



Minutes of meeting held on 2nd November 2007

RCCE Offices Feering

Attendees:

John Brown (JB)	RCCE – Chair
Suzanne Roast (SR)	RCCE
Joy Sheppard (JS)	EALC
Paul Williams (PaW)	ECC
Philip Wilson (PhW)	ECC
Mike Hall (MH)	Writtle College
Jenny Salisbury (Jes)	ECC Library Services
Karen Flack (KF)	ECC
Kirsty Monk (KM)	RCCE (minutes)

Apologies

Kitty Barrett	BDC
Judy Cuddeford	BDVSA
Sue Sumner	CVS Uttlesford
Elaine Woods	ECC
Chris Allen	EEDA
Keith Blackburn	ECC
Graham Bushby	Essex SJA
Ed Gregory	ECC
Dianne Hardy	ExDra
Ruth Juett	EREC
Gill Pike	UVC
Linda Riley	VST
Nick Shuttleworth	RCCE
Brenda Towle	ECVS
Miriam Stead	ECC
Tony Shelton	Age Concern Essex
Linda Smart	ECC
Theresa Coyne (TC)	Tendring Community Transport
Neil Keylock (NK)	ECC
Angela Balcombe (AB)	ECC
Wendy Jackson (WJ)	ECC
Ken Edwards (KE)	Chelmsford Sport

1 Chairman's Introduction

John Brown (JB) (Chairman) welcomed and thanked all for attending the meeting, introductions were made. The apologies were taken as read.

Karen Flack (ECC-Community Rail Partnership) was introduced to the meeting; she will be taking over the place of Linda Smart who is shortly due to retire.

Mike Hall announced that he was due to leave his post at Writtle in December 2007 and Vincent Marley from Writtle College/CERA (December 2007) would be taking

his place at the full ERP membership meetings.

JB, thanked MH for his invaluable input and on behalf of the Community Action Group and requested that he remain a member of the CAG.

MH thanked the Group and that he would like to attend future meetings, circumstances permitting.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting, 5th September 2007 & matters arising

No matters of accuracy were raised

The minutes were then agreed by those present.

The following were reported as updates/ matters arising from those minutes;

Market Towns (pg 2)

Action: Arrange market Towns event and arrange meeting to discuss the event SR/JS/PW with Sally Williams.

Further matters arising were covered within the main agenda items.

3 Post Office Update

SR advised the meeting that the special public meeting regarding the Proposed Closures of Post Office in Essex had taken place on 30th October 2007.

Although attendance was disappointing, all MPs, PCC's, Sub Post Masters, District, Town and Parish Councillors affected by the closures had been invited. In general the feedback had been very positive. The Deputy Chair of Post Watch, Keith Andrews, Essex County Council, EALC, RCCE and Rural Shops Alliance formed a panel to help answer questions. Post Office Limited, who had originally stated that they would be attending, declined.

The purpose of the meeting was to offer help and advice to affected communities, exchange ideas and to gain local information to inform the ERP response to the Public Consultation. Key advice/points from the meeting:

- Evidence based written responses more effective than petitions
- Representation by Postwatch saved some Post Offices in the Pre consultation process and there are still those under threat of closure that Postwatch are campaigning to save; please copy in letters to add local knowledge to there arguments
- If 1 Post Office is saved another will be closed in its place.
- Access, Economic and demographic arguments would hold more weight than social impact arguments.

ERP Response to the Consultation:

SR explained that the ERP response would be constructed from the following key arguments:

- That the 6 week consultation period is insufficient and does not comply with the Essex Compact agreement (12 Weeks for consultations)
- Postal Strike affected dissemination of information and ability to respond.
- Name of Area Plan misleading and mislabelled when first issued.
- More Outreach facilities should be offered.
- Access, economic, demographic and general transport issues affecting individual post offices identified.

ECC Current Actions regarding Post Office Closures:

PhW advised that Lord Hanningfield had delivered a petition to Westminster and was coordinating a concerted political campaign regarding this issue to lobby Westminster on our behalf. A meeting with John Hutton has also been arranged.

SR said that she had been promoting the campaign via the radio and local media to raise public awareness.

SR advised that the ERP Post Office working group had arranged a meeting with Post Office Limited (POL) and PostWatch on 9th November 2007. SR invited the group to give her any questions they wished raised with POL.

RuralNet - Experts online:

SR circulated a snapshot from the RuralNet expert's online service. SR explained that this is an online service, which allows you to register and receive expert advice on various issues. The Commission of Rural Communities (CRC) had funded a new area within RuralNet of expert advice called "rural services" which would also be covering the issue of Post Office closures. RuralNet searched for an expert organisation to give advice, ACRE advised that Essex and Norfolk were furthest along in this area and once RuralNet had visited the ERP website and its dedicated web page on post offices it selected Essex ERP as its official Expert. SR had been trained to give expert advice on the service. Anyone who wished to log on to the service should do so via the ERP website as registration will then be free of charge and ERP will receive payment for any queries dealt with. Post Office Limited, CRC and ACRE had given their official support to the rural services online advice scheme.

If you wish to register please use the following web link as registration will be free of charge: Web link <http://www.essexruralpartnership.org.uk/postoffice.asp> and register using the experts online register now/login in now field.)

Action: Email the link to Experts on line to ERP Membership/ interested parties

SR/KM

4 RSCP Update

SR explained that the Rural Social and Community Programme (RSCP) had been funded by DEFRA and had been County allocated. They had allowed County to determine its parameters. However funding for the many projects that had the RSCP supported was due to end in March 2008 and no information from Central Government had been given (or was likely to be received in the near future).

JB felt that the time taken to make the announcement on the future funding of these projects was unacceptable.

MH added that the announcement had been delayed due to the comprehensive spending review that was currently being undertaken by Government.

SR advised the meeting that the RCCE RSCP projects, Rural Transport and Access Advisor, Rural Housing Enabler, Field Officers, Community Planning Fund were all under threat; although the Rural Housing Enabler is hoped to eventually become self financing.

JS advised that EALC projects were running to target with excellent pass rates (65%) for Parish and Town Clerks attaining their qualifications. However there is no central funding available for next year as the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is withdrawing funding in 2008. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is lobbying government on this issue however the message from Government is that precepts should be raised to meet the shortfall in funding at a local level.

5 Year Of Food and Farming (YoFF)

PhW reported that the YoFF launch had taken place at Highgrove on 12th September. The Essex committee for YoFF were on course with their planning and programme of events and the major event on 1st May 2008 (Writtle College) had already received 2400 bookings of the 3000 available.

MH felt that it would be useful to contact the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS contact Tim Hughes) who have proven expertise in similar events. MH explained that all Writtle College Staff and Students were “pitching in” to help out at the event in May.

Action: MH to contact PhW with contact detail for RHS

MH/
PhW

6 liC Projects

Rural Retail Advisor Research Post

SR reported that Elizabeth Thorogood had been appointed to the Research Post (part time, 6 month contract) to prove the need for a Rural Retail Advisor – funded by Investing in Communities (liC)

A steering group has been assembled from RCCE, Federation of Small Business, Braintree District Council, Business Link, and the Rural Shops Alliance

PaW offered to meet with Elizabeth Thorogood to discuss any identified training needs picked up by the research she is undertaking.

Remote Access Point Project

SR is currently completing the next round of forms for this project.

Action: Arrange a meeting between PaW and Elizabeth Thorogood

SR/PaW/ET

7 ERS Action Plan

Childcare

Neil Keilock had sent a written report to say that have not yet been able to identify anyone from the Early Years and Childcare Development to come to a meeting to outline the work being undertaken to develop childcare in rural areas; he would try to arrange for someone to attend the CAG regarding this issue.

Fear of Crime

PhW felt this was a cross cutting issue with the Economic working group (CAG *concentrate on the community aspect of the task*)

The Group discussed possible invites to representatives from Neighbourhood Action Panels (NAPs) and the Essex Police, ECC

Rural Services Survey

SR advised the Group that the Rural Services survey was about to commence and would shortly be sent to Parish and Town Councils in Essex.

Tourism

JS suggested contacting the Arts and Heritage Manager for ECC Miriam Stead on this cross cutting issue. (please see action below)

- Continued Actions:** NK
- **NK to identify contact from** Early Years and Childcare Development to come to a CAG meeting to outline the work being undertaken to develop childcare in rural areas
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 - **Action:** MH to liaise with SR re NAPs contacts (ERSAP Fear of Crime) MH/SR
 - **Action** JS to liaise with SR and notify Parish Clerks regarding the Rural Services Survey to encourage them to complete it. SR/JS

8 Community Action Group Membership

The CAG group discussed ways of increasing membership and attendance at meetings. **The following actions were decided** SR/JB/KM

- Next CAG meeting should be a planning meeting to re-launch the CAG for 2008 All
- The CAG terms of reference should be circulated to the CAG prior to the meeting. SR
- A brief summary of the CAG's aims and purpose should be devised and circulated. SR
- Representatives from under-represented groups such as the farming community etc should be identified and invited. All

9 AOB 50 Not Out

PaW distributed leaflets regarding the ECC 50 Not Out Programme which gives free advice and guidance on training, applications, interviews to help older people get back to work or retrain.

Mobile Library Service

JeS informed the Group that the mobile library service had been successfully running on a fortnightly service since July with initial responses very positive. The new time table would be available from January 2008.

JeS added that the transformation and upgrading of Saffron Walden Town Library had been very successful and work was soon to commence on the new building for the Dunmow library.

Minutes: KM!
Action: Km to put an action column in the minutes

10 Date of next full Essex Rural Partnership Meeting

The next CAG meeting was later agreed to be held on Wednesday 19th December 2007 With a Christmas Buffet Lunch followed by the meeting at 2.00pm

Meeting concluded: 12.20pm