



East Sussex Assembly Conference 2014  
14 July 2014, Winter Garden, Eastbourne

## **CONFERENCE REPORT**

### **BACKGROUND:**

The East Sussex Assembly meets once a year to receive a report on the East Sussex Strategic Partnership's (ESSP) activities and to focus on a topic that will be of interest for Assembly members. Around 35 delegates attended from partner organisations across the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. This year there was a specific focus on the First World War Centenary Commemorations in East Sussex and Economic Development, with reference to the key findings of the East Sussex Councils 'Open for Growth' Peer Challenge. This focus was assisted by requests from ESSP members and Assembly members from recommendations made at the previous years' conference.

### **Introduction**

The 'Economy, Jobs and Prosperity' is one of the key themes of 'Pride of Place' (the ESSP's Sustainable Community Strategy for East Sussex). The big issues in East Sussex are: low paid jobs; low skills and poor educational attainment; low job density; areas of high deprivation, too little affordable housing and poor transport; and inappropriate and insufficient business accommodation. ESSP's priority is to narrow the economic performance gap within and between communities in the county and between the county and the region, in order to develop a thriving, diverse and sustainable economy where everyone can prosper.

Culture and Sport is also one of the key themes included within 'Pride of Place.' East Sussex has a rich cultural heritage with numerous cultural and tourist attractions and a variety of opportunities to participate in sports, arts and leisure activities. Culture, sport and leisure play a role in our local economy: our towns provide shops, restaurants, leisure facilities, libraries, museums and cinemas. Culture, sport and leisure are also used as community development and regeneration tools: cultural and sporting events help bring people together, can build self-confidence, counteract obesity and help people to adopt healthier lifestyles.

This event focussed on the topics of 'First World War Centenary Commemorations in East Sussex' and 'Economic Development and Key Findings of the East Sussex Councils 'Open for Growth' Peer Challenge'.

## **ASSEMBLY ITEMS:**

### **1) First World War Centenary Commemorations – Dr. Chris Kempshall, Project Officer: First World War Commemorations, East Sussex County Council**


Dr. Chris Kempshall gave an interesting presentation on East Sussex in the First World War (WW1). He gave a brief history of the county's involvement and then also spoke about community engagement and the planned commemorations.

Assembly members were told of the three key aspects to the East Sussex WW1 Commemorations Project:

Firstly, a dedicated, interactive WW1 website is currently under development which will allow for the sharing of stories relating to, and resources to learn about, WW1. The public, schools and local interest groups and organisations will be encouraged to share their own local, family or group interest WW1 stories on the website. There will also be a calendar of events: the website will allow users to add or search for events or activities in East Sussex that relate to the WW1 centenary programme.

Partners working at The Keep (the East Sussex Record Office), in conjunction with Historic Environment Record, (working with West Sussex County Council) have developed an initiative whereby interested parties can help us map all of the war memorials across the county. Encouraging and enthusing volunteers to map the war memorials across the county will help us develop a complete picture, for the first time, of all the WW1 commemorative monuments, statues and plaques across the county and will enable colleagues to provide advice on the possible effects of new development, land use change and to plan effective conservation of the memorials.

East Sussex Councils are also working with the Department for Communities and Local Government to co-ordinate the installation of commemorative paving stones across the county to honour the East Sussex soldiers who were awarded the Victoria Cross during WW1.

Please note that the dedicated WW1 website can be accessed at: [www.eastsussexww1.org.uk](http://www.eastsussexww1.org.uk) and followed on Twitter:  @EastSussexWW1

### **2) Economic Development and key findings of East Sussex Councils 'Open for Growth' Peer Challenge – Rob Cottrill, Chief Executive, Eastbourne Borough Council and Rupert Clubb, Director of Communities, Economy & Transport**

The East Sussex Council 'Open for Growth' Peer Challenge took place in March 2014. A peer challenge team comprising 12 Members, officers and business partners met with over 250 key stakeholders, including Members, officers and partners about their experiences within the local economy.

The presentation comprised the key findings of the Peer Challenge, next steps and how members of the Assembly could participate.

Peer challenge is a tool that helps councils review their performance. An Open for Growth peer challenge looks at how councils are supporting their local economy and businesses. Councils are responsible for managing their own performance, and using the knowledge and expertise of external peers or colleagues is one way of doing this.

The East Sussex Councils (Eastbourne Borough Council, East Sussex County Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council, Rother District Council and Wealden District Council)

asked the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to bring together an expert team from within local government and other sectors to assess:

- What the councils do well to support local growth;
- How and where the councils could do better; and
- What businesses need from the councils to support the sector further.

Rob and Rupert spoke about the seven areas of focus and provided the Peer Challenge Team's findings on these:

The peer challenge team was asked to focus on the following five priority areas:

- Promotion of economic growth;
- Planning;
- Housing;
- Educating and training for skills; and
- Procurement.

A presentation of the initial findings was delivered by the peer challenge team at the end of the week and this was followed by a report which sets out all the findings of the peer challenge team along with their recommendations for next steps. Copies of the presentation and the full report are available on the ESSP website.

As a result of the Peer Challenge, a set of recommendations have been agreed; these will form the basis of an action plan in which Assembly members were invited to participate.

Partners will work together, using the recommendations set out in the report, to develop an action plan which will implement the key findings of the peer challenge, in the context of the recently agreed [SELEP Growth Deal](#).

There was time at the end of the presentation in which members of the audience were invited to ask questions. If there are any further questions, members of the Assembly are invited to contact Sarah Feather or Indea Cadman-Rivers.

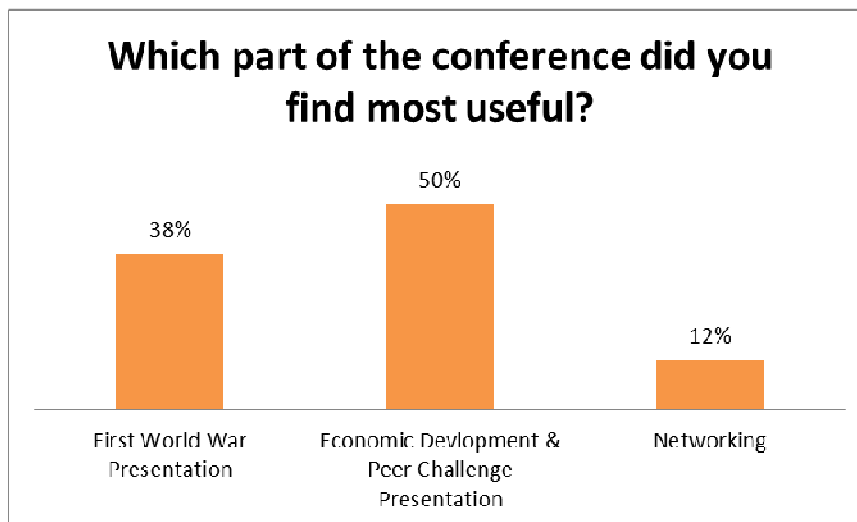
Rob and Rupert thanked all of the members who took part in the challenge and confirmed that the Peer Challenge Report will feature on October's ESSP agenda.

All presentations from the Assembly speakers, as well as the Peer Challenge Report and presentation, can be found on the ESSP website: <http://www.essp.org.uk/Meeting-papers-and-reports/East-Sussex-Assembly>

## FEEDBACK:

All delegates were provided with an event feedback form. The following results are based on the completed forms returned by attendees at the Assembly. The results are set out and main points are summarised below.

	Yes	No
Did the event meet your expectations?	100%	-
Was the content appropriate?	100%	-
Was the timing and duration of the event appropriate?	100%	-
Was the pre-event administration sufficient?	100%	-



Responses to the questions asking which part of the conference was most/least useful praised the presenters and gave encouraging feedback.

All presentations received positive feedback. Whilst other positive comments included:

- “The First World War presentation provided an opportunity to bring communities together;
- Whilst the Peer Challenge presentation was most useful, the history of East Sussex in WW1 was very interesting.”

All respondents felt that no part of the conference was ‘least useful’.

Overall, the content of the event was seen as appropriate and useful. We will continue to ensure that content is relevant to organisations invited to future events. Attendees’ suggestions for next year’s focus will be considered when planning the Assembly 2015. The suggestions were:

- Young People
- NEETs
- Adult Education
- Education from 0-? across East Sussex (and the impact on long-term economic development)
- Volunteering
- Public Health
- Rural Economy inc. Broadband
- ESCC proposed cut-backs e.g. bus services and how these will affect the economy
- Adjustment of Local Welfare Assistance (DESSS) and the impact on SELEP targets
- Town Teams

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The ESSP is recommended to:

1. Note the presentations to the Assembly;
2. Note the feedback and suggestions for next year's Assembly; and
3. Consider different ways of engaging with the Assembly.

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