



## Essex Rural Partnership

**STEERING GROUP**  
**27<sup>th</sup> May 2011**  
**Minutes of the Meeting**  
**RCCE Offices, Threshelfords Business Park, 10:00am**

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<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
Nick Shuttleworth	Facilitator	RCCE	NS
Suzanne Harris	CAG & EERF	RCCE	SH
Daisy Martlew	Minutes	RCCE	DM
Philip Wilson	EcAG	ECC	PhW
Dominic Petre	EcAG	EET	DP
Cllr Peter Baggott	EnvAG	EALC	PB
Cllr John Buchanan	EERF	EALC	JBu
Fiona Bryant	EEDA	EEDA	FB
Peter Chillingworth	ELG rep	Colchester BC	PC
Richard Woolley	EERF	RCCE	RW
Wendy Scattergood	ELG rep	Braintree DC	WS
<b>Apologies</b>			
Joy Darby	CAG	EALC	JD

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Cllr. John Jowers welcomed all to the meeting.

#### 1.1 Apologies

Apologies were taken as read (see above for details).

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

#### 2.1 Accuracy

Agreed

#### 2.2 Matters Arising

None

### 3. ERP Response to Essex Partnership Consultation

The Consultation will run until 13<sup>th</sup> June. Feedback from the Steering Group was as follows:

JB felt that there was very little consultation regarding the 'drawing up' of the document - the voluntary and private sector should have been consulted. In addition the document is very top down from ECC. We should first work out what the consultation is for, and then work out the structures needed.

JBu suggested that, having decided on the goals, the structures and organisations in place should focus on involving the 'right people', who understand the goals and will then decide who should be part of the task and finish group.

NS added that there needs to be a political leadership, a strategic strand and a delivery strand. The two structures in between could possibly block the system of strategy to delivery.

JJ highlighted that the Health and Wellbeing Board is important and will link in to practitioner-based commissioning. The Locality Boards are still to be confirmed, but are being seen as a replacement for Area Forums.

We have no jurisdiction over the LSPs - they are internally funded and have a responsibility for sustainable community strategies; they could be considered 'mini LEPs' in their own right.

Braintree District Council carried out a survey looking at powers they felt they could devolve down to Parish Councils or refer upwards to ECC. The difficulty lies in working out the appropriate governance level for decisions to be made.

RW appreciated that there were a number of Government initiatives looking at local level, but it felt as if the health agenda was being dictated to us. The document is written the wrong way round and gives a strong impression of being very 'top down'. The response locally might be more positive if it were reversed to 'bottom up'.

DP agreed and suggested we should start with everything devolved down and then decide which powers we want to retain higher up. This would be different for each District.

FB was concerned that it was unclear how communication will happen vertically and there was a lack of detail around how any of the groups might work together. There needs to be flexibility and the right people who can make the right decisions at the right level should be involved. This might mean that people attending meetings would vary according to the theme and non-permanent seats on a number of groups might be held. Task and Finish Groups need to be flexible, and pin-point where skills are and where they can be applied. Communication between groups and the public is also critical.

JBu agreed and suggested that there should be someone at the Partnership level who understands the topic, who then knows someone who has an understanding of the detail, who can then be a part of the task and finish group.

FB acknowledged that at a certain level, knowledge and expertise is required, however there are many groups on the ground who give their time freely, who are skilled and do good work. More communication and detail between and within the different levels needs to be defined and the voluntary sector should be included. We need a framework in place for local communities to say what they think they could deliver better.

NS referred to Neighbourhood and Community Led Plans as a means of supporting local communities, but acknowledged that how influential they are varies by District – Braintree considers them at a high level, for example. However not everything can be decided at a local level and a more strategic overview is needed.

We need to think about what we want to see in the document that will benefit rural communities.

RW highlighted that there needs to be a cultural community change if localism is to succeed – this should be reflected in the document.

SH was concerned that the Essex Conference is supposed to be a wider forum for people to come together, however the sentence “doesn’t make decisions!” is quite insulting to those organisations involved. How the Sub-County Commissioning Partnerships link in with the rest of the structure is unclear – is their role to influence decisions?

PhW confessed he was somewhat disappointed with the document as it appeared to be a “rehash of something we’ve seen before” and was not radically different.

**Action:** SH will revise document based on feedback from the meeting and will circulate to the group by **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June**. All to provide feedback to SH on revised document by **Monday 6<sup>th</sup> June**, although SH acknowledged that she was happy to receive comments as the consultation proceeds.

**SH/All**

All agreed that the response from the ERP will have a rural focus.

## 4. Strategic Developments

### 4.1 Local Enterprise Partnerships

FB reported that an executive group of 24 members has been agreed, its main role being to act as an operational executive and report to the full Board. The full Board of 44 members will act as a strategic advisory group to the LEP. Overtime this structure will be reviewed; critically a Chair from the private sector still needs to be put in place.

Essex representatives on the executive group will include:

Four from the political arena

- Leader of Essex County Council
- Leader of Southend Unitary Authority
- Leader of Thurrock Unitary Authority
- Leader of one District/Borough (Basildon)

Four from the business community

- Haven Gateway – George Keiffer
- Thames Gateway – Gary Sullivan
- M11 Corridor – John Spence
- Heart of Essex – Nick Cook

One from further and higher education (FEHE)

- Colin Riordan (University of Essex Vice Chancellor)

The group had its first meeting last week (week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> May).

- John Regan has been confirmed as a 'rural member' of the executive group
- Keith Brown, FSB, sits on the full Board (of 44 members)
- Colin Riordan, Vice Chancellor of the University of Essex, is also on the full Board

The Integrated County Strategy will act as the overarching strategy for the LEP. Priorities are currently being reviewed and a critical plan for the next two years is being developed.

Proposals for Enterprise Zones and Regional Growth bids need to be in by the end of June. It is expected that the LEP will get at least one Enterprise Zone, but it is unclear where this will be.

Essex will manage the secretariat – the structure is being reviewed and a proposal for building a dedicated web page within ECC's website is being considered.

NS reported that he had made contact with the other RCCs in the LEP; most recently a meeting was held in London. It was agreed that NS should continue to support and attend future meetings.

NS

PhW reported that Essex and East Sussex did not put in a bid for the first round of BDUK funding as more work needs to be done. However both Councils will be putting in a bid by the end of August.

JJ requested that we receive regular updates on the LEP at future meetings.

## **5. Rural Services Survey**

### **5.1 Update on Report and Findings**

SH reported that the draft report is completed, however will need to be edited before circulation to ERP members. The data analysis is completed, so if anyone would like specific information please inform SH.

## **6. Items to Report**

### **6.1 Report from Economic Action Group**

PhW reported that the focus of the meeting was primarily on broadband but a discussion also took place regarding business support post Business Link – Keith Hughes has left Business Link. NWES is looking to fill the gap in Maldon, Brentwood and Southend. Keith Brown is chairing a group to encourage local supply chains for local businesses. Phil Smith provided an update on Post Offices.

### **6.2 Update on East of England Rural Forum**

Nothing to report. The next meeting will take place on 8<sup>th</sup> June with a focus on broadband.

## 7. **Future Chairmanship of the Environment Action Group**

SH explained that John Hall contacted her shortly before the EnvAG meeting was due to take place in May and informed that he wished to step down as Chair due to pressures on his time. Matt Searle at ECC offered to stand in as Chair and is very keen to be involved.

FB supported Matt Searle's involvement and felt that it would be advantageous for the group to be ECC led. It is also critical to have an enthusiastic and capable person to drive the group.

PB highlighted that there have been a number of problems with the EnvAG including poor attendance and a high number of meeting cancellations, and suggested that the EnvAG merge with the EcAG.

It was agreed that the EnvAG should stand alone, as there are a number of organisations within Essex dedicated to Environmental issues.

JJ wished to thank John Hall for all the great work he has done; the Steering Group acknowledged pressures of workload on individuals at this time and were appreciative of John Hall's honesty in declaring that he was finding it difficult to devote the amount of time he would have liked to the EnvAG. SH will write a letter to John on behalf of the ERP.

SH

## 8. **AOB**

SH reported that unfortunately Jon Regan is not available on the 20<sup>th</sup> July but is keen to come and talk to the ERP about food security. It was agreed to invite Jon to a future meeting.

SH/DM

PhW requested a slot at the next full ERP meeting for a presentation on broadband.

PhW

### **8.1 Meetings/Conferences Attended**

PhW reported that the Essex Schools Food and Farming Day was a success with 3000 8-11 year olds from approximately 60 schools attending. Over 200 stewards turned out for free to escort the children and Writtle College were excellent hosts. There were approximately 60 exhibitions – farm machinery etc.

### **8.2 Forthcoming Events**

21<sup>st</sup> June – NextGen Roadshow: how to get broadband into rural areas. Held at the Three Rivers Golf and Country Club, Maldon. Maldon was chosen as a venue for the conference as it marks a year after the Maldon pilot was launched.

18<sup>th</sup> July – County Broadband Conference, venue to be confirmed but possibly located in Coggeshall. JBu will be able to report back at the next full ERP meeting in July. For more information contact EALC or County Broadband.

### **8.3 Date of Next Meeting**

20<sup>th</sup> July, 2:00pm at Writtle College

**The meeting concluded at 12:10pm**