



Community Action Group

Friday 25th March 2011, commencing at 10.00 am

RCCE Offices, Threshelfords Business Park, Feering CO5 9SE

MINUTES

Present:

John Brown (Chair) (JB)
Daisy Martlew (minutes)
(DM)
Linda Riley (LR)

Philip Wilson (PhW)
Paul Williams (PW)
Pooneeta Mahadeo (PM)
Julie Nelson (JN)

Andy Payne (AP)
Don Gibson (DG)
Chris Rust (CR)
Sarah Sapsford (SS)

1 Welcome & Introductions

1.1 Apologies

Apologies had been received from: Suzanne Harris, Judy Cuddeford, Joy Darby, Rachael Price, David Eniffer, Gill Burden, Sheila Jackman, Melanie Rundle, Brenda Towle, Daren Smart, Angela Balcombe, Ken Edwards and Ed Gregory.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 9th December 2010

2.1 Accuracy

Approved for accuracy

2.2 Matters arising

2.2.1 Map showing rural locations in Essex

PM will send maps to DM, who will look into uploading them onto the RCCE website.

PM/DM

2.2.2 Action Plan: Active and caring communities priority 2

JB suggested that the CAG invite an Essex Police representative to the next meeting – CR will liaise with SH.

CR/SH

2.2.3 Royal Wedding street party guide

PhW reported that ECC has produced a street party guide including contact details of relevant people, which is now available on the ECC website. ECC only knows of a few planned street parties, but there may be more where permission is not

needed to close the road. A Facebook page for Essex residents has also been set up, which may flag up more planned street parties.

3 Promoting Community Led Plans

JB introduced SS who gave an overview of Community Led Plans (CLPs) and suggested some examples for the CAG to consider:

- **Steeple Bumpstead** – good example of a small parish with a high (90% plus) response rate. Having completed a Parish Plan they are now working on a review and are one of the first to do this.
- **Wivenhoe** – example of a more built-up area that produced a Town Plan which led to involvement with the Transition movement (developed from concern over climate change and peak oil, it encourages a resource-led and environment focussed approach).
- **Chelmsford district** – Chelmsford Borough Council have taken the lead in recognising that CLPs can be used as supplementary planning documents and have included a tick box on planning applications whereby CLPs can be indicated. West Hanningfield submitted a Village Design Statement as evidence against a proposed development that was out of character with the area and won the appeal.
- **Silver End** – an atypical rural community that produced a Parish Plan with the Police and RCCE's involvement, which has led to promotion of energy efficiency for homes by the group and exploration of funding for this.

PW suggested that the CAG include at least one coastal parish. Harwich is a dynamic port, part of the Haven Gateway, a tourist centre and a good example of people coming together to form committees to run local services, community transport etc.

DM will find out the population size of Harwich.

DM

LR flagged up a DVD made by ESTIC about Great Sailing Action Group that could provide a useful tool.

PhW suggested Saffron Walden as an example of community groups looking to create a network with an online chat-room to share views and ideas.

There was a general consensus that the CAG take the lead in raising awareness of community initiatives but should open it up to involve the full ERP. It was also suggested that the CAG visit community groups on location – JB will liaise with SH.

JB/SH

PhW suggested the CAG invite Sarah Hill-Sanders from Chelmsford Borough Council to the next meeting to discuss CLPs further.

PhW/SH/DM

4 The Big Society

4.1 Community Organisers

PhW explained that Community Organisers will be half-funded by the Government to energise communities and facilitate community action. The funding will cover the initial training, and then Community Organisers will become self-funding.

The CAG agreed that it would not be an issue if Community Organisers were absent from rural areas, as there are already people carrying out similar roles in these locations already.

4.2 National Citizens Service

JB suggested the CAG consult Brenda Towle.

4.2 Models of community projects

Agreed as covered under item 3.

4.4 Big Society ideas in the community

PhW reported that the Good for Essex prospectus, which includes some inspirational projects, was launched on Tuesday (22nd March) and is available on the ECC website. As part of the prospectus, a call for ideas was launched and some good ideas have been received so far. The Big Society Fund which opens up opportunities to small businesses, pubs and shops was also announced. PhW will pass on information regarding the prospectus to SH.

PhW/SH

Pub is the Hub will be coming to Essex on Tuesday 29th March to launch their Community Champions Campaign.

There was a discussion over ways of identifying community projects in Essex as examples of the Big Society in action. AP highlighted the work of the Village Agents as a means of obtaining this information. ESTIC also holds some information that may be useful – this will be available on the EACVS (Essex Association for Councils for Voluntary Service) website.

5 An Environment of Change

Deferred to the next meeting.

6 Village Agents update

AP reported that an internal valuation had been put to the Commission Board which has given the go-ahead for the business case. This will be presented to the Adults Community Wellbeing Board in May at the latest. There are a number of GPs signed up to the project and this number is growing rapidly. A lot of work has also been done around cost-benefit analysis. There are a number of decisions that need to be made regarding the project's feasibility, addressing issues such as

whether to remain in rural areas, involve different providers etc. AP will keep the CAG informed of any further developments between meetings and all agreed that a Village Agents update should become a standing item on the agenda.

AP

7 Rural Services Survey 2010 update

DM reported that the final response rate is 62% (172 out of 279 parishes surveyed). Preliminary analysis commenced this month and section one: shops and services has been completed so far. Some key points that have emerged:

- There have been 21 Post Office closures over the last 5 years, plus 4 that were closed during this period but now reopened
- 83 Parishes have a Post Office within their boundary
- 88 Parishes do not have a Post Office
- 56 Parishes have experienced shop closures over the last 5 years
- 11 Parishes were left with no shops, as a result of closures in the last 5 years
- 147 Parishes have at least one pub
- 33 pubs have closed over last 5 years – 3 parishes have lost their last pub (1 in Colchester, 1 in Maldon and 1 in Uttlesford)
- 18 parishes have a bank or building society
- 52 parishes have an ATM or cash point
- 57 parishes do not have a general store, post office or cash point/ATM

DM is aiming to finish the analysis over the next couple of weeks and compile a draft report by the end of April.

8 AOB

DG reported that £10 million from central Government will go to fund community transport schemes; Essex will receive £332, 000 for environmentally and economically sustainable transport. Core funding for community transport is agreed in principle but should know for definite by 30th March. The funding is for all schemes in rurally isolated areas of Essex over a three-year period.

8.1 Date of next meeting

Late May/early June. DM will email dates.

DM

8.2 Forthcoming events/information sharing

Nothing to report

The meeting concluded at 11:30am