



**ERP Full Partnership Meeting
Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th October 2008**

10.00 am Blackwater Sailing Club, Heybridge Basin

Present:

Chair – Cllr. John Jowers – ECC (JJ)	Cllr. Peter Baggott - EALC (PB) EnvAG
Vice Chair – Canon John Brown (JB)	Terry Taber – FSB (TT) EconAG
Cllr. John Buchanan EALC – EERF (JBu)	Doreen Marsden Volunteer Centre Uttlesford (DM)
Cllr. Mick Page – EERF (MP)	Keith Cheesman ECC (KC)
John Hall– EWT (JH) EnvAG	Jacqui Mee Age Concern (JM)
Peter Chillingworth- (PC) ELGA	Theresa Coyne Tendring Community Transport (TC)
Philip Wilson – ECC (PhW)	Dr Chris Gibson Natural England (CB)
Suzanne Harris - RCCE (SH) CAG (/ EERF)	Shelley Labbett RCCE (SL)
Chris Rust Maldon District Council (MDC)	Jenny Salisbury ECC (JeS)
Kitty Barrett Braintree District Council (KiB)	Julie Harrison ECC (JH)
Cllr. Norman Hume ECC (NH)	Wendy Jackson ECC (WJ)
Stuart Crowgey –Go East (SC)	Rosemary Alexander FCN Essex
Alison Jennings – In-TEND (AJ)	Gill Burden – Tendring District Council (GB)
Paul Williams ECC (PW)	Paul Harris Maldon District Community Transport
Keith Blackburn ECC (KB)	Dominic Petre – ETA (DP)
Anthony Buston ECC (AB)	Alex Butler Zagini –NFU (ABZ)
In Attendance	
Kirsty Monk- RCCE (KM) (minutes)	
Sue Sheppard RCCE (SS)	

Apologies:

Dianne Hardy – Haven Gateway (EconAG)	Chris Allen –EEDA (CA)
Richard Woolley – RCCE (RW) EERF	Joy Sheppard–EALC (JS) - CAG
Ed Gregory- ECC (EG)	Linda Riley Voluntary Sector Training
Cllr. Wendy Scattergood – ELGA (WS)	Judy Cuddeford BDVSA
Nick Shuttleworth – RCCE (NS)	Mike Hall AUEE
Phil Smith RSA	Keith Hughes Business Link
Cllr Roger Walters Braintree District Council	Neil Keylock ECC

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Cllr John Jowers welcomed all to the meeting and thanked Blackwater Sailing Club for allowing the Essex Rural Partnership (ERP) to hold the meeting at their splendid venue.

Apologies were taken as read

JJ advised that the Essex Rural Commission (ERC) would meet with the ERP on 4th November 2008 at the new Stadium in Colchester (Meeting Commences 10.30am until 3.00pm with lunch). JJ hoped that today's ERP meeting would kick start the process of refreshing the ERP Essex Rural Strategy and inform and feed into the Rural Commission Meeting on the 4th Nov. He hoped that the Rural Commission report would also inform the ERP Strategy Refresh.

1 Minutes of the previous Steering Group meeting, 18th June 2008 & matters arising.

No matters of accuracy were raised

Those present agreed the minutes.

Matters Arising were dealt with in the main agenda items.

2 Presentation: Access to Services for Rural Areas

Cllr. Norman Hume Essex County Council - ECC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

(An electronic copy of this presentation has been circulated with these minutes).

Cllr. Hume advised members that there was a need for a realistic appraisal of the current transport situation in Essex to allow forward planning for future provision of rural Transport. Essex County Council needed to ask new questions which considered:

- What rural environment exists? – Dormitory, second homes, self sustaining communities or a mix?
- Transport economics – no sound commercial business case when density of population is too low to allow economic provision.
- Public shift to increasing Car Reliance
- Confidence in services – perception of reliability.

Cllr. Hume reported that the maximum spend per passenger journey was £5.00 in the current financial year.

Essex Council considers accessibility planning, which under Government targets must look at Access to 4 key services – Education, Employment, Health and Food Shopping with a commitment to focus on socially excluded groups and improve access for those who cannot travel using standard forms of transport. Local services such as post offices closing, has not helped the situation in rural communities. EEC view transport as just one way of providing service delivery and they also wish to review how current services can be used more efficiently and creatively (such as school buses) to provide alternative solutions in rural areas.

Q. JBu asked whether it was possible for ECC to fund taxi voucher schemes run in rural areas by some Parish Councils.

Ans. WJ responded ECC looked at all solutions however it would be down to the local Parish Council and District or Borough Council to determine whether they wished to offer this option.

Q. JJ/JH asked in respect of those who took up their over 60 free bus passes but did not use them, whether ECC was still paying for each pass up front.

Ans: NH responded that every pass issued was an immediate cost to ECC whether it was used or not.

Members felt that it would be useful to notify the public of this to save money on free bus passes that were not being used.

JJ thanked Cllr. Hume for his presentation and for taking the time to answer Members questions. JJ felt it was important that rural transport is clean, reliable and that it goes to the right places for it to be a real benefit to communities.

3 **Rural Transport and Access to Services -The Role of Community Transport Schemes -**

Theresa Coyne, CEO Tendring Community Transport

(An electronic copy of this presentation has been circulated with these minutes).

TC outlined the role of Tendring Community Transport (TCT) and explained some of the community transport projects that TCT had been involved with such as :

- Colchester and Clacton Hospitals Hopper Bus
- Community Transport for Groups
- Day trips
- Dial a Ride
- Youth Buses

Key partners were Essex County Council and North East Essex Primary Care Trust, whose aims and objectives overlap with TCT and, whose grant aid enables TCT's development.

JJ felt that the presentation flagged up the importance of the Third sector in delivering services to rural communities.

4 **Rural Transport and Access to Services Issues identified through the Rural Services Survey**

(An electronic copy of this presentation is attached).

5 **Local Area Agreement Update**

Rural Proofing

SR reported that during the first stage of work carried out, the consultants employed to initiate the scoping of the Rural Proofing process had offered 3 options ranging from high level to low level consultation. The intermediate level had been chosen as the preferred option and a new brief for Stage 2 had been drawn up. Stage 2 of the process had been put out to tender and confirmation of the award of contract was still awaited.

Environment NI 197; LI 10.1 Biodiversity and Living Landscapes. - Indicator Lead John Hall. JH circulated the Essex Wildlife Trust "Living landscape" document to those present. JH explained that the vision of living landscapes was to bring fragmented landscapes back to life and to work with communities to make these important areas as a whole function and benefit both wildlife and the people that live there. JH highlighted Dedham Vale as example of a river valley living landscape.

(N.B. The Essex Partnership Forum will meet on 28th November 08 to agree all LSP and Thematic Partnership action plans).

6 **Members divided into Work groups to identify: a) the key priorities for transport and access to services in rural areas and b) review of other key priorities for Rural Areas.**

The following questions were posed to the working groups:

- How could transport in rural areas be improved?
- What could be done?
- Who could undertake the role?
- How could the work be resourced?

Review of the Essex Rural Strategy Workshop

- What are the other priority issues for rural areas?
- (This will inform the start of the review of the Essex Rural Strategy)

(Copies of the Essex Rural Strategy key priorities identified by members for both workshops at the meeting and written responses have been collated and are available on request).

7 Report from the East of England Rural Forum (EERF)

SH reported that the following topics were discussed at the June meeting of the EERF:

- Sustainable Growth
- Inward Investment

AGM in March would discuss local food and sourcing/land use

SH

Action: EERF Report to be circulated to the ERP membership

8 Reports from the Essex Rural Partnership Steering Group and Action Groups: Current Projects/ Actions for these groups are listed below.

ERP Steering Group

- Refresh of the Essex Rural Strategy
- Rural Commission Meeting 4th November 2008

ERP Community AG

- Joint Task Group Meeting with Samantha Grant ECC regarding Fear of Crime 7th November
- CAG review of current Essex Rural Strategy

ERP Economic AG

- Review of Andrew Fieldson report regarding rural employment
- Unreported rural crime
- Tourism

ERP Environment AG

PB reported that no meetings have been held since the last partnership meeting due to work being carried out on LAA indicators. However a meeting to determine the future of the environmental action group was to be held shortly.

9 Rural Post Offices Update

SH reported that ECC had successfully negotiated contracts with Post Office Limited and had reopened Station Way Post Office in Buckhurst Hill. Community information points will be incorporated into reopened post offices.

It was hoped that more rural post offices would be able to be reopened in the near future once the necessary complex contracts had been agreed (Little Hallingbury and Henham should hopefully reopen shortly).

South Essex, South Herts and Bucks Post Office Network Change Decision

SH reported that the decision regarding Post Office Closures in the current public consultation had been announced with the following outcomes:

South Essex Post Offices to be closed:

Dovervelt Road - Canvey Island

New Thundersley Benfleet
London Road- West Cliff on Sea
Hathaway Road - Grays

South Essex Post Offices Saved:

Sutton Road- Southend on Sea

ECC National Post Offices Conference.

MP reported that the ECC conference had been a success. Also that ECC are looking at an alternative method of delivering services in areas where Post Office Limited will not reopen a Post Office (ie when it may affect the profitability of neighbouring Post Offices). This Option B will provide most services (except pensions).

10 Presentation: Natural England -Overview Dr Chris Gibson Natural England

(An electronic copy of the full presentation has been circulated with these minutes).

CB advised that Natural England is working towards the delivery of four strategic outcomes, which together deliver on their purpose to conserve, enhance and manage the natural environment for the benefit of current and future generations:

1. A healthy natural environment - England's natural environment will be conserved and enhanced.
2. People are inspired to value and conserve the natural environment - more people inspired to enjoy, understand and act for the natural environment.
3. Sustainable use of the natural environment - the use and management of the environment is more sustainable.
4. A secure environmental future - decisions which collectively secure the future of the natural environment

11 Date of Next Meeting

Date: Tuesday 24th February 2009.

Venue: The Reid Rooms, Marks Hall Lane, Margaret Roding, Essex, CM6 1QT

Time: Registration and Refreshments 9.30am to 10.00.am

Meeting commences: 10.00am to 1. 15pm

Buffet Lunch 1.15pm to 2.00 pm

Meeting concluded 1.30 pm

NB

The Essex Rural Partnership Steering Group met immediately after this meeting. As part of their agenda the outcomes of the workshop sessions were reviewed and the following was determined:

- That the revised strategy should incorporate a 5 year rural plan for Essex which was deliverable in the short term and also outline 10 to 20 year aspirational objectives for Rural Essex.
- That there might be an optimum size of rural settlement which facilitated community viability in rural areas and that this should be investigated further.
- That the ERP Action Groups should be involved in determining their individual relevant action plans.
- That further wider consultation would be carried out to help inform the refresh process (details to be agreed by the ERP Steering Group).
- That the new Essex Rural Strategy should identify key priorities which could be delivered and were achievable; these priorities should meet the ERP Partnership vision of creating an environmentally and economically sustainable future for Rural Essex.

**6 Key Priorities for Rural Essex To help achieve Community Viability
(for discussion with the Rural Commission):**

- Affordable Housing
- Support for rural enterprise and a strengthened rural economy
 - for small business security and for local employment opportunities
- Access to essential services
- Community well-being, incorporating community voice and empowerment
- Land issues
 - Accessible green space for all
 - Management of rural/agricultural land
- Planning influence, incorporating housing, transport and business