



## HIGHER WEALDEN COMMUNITY NETWORK

The third Higher Wealden Community Network meeting was held on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2018 at the Youth & Scout Hall in Rotherfield.

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

Rotherfield St Martin (RSM) acted as host and gave us an overview of how this key neighbourhood service came into being, how it is funded and organised and what activities and services are provided. Rachael Wood CEO and Vicky Cheeseman, Charity Manager described the challenges the organisation faced, how they were overcome and what the future holds. "RSM - the Movie" was played and we had a short question and answer session before refreshments and sampled the wonderful baking of the members of RSM. If you want to watch it here is the link: <https://app.minibox.com/files/kZG1u2>

Donna Wilson, Locality Link Worker, circulated a report on some of the outcomes from the network meetings. Sharing information particularly with GPs and through statutory networking meetings has produced community information in an accessible form for GPs and others. This information is used to encourage patients and clients to make use of existing community services. Fiona Morton, 3VA, highlighted the increased uptake of training by voluntary organisations such as the project planning and data protection courses. She described some of the partnerships that had begun to develop between organisations because of the networks. More community organisations were accessing grants, with High Wealden being the recipients of all the Building Stronger Communities grants so far. She urged groups to continue to send in applications.

Participants then enjoyed a good chance to meet each other and discuss our individual projects by speed networking. After lunch provided by the Courtyard Café, the beneficiaries and members of RSM then shared their experiences. It was very moving to hear how Morag's father had his life transformed by joining RSM and taking part in so many activities, despite living with the aftermath of a severe stroke. He attended the regular weekly talks, art and craft sessions and enjoyed being able to stride about in the thermal pool as part of the fitness programme. RSM improved the quality of his life after he moved to the village. Julie talked about how her main volunteering was as a volunteer driver. She described how satisfying it was and how essential it was to RSM members, even if it just meant you took 10 mins to drive someone to their doctor's appointment. It meant such a lot to her passengers, who described how

it took the worry out of getting help. Joyce talked about the knit and natter group and how it brought people together as well as producing crafts for people to donate to good causes. Being involved in RSM meant that other friends and family lent a hand too. She talked about how her daughter became involved, hosting cream teas in her garden. Vicky described some of the adventures they had on their outings during the summer months when RSM organised a week of activities as part of the holiday at home project.

It costs £85K per year to run the RSM programme. 80% of staff time at RSM is spent on fundraising.

The group reflected were that RSM was an inspiration to us all and that it was a model that could in part or in whole replicated in other parts of the community if supported by key stakeholders.

Data from the evaluation forms:

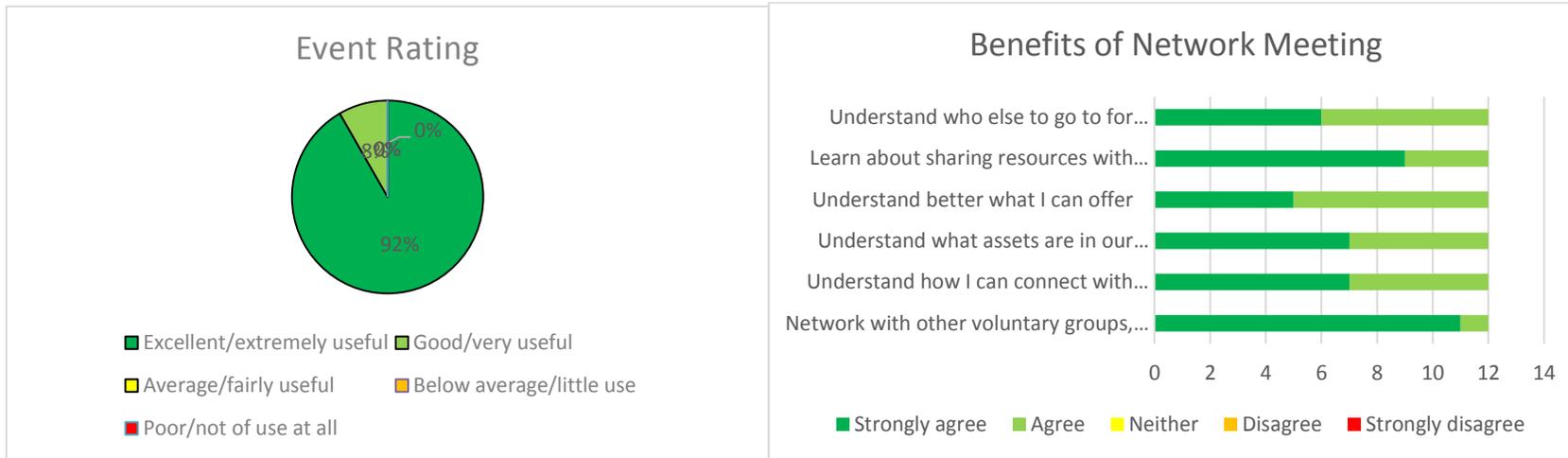
The event received a 100% rating as excellent on usefulness, location, accessibility, environment, refreshments and time of day!

<b>Locality:</b> High Weald	<b>Meeting number in 2017/18</b>  3/4		<b>Location:</b> Rotherfield Scout and Youth Community Hall	
<b>No of Attendees:</b>	<b>C&amp;VS:</b>	<b>Pub Sec:</b>	<b>Indep:</b>	<b>Other:</b>
<b>Invited:</b>	41	20	3	3
<b>Attended</b>	12	8	3	3
<b>New Attendees:</b>	8	7	2	2

The following comments were made:

- "understanding the services offered by other groups"
- "Being inspired to hear that communities are helping themselves"
- "Great to meet others with like values and views, signposting"
- "All very useful"
- "presentation was good but could have been more interactive"

12 people completed the evaluation forms giving the following feedback:



Group photo kindly shared by Rotherfield St Martin!



Locality: High Wealden	Date: 30 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2018	Venue: Youth & Scout Hall Rotherfield	Facilitators: Fiona Morton, Donna Wilson, RSM
Themes / Topics from previous meeting:	How to support people in rural communities		
Theme: (by service area?)	Previously Known Priority:	Insight / intelligence/ Discussion highlights	Next Steps: (where will this go?)
Building networks	More opportunities for networking and signposting with smaller organisations	Isolation of local groups/lack of reliable/central point of contact	Use 3VA newsletter to highlight organisations More organisations speaking at next event Sharing information Group photos Photobooth idea to connect people with organisations Let's have a doing event try out what each of us can offer
Building skills	Access to training/workshops	Great to have events in different parts of Wealden, not just towns	Workshops on policy writing in rural areas