

Report to: East Sussex Strategic Partnership (ESSP)
Date: 3 November 2010
Title: East Sussex Research and Engagement Network (REN)
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Purpose: To update partners on the creation of a network for consultation, engagement and research professionals across East Sussex, to share data, learning, support and improve collaborative opportunities.

Recommendation:

That the East Sussex Strategic Partnership:

1. note the creation of the East Sussex REN and consider its use within the Pride of Place delivery workstreams.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Since 2008, consultation professionals across Sussex have been seeking to meet to share information and collaborate. A number of outcomes from this partnership were positive, however, the logistics of dealing with Sussex wide organisations down to local district and borough agencies has proved too difficult to overcome. The West Sussex Research and Engagement Network (REN) has been successful in encouraging a multi-agency forum for sharing ideas, learning and initiating collaborative projects. It was decided that East Sussex should establish their own REN allowing officers to meet at a more local level which may be more beneficial to its members.

2. The Research and Engagement Network (REN)

- 2.1 The REN exists to promote a range of resources and support for people involved with research, engagement and consultation in East Sussex. Key areas of focus are:
 - **Networking and information**
e.g. skills sharing, updates and online discussion forum
 - **Learning and professional development**
e.g. events, courses, sharing best practice
 - **Continuous improvement**
e.g. governance and toolkits
- 2.2 There will be quarterly meetings, learning events, and circulation of regular updates and information. Membership is open to County, District and Borough Council staff and partner organisations who are involved regularly or temporarily in research, engagement and consultation activities. Members will be able to attend events and access resources at a level that suits their requirements.
- 2.3 The network had its inaugural meeting on 9 September, 2010. The meeting focussed on providing assistance in accessing usually excluded groups and communities, and resulted in a concise guide for accessing hard to reach communities which would go towards a shared toolkit. Discussions continued about the future and parameters of the network, and members were enthusiastic about the scope and value of the forum.

2.4 The network will next be meeting in December 2010.