBC
- Monday 5 December 2016, 10-12.00pm, Venue TBC

SUMMARY OF AGREED ACTIONS –	
Item	Action
4	Devolution to remain a standing item on the agenda.
6	Members to pick their top three themes for this year's annual assembly and feed-back to Sarah Feather at essp@eastsussex.gov.uk by 31 st March 2016

A copy of all the presentations from the meeting can be found on the ESSP website (<http://www.essp.org.uk/Meeting-papers-and-reports>).