

# **West Sussex Rural Forum: Decentralisation and Localism Bill – impact on local communities**

**Tuesday 22 March 2011**

## **Feedback from discussion groups ( 11 tables of 8 people each)**

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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?**

#### **Local Authority**

- Local Authority 'buy-in' to relinquish power down to Local Councils and community groups.
- Positive support to Local Councils from Districts and County
- Needs to be clarity around the Bill in relation to new National Parks planning role

#### **Parish and Town Councils**

- Committed and trained Local Councils
- Achieve Power of Competence/ Qualified Clerk
- Finance / funding needs to pass to Parishes to provide the agreed service / facility
- Collaboration and networking with neighbouring councils to work together on issues
- Overcoming apathy and generating enthusiasm for community involvement – helping to recruit more able parish councillors – is key to making 'localism' work.
- Parish websites to be clear and concise to be informative to the Localism Bill. Community 21 will be a great help.
- Proactive local councils showing community leadership
- Parish Office and facilities
- Need Ambassadors or Community Champions
- Communications needed at local level across all key groups

#### **General**

- Clear guidance and obligatory timescales from the Government , including clarity of intention and parameters of powers.
- Education and training available for the councils, officers, community etc.
- The details need to become law before any actions, facts and figures are needed.
- Incentive for people to register for a site like Community 21.
- Needs more general buy-in to the Big Society - good communications on a wider basis to the public. Good PR – both conventional and digital to progress schemes and provide continuity.
- Section 106 / CIL – more influence on how local community / open space contribution is used.

- Help and advice from AirS and SALC. Events and discussions to provide understanding and guidance.
- Case Studies on positive outcomes to encourage involvement / action.
- Realistic expectation of public for these changes – skills and volunteers will be needed.
- Danger of ‘single issue’ pressure groups hi-jacking local issues.
- Will need to / help to counteract NIMBYISM.
- .Access to communications including internet (Broadband) but not solely. All levels of local authority need to be involved in the communications.
- Small communities may **not** wish to take on larger responsibilities, i.e. road mending and planning decisions. Abilities and capacity to deliver need to be built up over time.

## **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?**

- Technical knowledge and training for councillors, volunteers on all provisions and scope of the Bill
- Support to recruit people locally including professionally qualified and skilled volunteers
- Tools and guidance to manage change, to move to new ways of doing things. Funding for new processes – bidding and clerk’s time
- Guidance and training from AirS and others on public consultation/ questionnaires, template for the Neighbourhood Plan, procedures and content of referenda, costs of the referenda, Neighbourhood Plan to the local council. Shared learning is going to be important.
- A costed model for Neighbourhood Plans
- Specialist advice readily available – for example legal advice, planning advice
- Simpler processes so there is less red tape, especially for volunteers
- Communications are important – need constant updates of information
- Service Level Agreements for local councils from District and County
- Guidance / help on raising funds for Community resources.
- Finance for training and consultancy on Neighbourhood Plans, Community Right to Build etc.
- Better broadband coverage for rural villages
- Delivery of tools like Community 21 for Parish Councils to use as appropriate
- Support and advice from the County Association and National Association (SALC / NALC)
- Brokerage to support initial discussions between Parishes / Communities
- Understanding of the implications of not getting involved
- Need to involve organisations like HydePlus who are providing added value services working with local communities to address local issue e.g. community gardens, shops, rural transport.
- Good system of ‘Localism’ grants: easily accessible and non bureaucratic
- Competent advice from AirS, District and County Councils.
- Resources- how will it be paid for? – support staff; District Councils? – less staff: AirS – costs?
- Feasibility of clustering
- Skills bank / knowledge sharing, register of best practice and standards Database type of sources, people offering their skills / knowledge free of charge.

## **Question 3**

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

- Resilient and responsive and happy communities
- Empowered communities, individuals feel that they are heard, community spirit
- Self sustaining and control over what is provided, “Community ownerships” – less “nanny state”.
- Pride in your community

- Better educated and skilled members of the community, people understanding their role and wanting to be involved
- Lessen the burden of excessive red tape ie Health and Safety and getting sued.
- More housing for local needs
- Economic sustainability (jobs)/ creation of local jobs
- Wider community representation outside of Parish Council
- Secured services / assets – maintain local facilities that are under threat
- Keeping people in rural communities
- More transparency of management, greater accountability locally
- Extending democracy
- Better facilities for social integration (new hall)
- Positive response to local news and publicity
- Tenants' needs acknowledged and addressed by their parish council. Tenants actively involved with the wider communities
- Better design of processes that meet local needs
- Decisions are more relevant and better understood
- Taken most of community with us
- No more holes in the road!
- Statutory endorsement by Planning Authority
- More social housing agreed
- Recognition and implementation of Neighbourhood Plan in District Local Plan.
- Parish/community has a say in the use of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funds
- Realistic budget to local councils for training and consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan and other provisions of the Bill
- Community 21 type tool for neighbourhood or parish – potentially as an ongoing public consultancy tool.
- Clarity of planning responsibilities and role of parish in defining local plan priorities, including South Downs National Park Authority
- Cohesion between council and electors

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 on behalf of the West Sussex Rural Partnership  
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