

AGM 20 June 2006

At the Annual General Meeting held on 20 June the three working groups reported progress in meeting the demands of the Action Plan.

Roger Martell reported that the Local Environment and Transport Group has been active in support of a number of projects which will be of benefit to the town including:

- Work to promote the arrival of the Bluebell Railway which will play a vital role in encouraging tourists to East Grinstead.
- Finding practical ways to improve the public transport system and to assist “Care” which provides a valuable service ferrying the elderly and sick to doctors and hospitals.
- Lobbying West Sussex District Council for new signs to direct drivers to car parks around the town.
- Producing a glossy booklet for visitors to the historic High Street.
- Liaising with town centre developers Thornfields.
- Drafting a response to the Area Action Plan which reflected town opinion and lobbied for a relief road which by-passes Forest Row as well as East Grinstead.

Dale Bulbrook reported from the Local Economy Group that the business community had been active in promoting the town economy over the last year.

Among the measures taken to ensure a healthy and active business community in East Grinstead the Group has:

- Held well-attended Business Networking meetings every Wednesday between 1pm – 2pm at the Dorset Arms in the High Street. These have proved successful in building relationships between the town traders and generating new business.
- Organised a reprise of the highly successful French Market at the annual December Christmas Shopping Day and arranged a similar summer market this July.
- Promoted the aims of the newly-formed Imberhorne Industrial Association and made their unique needs known to both Town and District Councils.

In the coming year the Group will continue to cement working relationships between all commercial interests in the town and liaise with nearby trade associations to promote the interests of East Grinstead’s business community.

Cllr Ginnie Waddingham reported from the Social and Community Group that, following the success of their work to promote the needs of the elderly in the town, most notably in assisting Age Concern to address the issue of lack of facilities, the Group is now giving equal priority to the needs of the town's young people.

Among the projects they are currently working on is the production of a magnetic A5-sized card which will contain useful numbers for parents to contact if they need help or advice. The cards, which will be made freely available, will also ask across the top "It is 9pm – do you know where your child is?"

Bobby Hamilton, who took over the role of chairman from Don Cooper, said: "The Partnership is alive to the emphasis in the Action Plan that they ensure that all of the Actions are progressed even where these are the responsibility of other statutory organisations or Partnerships."

"There is a danger that interest in particular actions is dissipated if the Partnership does not ensure that they remain on the agenda of the relevant external organisations. This is especially true in East Grinstead where there are big issues of housing numbers and road developments to be decided."

Bobby's remarks underlined those of Mayor Jim Joyce-Nelson who reminded the Partnership at its 15 July meeting of its obligation to revise and update the Action Plan in the face of changing circumstances.