



STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the Meeting held on

Wednesday 16th May 2007
2.00pm
Cressing Temple Barns

Present:

Chair - Peter Martin (PM)	Vice Chair – John Brown (JB)
Terry Taber – FSB (TT)	John Hall– EWT (JH)
Wendy Scattergood – ELGA (WS)	Richard Woolley – RCCE (RW)
Peter Baggott - EALC (PB)	Joy Sheppard- EALC (JS)
Sandy Cruickshank -Go East (SC)	
Suzanne Roast - RCCE (SR)	Nick Shuttleworth – RCCE (NS)
Keith Blackburn- ECC (KB)	Minutes -Kirsty Monk (KM)

Apologies:

Dianne Hardy – Exdra (DH)	Mick Page – EERF (MP)
Chris Allen –EEDA (CA)	Gemma Driscoll ECC GD
Peter Chillingworth (PC)	Ed Gregory- ECC

1 Minutes of the previous Steering Group meeting, 15th March 2007 & matters arising

No matters of accuracy were raised

The minutes were agreed by those present.

The following were reported as updates/ matters arising from those minutes:

Item 4 pg 4 – EnvAG Meeting – covered under item 5

Item 10 pg 6 – Remote Access Point Pilot Scheme

SR advised that a formal application was in the process of being made for the liC remote

access point pilot scheme to be set up next year. There was no further news as yet on the Thurrock mobile IT skills training bus being used around the County.

Other matters arising were covered within the main agenda items.

2 East of England Rural Forum (EERF)

Before the main update regarding the EERF, the Steering Group had a general discussion regarding the need to meet as a group before each EERF meeting, as well as the 6 counties meeting, in order to pass on items of concern and have an effective say in shaping their agendas.

RW reported that the next Regional Rural Forum nearest in date to the next full ERP meeting will be held on September 19th 2007

Action: It was decided to plan out future meeting dates to take into account the EERF and 6 County meetings where possible in future.

EERF Update

JH advised the meeting that the new EERF Chair, John Yates, had put the issue of affordable housing firmly on the agenda, along with encouraging land to be released for housing and looking at planning issues.

Actions:

NS agreed to feed back information on this issue from the Rural Housing Enabler

Invitation to be sent to John Yates to come to the Steering Group Meeting at a future date. – SR

3 Appointment of the New Chairman of the ERP

PM asked that the voting members of the ERP be called upon to cast their votes regarding nominations for the new Chair of the ERP

Action: SR to review the constitution and advise all members of the Steering Group on the procedures for electing a New Chair and the best method of carrying out the election.

4 Items from the Regional Rural Forum

SR asked that the problems facing rural transport's lack of funding from EEDA in the Eastern Region should be raised at the Rural Forum. It was also felt that this should be raised with the 6 Counties at the next meeting

Action: KB and SR to liaise and take this item forward

5 Reports from the Action Groups.

Community Action Group (CAG)

Suzanne Roast

SR explained that the CAG had been continuing its work to review and highlight the priority actions on the ERSAP.(Essex Rural Strategy Action Plan). Sub groups to tackle individual action plan items were to be formed.

Action:

SR to update the ERSAP and post on the new ERP website

(a full discussion on the ERSAP is covered in item 6)

Environment Action Group

Peter Baggott

PB advised that the EnvAG meeting date had been rescheduled from 4th April 2007 to 1st May 2007 as the Chair was unable to attend. The SG Group held a discussion regarding the effectiveness of the EnvAG and how best to help the group achieve its aims and objectives.

Action: PB and PM to liaise to forward this action and ensure that the 3 groups work to the same framework.

6 Essex Rural Strategy Action Plan Update (ERSAP)

The Steering Group discussed the current ERSAP and decided that as the plan was almost 2 years old that a review should be carried out by the Group and guidance then passed on to the Full Membership and ERP action groups. The Group decided that the following actions should be carried out by the Group:

- The 15 ERSAP priorities should be reviewed those actions that have been met or are no longer useful to the plan should be cut.
- After this review the actions should be re prioritised to identify the most urgent actions – a traffic light scheme was suggested to highlight the highest priorities.
- There should be a column on the action plan to show what progress on each action has been made and also a column to identify who is specifically undertaking each action.
- Each Action Group should submit a written report on the progress made towards the ERSAP.
- The ERSAP and the working group written progress reports should be posted on the ERP Website.
- Periodic review and monitoring of the ERSAP should take place.
- Actions on the ERSAP that are currently being met, but that may end shortly due to finite funding, need to be highlighted for urgent review; in order to put into place contingency plans.

7 Farming Seminar Update

KB had previously briefed the ERP Full Membership (16/05/07 am) and those present on the Farming Seminar held on 15/05/07.

The Group also discussed the "Year of Food and Farming" raised at the full membership meeting by Chris Philpot from Barleylands and wished a greater emphasis on this issue to be highlighted at the next membership meeting.

RW felt that farming was not covered fully or directly by the ERP agenda but dealt with amongst other ERP issues. RW asked the Group if they were happy with the existing agenda format and whether it might be time to "up" the profile of this issue and get further representation in addition to those from Farming Groups (NFU, Barleylands) already attending the full membership meetings.

PM suggested that Simon Bryson be invited to attend Steering Group Meetings to give greater representation for the farming issues.

Action: KB/SR to liaise and invite Simon Bryson to the Steering Group

8 RSCP Update

SR reported that the Community Planning Fund (CPF) had been fully allocated for the financial year 06/07 and continued to be in demand. SR hoped that both the CPF and the Linking Communities project would continue after March 2008 as they had provided funding and essential help to rural communities.

JS advised the Group that that the £20,000 funding from RSCP to EALC to fund development and communication had been skewed towards assisting smaller Parish Councils. More money was required to keep this going next year.

JS went on to report that she had looked at innovative ways of using the RSCP funding to help fund the continued professional development of Parish Clerks by providing funding for training at the University of Gloucester, which had proved very successful so far; Essex had the highest pass rate for Parish Clerks qualifications in the country. 34 Parishes had now achieved Quality Council Status with EALC's help and training.

JH passed on his congratulation to the work of EALC on this issue.

PM asked whether Essex was strong in this field because EALC was promoting it?

JS felt that they were promoting it, and that there was an established ethos at EALC to promote training and ensure programmes are in place to achieve this and stay ahead of the game.

NS explained that RSCP is a Defra funded programme, we will not have any information of continuation of funding in what ever future form until after the comprehensive spending review in September which meant that, we would not hear until the end of December 07 at the earliest.

JS felt that according to reports from the DCLG - green issues would dominate future funding priorities.

9 liC Business Plan Update

The Rural Retail Advisor

SR advised that this project would not now start until April 2008 and would only be for 1 year as a pilot scheme.

PM felt that a rural champion was needed on the EEDA board.

Action: Lord Ivor, John Yates and Richard Ellis to be approached via the SG to highlight the importance of rural issues to the EEDA board.

10 Rural Post Offices Update

This item was covered in detail in the Full ERP Partnership meeting earlier that day. (16/05/07)

11 Informal Review if Full ERP Meeting and items to be considered for the next meeting

The Group considered ways of attracting more members to attend the full partnership meetings and looked at the format and content of the meetings. The following suggestions were made:

- To periodically use a different format for the meeting such as workshops with break out groups.
- New Topic: Farming and the Year of Food and Farming (Chris Philpot) - to look at this as a meeting theme, perhaps link the meeting venue to a school.
- ERP promotional material to be finalised.
- ERP Website to be finalised and promoted
- Revised and updated membership list for the ERP to be circulated to SG
- New Topic: The LAA process/ Essex Compact - suggested for the full ERP meeting theme.

12 Date of Next Meeting

The Date of the next steering group meeting was later decided to be 1st August 2007, 3.00 pm -5.00 pm, RCCE Offices, Feering

Action: future dates for the Steering Group to be timetabled with the Steering Group

Meeting concluded 3.40 pm

