



## Essex Rural Partnership

**STEERING GROUP**  
**18<sup>th</sup> February 2011**  
**Minutes of the Meeting**  
**RCCE Offices, Feering, CO5 9SE, 10:00am**

---

<b>Present</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Orgn</b>	<b>Initials</b>
Cllr John Jowers	Chairman	ECC	(JJ)
Canon John Brown	Vice Chair	RCCE	(JB)
Peter Chillingworth	ELG rep	Colchester BC	(PC)
John Hall	EnvAG	EWT	(JH)
Suzanne Harris	CAG & EERF	RCCE	(SH)
Dominic Petre	EcAG	EET	(DP)
Joy Darby	CAG	EALC	(JD)
Nick Shuttleworth	Facilitor orgn	RCCE	(NS)
Philip Wilson	EcAG	ECC	(PhW)
Cllr Mick Page	EERF	ECC	(MP)
Richard Woolley	EERF	RCCE	(RW)
Cllr John Buchanan	EERF	EALC	(JBU)
Wendy Scattergood	ELG rep	Braintree DC	(WS)
Daisy Martlew	(minutes)	RCCE	(DM)
<b>Apologies</b>			
Cllr Peter Baggott	EnvAG	EALC	(PB)
Fiona Bryant	EEDA	EEDA	(FB)

### 1. **Welcome and Introductions**

Chairman Cllr. John Jowers welcomed all to the meeting.

#### 1.1 **Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Peter Baggott and Fiona Bryant.

### 2. **Minutes of the ERP Steering Group Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2010**

#### 2.1 **Accuracy**

All agreed as accurate except item 4.2 Local Economic Partnerships – should have included Essex RCC as well as Kent and East Sussex.

#### 2.2 **Matters Arising**

SH has not received any feedback regarding the Woodland Strategy.

JJ stated that community assets should be given to the community where possible.

### 3. Items to Report

#### 3.1 Updates from Action Groups

##### Community Action Group – Report from Canon John Brown

JB reported that the CAG (supported by ECC library service) had been working on a map of the county which can overlay other maps to indicate what's happening in rural areas – this is now near completion. The CAG has also been looking at ways to improve communication with communities including use of the mobile library service. There was a discussion over how CAG and the ERP Steering Group can contribute more to implementing the 'Big Society'. JB proposed that the group identify three or four models of various size community projects that work to inspire and inform other communities of what can be done.

PhW reported that an Essex street party guide, approved by all districts, will be published online next Tuesday (22<sup>nd</sup> February).

##### Economic Action Group – Report from Philip Wilson

Nothing to report as the EcAG had not met since 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

##### Environment Action Group – Report from John Hall

JH informed the group that the EcAG will be meeting next week (Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February). Items on the agenda include Local Wildlife Sites –target of 538 in positive conservation management has been achieved – and the Living Landscape Project – not able to meet the target due to funding cuts, but there has been a lot of interest across the county. Essex was bottom of all counties for local wildlife sites when the project started, but is now half way up the table with 36% of sites now under positive conservation management. The group is also looking at how to encourage and support private landowners. JH noted that a big challenge is whether to split rural areas from urban, as there are many wildlife sites in urbanised areas which bring educational benefits to those living in towns and cities. There will be a practical work party at Layer Breton Heath on 11<sup>th</sup> March in celebration. Please let JH know if you would like to attend and if so, please bring work clothes!

All

#### 3.2 East of England Rural Forum

SH reported that the Forum had met last Friday (11<sup>th</sup> February) to discuss the Rural White Paper Action Plan; each table focussed on a different theme. Two more events will be held over the next month and all information will be pulled together. The next meeting will take place on 9<sup>th</sup> March. SH will be representing East of England Rural Forum at the national RAF Chairs meeting with Richard Benyon MP in March to discuss the future of the Rural Affairs Fora. The general consensus is that the EERF should continue to meet until future funding is secured or until the forum no longer serves a purpose/is replaced by something else.

JBu also attended the event on the 11<sup>th</sup> February and reported that the Rural Farm Network presentation, which argued a case for focussing on food production, was most interesting. SH added that Defra suggested joining forces with the Sustainable Food and Farming Group, however they are not interested.

JD reported that she had been a part of the educational group at the Rural White Paper event, looking at skills. It was noted that people in the sector believe there are a high number of apprenticeships available; however in her experience JD felt that it was hard to access them.

PhW was involved in the technology/broadband group at the event. It was concluded that technology changes so much and so quickly that it might be best to overthrow the strategy. We are moving towards 4G and when it arrives, rural broadband will be

a part of it.

## **4. Essex Partnership**

### **4.1 Feedback from meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> February**

JBu reported that a new public health service Health Watch is being established which will be accountable to local authorities. Primary Care Trusts will cease on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 but a shadow consortium will be set up. George Keiffer gave a presentation on setting up a LEP board. The workshops focused on whether there was a need for an Essex LSP Framework and how to devolve power.

JH expressed concern over a lack of clarity on the overarching structure of LSPs. JJ agreed and added that there is no financial structure and the funding is unclear. Uttlesford, Harlow and Epping have joined up in a single LSP.

NS reported that Dan Gascoyne has proposed that partnership meetings need to be scaled down, however there should be a continuation of a strategic countywide body. There are likely to be three key partnerships at the middle level – LEP, Health and Wellbeing Board and a Community Board. NS stated that the bottom level, including ERP, needs to think about how it relates to the above bodies connecting up to the top. NS also expressed concern that if everything is focused on districts, it could have a negative impact on rural areas; there are varying degrees of rurality and as such rural areas could be in the minority and not reflected. NS added that the Essex Partnership gives us high level representation.

PhW reported that he had attended a Rural Interest Group meeting including Essex, Kent and East Sussex RCCs at DCLG (Department for Local Communities and Government). Common themes of future plans were identified including infrastructure – roads, technology etc. A Kent Economic Board member is likely to be representing rural interests on the 'final' LEP board – Essex and East Sussex should endorse this. Essex County Council is putting together a revised and expanded version of the Jeremy Leggett paper to be presented on 14<sup>th</sup> March.

## **5. Strategic Changes**

### **5.1 Local Economic Partnerships**

Agreed as covered under item 4

### **5.2 Localism Bill**

JJ felt that the main issue concerning localism was with planning.

JBu proposed that it was best to wait and see what happens with the legislation, and deal with the consequences once it has been pushed through. JBu anticipates that opportunities will come out of the localism bill.

NS added that there is a lot for RCCs to be positive about as the bill embodies what the organisations support. RCCE facilitates on average 30-40 units of new affordable housing in rural areas, however a referendum could back rather than enable rural house building.

JJ expressed concern that there is no potential for altering local financing as it is still centralised.

JB recommended that localism be an item on the full ERP meeting agenda in April. PC suggested that this be included in a future ERP meeting when the bill becomes an Act.

It was suggested that we invite John Regan to give a presentation on food security at the full ERP meeting in April and PhW to give a presentation from Essex County Council.

**PhW**

### **5.3 Structural Changes**

Agreed as covered under item 4.

## **6. Services in Rural Essex 2010**

### **6.1 An update in the Rural Services Survey**

DM reported that the deadline for returning completed surveys had been extended to the 31<sup>st</sup> January (from 3<sup>rd</sup> December), however any surveys received after then had and will be included in the analysis. The response rate is now 61% (172 surveys returned out of a total of 282). 43 parishes responded this year that did not in 2008 and 30 parishes that responded in 2008 did not respond this time. SH added that there was an issue with some Parish clerks not living in the parish they are filling the survey in for, and therefore not knowing all the answers.

WS suggested that a question on mains drainage be included in future surveys. She added that some clerks may not fill in the survey if nothing has changed in their parish.

DP suggested that the first question on future surveys should give the opportunity to say nothing has changed, which they can then send back.

## **7. Any other business**

### **7.1 Items notified in advance of the meeting**

SH reported that DM is designing a new ERP monthly newsletter and welcomes any ideas/news to include in future issues.

### **7.2 Reports from meetings/conferences attended**

None to report.

### **7.3 Forthcoming events**

- 11<sup>th</sup> March – Practical work party celebration event, Layer Breton Heath
- 29<sup>th</sup> March – Community Champions – RCCs and Pub is the Hub event with publicans to pass on idea and information
- 5<sup>th</sup> April – full ERP meeting (venue tbc)

### **5.2 Date of next Full ERP meeting**

Afternoon at full ERP meeting 5<sup>th</sup> April

**The meeting concluded at 12:00 pm**