

East Sussex Rural Partnership 29th September 2016 – Robertsbridge Community Hall

Workshop 2: Widening participation in the economy and the contribution of extended childcare

Exploratory session to identify ways in which participation in the rural economy can be increased and maximum advantage taken from the government's commitment to extend free childcare provision from 15 to 30 hours per week.

Lead: Gill Cameron-Waller, Policy & Partnerships Manager, Wealden District Council

Participants from

Nutley Pre-school Play Group
Chalvington & Ripe Parish Council (2)
Sedlescombe Pre-School (2)
Beckley Village Hall Trust (& Play Group)
Maresfield Parish Council
Peacehaven Town Council (2)
Diocese of Chichester
DEFRA & Village Hall Trustee

Initial issues raised

Money, fundraising opportunities, extra hours as an opportunity, increasing divide between old & young, reliance on volunteers, costs of pensions, ESCC cuts, issues around financial capital, extended hours could result in closure of group, need more money, purpose-built accommodation

Discussion

- Extended hours – pressure on capacity leading to over-stretch and potential business failure / closure of facility
- Can't access extended hours because not affordable at the current level of funding – also potentially leading to business failure / closure of facility
- Restrictions on hall availability – mixed use space – conflicts (sometimes)
- Are there funding opportunities to improve hall space?
- Storage space for toys and equipment is an issue in some places – 'never enough'
- Issues around extending hall space: land ownership, planning, funding & bureaucracy
- Hall sharing – separating users – lack of understanding on safeguarding issues – locked areas a solution in some places
- Time constraints on hall use because of other users – can't extend hours
- Some 'agile' solutions e.g. using different locations on different days
- Hours not always practical for parents working further away
- Staff relations can be strained – more hours than they want?
- Contact with ESCC – not much – meetings often at difficult times of day – that conflict with running the play group / pre-school – could they do a webinar?
- Political channels are more open than officer
- A group applied for Early Innovators project but East Sussex weren't chosen
- ESCC doesn't pass on all the funding money £5 / hr becomes £3.60/hr after ESCC takes a cut
- Charges to parents vary £4 / £5 /hr
- For every 10 children one group loses £1k per 10 months – not sustainable

- Demand – all agreed that there is huge demand for pre-school childcare places – lack of demand is not an issue
- Parents find jobs, but can only take them if there is suitable childcare
- Running / helping to run a pre-school group can open up new skill areas and lead to career development
- Good relationship with landlord is vital
- Business model is key – current version is scarcely viable
- High costs of space per hour
- Lack of pre-school provision has knock on effect on primary provision – once parents go elsewhere for childcare they stay away for school
- Some people split childcare to achieve the amount they need
- In some places there are several groups serving the area
- Restrictions on e.g. putting things on walls – adversely affects Ofsted ratings
- Ofsted requirements are onerous – training vouchers would help
- The training is very good but expensive
- Issues around shared space
- Demand for Village Hall space is very high
- Church Halls are not always made available – some vicars have concerns – Mark Betson (Rural & Environment Officer, Diocese of Chichester) says there are solutions and offered assistance if people contact him
- Would it be helpful to continue this discussion as group – to take things forward?
- Working together - Village Hall Trusts + the Church + user groups – see Barham, Kent website for some examples (Sarah Tyler, DEFRA) – partnership approach

Other matters

- Village Hall broadband – for local ‘home’ working – version of community hub
- Costs of screening films, DVDs etc – Motion Picture Licensing Co costs £450 p.a.; Performing Rights Society costs based on turnover – prices not structured for community use
- Nutley Memorial Complex looking for funding – big vision for improvements
- Transport – there are quite a lot of minibuses out there – finding drivers can be an issue
- The Community Transport Association can provide advice for community groups concerned about transport
- Community Energy Fund – govt initiative for e.g. solar panels, renewable energy – sustainability and reduced costs
- Issues around volunteers – organising them, rota’ing – need for match making – ask & offer
- Different models – less commitment - micro-volunteering
- Some (bigger) businesses allow/encourage their staff to volunteer

Ideas for Village Hall activities / events

- Race Night with cash bar & fancy dress
- Quiz Night – need a good quizmaster
- 10k race – involves community and brings in participants from elsewhere – charge entrance fee - good for local economy
- Mud Run
- Local Antiques Roadshow – get in an auctioneer &/ expert
- Auction of promises examples of raising from £6k to £24k

- Volunteer-led community store
- Food festivals

Benefits

- Fundraising
- Community cohesion
- Section 106 & CIL funds for local use - benefits of development – will be addressed in more detail at the January event.