



Minutes of meeting held on 14th March 2007

RCCE Conference Room, Feering

Attendees:

John Brown (JB)	RCCE – Chair
Suzanne Roast (SR)	RCCE
Theresa Coyne (TC)	Tendring Community Transport
Tony Shelton (TS)	Age Concern Essex
Mike Hall (MH)	Writtle College
Paul Williams (PW)	ECC
David Eniffer (DE)	Volunteer Centre Tendring
Wendy Jackson (WJ)	ECC
Judy Cuddeford (JC)	BDUSA
Kitty Barrett	BDC
Linda Smart (LS)	ECC
Kirsty Monk (KM)	RCCE (minutes)

Apologies

Sue Sumner	CVS Uttlesford
Elaine Woods	ECC
Angela Balcombe	ECC
Chris Allen	EEDA
Keith Blackburn	ECC
Graham Bushby	Essex SJA
Gemma Driscoll	ECC
Ken Edwards	Chelmsford Sport
Ed Gregory	ECC
Mike Hall	Writtle College
Dianne Hardy	ExDra
Ruth Juett	EREC
Neil Keylock	ECC
Gill Pike	UVC
Linda Riley	VST
Jenny Salisbury	ECC Library Services
Joy Sheppard	EALC
Nick Shuttleworth	RCCE
Brenda Towle	ECVS
Miriam Stead	ECC

John Brown warmly welcomed attendees to the meeting at 1.35pm and introductions were made.

1. **Minutes of the last meeting & Matters Arising**

No matters of accuracy were raised

Item 2 - Suzanne Roast (SR) reported that she was still awaiting news regarding Sarah Swan's role and remit and inviting her to attend a meeting of the CAG as an ESTIC (Essex and Southend and Thurrock Information Consortium) representative.

Action: SR to update on progress at next meeting.

SR advised that this information should be distributed via ESTIC .

There was a general discussion by the group as to the difficulties of passing on information to relevant groups as the information was often not read.

Wendy Jackson (WJ) Suggested putting information on the Community Link Site.

Action: John Brown (JB) suggested that the effective dissemination of Information should be an item on the next Steering Group agenda.

2. Update on RSCP Projects in Essex:

Community Planning Fund (CPF)

Suzanne Roast (SR) reported to the Group that proactive measures to counter act the anticipated under spend of the Community Planning Fund for the current financial year 06/07 had been taken and produced a large influx of applications. SR felt confident that there would be no under spend remaining (any under spend over 5% must be returned to DEFRA).

This had been tackled in several ways. SR had confirmed permission to open the CPF to applications for projects arising to community led plans and SR and KM had marketed this to interested groups and with the help of the Voluntary Sector and EALC had reached a large number of the target audience for funding.

The RCCE Field officers had also pushed the fund to prospective applicants and had advised groups in completing their applications and many resulting applications had been received.

There was a discussion by the group as to the need to maintain promotion of the Community Planning Fund to prevent an under spend situation arising for the next financial year and ensure that Communities are informed of this funding stream

SR confirmed that RCCE were committed to doing this and both herself, Kirsty and the Field Officers were taking a very proactive approach in promoting the fund. However the only difficulty encountered on occasion were the long term time scales of Community Led Plans such as Village Design Statements and the fact that groups embarking on these projects may well need to apply after March 2008 and there is currently no funding in place for them. It was therefore of paramount importance that funding be secured for these projects for the future.

Action: JB asked KM to prepare a report for the CAG as to which Parishes have been funded and the projects assisted.

3. Impact of the Olympics on Lottery Funding

Suzanne Roast (SR) circulated a document to the meeting regarding the use of Lottery funds to make up the shortfall in the final budget for the Olympics in 2012. the primary concern was that using National Lottery funding for the Olympics shortfall would certainly mean that lottery money would be diverted from other essential projects and affect the Voluntary Sector very badly.

Theresa Coyne (TC) said she had learned from TCVS that ten Big Lottery Fund applications from Tendring based charities were unsuccessful. This raises concern that Big Lottery Fund allocations are being cut back to serve the Olympics. TC said it appears that central government will take money to support the Olympics from L.A.s Big Lottery allocation and not the voluntary sector, if this is the case the voluntary sector will

still lose out because L.A.s will have no option but to make cuts in other areas to offset any shortfall. This in turn could impact on the voluntary sector.

SR spoke of the proposed cutbacks in the Awards for All funding Scheme, which could be as much as 50% in total.

Tony Shelton (TS) said that following a failed bid to the Big Lottery Fund, NEAT's (North Essex Advocacy Team) faced closure. It appears that Age Concern Essex may step in to save the scheme.

TC spoke about an excellent paper on abuse of the elderly, produced by Sue Greaves, NEAT's manager. She added that NEAT's closure affects elderly, vulnerable people and emphasised the importance of training for voluntary sector trustees and managers, many of whom build and expand their organisations without any long-term plans for sustainability. What has happened to NEAT will happen to others as government policies and strategies push the VS towards the social enterprises model. TC said that government interference in the voluntary sector will kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Judy Cuddeford (JC) had written to various organisations and said that most CVS's are registering their concerns. However not all unsuccessful lottery bids will be due to this issue.

Paul Williams (PW) felt it would be a good idea to quantify what services might be lost and the failure rate for applications in the area.

John Brown (JB) asked whether the group wished to respond formally to this issue or as individual organisations.

Action: SR to collate information about what services and groups are likely to be affected and draft response letter for circulation to the CAG group. This issue should be also taken forward to the Steering Group's next meeting on 16/05/07

4. Update on Essex Rural Partnership Activities

Closure of Rural Post Offices

SR advised the group that a small task group had been assembled to tackle this issue and were to meet on 20/03/07 and devise plan of action on behalf of the ERP. Their aim was to ensure the continuation and preservation of essential post office services and that they would be maintained in some format in Rural Areas.

The ERP response to the DTI consultation on the future closures had been submitted on time and its receipt acknowledged. No decision was expected until after the local elections, no formal date had been issued for the Government's response at present.

liC Update:

The Rural Access Points

This project was now likely to start in 2008 as a pilot scheme in the Maldon District

The Rural Retail Advisor

SR advised the meeting that another proposed project to assist rural communities is to offer the service of a Rural Retail Advisor; a post in the process of creation and awaiting final approval and funding which will assist any retailer providing essential service to rural communities. Unfortunately concerns raised by EEDA have meant that ultimately this project has been put on hold, and although Extra have fought hard to keep it in the business plan, the likely start time for this post will be April 2008 rather than June 2007.

SR felt that it was a combination of cut backs in this year's budget and ironing out the final remit of the RRA post that had caused the delay.

Paul Williams (PW) proposed to the group that RCCE would be the most appropriate organisation to maintain this post and the other members of the group gave their agreement.

Action: SR to report back on further developments on these 2 projects.

5. Essex Rural Strategy Plan – New Actions Tasks and Priorities

SR advised the Group that she had revised the Action Plan so that it was sorted into priority action order so that the most urgent issues could be identified and that the descriptions of the actions had been inputted fully. SR suggested that the group look at the most urgent issues assigned to CAG as it would take too long to review all the actions.

Action Plan Item 2a. – Linking Communities

SR notified the Group that although this item is partially being met by the Linking Communities scheme that RSCP funding for this project ends in March 2008 and no further funding had as yet been secured. It was therefore necessary to further the ERP Action Plan implementation, that funding for this scheme is secured.

TC raised the issue of the need for transport and access for vocational training and after school activities for young people in rural areas who are excluded owing to an acute shortage of appropriate transport. TC said that she attended a Transport sub group that dealt solely with the transport needs of children, young people and families living in Tendring District, in an effort to address this issue.

There was a general discussion regarding the transport and access needs of young people and although some areas did offer transport services via community minibuses and social car schemes provided by the Voluntary Sector, the Group felt a county wide scheme with consistency of availability in all areas of Essex should be the main goal. Also that the research carried out by individual transport organisations for their areas should be shared to give a wider overall picture of Essex Services for Young people. TC suggested that the Tendring Transport Sub Group, could be a model for the rest of the county.

Action Plan Item 6G- Reducing the Fear of Crime

SR explained that the ERP Economic Action Group was also looking at this issue from a business point of view.

PW felt there were two interrelated issues related to crime:

- 1) The fear of Crime in the business community
- 2) The fear of Crime by individuals and the wider community

Action: SR to report to the CAG on the actions and strategies of the ECAG so that the group can plan their areas of work on this issue.

Market Towns Partnerships

SR explained that since the launch of the Market Towns Initiative, there still appeared to be reticence by groups informing partnerships. Keith Blackburn and SR had been to a meeting in Bury St Edmonds promoting the benefits of joining a Market Town Partnership (MTP) with Sally Williams from Action for Market Towns (AMT), who has been asked to draft MTP promotional material that the ERP could circulate.

SR is planning an event in Essex at the End of July which will be in partnership with AMT, EEDA and ECC.

6. **AOB:**

RTAN Lunch

Kirsty Monk (KM) advised that the Rural Transport and Access Network Lunch is due to be held at Chapter House on 29th May 2007 in Cedd's Hall (Arrive for 12:30 start, 2:00pm finish). This might be useful given that some of the Group's discussion had been about the need to improve communication and sharing of information between those involved in transport and access.

Patient Transport

Judy Cuddeford (JC) raised the growing issue of Patient transport to hospital and other NHS services. The lack of co-ordination and planning with the hospital appointment and the transport links to the hospital which made it impossible for patients in rural areas to attend.

Action: The group agreed to look at ways of addressing this issue.

Wendy Jackson

Wendy Jackson (WS) asked that she be included as a member of the Group. The group welcomed WJ and were happy for her to attend future meetings.

Action: KM to circulate meeting details to WJ

7. **Date of Next Meeting -Wednesday 9th May 2007** at Chapter House, the Johnson Room, Chelmsford 1.00pm Lunch 1.30pm Meeting Commences.

Meeting Concluded at 3.40pm