

## Rother District Council

### Briefing Paper: Community Consultation and Local Strategic Partnership

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#### Community Consultation

1. An analysis of the community consultation, "Tell Us What You Think", attached at Appendix 1, is a summary of the findings received from the research team at the University of Brighton. This summary will form a part of the more substantial Rother Community Profile that the University team is currently putting together from a variety of research sources including this survey, the community database and other primary and secondary material.
2. The "Tell us what you Think" booklet was circulated to 10,000 households in the Rother area. Approximately 250 completed returns were entered into an Access Database. A typical return for a postal questionnaire of this type is in the region of 1%; a return of 2.5% adequately fulfils the requirement for a robust methodology. Anonymous verbatim copies of the individual questionnaire returns are under preparation in thematic order and can be made available to interested parties and other agencies.
3. The report summarises the key issues that are of current concern to Rother residents. The age profile of respondents, whilst showing a preponderance of older people, reflects in some measure the age profile of the district. The recently published 2001 Census results for Rother demography are attached as Appendix 2 for information.
4. Whilst it must be remembered that quantitative data of this kind should be treated with care and that it would be a mistake to jump to conclusions without the assistance of the Rother Community Profile report that will qualify this data with other evidence, there are some early points worth noting. In terms of frequency of response the key issues would seem to be the following:

	<b>Key Issue</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
1.	More visible/ appropriately targeted policing	64%
2.	Concerns with household/corporate waste disposal	61%
3.	Concerns with the availability of affordable/decent quality housing	56%
4.	Leisure and recreation facilities insufficient in local area/ difficult to access	55%
5.	Concerns to increase/improve bus services	53%
6.	Local job creation required through supporting businesses	48%
7.	Improved transport systems	41%
8.	Concerns with access/choice in educational services	40%
9.	Provision of more affordable recreational facilities, clubs and support services for young people	39%
10.	Waiting times for GP's, operations and dentists	37%

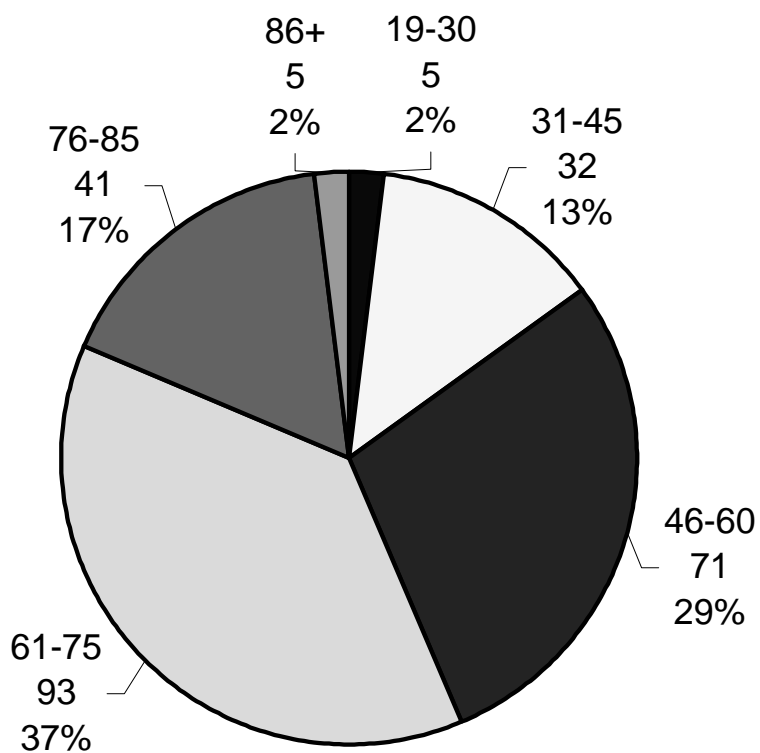
Rother District Council – Community Consultation

Findings

247 questionnaire returns were included in this analysis.

**Age**

As shown in the graph below, younger people are under-represented in this survey. Over half respondents were over 60.



## Questions

What do you think is important in relation to health?

The most common factor to be seen as important to health was the amount of time patients had to wait to see a doctor or dentist. Several felt that one way of dealing with this would be to fine those who missed appointments. A large number of others felt that managerial changes would help e.g. a reduction in bureaucracy, a return to the old matron system and various recruitment initiatives in order to provide adequate numbers of nursing staff.

The second largest proportion expressed a concern about lack of hospital care in their local area. Non-drivers from Bexhill, Rye and Battle lamented the difficulties of travelling to Conquest hospital or elsewhere for treatment due to inadequate public transport, whilst some of those who did own cars complained about the lack of parking at Conquest hospital. In addition several respondents argued that more hospital services should be made available at Bexhill hospital, particularly an Accident and Emergency department. Others suggested that minor operations should be made available at local surgeries to avoid having to travel unnecessarily.

'Other' responses included affordable prescriptions and ways of combating poverty as a cause of ill health.

Type of Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Waiting times for GP's/operations/dentists etc.	80	32	37
Local access to healthcare / transport	68	28	31
Resources/standards (e.g. staffing, management, equipment, hygiene).	61	25	28
Support for healthy lifestyle - diet/exercise (education, facilities etc.)	47	19	22
Clean, safe environment	37	15	17
Provision for older people/long term sick (e.g. nursing homes, day centres).	16	6	7
NHS/ affordable dental care	9	4	4
Specialist healthcare (e.g. mental health, substance misuse etc.)	9	4	4
Regular screening	5	2	2
Other	3	1	1
Missing	29	12	-

What are your views on employment issues?

Most of those who responded to this question expressed concerns over the lack of employment opportunities in the area, and many of these felt that ways need to be found to attract new businesses. There were however differing views as to how this could be accomplished, although the most common answers were to minimise regulations, rates and tax on small business and to improve local transport systems.

Some also felt that improving road and rail links would be helpful in enabling more residents to take work elsewhere, whilst others bemoaned the possibility of their town (e.g. Bexhill) becoming a dormant commuter place with few employment prospects of their own to entice local young people to stay. In rural areas opinion was divided between those keen to see an improvement in transport systems in preference of new industrial developments in the area (due to environmental concerns), and those keen to see new local employment opportunities where farming has declined. 'Other' responses included immigration issues and raising the status of unpopular jobs.

Type of Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Local job creation required through supporting businesses etc.	83	34	48
Investment is needed in local transport systems to attract businesses/facilitate commuting	35	14	20
More training opportunities, apprenticeships, careers advice etc. needed	27	11	18
Local wages are too low for the cost of living	20	8	11
Jobs are available/ tougher measures needed for unemployed	18	7	10
New industrial centres should only be located in urban areas	10	4	6
Greater job security/support in the workplace needed	8	3	5
Other	5	2	3
Missing	76	31	-

What do you feel is important in relation to housing?

Many respondents were concerned about rising rents and house prices and the lack of affordable housing despite new developments. Some felt that lower cost housing should be made available for particular groups, especially young people from the local area. A large proportion also considered environmental implications of new housing developments on green belt land as important. Most of these suggested other solutions for affordable housing provision such as the conversion of unused buildings in urban areas. Thirty-nine people pointed out that wherever located, housing developments need to be accompanied by sufficient expansion in local services and amenities in order to avoid further social problems.

A number of respondents also mentioned the problem of poorly kept property, and several of these felt that greater control should be placed upon landlords to ensure housing standards are maintained. 'Other' responses were concerning tax on empty property, leasehold law, hostels for homeless people and consultation opportunities for council tenants.

Type of Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Availability of affordable/decent quality housing	116	47	56
Environmental concerns of building on green field sites/villages	64	26	31
Good planning of developments i.e. distribution of different types of housing, situation of amenities etc.	38	15	18
Appropriate design and upkeep of housing and gardens	20	8	10
Perceived unfairness in housing allocation/ nuisance neighbours/housing benefit fraud	16	6	8
Help for older people and disabled e.g. warden assisted housing	7	3	3
Problems of overcrowding/health and safety issues	6	2	3
Home ownership/minimal State involvement	5	2	2
Other	3	1	1
Missing	40	16	-

Do you have any suggestions about improving public transport and other transport issues?

Around half respondents suggested improvements to local bus services. Most commonly these were regarding the introduction, re-instatement or improvement of services in rural areas. The lack of evening services was a particular complaint. Many also felt that running smaller buses might be a way of keeping costs down and several mentioned the difficulties of accessibility for older and disabled people. Other suggestions regarding buses included community initiatives, park and ride schemes and bus lanes.

In terms of both trains and buses the most common complaint was the unreliability and infrequency of services followed by the lack of comfort and cleanliness. Many also wanted to see more train stations and/or refurbishment at existing stations as well as an increase in

particular services (especially London). Several noted safety issues and the importance of information services and the co-ordination of bus and train times. Most of those who mentioned road improvement specified their support for the Bexhill/ Hastings by-pass.

Type of Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Increase/ improve bus service	112	45	53
Increase/ improve train service	57	23	27
Increase/ improve roads	53	21	25
Affordable travel – subsidised costs/lower fares/ discount cards	41	16	20
Impose traffic calming/parking restrictions	19	8	9
Increase/improve cycle/foot paths	12	5	6
Reduce traffic controls/parking restrictions	11	4	5
Introduce trams	8	3	4
Restrict heavy good vehicle access	5	2	2
Localise amenities to reduce travel	4	2	2
Introduce car sharing initiatives	4	2	2
Encourage alternative fuels	3	1	1
Better management/more consultation	3	1	1
Greater use of river networks/canals	1	0*	0*
Missing	37	15	-

\* Less than 0.5%

What do you think of our current leisure and recreational facilities?

Around half respondents felt leisure and recreational facilities (either in part or full) to be lacking in their local area or that insufficient activities were available for a particular group (notably young people). A slightly smaller proportion were happy with at least some of the facilities provided.

Many however, including those who felt existing services to be adequate suggested improvements. The most common plea was for new or better swimming pools and several suggested creating skateboarding/roller skating areas for young people.

Type of Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Insufficient in local area/difficult to access	112	45	55
Good/adequate	105	43	52
Inadequate quality/size	64	26	32
Too expensive	14	6	7
Insufficient information available	12	5	6
Missing	45	18	-

What worries you about the environment? How can it be protected for ourselves and for future generations?

Waste disposal was by far the most prominent concern expressed, particularly regarding inadequate recycling facilities. A significant number were also troubled by the amount of litter and fly tipping in their locality and some felt that this should be more forcefully deterred through greater penalties. Environmental education and information for both young and old was also suggested by several respondents as a way to combat such problems. The most common suggestion though, was for methods to be implemented to encourage recycling, such as a collection service. Several also suggested collecting unwanted household items or providing other means of disposal such as better access to a local tip. Concerns about incineration were also fairly common, although a few felt this to be preferable to landfill.

As in the housing section many expressed their anxiety over housing and industrial developments in rural areas. Again it was suggested that there should be greater restrictions imposed on developers and that better use be made of current housing stock and brown field sites. A number of respondents also suggested more conservation schemes to be initiated such as tree planting and care of woodlands.

The transport issue was also obviously of relevance here also and was mentioned by around ¼ of respondents, many of whom argued that policies should be developed to reduce traffic. The most common of these were for improvement of public transport and the building of new roads in order to reduce congestion and subsequent pollution of towns and villages. Several also noted that the presence of abandoned cars was a problem in their locality.

Of those who were concerned about energy around one third indicated that they felt natural sources should be encouraged and several felt that more information and support on energy efficiency in the home should be provided. Suggestions from the other categories included better general cleaning and maintenance of streets, gardens etc. and incentives to farm and buy organic produce.

Type of Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Household/corporate waste disposal	128	52	61
Over-development/overcrowding/ loss of countryside	61	25	28
Vehicle usage and disposal	59	24	27
Condition of streets, gardens etc. / criminal behaviour e.g. vandalism, fly-tipping	42	17	19
Energy – waste / pollution	19	9	10
Condition of waterways / sewage / fish stocks etc.	12	8	6
Farming practice – chemical use, maintenance of ditches	10	4	5
Management/ local involvement	6	2	3
Dog fouling	5	2	2
Missing	31	13	-

Young people are a part of the future. What needs to be done?

The largest proportion of respondents advocated greater provision of recreational facilities at an affordable cost. Youth clubs and sports facilities were most commonly suggested especially skateboard parks. A smaller number (22) felt that younger people should be encouraged to become more involved in constructive ways with their local community and/or environment. Public transport was also mentioned by several as an important consideration in terms of enabling young people to access relevant facilities where they may be available in neighbouring towns. Almost a quarter felt that a lack of discipline particularly needs to be addressed at home, in schools and on the street. Several attributed this decline of moral guidance to the parents and some felt that education and/ or punishment may be necessary for both wayward parents and offspring.

A large number of respondents also felt that improvements in education and training/ employment prospects are needed, although there were various ideas about how this could be accomplished. A number felt that more opportunities for work related learning are necessary. A few also expressed concern over the abolition of grants that may hinder young people going on to higher education.

Thirty people felt that it was particularly important to actively involve young people in any decision making process which would directly affect them



Type of Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Provide more affordable recreational facilities/clubs/ support services	83	34	39
Moral guidance/discipline/control (parents, teachers, police)	64	26	30
Improve education and advice in schools/ widen access to higher education	42	17	20
Increase local training/job opportunities	37	15	17
Effectively consult/value young people	30	12	14
Involve in community/ environmental projects/ oluntary work	22	9	10
Address social issues e.g. housing, health, environment etc.	15	6	7
Improve public transport	14	6	7
Missing	35	14	-

What is important in educational services for all ages?

The most common types of response were issues around access. This included affordability and barriers faced by older and disabled people in particular e.g. transport, as well as childcare difficulties. 'Choice' refers to those who mentioned availability of various types of courses as important.

A fairly large proportion felt that standards in education need to be improved particularly in English and Mathematics. Provision of good IT/ library and sports facilities were also seen by several to be of particular importance.

Type of Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Access/choice	71	29	40
Standards - teaching/facilities/management	51	21	29
Enjoyable learning - flexible curriculum /individual support/less assessment orientated	40	16	22
Discipline/moral, social, health education	35	14	20
Practical/vocational education/careers guidance	20	8	11
Pre-school provision	5	2	3
Information/promotion/consultation	5	2	3
Missing	69	28	-

What further actions could be taken to reduce crime and disorderly behaviour?

Most respondents expressed a concern over the lack of police officers on the streets and/or available at the local police station. Many mentioned slow response times when police are called out, and some felt that police should not be diverted into other locations or occupied by traffic offences in place of more serious crime.

As shown on the table below, a fairly large proportion indicated they felt socialisation of young people to be a major factor and most of these stated that parents in particular should be made more responsible for their offspring. Some suggested that this should be encouraged through greater punitive measures such as fines to parents of children who commit offences. Some also felt that children should receive more moral/social education in schools e.g. citizenship and parenting classes.

Other preventative controls mentioned included Neighbourhood Watch schemes, environmental planning issues such as street lighting and design of housing estates. Several also thought that the consumption of alcohol on the streets should be banned.

Type of Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
More visible/appropriately targeted policing	149	60	64
Tougher punitive measures, greater police powers	79	32	34
Moral guidance from parents / schools / communities	41	17	18
CCTV / other preventative controls	33	13	14

More facilities for young people	27	11	12
Improvements in health and social services, housing, education etc.	13	5	6
Alternative punishments e.g. community service, restorative justice, treatment	12	5	5
Traffic controls, more traffic wardens etc.	7	3	3
Improvements in consultation/organisation between agencies and communities	7	3	3
De-criminalize drug use	1	0*	0*
Missing	15	5	-

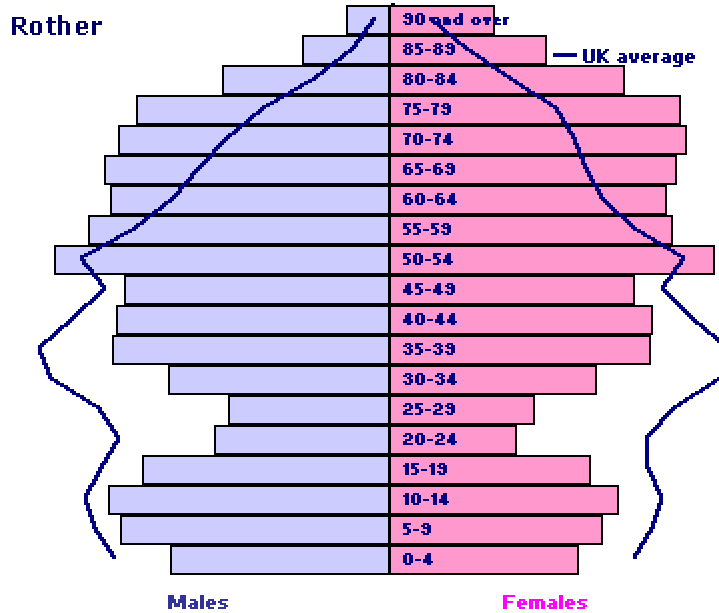
\* Less than 0.5%

Finally, what would contribute to a better quality of life for you?

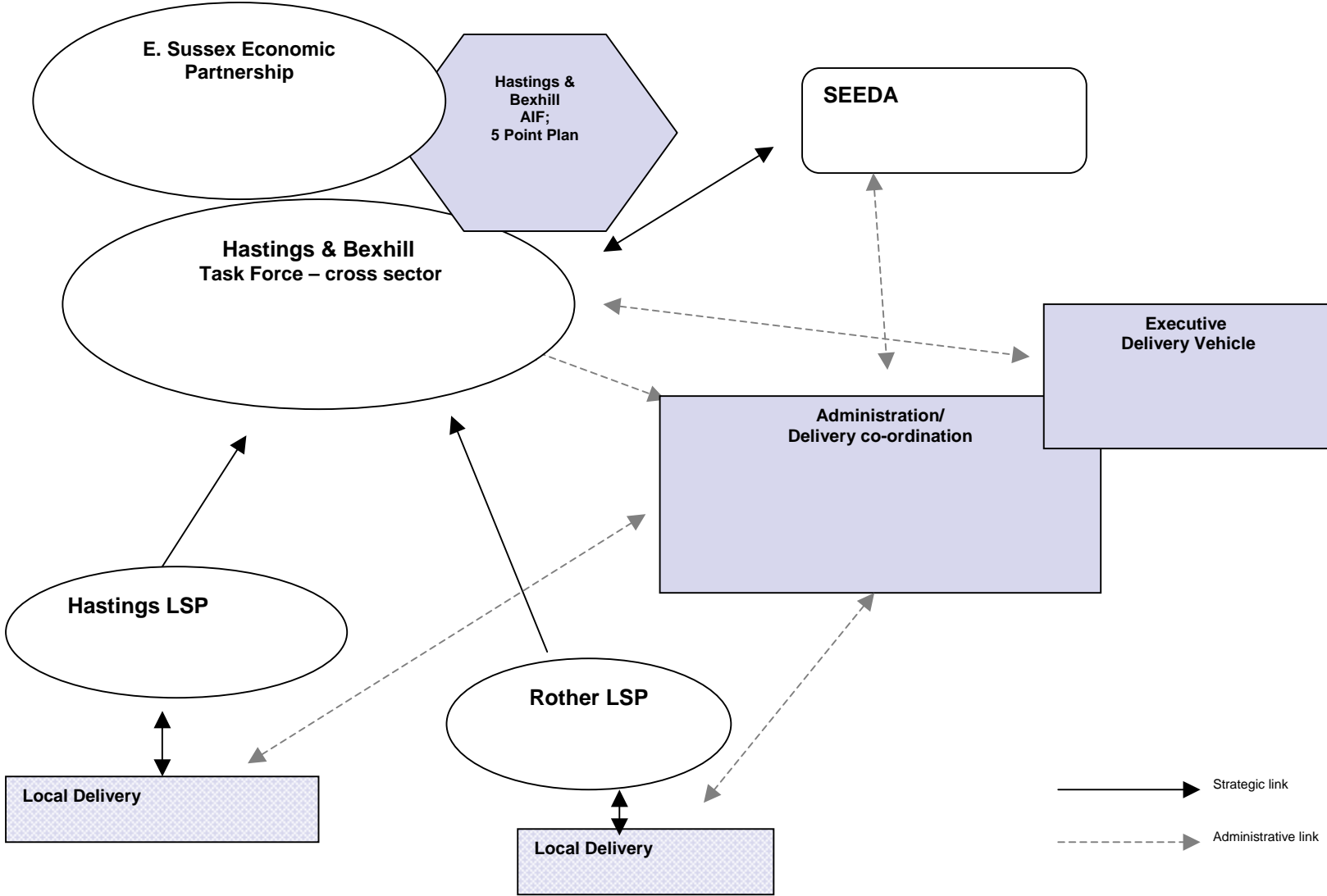
Improvement in local transport systems was most commonly felt as imperative to better quality of life for Rother residents, whether this was in the sense of facilitating mobility or reducing noise, hazards and pollution. A reduction in criminal and anti-social behaviour was also mentioned by a significant number.

The improvement and/or protection of the environment category refers to concerns around conservation of green field sites, recycling, and the image, design and cleanliness of villages and towns. The 'other' category included changes in farming regulations and the weather!

Type of Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Improved transport systems	84	34	41
Less crime/anti-social behaviour/better policing	61	25	30
Improved/protected natural/urban environment	46	19	23
Improved health/educational/social services/benefits	37	15	18
More money – less tax/rates/better pensions	28	11	14
Improved shopping/recreational facilities	28	11	14
Change/improvements in central/local government	17	7	8
Greater sense of community	11	4	5
Better/cheaper housing	9	4	4
Better job prospects	6	2	3
Other	3	1	1
Missing	43	17	-



<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
0 - 4	3965	1983	1982
5 - 9	4677	2440	2237
10 - 14	4942	2541	2401
15 - 19	4339	2227	2112
20 - 24	2936	1585	1351
25 - 29	2991	1452	1539
30 - 34	4164	1994	2170
35 - 39	5254	2515	2739
40 - 44	5231	2479	2752
45 - 49	4972	2393	2579
50 - 54	6436	3035	3401
55 - 59	5686	2725	2961
60 - 64	5443	2532	2911
65 - 69	5588	2581	3007
70 - 74	5554	2447	3107
75 - 79	5344	2298	3046
80 - 84	3982	1508	2474
85 - 89	2431	779	1652
90 and over	1487	367	1120
<b>Totals</b>	<b>85422</b>	<b>39881</b>	<b>45541</b>



### SEEDA Strategic Partnership Arrangement Proposal for East Sussex

