



SPREADING the word

Welcome to *Spreading the Word*; a quick and simple monthly update of the latest news and events in and around the District from your Local Strategic Partnership members.

I hope you are able to take five minutes to update yourselves with all the latest LSP news and information, and to forward this newsletter to any colleagues who may also be interested.

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Key dates for your diary – February

LSP away day – area profile & place survey outcomes
Friday 13th March 2009

9.00am – 1.30pm (including buffet lunch)

Venue to be confirmed

Safer Neighbourhood Awards nomination deadline

Friday 20th March

National No Smoking Day

Wednesday 11th March





Refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy for 2009 –February update

The first stage of consultation to inform the refresh of the 'Shaping our District Together for 2021' Sustainable Community Strategy is now almost complete.

Members of the LSP Management Committee have covered the refresh with the following groups during January and February:-

District Children's Trust Partnership
 Community Safety Partnership
 Disability Access Group
 St Albans Inter Faith Forum
 Community Sports Network
 Youth Council
 St Albans Learning Forum

The last few meetings will take place during March with the following groups:-

St Albans Racial Equality Council
 Sopwell Community Partnership
 Health, Housing and Social Care

Specific focus groups have been held to consider the current priority gap areas and potential new gap areas as follows:-

Environmental impact
 Economic development
 Providing youth activities & facilities
 Deprivation & inequalities
 Building the capacity of the voluntary sector
 Meeting the needs of an ageing population

The final focus group, which had to be postponed due to the snow, will take place in the next couple of weeks:-

Community engagement & participation

Another opportunity to get involved will be the LSP away day which is being planned **for Friday 13th March** by which time the Place Survey outcomes for the district will have been analysed and evidence collated for the area profile.

The meeting will consider:-

- Updated area profile (including data exchange with strategic partners)
- Presentation of key Place Survey outcomes
- Hot spots for the district and where they fit under the priorities of the SCS
- Headline data to include in the strategy document for context setting

If you wish to attend the last focus group or the LSP away day please contact Jane Pearce in Corporate Policy - jane.pearce@stalbans.gov.uk or 01727 819349.

The initial outline of the emerging updates to the Sustainable Community Strategy was presented to the LSP Board at their meeting on 24th February 2009. More detailed work will now take place to work up the proposed amendments and a draft

will be sent out for wider consultation for a 6 week period beginning Monday 23rd March.

The LSP work programme for 2009 (including the refresh of the Community Strategy and reviewing delivery mechanisms/structures and governance arrangements) was agreed by the Board.



Centre for Voluntary Service Coffee Mornings

BME Groups & Faith Groups 12th February

“A great networking opportunity” “ Excellent! The relaxed atmosphere encourages people to be at ease and chat more readily” “CVS advice and positive words were invaluable”

The CVS hosted a coffee morning on February 12th welcoming representatives from BME and Faith small groups together with LSP partners and community organisations who support them.

We had a lively discussion focused on getting money, developing skills and sharing information! The following emerging themes could apply to other networks in the LSP. Please let us have your comments and thoughts to wendy@cvsstalbans.org.uk

- the need for inexpensive community meeting space*
- shared information on groups already meeting to avoid an extra diary date
- skill development in web site and leaflet creation
- need for earlier notice of statutory money available for community bids
- the importance of advertising that hard copy information is available on request
- a coffee morning was a good way to learn and use each other's expertise
- clear agenda and desired outcomes to ensure relevant and engaged participation
- to explore best time / venue to encourage more participants including evenings and weekends
- a good opportunity to learn to be more culturally aware

We are delighted that extra support is offered by Police colleagues and Children's Centre colleagues to facilitate another get together later in the year – THANK YOU.

Please note the following CVS diary change - the advertised April community coffee morning on mental health concerns is postponed to later in the year but CVS are pleased to announce a new event on Tuesday 21st April called 'Weathering The Storm'.

Weathering the Storm - Managing your group in a recession

An invitation to voluntary and community groups to hear about, & cope better with, the impact of the economic downturn.

Tuesday, 21st April 2009
(Reg from 9.30 a.m.) 10a.m. to noon
The Waterend Barn,
St Peters Street, St Albans AL1 3LE
(rear of the central Post Office)

Participate in Question Time with experts in the sector's financial field to answer your concerns, learn tips to minimise your costs - including how to sail away with free computer software - and net information on services and funds to buoy you up in this crisis.

Spend a couple of hours over a cuppa, fruit and cake to dispel some of the clouds overhead, with others in the same boat.

RSVP with your name, organisation, address and email to:
St Albans Centre for Voluntary Service (CVS)
31 Catherine Street, St Albans AL3 5BJ
Email: wendy@cvsstalbans.org.uk **Tel: 01727 852657**

Please keep an eye on our E-Inform emailed newsletter and the CVS web www.cvsstalbans.org.uk for news of other events that need your knowledge and skills and will help you reach out to others.

(we circulated the CVS list of affordable local venues called 'Really Useful Spaces')*



St Albans City and District Council scores 'good' on Comprehensive Performance Assessment

The Audit Commission confirmed on Tuesday 3rd February that St Albans City and District Council has been classed as "a good council that is performing well."

Obviously, this is an improvement on the 'fair' rating we received in 2004, but as the bar for 2008 was much higher than it was in 2004, we can see this as an even greater achievement. We are delighted that the report gives strong recognition for the contribution of staff, councillors and partners to improving the district and we want to thank all in their work in achieving this well deserved result.

The report mentioned in particular:

- The Sustainable Community Strategy presents a particularly strong sense of place which is distinctive and fitting to the context of St Albans.
- Some good joint working and action planning taking place to address the LSP 'gap areas'
- Improved performance and targeted partnership action in areas such as recycling, planning, addressing the needs of homeless people, reduced anti-social behaviour, good quality parks and increased leisure opportunities.
- That residents are satisfied with the council and delivery of many of its services. The report acknowledges that we are listening and responding to their needs.
- That "overall services are of high quality and provide good value for money to the residents of St Albans"

The Audit Commission also identified areas where the council can serve residents even better. However, the report also recognised that we are developing the means

to address these areas of improvement, particularly through our work on developing a vision for St Albans city (to develop consensus on sustainable development), the introduction of the new performance framework (to provide better integrated performance information so we can take action on areas of underperformance) and our Business Improvement Programme (to improve staff capacity and service delivery outcomes for our customers).

Partnership working in particular was seen as inconsistent, with a need to provide a longer term work programme, and to better measure achievement against all of the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities. Much of the work to strengthen the LSP around these recommendations is being taken forward through the current Sustainable Community Strategy refresh and (in the second half of 2009) the review of the structure of the LSP and the development of a performance monitoring system around the Sustainable Community Strategy.

The full report is available on the Council's website - <http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/your-council/council-performance/othersthink.aspx> - or through the Audit Commission website - <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa/>.

For information about the Comprehensive Performance Assessment report feel free to contact the Corporate Policy Unit on 01727 819571 or c.andrews@stalban.gov.uk.



Advice Plus Project – information and advice in the community

Age Concern Hertfordshire has been successful in receiving funding from the Big Lottery Fund for the Advice Plus project. This funding has enabled us to expand our Information and Advice schemes, which are designed to help older people, their carers and relatives to clarify options, obtain entitlements, access suitable services and resolve issues of concern.

Services available include:

- Countywide Information Line
- Benefits Outreach
- Information and Advice outreach
- Home Matters
- Asian and Italian outreach
- Advocacy in Care Homes
- Hertfordshire Voice

To read more about these schemes, click [here](#).

Midway Surgery Mondays from 1pm – 2pm on 30 March, 27 April, 18 May, 29 June and 27 July. Find out more about our services for older people including, Benefits advice, Carers Support, Visiting Scheme, Telephone Club, Hospital Discharge and Volunteering.

**For more information call
0845 601 3446**



Sopwell Youth Consultation

Several parties with an interest in the development of youth services in the Sopwell area have recognised the potential to make better use of the Marlborough Pavilion as a community centre and joined forces in October, initially to determine levels of demand for a youth club for Sopwell.

Jackie Thompson, LSP Partnership Project Officer, Helen Thorpe, Extended Schools Co-ordinator for the More @ Extended Schools Consortium and Matthew Green, Youth Connexions Manager, worked together to find out what young people want:-

- Youth Connexions spent a week at Marlborough School running assemblies and getting responses to lunchtime questionnaires from young people living in Sopwell
- The Youth Connexions detached youth workers for Sopwell (5-8pm on Tuesdays) consulted through an informal focus group

This initial consultation indicated a demand for a youth club from 57 out of 60 young people surveyed. In response to the question, 'What don't you like about Sopwell?' 15 said, "There's not a lot or nothing to do", and nine reported a fear of gangs in Sopwell. The plan is to run more focus group discussions with young people to get their input into how services are developed.

Community use of the Marlborough Pavilion is already growing; alongside its use as a sports pavilion there are art classes on Fridays and it's a venue for the local Muslim complementary school for children and young people at weekends. The district council's bid to the Children's Play lottery fund has provided funding for Play Rangers to run outdoor activities based there in the school holidays and the floodlit multi-use games area is expected to open in time for the school summer holidays.

There is huge potential for more - as a youth club and as a venue for afterschool childcare. Primary head teachers of Sopwell schools have been consulted and all see the benefits of a shared childcare service which overcomes the viability issues experienced in individual schools and offers children the opportunity to make new friends in a fresh location.

Helen Thorpe, Extended Schools Co-ordinator
01727 754078

helenthorpe@mandeville.herts.sch.uk



National Award for Leading Technology

Pioneering technology used by Hertfordshire Constabulary to transform Neighbourhood Watch in the county has been recognised by the Government at an awards ceremony in London. Online Watch Link (OWL), the only system of its kind in

the country, was named the best 'Innovation in strategy at a local level' at the recent e-Government National Awards.

OWL, which has allowed the Constabulary to keep in touch with members of the public and businesses with crime prevention messages, witness appeals and advice, was one of the 11 winners following 588 nationwide nominations.

OWL was jointly funded by Hertfordshire Constabulary and Hertfordshire Police Authority with a local Neighbourhood Watch coordinator and director of Direct Path Solutions Ltd, Gary Fenton. The internet based tool is an easy to-use communication system which has helped thousands of wards, area and street coordinators send police messages to their members via phone, text messaging, fax and email.



Executive Forum launched

St Albans City and District Council, working together with Oaklands College, Jobcentre Plus, Centre for Voluntary Services (CVS), and the Old Albanian Sports Club have set up an Executive Forum for local senior executives, plus high calibre professionals who have recently found themselves out of work. It is designed to help them get their careers back on track, whilst benefiting from being amongst a group of people at similar career levels, albeit in differing organisations.

The Executive Forum is aimed at local people within the district who have recently been made redundant, but it is uniquely tailored for senior managers and executives with a high earning power.

The Executive Forum is:

- A free programme running over a period of 6 weeks.
- A framework of relevant information designed to enable participants to explore options and skills.
- A programme which focuses on the individual and includes CV development, application and interview techniques.
- An opportunity to explore self-employment, lecturing, teaching and opportunities in mentoring and volunteering
- Opportunities to network with like minded individuals.

All delegates will benefit from weekly networking sessions at the Old Albanian Sports Club, plus tailored one-to-one sessions providing information and guidance that is relevant to the individual.

Places are limited to a maximum of 15 delegates on each programme so individuals will need to book in advance. For further information or to book a place, please e-mail: Marion.Turner@oaklands.ac.uk or ring 01727 899518.

Further information is available on www.oaklands.ac.uk

The first session commences on Monday 2nd March 2009 at the Old Albanian Sports Club on the Harpenden Road from 1pm until 4 pm.



Hertfordshire PCTs unveil first report on progress towards World Class Commissioning

The Hertfordshire PCTs have today (24 February 2009) published the results of an external review that measures our progress towards becoming a world class organisation.

The report follows a thorough assessment of the Hertfordshire PCTs' progress over the first year of the World Class Commissioning programme. It reviews Hertfordshire's performance in three key areas:

- progress on addressing local health priorities
- commissioning capabilities
- effectiveness of management arrangements.

World Class Commissioning is a national framework designed to help all PCTs match health and care services more closely to local needs, both now and in the future. It helps PCTs work with local partners (such as local councils, GPs and hospitals), as well as the public, to understand these needs and to improve services for local people.

As well as praising Hertfordshire's strong working relationships with local partners in the community, the report highlights the PCTs' achievements in eliminating debt and engaging local clinicians in redesigning services.

The assessors described our plans for the development of services - 'Delivering Quality Health Care for Hertfordshire' - as "remarkable". The panel also said that the urgent challenge was to begin thinking of ourselves as a commissioning organisation, rather than one which directly provides services.

Anne Walker, Chief Executive of the Hertfordshire PCTs welcomed the report and its findings. She said: "Commissioning is key to everything we do and we are pleased that this first year's report recognises our excellent track record and the strength of our future plans.

"Because this is such an ambitious programme, no PCT is expected to score highly in this first year. We recognise that we still have a way to go to become world class commissioners and we are currently making some amendments to our strategy so that some of the weaker areas identified by the panel are awarded higher priority.

"Being world class cannot be achieved by the PCT alone, so we will be working closely with patients, staff and partner organisations like Hertfordshire County Council, to make the changes happen."

You can read the full assurance report on our websites: www.wherts-pct.nhs.uk and www.enherts-pct.nhs.uk



Make a difference to someone who really needs you!

The icy pavements and cold days of February can be not only depressing but downright dangerous to older people. Falls in winter are common, and frequently result in broken hips, arms or legs and a spell in hospital. But what happens when they go home?

Age Concern Hertfordshire has for some years run a special scheme to help older people living alone to cope when they first leave hospital. The first few weeks can be very daunting and so trained volunteers are introduced, and visit the older person in their home for a couple of hours a week for six to eight weeks following discharge, helping them to re-gain their confidence and independence.

However up till now this type of provision has been limited for older people discharged from hospital with additional needs due to depression or dementia. Age Concern Hertfordshire, working closely with health and social care professionals now has funding for a new scheme to provide practical and emotional support to people in this situation, but cannot do so without your help! The Mental Health Hospital Discharge Scheme relies heavily on trained volunteer visitors, who can help make a huge difference and even prevent the need for an older person to go back into hospital.

Volunteers have to be over 18 years of age, and experience of dealing with either older people or people with mental health needs would be an advantage.

Volunteer visitors also look out for other issues, such as under- heated rooms, lack of healthy food in the fridge, physical deterioration or emotional distress, and pass on any concerns to the Coordinator who will support them and refer the matter on to a family member, GP, primary carer or social worker, depending on the nature of the concern.

The new scheme is open to people over 55 with mental health needs, and referrals can be made by patients themselves, their relatives and friends, or health and social care professionals.

If you would like to know more about becoming a volunteer with the Mental Health Hospital Discharge Scheme, or know someone else who might be interested, please call the Volunteer Coordinator now at Age Concern Hertfordshire on **01707 323272**. Information can also be found on the Age Concern website <http://www.acherts.org.uk/>



Nominate a Deserving Community Safety Hero for the Safer Neighbourhoods Awards

If you know someone – perhaps a neighbour, colleague, voluntary group, police officer or PCSO – who deserves an award for the work they have done to make your neighbourhood even safer, then we would like to hear from you. Now in their third year, the Safer Neighbourhoods Awards recognise outstanding contributions to creating a safer Hertfordshire, with nominations open until 20th March 2009.

For each award, there will be 10 district winners going forward to the County Final on 23 June 2009. If you have nominated a heat winner you will also be invited to enjoy the celebrations at the County Awards Ceremony in June. There are three award categories:

- Police Community Support Officer of the Year
- Neighbourhood Police Officer of the Year
- Community Award (for individuals who have made innovative contributions towards community safety).

To nominate someone please visit www.herts.police.uk/awards/ and click on the links to nomination forms at the foot of the page. The website pages include the nomination criteria for each award to guide you. You can find out more from Herts Police Authority on 01992 556600 or email enquiries.hpa@herts.pnn.police.uk

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To find out more about the information within this document, to give us feedback or to send information for the next issue, please contact:

Jane Pearce

St Albans City and District Council
St Peter's Street
St Albans
Herts, AL1 3JE
Tel: 01727 819349
Fax: 01727 819336
Email: jane.pearce@stalbans.gov.uk



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PARTNERSHIP