



**ERP Full Partnership Meeting
Minutes of the Meeting held at 10:00am on 24th July 2013
Chelmsford City Football Club, CM1 2EH**

1 Chairman's Introduction

Vice Chair Canon John Brown welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 Apologies

Apologies were taken as read
(please see last page for details of attendees and apologies).

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 13th March 2013

The minutes were approved as accurate.

Matters arising – item 10, Keith Blackburn to be invited to the next full ERP meeting

4 Update on Defra Rural and Farming Network (RFN)

There had been a meeting of RFN member group Chairs, on 13th June in London. Cllr Jowers was unfortunately not present to report back, but SH advised the meeting of the agenda topics, which included the Future of Farming Review, LEPs, Uplands and Water Management. There was a discussion regarding affordable housing which it was agreed needed to be made an agenda item for the next meeting. Skills and Training were also discussed.

SH reported that ERP had been approached by Defra at very short notice to meet Richard Benyon as an add-on to a visit he had made to Essex. He was accompanied by John Coleman from the Rural Communities Policy unit at Defra. The meeting was very positive. Topics discussed included EU funding, LEADER, CAP, other environmental schemes, and fishing/water issues.

5 Update on Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) (Suzanne Harris)

ERP had jointly arranged a meeting about RDPE on behalf of Defra, in May. This meeting, in Huntingdon, was attended by over 70 people, making it one of the highest attendance of any of these meetings across England. Defra provided a facilitator on each table to record discussions, they commented that the debates were very good.

AS – UK settlement will see a reduction of 27% of money going to RDPE, most of the money will be going into Pillar 1. A great deal of negotiation is still going on at EU level.

KE – As I understand it there needs to be a LAG to receive money. What has happened since March?

SH - A meeting took place in April, attended by approx. 40 people. Maldon District Council are holding a district-based meeting for interested parties. The exact size that the LAG is required to be (by EU rules) is still unknown and so it is difficult to formulate an area.

KE – Are the RCCE taking the lead in this?

SH – Yes, along with Adrian Harris from ECC.

PW – The person who is responsible for writing the LEP EU funding prospectus is a

former ECC employee, so she is aware that we are keen to have the potential for 3 or 4 across the area. I am involved in the Eastern Plateau LAG, which covers a small part of Uttlesford District. We are hopeful that Defra will be announcing money to support establishment of new LAG's in November. There may be one for the East of Essex and one from the north of Essex into Suffolk. There is a genuine desire for a LAG from the ERP, RCCE and ECC and so far there seems to be lots of interest from the private sector.

SH – The Essex Rural Partnership website has a section relating to RDPE and Leader. This can be accessed from the main pages of the RCCE website.

PW – I have met Robin Healey who is the new link person from Defra, (he has taken over from David Sillett) and unfortunately there just isn't a lot of information available.

6 ERP Action Groups and Taking the Essex Rural Strategy Forward

6.1 Report from the ERP Steering Group

SH reported that the ERP Steering Group had last met in March, where they had discussed the planning of the RDPE event, EERF, and a Rural Services Survey for 2014.

The Steering Group had also discussed how to better engage with the SELEP. SH had been asked to represent ERP on the LEP Rural Working Group but meetings were on hold whilst the LEP underwent a restructure.

John Spence had stood down as Chair of the SE LEP, and Susan Priest had resigned as Director, due to a new appointment.

PW informed the group that Peter Jones will be the new Chair of the LEP. SH advised there is a proposal to move to a federated model but this could take time. PW also told the group that funding for transport links is being considered a priority.

SB – commented that it is a period of flux with the LEP, along with the CAP reforms there may be more money going to local areas after 2015. They may be taking it from Pillar 1 and putting it into Pillar 2. We should continue to try to influence decisions as there may be more money from other sources.

JB – There is no timeline for decisions between now and the Autumn.

KE – Whose responsibility is it to review the Essex Rural Strategy, and do we know what progress is being made?

SH – it is within the remit of the Steering Group. Individual Action Groups also look at the progress for the relevant chapters.

6.2 Report from the ERP Community Action Group (CAG)

JB reported that the Community Action Group met on the 10th July. A presentation was received from Sarah Sapsford from RCCE regarding Neighbourhood Planning. There are 500 plans nationally and 11 plans in Essex; none of these have yet been approved. The group discussed the costs to parishes and how this may be a problem. Funding is available but very limited.

Joy Darby also updated the group on the EALC action plan regarding rural parishes. The CAG received an update on the latest developments at Healthwatch Essex. HWE have held their first A.G.M and have run three Welcome Events across the county for the voluntary and community sector, which were well attended. A new Engagement Manager and Research Manager have now been appointed and are due to start at the beginning of September. The Group also had a presentation from Paul Gaylor regarding the impact that updates to the benefits system have had on rural communities. The group found this very interesting. The Cabinet Minister for adult and social care in rural communities John Aldridge is booked to attend the next meeting.

The next meeting is planned for the 20th August 2013.

PD - With relation to Brentwood, the absence of a Local Plan has acted as a disincentive to parishes.

SJ – It does depend on the local council that you are working with as in some areas parishes they have been asked to feed into the local plan.

JBu - Has attended an EALC national event regarding development plans and it was highlighted that parishes only need to do a Local Plan if it is contrary to the local government growth agenda. He highlighted a successful plan in Cumbria where 24 local parishes joined together to produce a neighbourhood plan as the local plan was contrary to the National growth strategy agenda.

SS – offered to talk to anyone individually after the event as it is an area that is a complex subject.

JB - this subject highlights questions about relationships between parishes, councils and planning departments.

6.3 Report from the Environmental Action Group (EnvAG)

PH had asked the group for their comments regarding any areas they specifically want to pursue and he hoped to base the next meeting on this feedback. PH highlighted the importance of the Rural Carbon Energy Fund.

6.4 Report from the Economic Action Group (EcAG)

PW informed the ERP that there had not been a meeting of this group since the last full ERP, so there was nothing to report. The next meeting is planned for Monday 29th July.

SB – suggested that we have some key bullet points about what has happened from each Action Group for the next meeting.

7 Broadband in Rural Essex - An update

PW reported that ECC hope that by the end of 2015 100% of the county will have 2MB broadband. They would also like to get 90% of the county supplied with 24 MB superfast broadband by 2015. This speed is needed to get Telecare and online Healthcare to more remote areas. A bid was received by BT last Friday and this is being considered in the next 2-3 weeks. David Wilde, Chief Information Officer for ECC, has been delegated to make the award to BT for upgrading the telecoms network to rural areas not within their plan. There is £13 million available; £6.5 million from central government and £6.5 million from ECC. With the exception of Tendring the exchanges have been updated. The main issue now is to get the cabling from the green cabinets on the streets to the exchanges updated. Fibre optic cables will go into green cables, which will enable households to get broadband. A schedule of works will be ready by the end of the year which will tell us where and when things will be done up until the end of 2014; this should give a very significant improvement to the service. There is now also a move to extend the reach of superfast broadband to mobile phone coverage. The LEP has identified it as a major issue to businesses in losing business in dead spots in rural areas. EE are rolling out 3G and 4G services and pressure is being put on them to include rural areas. 2G is still the main problem; Archiva have been given money to deliver 2G to 98% of the population.

AS – This is excellent news; I understand that the BBC has made 300 million available nationally to plug the 10% that are not getting superfast broadband. Are ECC going to get some of this money?

PW - Yes 90% is the minimum that is being aimed for. There is a pot of money about

£20K funded by Defra and BDUK which aims to fill the other 10% that is not being covered.

SB – ECC should be commended for their good work. There should be a caveat regarding the contract with BT that they cannot ask for any further funds as well as a penalty for not delivering on target.

PW - Suppliers have been told that they take the risk themselves if they need further funding and that they won't be paid for non- delivery.

DP - Would it not be a good idea for ERP to recommend one speed testing site to get a standardized view consistent over the county

PW – We use one on the BBC webpage which can be accessed via www.superfastessex.org There are drawbacks, in that there are many variables relating especially to the time and day of the week.

Break for refreshments taken for 20 minutes at 11.20 am

8 Presentation: Lucy Shepherd, Flood Partnerships Manager for ECC with an overview of Essex County Council's progress as your Lead Local Flood Authority.

The presentation can be viewed at the ERP website at www.essexruralpartnership.org.uk

9 Presentation: Mark Iley, Essex Biodiversity Project, Anglian Water regarding Healthy Headwaters.

The presentation can be viewed at the ERP website at www.essexruralpartnership.org.uk

10 Presentation: Ellie Pluck, Community Education Manager, Anglian Water regarding Essex Learning for Sustainability (ELfS)

The presentation can be viewed at the ERP website at www.essexruralpartnership.org.uk

Questions were then put to all three representatives.

GC to MI – Does the road salt that runs off into the drains cause a problem, and should we be trying to stop ECC from doing this?

MI – Agreed that this does cause a problem but he didn't think there was an alternative and therefore not much that could be done about it.

SB to MI – You mentioned in your presentation that the RCCE will be helping to deliver your project. Will they be getting paid for this work?

MI – The work we are asking them to do will be fully funded.

SB to MI – regarding phosphate and nitrogen levels, farmers are not solely to blame. Water companies need to be highlighted as being a contributing factor to these levels.

DP to LS – The double application permission process seems a little bizarre. I feel it will make things unnecessarily difficult and will damage the planning image even further if you have to apply twice, to two different places with two sets of costs.

LS – I agree. The implementation date has been put back twice and a steering group has been set up with stakeholders to try to find a way forward, although something must be done to stop surface water flooding.

PC to LS – I agree that ECC should take the lead on this. There has been some very effective work taking place in my local area, and it is definitely making a difference. It is a huge task, how are you to resource this across a large rural area?

LS – We are still not sure as to how large this problem is as we have inherited it. We need to engage with rural communities to gain local knowledge. We need to prioritise the people and properties that are most affected. Some areas need to be community led to put in new drains. We have no power to enforce new drains.

PD to LS – How much influence do you have over the Environment Agency in influencing their decisions.

LS – It is much better now, as interested parties are working together. We work to influence decisions not direct outcomes.

SB to LS – Have you taken over the ordinary water courses from the Environment Agency?

LS – Yes, ECC are in charge of regulating them, but not maintaining them.

SB to LS – It would be helpful for you to work with farming and landowner organisations to help you deliver schemes.

LS – We will be looking at this to see if there is any funding available.

SB to EP – Could you give some clarification regarding the discussion with children as to the merits of vegetarianism.

EP - This is done in a wider discussion regarding water usage to get children to think about food production in regard to water.

10 Soap Box

Michael Neale from the Environment Agency regarding the latest Environment Agency consultation on the water environment. “ Challenges and Choices”

MN informed the group about the latest EA consultation which is running from 22nd June to 22nd December. The EA are looking for input from communities This consultation is an important step in managing the water environment in England and will help them plan how to improve water quality between now and 2021. It was agreed that more information will be added to the next ERP bulletin and further information regarding the consultation can be found at

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/33252.aspx

11 Any Other Business

There was no other business to report.

Dates of future meetings/events

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|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------|---------------|
| Economic Action Group Meeting, | Monday 29 th July | 10.00 am | RCCE offices. |
| Community Action Group Meeting, | Tuesday 20 th August | 10.00 am | RCCE offices. |
| Environment Action Group Meeting, | Thursday 3 rd October | 10.00 am | RCCE offices. |

The meeting concluded at 1:05 pm

Present:

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| SB | Simon | Brice | Country Land and Business Association |
| JB | John | Brown | Rural Community Council of Essex |
| JBu | John | Buchanan | Essex Association of Local Councils |
| PC | Peter | Chillingworth | Colchester Borough Council |
| GC | George | Courtauld | Rural Community Council of Essex |
| PD | Peter | Davey | Essex Association of Local Councils |
| KE | Ken | Edwards | Active Chelmsford |
| SH | Suzanne | Harris | Rural Community Council of Essex |
| PH | Paul | Hinsley | Essex County Council |
| MI | Mark | Iley | Essex Biodiversity Project |
| SJ | Sheila | Jackman | Essex Association of Local Councils |
| RL | Rob | Lacey | Essex County Council |
| JL | Jenny | Lewsey | Maldon District Council |
| AL | Andrew | Lowing | Rochford District Council |
| TM | Tricia | Moxey | CPREssex |
| MN | Michael | Neale | Environment Agency |
| DP | Dominic | Petre | Visit Essex |
| EP | Ellie | Pluck | Anglian Water |
| AP | Amanda | Plummer | Rural Community Council of Essex |
| LR | Linda | Riley | Voluntary Sector Training |
| SS | Sarah | Sapsford | Rural Community Council of Essex |
| JS | Jenny | Salisbury | Essex County Council |
| AS | Adam | Scott | National Farmers Union |
| LS | Lucy | Shepherd | Essex County Council |
| NS | Nick | Shuttleworth | Rural Community Council of Essex |
| RT | Richard | Thomson | CPREssex |
| PhW | Philip | Wilson | Essex County Council |

Apologies:

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| Keith | Blackburn | Essex County Council |
| Geoffrey | Bray | Rural Shops Alliance |
| John | Buchanan | EERF ex-officio, EALC |
| Petra | Crees | Essex County Council |
| Joy | Darby | Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) |
| John | Gili-Ross | Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) |
| Jody | Owens-Hughes | Rochford District Council |
| Stephen | Rhenius | Uttlesford District Council |
| Melanie | Rundle | Colchester Borough Council |
| Brenda | Towle | Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services (ECVYS) |
| Darren | Smart | Essex County Council |
| Rosemary | Alexander | Farm Crisis Network Essex |
| Judy | Cuddeford | Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency |
| Rosemary | Padfield | NFU |
| John | Jowers | Essex County Council |
| Julie | Nelson | Diocese of Chelmsford |
| Jenny | Pettitt | Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) |