

LSP EDG Meeting

11-03-19

1. Welcome and Apologies

Attendance:

Simon Hubbard (chair)
Chantal Lass
Chris Gibbs (Minutes)
Ian Sycamore
Prannesh Datta
Jacki White
Inspector Jon Hartley
Steve Manwaring
Carole Dixon
Vanessa Biddiss
Sarah Feather

Apologies for absence from:

Cllr Peter Chowney - HBC
Chief inspector Sarah Godley (substituted by Inspector Jonathan Hartley)
Jim Sharpe – East Sussex College Hastings
Richard Watson – CCG
John Williams – Sea Change Sussex
Caroline Evans – ESCC
Stuart Gallimore – ESCC (substituted by Sarah Feather)
Dr John Smith - UOB

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th September 2018 be approved as a true record

4. Sussex Police Update - Verbal update Key challenges and priorities for 2019/20 including new resources allocated to Hastings & St Leonards

(Inspector John Hartley, Sussex police on behalf of District Commander Chief Inspector Sarah Godley)

Inspector John Hartley presented an update on Sussex Police. He stated that they were entering into a positive period for the force following on from the previous 5 years of budget cuts. Additional funding was being allocated for up to 15 new PCSOs for Hastings and Rother (although the final figure is not yet confirmed) and a new focus on preventative and community policing.

Their key challenges and performances are the same as before and they are looking at a control strategy around organised crime and exploitation of the vulnerable.

There is a lot of work around county lines which are moving from London to Brighton and then from Brighton to Hastings. There has been a decrease in burglary dwellings but a rise in domestic abuse crimes. Reported crime rates for weapons and gun crime are low. There is a national project looking at knife crime.

Main concerns for the police are exploitation of the vulnerable and children and the increase in what are deemed more socially acceptable drugs such as cocaine. They are looking at educating and raising understanding about these drugs and the exploitation surrounding them in the same way as heroin although the exploitation is different.

Partners asked questions around the active 'county lines' in Hastings and were advised that the number is less than 5 at the moment. This is a reduction compared to previous figures of 12. However this could be a reflection of 4-5 criminal gangs having 'secured the market' locally.

Partners discussed the importance of working together in a structured way to pool resources and to make sure that the resources we have are used to reduce the threats of harm and risk to our more vulnerable communities.

It was suggested that a partnership meeting is convened which brings together partners including and chaired by Cllr Colin Fitzgerald – partners to include are ESCC (children's services), the voluntary & community sector (Optivo, Orbit) and HBC and the Police and the new drug & alcohol service provider.

Inspector Jon Hartley said that there is currently no date for the recruitment of the new PCSOs but will be in the new financial year.

5. Future High Street Fund - expression of interest for Hastings Town Centre – update

(Pranesh Datta, Economic Development Manager, Hastings Borough Council and Phillip Johnson, Locate East Sussex)

Pranesh Datta, Economic Development Manager for Hastings Borough Council presented an update on the future high street fund and the draft expression of interest for Hastings Town Centre. (see attached briefing note and proposed map of the area)

The government launched this fund in the beginning of January with 460 towns eligible to apply for it. Bids can be up to £25m but are encouraged to be between £5m-£10m. It is to support town centres and more specifically struggling town centres.

The total fund is £675m for struggling town centres to help them in the current environment.

Hastings town centre is doing relatively well, we have forty national outfits located in the town centre this is important for Hastings as it drives and gives opportunities for local jobs.

We are going for something different apart from retail, a place where people want to live and 'hang out'. We are 'playing on' our historical roots to change the town centre from just retail to a destination. National retailers are struggling and other retailers are at risk so they are reconsidering their position, approaches and business plans. We have 60 empty stores out of the 540 total which works out at around 12% which isn't high as compared to other towns.

We are looking at building capacity to physically transform the town centre. We are looking at new forms of housing that support the most vulnerable to those with expendable income. Need to work on the digital transformation of the town to create more technologically friendly town centre that helps businesses promote themselves. A fibre optic network will be essential for this.

The loss of the University of Brighton creates a new challenge for the town centre. We are developing ideas around Hastings being the point in England where English culture changed forever following the Norman invasion. Therefore, we could perhaps look at a museum themed around the change in English culture following the Norman invasion and migration.

The bid needs to be submitted by the 22nd of March. There are challenges in the town centre around large empty buildings. The University of Brighton leaving was a large disappointment and other large vacant buildings include the Observer Building and Queensbury house. We need to re-think how we are going to use these large non retail buildings. Whether we win this bid or not these challenges will still remain so it is good to be thinking about it now. Simon Hubbard added that the town centre needs to provide shops for local people; economically we are a poorer town and have more affluent shopping centres in the Old Town and St Leonards.

There are still a number of unknowns that may still impact on the town centre including uncertainty around Debenhams future and the HS1 high speed rail link. We need to look at repurposing large buildings that may no longer be suitable for retail as the way people are shopping is changing. The government has pledged money to towns post Brexit we need to be clear about our ideas and develop a new vision for the town centre.

Partners discussed how developing the town centre as a destination with shopping as a bi-product of something else would most likely be the strongest approach.

There are currently very little interpretative navigation about Hastings. Partners also discussed how some retailers are changing their size or shape and the way they do business. Mainly moving into a pre-order system where the product is not on the shelves but can be ordered in, mirroring online shopping habits. It was commented that Amazon are opening high street shops so even the online only businesses deem that physical store fronts are still relevant. Super outlets no longer seem to be working but street outlets do allow for better customer engagement.

Leisure facilities are being considered but there are many organisations developing them at the moment that would directly compete with anything we would build and /or develop. Priory Meadow are currently applying for planning permission for a gym in the shopping centre. Deliverability and investment are important to these plans.

Partners discussed whether this bid would help independent traders, but were told that this fund is not for this purpose and there are other funds available that can help with this. Small independent stores are becoming more popular and trends are changing. It was also noted that Banks are moving a lot of their services online and their future on the high street is uncertain. Questions were asked around who the town would be attracting if it is revitalised. It was commented that more affordable housing for younger people were needed. The town centre will need to be adaptable to be able to change to people's interests as they change.

6. Hastings Borough Council - Energy plans - verbal update (Chantal Lass, Sustainability Manager)

Chantal Lass (Sustainability Manager for Hastings Borough Council) gave an update on the energy generation plans of the council. She said that there was a motion passed at council by the leader for Hastings to be carbon neutral by 2030 or 2050 at the latest and to aim for the borough to become more energy self-sufficient through local sustainable energy generation.

An update was provided about the proposed ground mounted solar project in the Country Park. The Council will be commissioning a number of studies to inform its decision about pursuing this project. Formal advice will be sought from Natural England and a business case developed for a Cabinet decision in the autumn this year.

This and other proposed renewable energy projects meets 3 key drivers for the Council

- Reducing the towns greenhouse gas emissions
- Playing a leadership role in sustainable energy projects
- Helping to address fuel poverty and create local energy

Simon Hubbard added that Hastings Borough Council are reviewing the Local Plan and its associated policies to make sure going forward we can enable as much local energy generation as possible. There is going to be some very interesting debates about how we power the town into the future and how this may visibly affect the town. It will be important to hear everyone's opinion.

Partners discussed how to broaden involvement on the process of the local plan. It was commented that younger peoples voices and planning policy are both important in this process.

7. Brexit - 'no deal Brexit' all partner discussion - risks of a no deal Brexit and potential impacts for Hastings
Led by Simon Hubbard –HBC have identified key risks for service Provision and for the town – what have other partners considered in Their risk management processes?

Simon Hubbard led a discussion on the impact of a no deal Brexit, highlighting the key risk issues the Council had been considering from a service perspective, as well as wider transport issues that may be affected by delays at the regional ports and airports. Transport and congestion is likely to be an issue – plans are in place for the Kent ports (Folkestone and Dover) Newhaven and Portsmouth. The main issues are the ability to 'stack' large volumes of lorries.

Other issues include consideration of the supply chain for our services that are reliant on imports e.g. maintenance arts for the crematorium

As a town and community we need to look at retaining our language schools and making sure our young visitors continue to feel welcome.

Simon advised there may be added pressure on our environmental health team as they will potentially need to certify the fishing fleet exports such as cuttlefish and crab to France and Belgium. There may be fuel shortages so we have prioritised services that will still need to commute into the office.

It is organisations such as East Sussex County Council, the NHS and Sussex police who will be the most impacted.

Inspector Jon Hartley added that Sussex police had significant plans in place. There is a mutual aid agreement with Kent which will mean remaining staff will be working 12 hour shifts to provide cover. Community policing is likely to suffer as a result. There are concerns nationally about a rise in hate crime, especially in places like London, where further mutual aid support is in place. The police are monitoring social media etc for 'Brexit tones' and hate crime. Annual leave has been cancelled and the Government have looked at military assets should there be a no deal Brexit.

Partners discussed the spike in vulnerability locally, and that some organisations are starting to identify concerns including The Links project and the one stop shop. Concerns were raised about the levels of hardship already being witnessed by local charity food organisations; there is a huge volume of food being distributed to the local community and local hardship is likely to increase.

8. Any Other Business

Steve Manwaring advised that Hastings Voluntary Action have secured 'Inclusive and Active Volunteering funding' (£50k) and are one of five national projects following a very competitive process where 200 organisations bid for funding.

Carole Dixon advised Comic relief have filmed some of the work the Educations Future Trust are doing with local young people. The film will be shown on Comic relief night and is available to watch on their website.

Simon Hubbard advised subject to confirmation the Council have been granted £500k to develop incubator units.

9. Item for information - East Sussex Drug and Alcohol Service - recommissioning update - briefing note to follow Briefing note and update provided by Caroline Evans, Strategic Commissioning Manger – Substance Misuse, ESCC)

The tender process is now completed and the successful bidder was Change Grow Live (CGL) <https://www.changegrowlive.org/>

The new contract will begin on 1st June 2019.

The transition period has now begun (as of Friday 8th March). Local open days are being organised and details will be available shortly. Individual meetings will be arranged as discussed.

East Sussex county council substance misuse commissioner and a representative of the treatment provider will attend the LSP meeting on 29th April 2019.