



Economic Action Group of the Essex Rural Partnership

RCCE, Threshelfords, Feering

23rd May 2008

MINUTES

Present:

Philip Wilson
Suzanne Roast
Paul Williams
Keith Hughes

Terry Taber
John Buchanan
Dominic Petre
Phil Smith

1. Apologies

Ed Gregory, Chris Allen, Dianne Hardy, Kitty Barrett,

2. Notes of last meeting (provisional)

These were approved.

3. ECC's Rural Commission (PW)

PW reported that a Rural Commission is in the embryonic stages of being established. The idea is to be ratified at a cabinet meeting on 27 May. Draft terms of reference (written by PW and EG) were circulated. Several influential people/lobbyists had been approached to sit on the Commission.

Things which may be useful / have an impact:

- FSB barriers to growth survey
- ECC business survey
- Woodland Strategy
- EE Observatory
- Impact of growth area status
- EERF Learning and Skills paper
- ERP Rural Strategy review

4. Action Plan-

Rural Shops

ECC will be employing a Post Office Advisor for a period of approx 18 months.

5. Keith Hughes made reference to the Business Support Simplification model and raised concern about the 'fit' of this new post. The National Government aim is to reduce 3,000 streams of business support to 100. KH also highlighted disadvantages of an 'ECC' label on the support post. He suggested that the post should be more independent and should look at shops, social enterprises and market towns.

Social Enterprises

There is a strand of support available through Business Link.

Funding

Eastern Plateau Leader bid was successful. The LAG (Local Area Group) will meet shortly. There had been general criticism that there was not a pure Essex bid to the Leader Programme.

Planning and diversification

EPOA would be meeting again to discuss the diversification paper, as there had been some dissent at the last meeting.

Rural crime

ECC Crime Officer keen to work with ERP – proposed that a joint meeting with CAG be held and this person invited.

It was noted that the Environment Group was undergoing some structural changes and agreed that a possible way forward would be to hold joint meetings (EcAG&EnvAG / EnvAG&CAG / CAG&EcAG) to introduce an environmental perspective to all projects.

Market towns

Event planned for Sept. Date tbc.

Migrant workers

EEDA and EERF looking at Migrant Worker issues. The new threat to rural communities is the increase in migrant workers leaving the country. Conference to take place in Sept in Newmarket (Business Link, Job Centre +, EEDA).

Signage

Eli at ECC tourism would be invited to a future meeting. A new sign safety standard has been introduced. It was suggested that EcAG support a conference which could bring together businesses and those in authority to discuss/increase understanding of the constraints and possibilities.

Sustainable construction

Nothing significant to note.

6. AOB

Nothing significant to note.

7. Date of next meeting

July 2008