



HAILSHAM AND POLEGATE COMMUNITY NETWORK

The first Hailsham and Polegate Community Network meeting was held on 21 July 2017 at Hailsham Civic Community Hall. The meeting was hosted by Jenny Seale, joint chair of the Hailsham Community Groups Forum.

22 people attended the meeting. There was representation from voluntary and community groups, public services and businesses supporting the local community.

This first meeting focussed on people getting to know each other and what we do. There was a lively and purposeful speed networking session.

Finding volunteers and funding for local projects and services were key concerns for participants. 3VA presented the Building Stronger Communities funding and support available to apply. The Locality Link worker an outline of local data sources and how these can help community organisations to apply for funding support.

We split into groups to discuss four topics:

1. Top tips for working collaboratively
2. Identifying community assets in Hailsham and Polegate area
3. Ideas for engaging individuals and groups
4. Building a thriving volunteer network

The outcomes of our discussions were recorded as follows:

Theme:	Previously Known Priority	Insight/ Intelligence/ Discussion highlights	Next Steps: (where will this go?)
Collaboration	Clear objectives for the network needed.	This network needs to have a shared vision and be action-focussed.	Meeting 2 to include a session on priorities areas for collaboration. Suggestion to have focus groups.
Collaboration	Links with statutory services	More contact between these services and community groups.	One or two colleagues to attend the next meeting. Invite one of the Herstmonceux GPs to speak at the next meeting.
Collaboration	Local projects and networks	Hailsham Community Groups Forum, Vitality Villages, Polegate Community Association, Ecohub, Hailsham Active	Build on these. The locality network is a network of networks and individual organisations. Discuss individual priorities for each.
Collaboration	Number and variety of community groups.	Need to understand each other's offers, share information and find ways to link up.	Directory of groups
Community assets	Perceived shortage of meeting rooms	Community buildings. Charles Hunt Centre identified as an underused resource. Hailsham East Community Centre also reported to be underused by community groups - room hire is not affordable out of office hours due to need to pay for security guard (this policy perceived by some to be intentionally obstructive to community groups).	Further investigation into use of meeting spaces and any specific barriers to use.
Community assets	Outdoor spaces are a major asset in this locality.	Open spaces underused and underdeveloped. Recreation areas are well used but lack facilities such as changing rooms and toilets.	Support current work by Hailsham Active. Topic for discussion at a future network meeting. Possible focus on the Cuckoo Trail as it links most parts of this locality.
Community assets	Transport	Good core bus service but stops are limited on A22 e.g. Knockhatch and Bushy Wood	Contact Knockhatch and Bushy Wood to explore the issues.

Engaging individuals and groups	Need to establish a positive culture with mutual respect.	Welcoming and open to all. Accept and learn from feedback. Build trust and empower people.	Accessible with a warm welcome. Let people have their say. Safe environment to explore experiences and develop ideas. Willingness to learn from mistakes.
Engaging individuals and groups	Need for information-sharing and signposting	Resources for publicity. Vitality Villages have produced a directory - updating will be the main challenge. SCDA leading discussions on a local directory for Hailsham. Polegate Community Association wanting to become more outward-looking.	Network to move around venues. Next meeting to be held in Herstmonceux. Offer of support with press releases from Jenny Seale.
Volunteers	Recruitment. Local community groups reporting difficulties in attracting short and long-term volunteers. This is also being reported across the county.	Potential volunteers are out there. Need to target, think creatively and publicise volunteering opportunities.	Volunteer fair. Place to go to find information. Learn from volunteer hubs in other parts of the county.
Volunteers	Retention.	Need to attract and keep volunteers.	Make roles interesting and varied. Incentives - training, meals, perks. Thank volunteers - and mean it! Listen to volunteer ideas and suggestions - and follow up with action.

Feedback from participants

16 evaluation forms

100% liked the speed dating

4 people liked the focus groups in particular

2 people thought the data was interesting

1 person did not like the data presentation

2 people thought there needed to be more primary care organisations taking part

1 person noted that some groups & individuals were not aware of the event

1 person thought it was difficult to hear

Comments and suggestions

“vital that we meet on a more regular basis

“The next step is crucial. There is a need to be able to identify all groups, contact them with clear identified objective. What is the objective?”

“Well organised and very enjoyable. So refreshing to watch organisations working well together.”

“fantastic”

“very friendly organisations and people”

“the idea of bringing people together from different organisations is excellent”

“..move the venue around the area seeing where other people live and their environment”

“loved the speed networking though I thought I would hate it”

“very informative and interesting”

“group people together...i.e. people who run community centres”

Future meetings

The second meeting of the network will be held in at Herstmonceux Integrative Health Centre on 2 November 2017.