



## **Community Action Group**

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2014 10:30am**

RCCE Offices, Threshelfords Business Park, Feering CO5 9SE

**Present:**

John Brown (Chair) (JB)  
Rachel Fahie (RF)  
Suzanne Harris (SH)

Julie Nelson (JN)  
Darren Smart (DS)  
Chris Rust (CR)

Paul Williams (PW)  
Brian Goodwin (BG)  
*(item 3 only)*

**1 Welcome & Introductions**

Canon John Brown welcomed those present to the meeting and round table introductions were made.

**Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Gill Burden, Ken Edwards, David Ennifer, Wendy Jackson, Lorraine Jarvis, Rachael Price, Melanie Rundle and Philip Wilson.

**2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

**Accuracy**

With the addition of Julie Nelson shown as present, the minutes were agreed as accurate.

**Matters Arising**

There were none not on the agenda.

**3 Health and Wellbeing Updates**

It was noted with disappointment that there was no representation from Healthwatch. JN asked about the success of the launch events. SH agreed to request an update from Tom Nutt, which could be circulated to members.

SH

It was also noted that there was no representation from ECC Passenger Transport, although recognised that apologies had been sent. CR advised the meeting that Community Transport Schemes across the county have still not received SLA or confirmation of funding for the year commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014. Most are currently continuing to operate in the expectation of a written agreement, but this presents difficulties and means that CT boards must make a choice between putting staff 'at risk of redundancy' or carrying the risk of incurred costs if the expected SLA's are not forthcoming. It was thought to be a

delay at member (not officer) level and agreed that this would be highlighted at full ERP.

DS raised the issue of timebanks. BG reported that there was no news regarding geographic expansion. BG agreed to try and find out the current position from Clare Lawrence at ECC. SH agreed to find out how Colchester scheme works.

BG /  
SH

### **Village Agents**

BG – Village agents Update

BG explained that much work has been carried out over the last 6 months looking at the future of Village Agents and considering the recommendations of the Who Will Care report. RCCE is working in partnership with British Red Cross, Age UK and Neighbourhood Watch; other partners were approached but declined to get involved. Proposals were presented to ECC from the working partnership. It is now proposed that Village Agents will cease to operate on 30<sup>th</sup> June, and Community Agents will start on 1 July. There is slight uncertainty about dates until formal confirmation is received. The Business Case was approved by the Outcomes Board on 5<sup>th</sup> March, but Cabinet approval is needed; final decision is expected on 7<sup>th</sup> April.

Community Agents will have a slightly different remit to Village Agents. The service will be Essex-wide, covering urban and rural areas, with a focus on over 65's. In contrast Village Agents' remit was to work with those over 50. There is some concern about support for 55-60 year-olds, as much of past work has been early intervention for this age group, offering long term benefits. BG advised he is unsure of the flexibility to address this until the new service commences. The new service will have a stronger focus on health and social care; Village Agents have been working to wider remit. BG is expecting more direct referrals from the health sector in future.

The Agents service will have more support in its new guise – there will be 36 Agents (increased from 12) with (ultimately) 70-90 volunteers supporting them. It is intended that Agents will be able to identify areas where skills are required and to then use volunteers to provide the necessary support. This might include teaching the bereaved to cook, building confidence to attend a social club, and other generic basic life skills.

Within the partnership RCCE and Red Cross will be employing the 36 Agents between them. Red Cross will recruit and train the volunteers. Age UK Essex will record the knowledge base, including mobility needs of customers/users. Neighbourhood Watch will connect at a street level, using their co-ordinators to assist the Community Agents project, and using likewise using the project to recruit more co-ordinators to Neighbourhood Watch. This will help to emphasise the benefits of 'trusted voices'. The new project will have secure funding for 5 years.

BG added that the ECC Rapid Results Team is now operational, and Community Agents will work with them to look at the frailty pathway.

BG answered questions from those present:

RF – what is link between 0845 assessment number and new project?  
BG – not sure what direct link will be, but is hoped that CA will pick up a number of people who do not meet requirements of assessment. The current project aims to intervene before assessment required and it is intended that the new project will follow this way of working.  
RF – concern about those not meeting criteria to get into system  
BG – confirmed these are definitely the people the service is aimed at; just not sure what the route will be yet. Also hoped those receiving low level care package will go to Community Agents.  
JN – part of the strength of Village Agents is that they ‘go out and find people’ at an early stage.  
BG – confirmed that that approach won’t change  
PW – what is the future for those currently working as Village Agents?  
BG – all will be retained, with revision of Job Descriptions  
PW – summarised the benefit being expansion to countywide, the downside loss of rural focus.  
BG – ECC trying to match strengths of organisations to ensure they are included.  
BG – statistics show Village Agents having impact. Expecting half clients to come from social care referral, 25% from other health source and 25% outreach work.  
PW – reduction in age for support affects a pressured age group – they are supporting children and grandchildren and also elderly relatives – no support available for them.  
BG – expects those people will gain some support, from Community Agents or another source. Community Agents can help develop links to existing services. BG recognises concerns but thinks they can be overcome. He encouraged members to focus on the positive aspect that the service will be rolling out to cover all of Essex.  
JB – thanked BG for his input to the meeting.

#### **4 Social Value Act**

Information from the Essex Procurement Hub was circulated, outlining what the Social Value Act means. RF added that the legislation is permissive, not prescriptive; it builds on best value but there are varying levels of commitment in different places. The Social Value Act came into effect in January 2013. SH highlighted that for contracts over £172,514 there is a legal duty to consider social value (but no specific requirement expressing how that should be done); for contracts under £172,514 there is no requirement to consider social value, although Local Authorities can write this into criteria if they choose to. CR agreed to find details for the new lead officer of the Procurement Hub.

CR

#### **5 Credit Unions**

JN had suggested this as an agenda topic – she is enthused by the work of Credit Unions and would like to explore how we might work with them to support what they do. DS informed the group that Essex Libraries has a broad partnership with Essex

Savers (a countywide CU); Essex Savers uses libraries to both promote and deliver their service. The partnership has two-way benefits.

CR was aware of an independent CU in Maldon, covering only part of the district.

DS highlighted two difficulties CUs have in trying to help those most at need: i) that users need to pay in for a period of time before being able to borrow from a CU – those most in need are not in a position to make payments before requiring a loan; hence payday loan companies offer a more desirable service, albeit at an extortionate cost; ii) that CUs need investment from people not needing to borrow, in order to have the resources to provide loans.

JN stressed that Essex Savers is not the only countywide CU in Essex.

RF explained that Braintree LSP is considering how to promote CUs and highlight the risks associated with payday loans. The challenge is to make CUs better known and to replace advertisements for payday loans with a better alternative. The vision is to return society to principals of saving before borrowing and to move away from instant demands.

PW suggested using case studies.

CR asked if the CAB were involved in Braintree, and RF confirmed that they are.

RF suggested that to achieve a real shift in attitudes it is necessary to start in secondary schools.

There is also a general need to dispel some of the myths about CUs – they are covered by FSA regulations and people saving with them are protected.

DS offered to get involved in the Braintree project by engaging the Library Service.

JN advised that Holdfast is the main CU in Braintree, operating in Witham; it is keen to extend and requires support to do so.

PW reported on recent information suggesting that CUs can offer greater benefits to savers than banks.

JN reminded the group that CUs can accept corporate savings, such as from a church or village hall.

It was agreed to refer the subject to full ERP in October, and to retain on a CAG agenda. SH

## **6 Site Visits**

JB reported the following three options for visits:

- i. Nazeing
- ii. Chishall and Streathall
- iii. Pebmarsh, Alphamstone and Lamarsh

JB Agreed to follow-up possibilities. SH would seek views (by e-mail) from the CAG on preferred location(s) to visit and to establish if any CAG members have useful contacts in these areas. SH

## **7 Strategic Developments**

SE LEP is now working with a federated structure, based on counties – they key group in Essex is the Greater Essex Business Board, chaired by Simon Brice. The Rural Working Group has not met in traditional form recently, but a Rural Workshop was held in March, where possible projects to be included in the ESIF

strategy (European Structural and Investment Fund strategy) were discussed. The SEP (Strategic Economic Plan) and Growth Deal sets out how the SE LEP intends to direct funding to encourage economic growth and jobs. This plan was submitted on 31 March. Any money secured will be available from April 2015. The ESIF strategy (European Structural and Investment Fund strategy) explains how £165 of EU finding will be spent. This includes ESF (European Social Fund) and ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) which form part of the SEP. The ESIF also includes EAFRD (European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development).

LEADER funding must be aligned with LEP strategies, but does not form part of LEP funding and is expected to be passed directly from Defra Rural Payments Agency to successful applicants. LEADER is run by self-establishing Local Action Groups (LAGs) who must apply for funding by submitting a Local Development Strategy (LDS) by September.

In Essex the following three projects are working to secure LEADER funding:

- i. Eastern Plateau – an existing LAG covering Uttlesford and part of Hertfordshire, run by East Herts DC. Looking to expand further into Essex.
- ii. Essex Rivers – an emerging LAG which expects to receive funding from Defra to create a LDS. Area expected to include some/part of: Maldon, Rochford, Chelmsford, Brentwood, Braintree, Colchester. Led by RCCE.
- iii. Wool Towns – an emerging LAG led by Suffolk County Council, covering part of Suffolk and parts of Braintree, Colchester and Tendring districts. Several ERP members are involved representing Essex. This group has also submitted application for ‘preparation funding’.

SH would circulate some information about the SE LEP and funding available. SH

## **8 Forthcoming Events & Round Table Information Sharing**

CR offered information about a new project for which Heybridge Parish Council has received funding. It is a partnership which includes Maldon Dc, Moat Housing, Essex Boys and Girls Clubs and Maldon Community Safety Partnership. The project will provide doorstep clubs for 13-10 year olds in Heybridge, the area with the highest number of this age group outside of Maldon town (which has good facilities) and where a large new housing development has received approval for build.

## **9 Any Other Business**

There was none.

### **Date of next meeting**

10<sup>th</sup> June at 10.00am