

Notes of the meeting of the DEAL AND WALMER Neighbourhood Forum held on 28 July 2009 at the Town Hall, Deal at 6.30pm

Present:

DDC Councillor Trevor Bond incoming Chairman

KCC Councillors Julie Rook and Kit Smith

Other Councillors, officers and 16 members of the public.

1. Chairman's welcome

Cllr Trevor Bond welcomed those attending and the Notes of the previous Forum were approved. There were no matters arising or declarations of interest.

2. Community Safety questionnaire

Heidi Golden, Dover District Community Safety Partnership, explained that she and colleagues had been asking people attending Forum meetings to fill in a questionnaire about how safe they felt living and working in the District. Further questionnaires were at the back of the hall and leaflets explaining the Partnership between DDC, KCC, Kent Police, Fire & Rescue Services, PCT and others were also available.

Making your community greener

3. Alistair Gould, Chairman of the Bay Trust, spoke of the need for environmental education to focus on the next generation, the links with Rippledown Education Centre for practical skills in low carbon building techniques and the positive evidence provided by the Pines Calyx building at St. Margaret's Bay. St. Margaret's was taking steps to reduce its carbon footprint by individual actions led by the Parish Council. It had been designated by KCC as one of 6 low-carbon villages in Kent and current initiatives included:

- a village youth shelter/area, built with the active participation of young people, as St Margaret's had the largest proportion of under 18s of any Ward in the District.
- an emerging 13 acre community farm to supply local food
- a strategic study of options for village energy production including wind and bio-fuel.

The benefits of such schemes would be to the local economy, services and quality of life and an increase in the value of homes. An initiative in Kirklees was being examined whereby waste from a restaurant was composted, plastic recycled and cardboard shredded for horse bedding. The soiled bedding was then collected for a wormery which produced worms to be fed to sturgeon and their caviar was sold at the restaurant. A community in Denmark with 45,000 inhabitants had achieved

economic, elegant and sustainable energy systems over a period of about 20 years; what about Deal?

4. Rosie Rechter, Deal With It Campaign, explained that the group had grown from a Neighbourhood Forum meeting 2 years ago and encouraged individual sustainable actions in order to achieve large scale changes. They had organised films, meetings, exhibitions, stalls and lobbied politicians to raise awareness. Brochures were available listing some of the actions which could be undertaken and giving contact details and a blog address. The first campaign to ban single-use plastic carrier bags had resulted in 60-65% of local retailers reporting a reduction in use of the bags.

Other achievements had been:

- a meeting with Caroline Lucas MP,
- a future meeting with Michael Meacher MP in October,
- a Green Matters column in the local Mercury newspaper,
- objections to the Local Development Framework and lobbying MPs.
- A blog site had been set up, links forged with other groups to bring in younger members
- an event was planned for October in the Landmark Centre.

A carbon audit of the district was possible and Ed Milliband's recent new schemes for individual contributions to the National Grid could be feasible and advantageous. Local schemes for insulation, collecting organic rubbish for composting, an energy audit of government buildings and local government procurement policies should be undertaken. Human beings were ingenious and could come up with ingenious solutions to global warming.

5. Sean Fury, Deputy Director, Protect Kent explained that this was a new name for the Kent Branch of CPRE, a campaigning organisation for individuals engaged in the planning process particularly large schemes such as the China Gateway in Thanet, Lydd Airport, DDC's Local Development Framework and now Shepway Council's LDF. The wider work of the organisation was also to eliminate damage to Kent; Alistair Gould and Rosie Rechter were amazing examples of what could be done. Elham was focussing on energy efficiency, as the village was not on mains gas, and had started with yearly home energy audits. This had attracted the attention of KCC and the Energy Saving Trust which had given grants to the village. Wye had a very successful community farm, Hadlow was reducing transport and Hadlow College was keen to engage in the project. Partnerships were the key to fruitful and rewarding schemes and Lenham was holding a meeting to share ideas which were fun and captured the imagination. Committees should be avoided! Dover area had good and exciting opportunities in its regeneration programme; social infrastructure was important as well as building houses. Protect Kent would work with local authorities on sustainable communities, particularly energy and water, including effective and sustainable drainage.
6. Question and answer session
 - Planning permissions granted allow the lowest possible energy efficiency in new buildings; why is no pressure applied for provision of solar panels, etc.

and why is more asphalt used for pavements rather than blocks which allow for surface drainage? Sean Fury advised that the capability existed to build low carbon houses but the industry was largely untrained and so were many planning officers; Councils could raise the standard on these issues. The Chairman reminded the meeting that Planning was very strictly governed by legislation and government guidance and 20mph speed limits had been raised at the KCC/DDC Joint Transportation Board. **He agreed to write to Kent Highways asking whether 20mph limits could be imposed around schools in the District.**

- What source of renewable energy is St. Margaret's proposing to use if not wind power? Alistair Gould explained about community biomass to provide heat and power and achieve an effective payback if located in the correct position.
- How much education are children given on sustainability and could it be added to the curriculum? Dave Jones from Rippledown House confirmed that there was nowhere near enough environmental education in schools and the impact of this lack of knowledge was not understood. Cllr Kit Smith advised that there were now diplomas in energy and more schools had green areas. David Reid stated that solar energy had been around since he had been a science teacher many years ago, Sandwich Technical College has a wind turbine and the students were aware of environmental issues.
- Cycling is given little attention by local Councils as a safe and sustainable means of transport; Deal is an ideal location and economic benefits are underestimated. We are on Sustrans Route 1 but do not get publicity. Some of the cycle signs on road surfaces are wearing away; these should be renewed to save confusion. Local people need more of a say in where cycle paths are put. **Action to be taken on cycle Forum.**
- Recycling levels 18 months ago were less than 10% and were now 38%; this showed the real work done by householders in separating their recycling.
- Heatseekers was a new initiative working in conjunction with local authorities to identify by thermal imaging those domestic properties which were losing heat and could benefit from insulation.
- Are there any facilities for recycling small batteries? The waste facility at Southwall Road would take batteries and Alistair Gould suggested that local shops could be asked to take back used batteries; perhaps a container could be put in the High Street. Do retailers have a duty to take back used domestic batteries? If so they could be returned by the person buying new ones. **Rosie Rechter to investigate the situation with local retailers and report back.**
- When the pavement is extended into the road as a means of traffic calming it is often very hard for motorcyclist wearing visors to see these extensions, especially when it is raining hard. Humps in the road were better and therefore safer.
- Factory farming methods for intensive meat production used a lot of energy and water: more vegetarian options should be available in restaurants and schools. Organic, local and free-range produce was becoming more viable and available and a balance was needed between local produce and other items flown in from abroad. people could try 'meat-less Mondays'.

- Deal worked hard on cleaning litter and a 1300 signature petition had been considered by DDC's Scrutiny Committee. Spot fines for littering had been requested, more frequent cleaning of beaches and streets, more litter bins and labels on the bins about littering. What could be done about people who refused to use litter bins? Clean-ups were very good but the problem returned – how could the message be taken into schools and spread to society in general? Travellers in the grounds of Deal Castle leave rubbish and the tax payer has to pay for clearing it.
- Lack of enforcement of speed limits: nothing is done about 'boy-racers' in Western Road. PCSO Garry Faulkner responded that details would be taken and passed to police officers. If people felt that PCSOs should be able to issue tickets then they should write to the Chief Constable to say so. Use PCSOs or lose them.
- Free newspapers should be taxed as most of them were put in the bin unread.

The Chairman thanked the three speakers for their contributions and all those who had added to the debate.

7. Maintenance and cleaning of drainage systems

The Chairman introduced Mr Deryck Murry who had raised issues of flooding and drainage in the Middle Deal and Sholden area which, whilst not a new problem, was one which occurred more frequently and appeared to be difficult to resolve. KCC officers had been asked, at very short notice, to attend this evening but had been unable to do so however their written response would be circulated. KCC Councillors Kit Smith and Julie Rook had held informal discussions with Southern Water, Kent Highways, River Stour Drainage Board and the Environment Agency each of which appeared to refer the matter to the other.

Mr Murry spoke of his previous efforts to have reinstated the regular cleaning of drain grids which had not been done for 10 years and resulted in flooding in Walmer after heavy rain. Such flooding affected frail and elderly people who frequently did not have adequate insurance and suffered the consequences. Regular gully emptying and drain clearing was needed urgently to deal with the torrential downpours which were becoming more frequent and affecting a wider area. David Reid advised that there were storm tanks under Victoria Park which needed to be cleaned before it rained. The Chairman reported that KCC had started to act on cleaning drains but as there were 15,000 in the District it would take 7 years to get round them all. A meeting had been arranged on 3 October to discuss the matter fully with all the agencies concerned. The cost of reintroducing monthly cleaning was a major factor as was the exact location of all gullies as many were not marked on any maps. Sean Fury referred to a Government Green Paper – the Flood and Water Management Bill, and Sir Michael Pitt's review 'Learning the lessons from the 2007 summer floods'. Consultation on the green paper had now closed and it appeared that counties were expected to take a larger role but no funding would be provided. There also appeared to be a shortage of drainage engineers. Referring to potential for sea flooding, a member of the public reported that shingle was level with the top of the sea wall in places and should be pushed back. **The Chairman undertook to investigate this issue.**

8. Opportunities for Funding

Loic Flory, KCC, reported the three funding streams available to local communities:

- Neighbourhood Forum Small Community Grants with a maximum of £5,000 and deadline of 30 September;
- County Councillor grants - £10,000 in one fund over the year for organisations rather than individuals, who benefit the community;
- KCC Local Schemes discretionary grants totalling £65,000 between 7 County Members with a deadline of 30 October.

Emma Carey at KCC (tel. 01622 694599) and Caroline Hargreaves at DDC (tel. 01304 872314) had the application forms and guidance notes; these were also available on-line at: www.dover.gov.uk/community/neighbourhood_forums.aspx

9. Future discussion topics

- the pedestrian precinct needs looking at again; the six month period was long overdue. Cllr Rook had raised this with KCC and discussion was need with local traders, emergency services and the public in order to provide an update;
- regeneration and Deal – this would be the subject of the next Forum meeting. Could it include a report on the LDF?
- How to include Sholden in the Deal and Walmer Forum rather than the Sandwich Forum.
- 20mph speed limits
- Can trees around Deal Castle be cut back as had been done some years ago at Dover Castle?

The Chairman thanked all contributors and closed the meeting at 8.40pm.

Tuesday, 28 July 2009
