

Minutes of the Ashdown Forest Villages Road Safety Partnership

1000, 5 October 2006, Ashdown Forest Centre

Present John Gramolt (Chairman; Withyham PC), Karen Day (Danehill PC), Hanno Fry (Maresfield PC), Bryn Kemp (Speed Management Engineer, ESCC), Hew Prendergast (Conservators; minute taker), Keith Sinden (ESCC), Andy Tolkien (East Sussex FRS), Robert Watson (Forest Row Parish Council [PC])

1) Apologies

Tony Allen (Maresfield PC), Matt Elder (East Sussex FRS), Steve Grace (East Sussex Road Policing), John Stevens (Danehill PC)

2) Minutes of last meeting

No comments were made.

3) Matters arising

Invoices have gone out for the use of the SIDs. Danehill and Hartfield PCs have both responded that they had not agreed to payment. Keith is looking into this. Although the minutes of the 10 January meeting recorded that all parish representatives did agree to payment, there was concern about whether the parishes themselves had formally done so.

4) Communications

Keith said that a small feature about the Partnership (and showing the deer poster) is going out in the ESCC magazine on 13 November. The magazine is distributed to all house-holders in the county.

Some comments were made on a press release by Keith due to go out on the same day, for example adding a note on the impact on RTCs of the speed reduction of 4 mph (the mean effect of the use of the SIDs) and the use of graphs – or figures showing the actual speed reductions (Keith will ask a statistician for advice) - to show the traffic speeds recorded at the SID sites. It was also suggested that adding a few words in paragraph four about the 40 mph limit, and about the launch of the campaign in May, would be worthwhile. The Partnership welcomed the press release. Further points can be made to Keith. Keith will ask Hew later for the most up-to-date deer casualty figure.

Andy said that he was awaiting East Sussex FRS figures for RTC figures in the area.

Keith asked what everyone wanted to do with the posters done by children. A4 copies were deemed the most appropriate. Keith said that posters put up near schools are popular. Hanno wondered at those put up by the road in Nutley. Parish notice-boards, village halls, shops, doctors' surgeries - anywhere where people pass by or wait - would be appropriate. The deer poster would also be worth putting up (as in e.g. Chelwood Gate PO). Andy said that A3 posters would be useful for display in fire stations. Keith said it was vital to have an 'activist' who actually goes round putting up posters. Keith agreed to send a dozen posters to each PC.

On feedback to SID volunteers, Robert said that local volunteers were very upset and had had very little communication and feedback since. Keith said he would ask Graeme to write to coordinators.

Keith added that, as a result of a suggestion made at the last meeting, he had drafted a letter to accompany the free stickers received by those who sign up to the Commitment.

5) Police enforcement

Hanno said that Maresfield PC had talked to the Police about increasing enforcement in rural areas. He intends to contact the chief constable.

Keith said that the inspector at Uckfield had been keen for PCSOs to use SIDs with follow-up letters being sent to drivers found exceeding the limit. He himself had been told by the Dept of Transport that SIDs cannot be used for enforcement. Andy said that hand-held devices had been used extensively in West Hoathly/Sharpthorne. The problem is that all such devices are not accurate. It was generally acknowledged that the Police do not have the resources to enforce speed restrictions.

6) Inclusion of other parishes

John suggested that it was more important to keep parishes already involved than to get more. There was a danger of overlapping with other initiatives and diluting the principle of protecting the Forest. It was agreed that no more parishes would be contacted.

Keith emphasised that the Partnership is also concerned with villages in the area, not just the Forest.

7) Proposal for lighting at road junctions in Fairwarp

Hanno said that this proposal was discussed at Maresfield PC. Hew asked if lighting did in fact reduce accidents. Bryn replied that lighting may be used to address specific clusters of accidents at night. Hew said that there was no cluster at Fairwarp according to RTC maps from ESCC, ESFRS and Sussex Police.

8) What next?

John suggested that insurance companies might be a convenient hook on which to hang projects – a reduction in accidents will help reduce costs. He also wondered at how to keep the interest in speed reduction going. Hanno backed further education measures but suggested pushing enforcement more and seeking sources of funds.

Keith wondered whether the Partnership needs to meet any more and how much the SIDs have been used since the launch in May. Two tools that are effective in reducing speed are the Commitment (213 have so far signed in this area), for which much more work is needed (it takes effort to get people to sign up), and a programme of manning SIDs. Keith said that we all need to be active as individuals.

Robert said that ESCC is the basis of the Partnership. This is now entering a second phase, needing the full involvement of all partners, including those parishes that have not been fully involved so far. John said that the next meeting should discuss: education, advertising, public awareness, communications, data collection (road kills, traffic volumes and speeds), training (road safety, SID operators), education, speed limit enforcement, signing up to the Commitment, funding (do we need it?), tools for the job, and publicity.

Bryn said it was important to be clear on our target audience; the A22, for example, is used by a lot more than just local people.

Bryn informed the Partnership about a government circular on a nationwide speed limit review on A and B roads to be done by 2011. In East Sussex 700 miles of roads (including the A22) will be considered. For each 600 m of such roads data will be gathered on accident rates, the function of the road, mean traffic speed, traffic volume and what the road looks like to the driver. The appropriateness of the speed limit on each stretch will then be considered. Reducing speed limits from 60 mph to 50 mph has cost implications.

Villages (120 of them) are also going to be considered; most will need speed limit reductions. A revised speed management strategy is being made (with neighbouring authorities) and will be launched in spring 2007. To effect speed reduction will need engineering methods such as speed humps. He emphasised that all speed reduction will need to be self-enforcing. The work will need to be prioritised.

A22 will be a challenge. Bryn emphasised that one has to be very careful about what is actually achieved by introducing speed limits and quoted instances in the county where introducing a limit has actually *increased* mean traffic speed. People will drive to the speed they think appropriate and they will ignore signs they pass frequently. The government has turned down the idea of reducing the national limit for A roads from 60 to 50 mph. National limits do not need repeater signs. Bryn added that deer casualties do not equate with accidents; only injuries to people 'count'.

Hew said that reducing traffic speed involves a culture change. He thought that the 213 signed up to the Commitment since May was very few. Andy said that East Sussex FRS have been targeting car parks to get people to sign up to the Commitment. Keith suggested a training day to improve the ability of those interested to get others to sign up to the Commitment.

9) Date of next meeting

Wednesday 6 December at 1000.

(See under Item 8 for agenda items.)

The meeting finished at 1245.