



## Essex Rural Partnership

### Essex Rural Partnership Full Membership Meeting Minutes of the Meeting held on

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2008  
Reid Rooms, Marks Hall, Margaret Roding  
10am - 1.15 pm

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#### Present:

Chair – Cllr. John Jowers	Vice Chair – Canon John Brown (JB)
Alan Massow Braintree District Council (AM)	Cllr. Mick Page – EERF (MP)
Ken Edwards – Chelmsford Sport (KE)	John Hall– EWT (JH)
Cllr, Wendy Scattergood – ELGA (WS)	David Eniffer - Volunteer Bureau Tendring (DE)
Philip Wilson ECC- PhW	Cllr. Peter Chillingworth -ColchBC (PEC)
Nick Shuttleworth – RCCE (NS)	Keith Blackburn – ECC (KB)
Cllr. Peter Baggott - EALC (PB)	A Buston – ECC (AB)
Melanie Rundle -ColchDC (MR)	Phil Smith - Rural Shops Alliance (PS)
Suzanne Roast - RCCE (SR)	Elizabeth Thorogood - RCCE (ET)
Ed Gregory- ECC (EG)	Dominic Petre – Essex Tourism Assoc (DP)
Wendy Jackson – ECC (WJ)	Cllr. John Buchanan – EALC (JBU)
Anthony Shelton (Age Concern Essex) Ash	Richard Woolley – RCCE (RW)
Pat Roberts EALC (PR)	Sophie Blythe – CERA (SoB)
	Sarah Willsher - CERA (SW)
	Minutes -Kirsty Monk RCCE (KM)

#### Apologies:

Dianne Hardy – Exdra (DH)	Terry Taber – FSB (TT)
Chris Allen –EEDA (CA)	Gemma Driscoll ECC GD
Sandy Cruickshank -Go East (SC)	Chris Philpot- Barleylands (CP)
Jane Cryer –EET (JC)	Clive Mardiner - EREC (CM)
Alistair Pollock - Thames Gateway South Essex (AP)	Geoff Wilkinson – ECC (GW)
Paul Williams ACL (PW)	Geoffrey King – EDAL (GK)
Simon Neilson – (SN)	Sue Sumner Uttlesford CVS
Joy Sheppard- EALC (JS)	Yvonne Layton ECC (YL)
Pris Colchester Farm Crisis Network FCN (PC)	Rosemary Alexander (FCN) RA
Richard Bailey ExDRA (RB)	Kitty Barrett - BDC (KB)

Mavis Webster RDC (MW)

Alex Butler-Zagni NFU (ABZ)

Kathryn Berry (Sports Essex) (KAB)

Mike Hall – Writtle College (MH)

Anthony Buston – ECC (AB)

Keith Lawson – ECC (KL)

Steve Brewers – Environment Agency (SB)

Jenny Salisbury ECC (JeS)

Michael Porter (MPO)

Brenda Towle

Neil Keylock ECC (NK)

Rachel Payne – Cambs ACRE (RP)

Susan Rom – RDC (SROM)

Diana Cross – Z bikes (DC)

Dan Gascoyne – ECC (DG)

Theresa Coyne- Tendring Community Transport (TC)

Cllr. Roger Walters –ECC

Judy Cuddeford BDVSA (JC)

### 1 **Vice Chairman's Introduction**

John Brown welcomed and thanked all for attending the meeting. He explained that the Chairman (Cllr John Jowers) would be joining the meeting shortly as he had been asked to attend an urgent planning meeting at short notice. The apologies were taken as read.

### 2 **Minutes of the previous meeting, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2007 & matters arising from those minutes**

The agenda date was amended - No matters of accuracy were raised regarding the meeting minutes. The minutes were agreed by those present.

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

#### **Item 3: Farming Crisis Network” (FCN)**

SR reported that the ERP had established a link with the FCN since the enlightening presentation by Pris Colchester (FCN) at our last meeting. The FCN has been and will be invited to attend future ERP meetings. PhW reported that ECC has spoken with FCN and arranged assistance for the Essex FCN support worker in the form of a travel expenses grant.

#### **East of England Regional Forum (EERF) Representation**

JB explained that currently the Essex Rural Partnership had several members who attended the EERF, Cllr. Mick Page, Richard Woolley and Cllr John Buchanan. Suzanne Roast (RCCE) has been elected as our new ERP EERF representative.

**Further matters arising were covered within the main agenda items.**

### 3 **Presentation “Planning Diversification” -Keith Blackburn (ECC – Essex Planning Officers Association EPOA Working Group )**

KB explained that as an outcome of the Economic Action Group he was Chairing a task group looking at planning issues relating to diversification of rural economies, access to services and multi user services. KB then gave his presentation on Planning Diversification.

*(A hardcopy of the full presentation is be available on request, an electronic version has*

*been circulated to the ERP membership with the meeting papers)*

Following the presentation KB advised that the draft report regarding the task groups recommendations would be presented to EPOA shortly for their approval.

A conference on 21<sup>st</sup> February was due to be held for Development Control Officers.

Q. PC asked whether a similar planning diversification event could be held for the wider membership Countywide.

A. KB felt that this might be a good idea but he would have to check with the task group before proceeding.

JBu felt that a consistent and uniform approach across the County to the planning process was required, and that perhaps this could be better built into the Local Area Agreement and the Local Development Framework.

DP also called on planning regulations to be made more consistent as within 20 yards apart there can be vastly different policies.

Members felt that too much emphasis was given to urban planning and that rural issues generally and those distinctive to Essex in particular needed to be given greater importance by planning policy makers.

#### **Action**

#### **Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA) planning event for Members**

**SR/KB**

SR to liaise with Keith Blackburn re arranging a secondary event with the EPOA for members, Chairman and Vice chairs – if possible

*The Chairman John Jowers joined the meeting at this point and resumed the Chairmanship of the meeting.*

#### **4 Presentation – “the Local Development Framework” Alan Massow Braintree**

**District Council** (*an electronic version of this presentation has been provided with these minutes*)

AM gave a brief introduction and overview to the aims of the Local Development Framework (LDF) key points:

- Aims to determine how a district will develop over a period of time.
- Aims to involve the public in planning for the future via a real consultation process. (Proven frontloading through community involvement will improve the likelihood of early adoption, i.e. via the statement of community involvement - SCI).
- New LDF needed as the old system was too slow and did not respond to change quickly enough.
- LDF will be a rolling programme of review to enable it to have the necessary flexibility to respond to the changing needs of each district.
- LDF Core Strategy is required to be in conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)
- Tests of Soundness based on national criteria will be used to assess its content and procedures.

- Environmental Soundness will be independently assessed.
- All Development Plan Documents need to be based on evidence,

Members felt that the some Districts have issued statements of community involvement (SCI) and some haven't, making community involvement and consultation in border areas less than satisfactory; it was felt that in practice the public did not have as much of a say as was supposed.

AM felt there may be a possibility than any LDF without an SCI could be potentially found unsound.

RW advised of the important role that Parish Plans, Village And Town Design Statements and Housing and Transport Needs Surveys could play in informing the LDF's and that this is a way of empowering local communities and giving them a say in their future development.

NS reported that RCCE had produced training courses and guides to inform community led planning groups in Essex about the importance and possible role of their projects within the Local Development Framework.

JJ felt that the Essex Rural Partnership needed to react quickly in order to influence this powerful planning process and that the LDF's and the Regional Development Agency must be made to hear the true voice and wishes of real communities.

**Action:** JJ to take this forward to the Steering Group.

**JJ**

## 5 Revised Local Area Agreement (LAA2)

PhW reported that the draft version of the new LAA2 was due for circulation shortly (April 08). Evidence had been gathered from stakeholders and a draft strategy compiled and reviewed by stakeholders and the public.

NS reported that RCCE would be assisting ECC in "rural proofing" the LAA2 this was especially important as 72% of Essex was classed as rural.

JJ called on ERP Members to give their expertise and valued input into the new LAA.

## 6 Presentation - "Year of Food and Farming" - Sophie Blythe and Sarah Willsher

*(an electronic version of this presentation has been provided with these minutes)*

The Year of Food and Farming (YoFF) is a national campaign to promote healthy living by giving young people direct experience of food, farming and the countryside. The campaign is facilitated by CERA (by the Centre for Environment and Rural Affairs, Writtle College).

### YoFF Key points:

- The main event will be the Essex Schools Food and Farming Day 1st May, Writtle College, Chelmsford
- 3000 Key Stage Two pupils (ages 7 – 11) – event now fully subscribed.
- 500 teachers, assistants and parent helpers
- Each school group will be given their own farmer steward
- CERA organising the event on behalf of Essex Agricultural Society
- Support given by Essex County Council, National Lottery and CLA

For further details of the Year of Food and Farming presentation please see the attached electronic version.

*Refreshments were served between 11.30-12.00pm*

## **7 East of England Regional Forum (EERF) Representative.**

SR invited members to feed information and issues into the EERF and have an impact on a regional level. She advised members that the EERF newsletter was available to members on request.

**East of England Rural Forum (EERF) on 12 December 2007** *(taken from the written report by Suzanne Roast RCCE).*

SR reported that during current financial year £8K saved by change of venues to community buildings; this could now be spent on projects within the region

The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) has now received formal approval.

John Yates met with Jonathan Shaw on 29 Nov, with other regional Chairs and Dr Stuart Burgess – discussed sub-National review of Economic Development and the need for Multi-Area Agreements – consultation to be issued by end of year.

Learning and Skills paper showed more support required in deprived rural areas. Train to Gain scheme needs to assist 40,000 people by July in East of England to be on target.

Discussion on mainstreaming: agreed that EERF should challenge mainstreaming policy to ensure rural issues fully taken onto account.

A planning paper will be formally submitted – more evidence is required.

Next 'meeting with the Minister' topic (Feb 2008): Migrant workers – EEDA will prepare a paper.

Affordable Housing sub-group have funded a report by CLA – available to the public shortly.

**Annual conference will take place on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2008 in Peterborough**

Topic: affordable housing and sustainable/eco-friendly affordable housing

### **EERF AGM: 12 March 2008**

Some discussion took place on the topic of EERF structure and role.

- County RAF reps are now appointed to the Steering Group.
- Sub-groups of EERF will be reviewed and roles more focussed

### **SOAPBOX SESSIONS**

- Mainstreaming – encourage to look at LAA's
- Will be included as part of 'Influencing Strategies' at next meeting
- Post Office Closure Consultations
- Suzanne Roast / Mick Page
- Raised concerns about consultation process/length
- **Agreed:** EERF would write to Secretary of State and ask for consultation to be put on hold and reconsidered. SR to draft letter by 31 January
- BERR committee review now known to have closed for comments on 10 January. ERP response submitted.

Presentation on Swaffham (meeting venue) and access to services.

### **Future Meetings of EERF**

- March '08: Influencing Strategies
- June/Sept 08: Inward Investment
- June/Sept 08: Growth Areas

- December '08: Social Inclusion
- March '09: Local Food and Land Use

RW: felt that the lack of funding for transport and access across the region was of major concern and should be highlighted through the EERF.

JBu advised the meeting that the EERF have agreed that Parishes should have a member from each county to ensure better representation and this would be finalised at the EERF AGM.

*The meeting adjourned for 25 minutes for refreshments 11.30-12.00pm*

## **8 Reports from the ERP Steering Group and Action Groups:**

Brief written reports by Suzanne Roast (SR) and Peter Baggott (PB) regarding the Environmental Group (please see below), ERP Steering Group, ERP CAG Group were circulated to the meeting:

### **Steering Group**

*Short meeting as A12 closed for several hours making it impossible for some people to attend.* Meeting discussed:

- Content and attendance at future meetings / membership
- Regional Economic Strategy draft
- LAA
- Rural Social and Community Programme
- Post Offices

### **Community Action Group**

Discussed at November meeting:

- Market Towns
- Post Offices
- Rural Social and Community Programme
- Year of Food and Farming
- liC funding
- Essex Rural Strategy priorities for CAG
  - Childcare
  - Fear of Crime
  - Rural Services Survey
  - Tourism
- CAG membership
- 50 Not Out
- Mobile Library Service developments

*Minutes not yet available from December meeting.*

**Community Action Group and Economic Action Group** to hold joint meeting in February (15/02/08). Proposed visit to Langford to case study a project in progress. JB felt that it was important that the action groups worked together as there were some large pieces of work on cross cutting issues which could only be carried out if groups joined forces.

### **Post Offices Working Group**

SR reported that 29 of the proposed 31 closures are being followed through by

Post Office Ltd. Honeycroft Lawford & Warley Hill have been reprieved. It is now proposed that Henham and Little Bentley are closed instead.

The 3 outreach proposals (Langham, East Mersea & Birch) are being pursued; details of the actual proposals are not yet known.

The working group continues to meet. Options are being explored with POL to try to find ways of minimising the potential inconvenience for people to access PO services.

#### **Economic Action Group (Philip Wilson -ECC)**

PhW explained that there was good progression on all priorities. Topics discussed:

- Rural Retail Shops and Community Shop Schemes (Langford)
- Renewable energy sources and their carbon footprint.
- Signage -tourism and economic implications
- Diversification
- Essex Planning association working group seminar
- Migrant Workers – help with English skills

#### **ERP Environmental Action Group (Cllr. Peter Baggott) Written Report – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

The latest meeting of the Joint Environment Group was held on the 15th November 2007 at County Hall.

The meeting opened with a general discussion on how the group should interact with the Essex Strategy and the development of the new LAA: investigations will take place into the possibility of specialist seminars taking place to look at this issue. Concern was also expressed that the Strategic Needs Assessment did not include specific environmental issues and there was a general agreement that the group should have a block of their own.

These comments would be fed back to the relevant area.

Presentations were given on Waste and recycling in their respective districts by Ian Haines of Braintree Council and Stuart Jarvis of Maldon District, unfortunately however, the intended presentation by Essex County Council has had to be postponed.

Katherine Fox-Boudewijn (ECC Environment and Commerce) followed with a presentation on Local Environmental Air Quality and the Essex Air Quality Consortium. There are currently 14 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in Essex where monitoring takes place.

- 1 in Chelmsford
- 7 in Brentwood (mainly associated with the A12)
- 2 in Colchester
- 3 in Saffron Walden
- 1 in Epping Forest.

A new Air Quality Strategy was published in 2007 and a new EU Directive in due in 2008. See [www.essexair.org.uk](http://www.essexair.org.uk) for more details.

The final item to be discussed was The Climate Change Fact Sheet which was circulated for comment. The group agreed that it was a good idea to send out a message to the public and our partners to raise the profile of climate change. It was also agreed that the specific section for Essex should be expanded with the comment that it should be local, relevant and personal. Case studies should also be included.

A Sustainable Development seminar on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2008 was identified as possibly of

interest to members.

The next meeting will take place on the 12<sup>th</sup> February 2008 at County Hall

## 9 Rural Retail Development Research Project Presentation - Elizabeth Thorogood (RCCE)

**ET advised that the Rural Retail Advisor research aimed to:**

- Prove the need for support and advice for rural retailers and businesses via evidence based research (including farm and community shops).
- Had created a expert Steering Group (RCCE, ECC, Rural Shops Alliance; Federation of Small Businesses; Business Link, Braintree District Council)
- Review Case Studies.
- Had sent letters sent to the National Federation of Retail Agencies and aimed to collate responses.
- Publish a report on the research findings.

PS reported that a lot of other counties were interested in this research and the particular requirements of rural retailers.

JJ Welcomed the research carried out by Elizabeth and recognised the importance of rural shops as the social hubs of the community especially in these times when many were facing the threat of losing their Post Offices.

SR warned that the liC was facing major cuts to their funding and that as a result the future of the Rural Retail Advisor was uncertain.

## 10 Soapbox

No items were raised

## 11 AOB

### **Importance of the Natural Environment to Local Communities**

JH (EWT) wished to highlight the importance of preserving and improving the natural environment within communities. These areas provided cross cutting benefits which impacted on the economy, health and social welfare of local communities as well as the environmental element of preserving these spaces and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). JH wished to ensure that the environmental targets were championed in the new LAA2

JB asked who is going to ensure that the environmental component is embedded across the LAA and who will monitor it?

JJ reassured JH that politically the environment was paramount in the new LAA and would be cross cutting and not in blocks.

### **Action:**

ERP action groups (especially Envag) and relevant individual member organisations to highlight and review environmental elements of LAA2 as a priority

Action  
Groups

## 12 Date of next full Essex Rural Partnership Meeting

The next full ERP Partnership meeting was agreed to be held on *18<sup>th</sup> June 2008, 9.30 am registration, meeting commences 10.00am Best Western Hotel, Marks Tey, Colchester followed by a hot Lunch. (The ERP Steering Group Meeting commences at 2.00pm).*

**Meeting concluded: 1.20 pm**