



Essex Rural Partnership

STEERING GROUP
2nd May 2012
Minutes of the Meeting
The Reid Rooms, Margaret Roding, 2:00pm

Present	Representing	Orgn	Initials
Canon John Brown	Vice Chair	RCCE	JB
Nick Shuttleworth	Facilitator	RCCE	NS
<i>Daisy Martlew</i>	<i>Minutes</i>	<i>RCCE</i>	<i>DM</i>
Suzanne Harris	CAG & EERF	RCCE	SH
Richard Woolley	EERF	RCCE	RW
Revd Julie Nelson	EERF	Church of England	JN
ClIr Mick Page	EERF	ECC	MP
Dominic Petre	EcAG	EET	DP
ClIr Peter Chillingworth	ELG rep	Colchester BC	PC
Apologies			
ClIr John Jowers	Chairman	ECC	JJ
Philip Wilson	EcAG	ECC	PhW
ClIr John Buchanan	EERF	EALC	JBu
Joy Darby	CAG	EALC	JD

1. Welcome and Introductions

Vice Chairman Canon John Brown welcomed all to the meeting.

1.1 Apologies

Apologies were read (see above for details).

2. Minutes of the ERP Steering Group Meeting held on 18th January 2012

2.1 Accuracy

Agreed as accurate.

2.2 Matters Arising

Item 4.2 – SH reported that Marie Francis from the Food and Agriculture Board (FAB) will Chair the joint meetings between FAB and EERF, and will therefore represent the region at the Defra Rural and Farming Network meetings.

3. ERP (full) Meeting

3.1 Review of full ERP meeting

All felt that the Olympic Legacy presentation could have focused more on what will happen in Essex *after* the Olympics rather than the events leading up to it.

It was suggested that to help with timing issues, perhaps we should consider taking questions after all the presentations have been given, similar to the panel session at the last Partnership meeting in January. It was agreed that this largely depends on the agenda and the topics that are presented.

All felt that the Harwich Connexions presentation was very good and that it sparked some interesting questions and discussion.

4. Strategic Developments

4.1 Defra's Rural and Farming Network

Defra have accepted JJ's proposal for substitution.

RW – the socio-economic impacts need to be covered as well as food and farming issues. Housing policy, planning, the rural economy should be included; we need to have that wider debate.

NS – the Network has only just been set up and they have only had one meeting so far. We were one of the original 14 to get a seat which puts us in a more privileged position than other rural networks. It is a good opportunity to open up communication with the ministers and there is also the opportunity for the minister to come to us. We look at things in an integrated way and perhaps the minister coming to one of our meetings is a stronger way to put this point across.

SH – JJ reported that it was a really good meeting and we should take something positive from that. SH spoke to a consultant looking at how individual networks engage in the national network, which gives us an insight into how others are proceeding. Some industries are taking a very proactive approach (e.g. woodlands). There needs to be a balance between rural and agriculture but so far it is very dominated by farming and agriculture. This is partly in response to the sector feeling sidelined in the past. We can inform JJ of the issues we wish him to raise as our representative to give a more socio-economic focus.

It was agreed to add this topic to the agenda for the next meeting

SH/DM

4.2 EERF – Suzanne Harris

Agreed as covered in the morning meeting.

4.3 SELEP (South East Local Enterprise Partnership)

NS reported that the SELEP is recruiting staff at the moment. They will most likely have more of a public face in future.

4.4 Essex Partnership

NS reported that there had not been a meeting for a while. The February conference looked at the Essex Whole Community Budget and it is likely that their role will be to monitor this. The plan has to be completed by October and so this is ECC's main focus for the coming year.

5. Items to Report

JB/SH

5.1 Community Action Group

Members of the CAG had agreed to review the ToR.

Bringing in community groups to present occasionally can be very useful and gives a focus to the work of the CAG.

5.2 Economic Action Group

All agreed that the Post Office programme in Essex had been very successful and it would be a good thing to feature in the upcoming anniversary meeting on 31st July.

SH reported that following the success of the CAG community visits, the EcAG is considering organising trips to Walton-on-the-Naze to see the new visitor centre and Clay Hill vineyard in Maldon. The latter was suggested because the owner of the vineyard Dale Symons attended the last meeting.

5.3 Environment Action Group

SH reported that the last meeting was reasonably well attended and that the group agreed that they did not want to meet as frequently as the other action groups.

PC asked where planning fits. The NPPF and Neighbourhood Planning are significant developments that we should consider.

SH – Neighbourhood Planning has been on the CAG agenda and was covered at the last full ERP meeting, but to a certain extent all the action groups cover planning in different ways.

The role of the Steering Group to consider cross-cutting topics and refer them to an action group was discussed. This tends to happen informally as the Chair of each of the action groups sits on the Steering Group.

6. Anniversary meeting 31st July

SH explained that we want to make this meeting something different, to raise the profile of the ERP, looking at what we do and what we have achieved. Looking back at meeting attendance, numbers rose from around the 20s in 2003 to the 50s where they peaked in recent years and then have begun to decline. This is partly due to the fact that many of the people who attended were in posts (and in some case working for organisations) that no longer exist. This meeting is an opportunity for us to refresh out membership and boost attendance. We have been very instrumental in Post Offices, but this doesn't come across in a lot of the publicity. We can show people what we've done and what we can do in the future, if they get involved. We have booked Channels Golf Club, which will allow Cllr Peter Martin to stay for as long as possible before his afternoon meeting in Chelmsford. Perhaps the morning half could focus on our achievements and the afternoon sessions look at the future?

It was suggested that we invite John Spence from the SELEP to talk about how the LEP is working with rural areas, the rural economy as they perceive it and in the future. If he presents in the afternoon, this will tie in with the 'looking to the future' theme and give people a reason to stay for the whole meeting. If John Spence cannot attend perhaps we could invite Gareth Bradford from DCLG back?

Other suggestions were put forward as follows:

- Invite councillors and officers from all the districts and boroughs
- Invite Cllr Peter Martin to give a keynote speech (already arranged)
- Two or three presentations – including Post Offices
- Q&A session after Post Offices could focus on what we can learn, including case studies
- Invite a minister, perhaps Eric Pickles? JJ may be able to help with this

6.1 Meeting 10th October

Ideas were as follows:

- Broadband update
- NPPF
- Civil servant to talk about economic implications of NPPF
- Someone from a local authority or a developer to give view from working on the ground. SH has heard a good presentation from a local authority on NPPF, so will make enquiries.

SH

7. AOB

None

6.1 Date of Next Meeting

15th June, 10:00am, RCCE Offices

Apologies noted from RW

The meeting concluded at 3:00pm