

**Report on the  
St Albans and District Local Strategic Partnership  
First Annual Community Conference**

Friday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2007  
Rothamsted Research, Harpenden

## **An overview of the day**

The conference was attended by around 100 people including representatives from local public, business and voluntary/community organisations including local charities and Residents Associations, and other interested members of the community.

The event began with a brief networking lunch followed by a formal opening by Councillor Robert Donald, Chair of the Local Strategic Partnership and Leader of St Albans City and District Council.

Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) delivered the first keynote speech setting out the key role of volunteering and community participation in helping the district meet the challenges of the future.

A DVD, produced by the Shake-it! Production team from Oaklands College, was then shown presenting areas where the LSP has been doing positive work over the past four years focussing on:

- Promoting Fairtrade
- Working with the community in Sopwell to help improve their local area
- Encouraging green travel

This was followed by the launch of the new Community Strategy explaining how it had been developed through consultation with residents and a wide range of local organisations, and how the strategy will ensure that the LSP adds value to the excellent partnership work that is already taking place within the district.

Delegates then had the opportunity to take part in two out of four half hour workshops tackling the areas of work where the LSP will take a lead. These were well attended and provided valuable actions for the LSP to take forward in addressing these gaps. There is a summary of the workshop actions identified in the following section.

Afterwards there was a session to share the key actions from the workshops and an opportunity to ask members of the LSP Panel questions.

The conference then closed with a keynote speech from Stephen Joseph, Executive Director of Transport 2000 (recently renamed the Campaign for Better Transport), *Transport: Infrastructure, Sustainable Living and St Albans*, in which he discussed the ways in which sustainable travel could be encouraged within the district.

## Community Conference workshops: key actions for the LSP to take forward

The aim of the workshops was to explain how the LSP plans to address the five areas of work where it is to take the lead and, from feedback from delegates, identify three key actions for the LSP to take forward from each workshop.

### **Workshop 1: Providing facilities and activities for young people**

*Facilitators:* **Lydia Whelan**, Children, Schools and Families, Hertfordshire County Council and **Robert Brown**, Team Leader Youth Service St Albans, Hertfordshire County Council

#### **Key actions identified**

- Volunteering - need to build opportunities for young people to volunteer and promote them in a way that helps young people see the benefits
- Transport - should we develop a 'SCOOTERS' model?
- Communicating/information sharing – can we publish a community newsletter to ensure positive stories are celebrated?
- Use of buildings/goodwill – are we maximising our existing facilities?
- Working in partnership – we need to improve the working relationships between voluntary and statutory services

What are we going to do to progress these issues?

- Take them to Youth Councils
- Take them to St Albans Children's Trust Partnership
- Identify a Local Strategic Partnership/Hertfordshire County Council strategy for improving youth provision

*Also the following top three issues identified by the Youth Council, who were unable to attend the event:*

- *Need a cinema*
- *Pioneer should be open on Saturdays/ needs to have regular gigs*
- *Need a safe place to hang out and meet friends*

### **Workshop 2: Supporting the voluntary and community sector to provide preventative and support service/ Encouraging and promoting community participation and volunteering**

*Facilitators:* **Laura Cronshaw**, Executive Director, St Albans District CVS and **Sue Wheatley**, Lead Officer for St Albans Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership area, Hertfordshire Constabulary

### **Key actions identified**

- Positive communication that works for everyone (Facebook, 1:1 meetings, residents associations, touch screen technology, public relations, Speed-dating)
- Matching needs of volunteering groups with expectations of volunteers
- Life skills training for young people (including responding to emergencies)
- Finances getting through to communities

### ***Summary of discussions***

- Challenges of shortage of money in the voluntary sector
- Funding sources can be too controlling and lead to micro-managing of sector
- Key need to attract backroom volunteers, not just Trustees
- Need to raise awareness of voluntary groups that are available and promote the value of volunteering, yet need money for advertising especially using the press/radio to reach a wider audience
- Use new methods of communication e.g. Facebook (web 2.0) or other opportunities e.g. pre-retirement talks, colleges to help communicate to all generations
- Voluntary groups need to talk to each other
- Need to match volunteers with needs of organisation
- Organisations need help meeting the challenges of using volunteers e.g. people don't stay very long, volunteers are resource intensive and can have high expectations, bureaucracy/legislation getting in the way – this is the role of CVS. Also need to accept that public involvement is not always appropriate
- Develop Corporate Social Responsibility and identify opportunities in St Albans - perhaps choose one business to work with to lead this forward
- Learn from successes such as faith groups like the women's faith groups set up post 9/11– how do they energise?
- LSP needs to get to hard to reach groups and find out who they all are
- Transport is a major issue e.g. transporting patients to surgeries
- Opportunities for volunteering e.g. volunteer experts teaching life skills e.g. first aid in schools (10 – 11 year olds), Crucial Crew scheme in St Albans which encourages young people to take personal responsibility
- Charities need to be linked into locality
- Importance of volunteering to raise self-esteem and motivation and to help people have pride in their community

## **Workshop 3: Reducing our impact on the environment**

*Facilitator: Trevor Brennan*, Sustainability Officer, St Albans City and District Council

### **3 key actions identified**

- Free bike-loan scheme e.g. like one in Paris
- Policies on lighting to encourage commercial buildings to use low energy lighting
- Encourage cafes and restaurants to purchase locally grown food and reduce food miles

### ***Summary of discussions***

#### Sustainable transport

- Free bicycle loan scheme – could fund by seeking commercial sponsorship
- Car sharing network
- School buses e.g. yellow school bus or hopper bus
- Encourage and rewarding more walking or car sharing at schools
- Bus for shoppers which follows a small circuit -SHOPPER HOPPER
- Local organisations and councils should not have state as essential car driving licence or car ownership
- Village schools would reduce need for car journeys

#### Energy

- Re-introduce grazing on common land, meadows etc to reduce energy
- Cut down on food miles e.g. Year of Food or Farming to encourage people to buy local produce, encourage commercial organisations e.g. cafes
- More emphasis on local distinctiveness on land use planning
- Education of general public on energy saving
- Cheaper energy saving
- Movement sensors on street lighting
- Lighting policies for commercial companies

#### Land Use Planning

- Re-introduce grazing to increase biodiversity
- Have football pitches on green belt land instead of urban locations to free up these areas for other activities
- More emphasis on local distinctiveness on land use planning
- Forward planning e.g. floods

#### Recycling

- Enforce supermarkets to reduce packaging
- Potential for supermarkets to recycle packaging

- Recycle washing machines
- Get supermarkets to stop using plastic bags

## **Workshop 4: Reducing inequalities**

*Facilitators:* **Robert Donald**, Chair of the St Albans and District Local Strategic Partnership and Leader of St Albans City and District Council and **Fiona Breaker-Rolfe**, Community Strategy Officer, Hertfordshire County Council

### **3 key actions identified**

- Support for a co-ordinator post to ensure delivery of any projects
- Need to provide transport for elderly, Black and Minority Ethnic groups, young people
- Encouraging more volunteering

### ***Summary of discussions***

#### What are the key issues?

- Need for crèche facilities and child care
- Lack of activities for young people e.g. in London Colney and Cunningham
- Health inequalities within specific communities e.g. Bangladeshi communities
- Lack of transport to access community and health facilities for the elderly, young people, physically disabled, BME groups and other none car users
- More social facilities for community homes e.g. in Colney Heath and Cunningham
- Developing links with Community Centres e.g. encouraging mixed use of community venues for elderly and young people
- Supporting community links for elderly
- Post 18 homelessness (18-25 year olds)

#### How can we deliver this?

- Transport needs could be addressed by outsourcing to private provider (e.g. success of University bus) or through volunteer drivers
- Local Area Agreement – money to be used for business intervention
- Employ someone to work with these needs across the district
- Look at a particular issue
- Extending the community school concept
- Increase volunteers e.g. by working with the private sector to promote Corporate Social Responsibility
- Encouraging neighbours to look out for each other
- Through Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)

- Think about providing information via web and how to reach none-computer-users
- Co-ordinated approach to inequalities

## Taking the Community Strategy forward

The actions to come out of the workshop discussions will help the LSP plan projects to address the five areas where it believes there is a need for better co-ordination, as identified in the Community Strategy.

These actions will be taken forward to the LSP Management Committee at the end of September, who will then liaise with project groups to give them direction.

Some of the projects are more advanced than others at this stage, but action plans to address all the gaps will be taken to the LSP Board in October, who will have overall responsibility for this work.

The Lead LSP Board members who will be bringing projects forward in the five areas are:

- Providing facilities and activities for young people - *Lead Board member: Lydia Whelan, Children, Schools and Families, Hertfordshire County Council*
- Supporting the voluntary and community sector to provide preventative and support services - *Lead Board member: Laura Cronshaw, Executive Director, St Albans District CVS*
- Encouraging and promoting community participation and volunteering - *Lead Board member: Laura Cronshaw, Executive Director, St Albans District CVS*
- Reducing our impact on the environment - *Lead Board member: Andy Hardstaff, Groundwork Hertfordshire*
- Reducing inequalities - *Lead Board member: Robert Donald, Chair of the Local Strategic Partnership*

Copies of action plans for each of the areas of work will be available through the LSP website or on request from the LSP co-ordinator. The LSP aims to have at least one of these projects completed by the end of 2007.

Next year's Annual Community Conference will provide the opportunity to assess the year's progress and whether the right priorities for the district are still being pursued.

In the meantime ongoing progress can be followed by visiting the LSP website [www.stalbanslsp.org.uk](http://www.stalbanslsp.org.uk) and looking out for update bulletins, which will be sent out from time to time. The LSP very much welcomes feedback and can be contacted through its partners, via its website or by contacting the LSP co-ordinator directly on [info@stalbanlsp.org.uk](mailto:info@stalbanlsp.org.uk) or 01727 819571.