

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

Friday 15 April 2011 at Heathfield Community Centre, Heathfield

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?

- Funding for provision of new responsibilities/ resources
- Correct motivation of elected persons – directed at community rather than self promotion.
- Educating people with new communication technology – starting with Parish Council
- Increasing numbers of people to get involved on Parish Council
- People and people with time / overcome apathy
- Challenging the status quo
- Encouragement – get more people involved / interest from all ages within the community
- Better communities with vision / identify local needs
- More organised meetings for members of the public – better?
- Don't make the information frightening – we are all volunteers/ Information and clarity/ Documentation – check lists and list of powers and duties/ Information – actual person / body to come and talk to community
- More publicity about the Bill / acceptance by the local community
- Clear statement from the Government as to what the Localism Bill is all about / more detail / explain the pro and cons clearly
- People of the relevant knowledge to input into neighbourhood plans, etc
- Determine what amount of control at local level
- Bring more business into the High Street so as to keep people local
- Infrastructure to be in place – involve business and residents with a healthcheck and encourage the youth to be more involved

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 in clusters for entire Parish Councils rather than one or two key representatives at this kind of forum / training in a variety of ways to suit the individual
- Resources / money/ finances to cover new role
- Informed advisors
- Access to (free?) advice / expertise (costs??)

- Cluster / cross cluster support (get size 'right' = appropriate)
- Incentive(s): wine and canapés / money
- Viable communication network – varied (not just computers), parish magazine, Board, etc
- Information
- More support from residents
- More professional expertise – IT and marketing , financial, legal advice especially on planning issues at affordable cost for small parishes
- Police protection for councillor, if villagers disagree with their planning decisions?
- Support must be handed from Parish Council to Parish Council
- Respect for individuality of communities
- An idiots guide to the Localism Bill, its impact, pitfalls and benefits
- Sort out double taxation situation – will we get money for services devolved?
- Government publicity that everyone can understand
- Infrastructure personnel from the community
- Faster broadband for all types of communities
- Reasonable length of periods for proper consultation
- Practical support on Business Planning and Risk Assessment / Mitigation

Question 3

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

- Higher turnout for local elections/ Encourage more Parish Councillors not deter them
- Greater local influence in what is achieved for the community/ More interest in local issues / better control over local issues
- Greater autonomy in decision making process and less imposition of unpopular decisions that go against community wishes
- Nimbyism- negative outcome
- Local input to business eg: tailoring to local need / want
- Local community transport solutions, eg lifts home from pub
- Economic Development Business retention and growth
- Increase involvement from the community – taking part / less apathy for local councils
- Planning ... Affordable Rural Housing – understanding the need and provide more
- Litter watch group – 22 families responsible for stretch of road
- Better provision of services, more efficient services / Better neighbourhood to live in
- Increase volunteer base
- A united village / Retaining its community and rural aspect
- Community support in all forms
- Secure community and ability to work cross border
- Generational sustainability
- No double taxation
- Vibrant interactive website and people looking at it / Keeping up to date with technology
- Meetings accessible to all (including disabled)
- Encourage positive services
- Communicate with other local bodies
- Better transport/ better parking / Ability to set our own speed limits
- Revival of local business and encourage joint working
- Youth Councils / East Sussex Youth / Older People / Minorities needs met