

East Sussex Rural Forum: Decentralisation and Localism Bill – impact on local communities

Thursday 10 March 2011

Feedback from discussion groups

Those attending the Rural Forum were asked in their discussion groups to consider three questions. These were:-

1. What is required to happen if the whole concept of localism and the provisions within the Localism Bill are to be successful from a rural community point of view?
2. What support do rural communities need in order to be able to participate and support the concept of Localism and the provisions of the Localism Bill?
3. What could be achievable, what will success look like or what are the possible outcomes that rural communities could achieve?

Summary of Responses (amalgamation from individual tables' feedback)

Question 1

What is required to happen if the whole concept of localism and the provisions within the Localism Bill are to be successful from a rural community point of view?

- Real partnership working between county, district and parishes.
- Improved appetite for people to get involved, to get inspired by the opportunities, overcome apathy, Ideas on how to engage and energise people to get involved.
- Local community surveys to find out what is needed.
- Development of local village plans.
- Policy guidance notes and briefing notes for neighbourhood planning.
- A framework for community engagement.
- Local people involved for the start and listened to from the start. Involving all age groups, ideas from all age groups.
- Incentives for organisations to get involved.
- Recognition for the role of local volunteers – a bottom up approach, encourage more to come forward.
- Good communications and engagement.
- New forms of communications – use of web, social networking and twitter, Community21.
- Strong leadership at the parish level.
- Parish Councils to move into the 21st Century.
- New volunteers / parish councillors – will have to take on more work and responsibility
- Reduce red tape.
- Learning and training so that fully understand the processes, especially for local volunteers.
- Resources / funding/ money.
- Supportive infrastructure.
- Business sponsorship.
- Reduce liability issues
- Demonstration of the tangible benefits as a result of the hard work
- Be proactive now
- Changes in planning to allow local views to have more say
- Freedom of interference from District when wanting to take over devolved functions

Question 2

What support do rural communities need in order to be able to participate and support the concept of Localism and the provisions of the Localism Bill?

- Training to help understand and get involved, including IT.
- Facilitation and expertise, sharing of expertise.
- Financial assistance.
- Framework and legal advice from which to work
- Tools i.e. Community 21.
- Conflict resolution – audit / independent.
- Support for Parish Councils on dealing with Councillor complaints.
- Financial and technical expertise – where do we go for it?
- Data / information to assist.
- AirS and SALC to provide independent advice / expertise/ support, also NALC
- Volunteers / Community support
- Community input and support – how do we encourage / needs to be both ways
- Resourcing with precept and staff.
- Competent local councillors and leadership.
- Undertake SWOT analysis of councillors and use strengths and opportunities.
- Local action plans and neighbourhood plans
- Promotion of Partnership working/ promotion of parish clusters
- Engage local groups eg: Chamber of Commerce and voluntary groups to identify improvements which could benefit a service.
- Support from District, County Council, Government, MPs.
- Real wording / plain English on government policies.
- Police involvement and support
- Development Plan document for Rural Housing – full consultation with Parish Councils.
- District Councils / East Sussex County Council Broadband – demand from the service provider a consistent minimum broadband download speed.
- Financial transparency – not paying twice.
- Phased approach.
- Clear definition of roles and responsibilities at all levels of Government.
- Media support – papers / television

Question 3

What could be achievable, what will success look like or what are the possible outcomes that rural communities could achieve?

Positive

- Maintaining community identity, sense of community and community values, Sense of place 'belonging to local community'.
- Creating local resilience and autonomy, empowerment of public.
- Diverse vibrant inspired community / people.
- Addressing individuality of requirements, community more suited to residents.
- Active democracy, reduction in bureaucracy, improved accountability, local accountability, reduction in 'nanny' state
- Effective council / councillors.
- Stronger engagement with the local community.
- Providing community shops / community library.
- Development of a community plan / neighbourhood plan.
- Ability to shape "environment and community" sustainability.
- Share of County and District budgets to provide services/facilities eg: footpaths / toilets.
- Local bus service for local people / Good integrated transport systems.
- Affordable (not Social) housing – 2/3 bedrooms.
- Keeping local businesses and services.
- Local projects better supported.

- Improved delivery of services, improved quality of life for existing residents and new residents.
- Complete mains drainage.
- Unclassified villages / parishes have the ability to have pepper-potted infill development so that community does not stagnate.
- Fuel – consistent realistic fuel prices for rural communities (oil / LPG).
- Broadband – minimum download speed in **all** rural communities.
- Roads suitable for the volume of traffic.
- Economic sustainability, services provided at more economical prices.

Negative

- Apathy from local community.
- Lots of little societies not a BIG society.
- Less engagement – not wanting to be a parish councillor.
- Danger of insularity.
- Strangulation of development and growth by some bodies or cliques of people.

Negative or positive depending on viewpoint

- No changes for changes sake.
- District Councils become more accountable to Parish Councils.
- Removal of level of local government / Unitary authorities.
- Bigger Parish Councils /clustering.

Questions to the whole group at the end of the session:

Question 4

What more excites you, what are communities likely to get most involved in?

- Planning
- Right to Buy

Question 5

What is most daunting about the proposals?

- Planning

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