



Essex Rural Partnership

ERP Full Partnership Meeting Minutes of the Meeting held at 10:00am on 20th October 2011 Bentley Golf Club, Brentwood

Present:

KBI	Keith	Blackburn	Essex County Council
SB	Simon	Brice	<i>Speaker</i>
JB	Canon John	Brown	Church of England
KB	Keith	Brown	Essex Federation of Small Businesses
JBu	Cllr John	Buchanan	Essex Association of Local Councils
PC	Peter	Chillingworth	Colchester Borough Council
SC	Sid	Cooper	<i>Speaker</i> - Woodfuel East
GC	George	Courtauld	Rural Community Council of Essex
JD	Joy	Darby	Essex Association of Local Councils
KE	Ken	Edwards	Active Chelmsford
PH	Paul	Harris	Maldon District Community Transport
SH	Suzanne	Harris	Rural Community Council of Essex
RH	Rob	Hayne	Essex County Council
JJ	Cllr John	Jowers	Essex County Council
JL	Jenny	Lewsey	Maldon District Council
AL	Andrew	Lowing	Rochford District Council
DM	Daisy	Martlew	Rural Community Council of Essex
TM	Tricia	Moxey	Campaign for the Protection of Rural Essex
MP	Cllr Mick	Page	Essex County Council
DP	Dominic	Petre	Visit Essex
JS	Jenny	Salisbury	Essex County Council
MS	Matthew	Searle	Essex County Council
SS	Sue	Sheppard	Rural Community Council of Essex
NS	Nick	Shuttleworth	Rural Community Council of Essex
PS	Phil	Smith	Rural Shops Alliance
PhW	Philip	Wilson	Essex County Council
TW	Tony	Wright	Essex and Southend LINK

Apologies:

LA	Lindsey	Allen	Forestry Commission
PB	Peter	Baggott	Essex Association of Local Councils
KB	Keith	Brown	Essex Federation of Small Businesses
JC	Judy	Cuddeford	Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency
JN	Julie	Nelson	Church of England
RPr	Rachael	Price	Essex County Council
KR	Kris	Radley	Sustrans
LR	Linda	Riley	Voluntary Sector Training
WS	Cllr Wendy	Scattergood	Braintree District Council
DS	Darren	Smart	Essex County Council

BT	Brenda	Towle	Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services
IT	Ian	Trouse	Natural England
RW	Rob	Wise	Country Land and Business Association
RW	Richard	Woolley	Rural Community Council of Essex

1 Welcome and Introductions

Action

Chairman Cllr John Jowers welcomed all to the meeting. Alterations were made to the agenda as Jon Regan was unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances; Simon Brice had agreed to present in his absence.

2 Apologies

Apologies were taken as read. (Please see above for details).

3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th July 2011

Agreed as accurate.

3.1 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4 Introduction to Bentley Golf Club – a Community Amateur Sports Club

JJ introduced Andy Hall Secretary of Bentley Golf Club, who gave a talk on the Club's background and activities in the community. The land had been purchased in 1968 by Mr Barker, who was rumoured to have had involvement in the drug trade! He later sold the land to a family who established one of the best golf courses in Essex. The members bought the club in 2004 for £1.8 million. By 2014 the shareholders will receive a return on their investment, which will be invested back into the club. The club supports many charities including the Helen Rollason Cancer Charity, Sparks and Help for Heroes. The Essex Boys and Girls Club hold golf days at the club, which also supports local schools.

JB – Is there a link with the restaurant next door?

AH – we do occasionally meet up, but it is a separate business

Q – What is a community amateur sports club?

AH – We are a non-profit organisation. We receive 80% discount on rates, which saves the club £25, 000 per year as well as additional support from the local council. We are promoting sport in Brentwood – we have 60 juniors on our books, compared to five in 2005.

Q (SS) – How do you manage the ground?

AH – We are led by the companies that supply environmentally sensitive fertilisers. We are investing £14, 000 into the 17th green, which is currently very wet and dark. We are raising the green and diverting water away. We have three main lakes – we only use mains water when the ground is very dry.

Q (PhW) – How wide-spread, geographically, is your membership?

AH – Mostly local people, but members come from the Brentwood area, Chelmsford and Romford.

5 Broadband Update

PhW updated the meeting on the latest developments regarding Broadband in Essex. Over the summer BDUK put together a national broadband framework

which counties can use as a model. There is a lot of pressure on the markets to deliver what the Government wants, which is causing a bottleneck. The framework organises companies into a 'queue' whereby bids will be dealt with one at a time. There were nine companies in the running, now down to six.

ECC is developing an Essex model, which gives us the opportunity to support local broadband firms. In August BDUK allocated Essex, Southend and Thurrock £6.46 million; BT has since offered to check this to see if any more funding is available. Overall £26 million will be invested over three years. White areas (those with less than 2MB per second) are eligible for funding, which is most of Essex.

The Broadband Strategy has now been approved and is in place. Tendring and Braintree are looking to mirror the strategy and develop their own local versions. The broadband plan is being drafted, involving consultants where needed – this is the business case which outlines the procurement process for infrastructure upgrade, but has to be approved by BDUK to secure the £6.46 million funding. This should be completed by January 2012 with a view to start the bidding round in April/May 2012.

Uttlesford have a wireless infrastructure in place, which used a radio point-to-point system. ECC invested £35,000 for the Maldon pilot; Uttlesford District Council spent £30,000 on their network. Maldon had over 1000 people subscribe in the first year; Uttlesford's was launched in August and 1500 people are waiting to be connected.

PhW encouraged all to provide evidence that we are stimulating demand by registering their interest at www.ruralbroadband.com This is the national model for demand registration, created by Coggeshall-based company County Broadband.

JJ – Broadband is now an essential utility, on a par with water, gas and electricity. BDUK identified 225, 000 households in Essex with sub-standard broadband access. Broadband opens opportunities for rural businesses.

Q (PC) – What can we do locally? There is a patchy service in my ward. If I encourage people to sign up to the website, can they expect improvements within a good period of time?

PhW – Yes. It is realistic to expect upgrades by 2015 to at least 2MB for every premise – this is the Government's target.

Q (DP) – Are there any problems with planning permission for wireless aerial?

PhW – I do not anticipate any problems. The main emphasis is on laying fibre-optic cables. However for wireless networks, permission is needed for cabinets.

Q (NS) – How much of the evidence gathered on the website is being used? Is the evidence registered?

PhW – The website is the main tool we have and it is being used.

9.2 Report from the Community Action Group *(JB requested that this item be moved to the first half of the meeting as he had to leave early)*

JB reported that a few members of the Group had met with Great Saling Community Led Planning Group and that he had visited Stisted. We are looking at arranging another visit to Harwich, so if anyone is interested please let DM

know. Preliminary results of the Rural Services Survey were also discussed – the report is now available on the new ERP website:

http://www.essexruralpartnership.org.uk/Documents/Rural_Services_Survey.aspx

The Big Lunch is on 3rd June 2012 to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. JB wants to encourage all communities to participate. Stisted already have plans for this – they will personally visit every person in the village and hand them an invitation to their Big Lunch.

6 Woodfuel East: An Introduction

JJ introduced Sid Cooper from Woodfuel East, who gave a presentation about the organisation and projects in Essex. A copy of the presentation is available at <http://www.essexruralpartnership.org.uk/Documents/Presentations.aspx>

JJ invited delegates to put their questions to Sid in the break or contact him after the meeting (contact details included in the presentation slides).

A 10 minute interval was taken for refreshments at 11:00 am

7 Food Security

JJ introduced Simon Brice, a well-known Essex farmer and former member of the Essex Rural Commission, who kindly stepped in at short notice to present on the importance of food to us and the rural economy. In agricultural terms, pre-industrial we had low productivity but it was non-invasive; we now have high productivity but also high intrusion on the environment. Post-industrial, the focus is now on striking a balance between high productivity and low intrusion. The following statistics were presented:

- The world population is now 7 billion, predicted to rise to 9 billion in 2050
- 1 billion people live on less than \$1 per day. 2.7 billion people live on less than \$2 per day. Once people go beyond this, health increase and demand for meat, dairy, fish and edible oils increases.
- Of the world's agricultural land, 40% is too dry, 21% too cold, 21% too wet and 6% too rough. 12% of land is available to agriculture without much harm to the environment, but beyond this severe harm will be caused.
- In 1957 demand for grain was 300Kg per head. In 2007 this increased to 350Kg per head.
- World food production must increase by 50% by 2030 to match demand.

Q (JS) – Should I buy local?

SB – Yes it does make a difference; you are keeping local people in business.

Q (PhW) – There is an assumption that China and India's emerging middle class will adopt our Western diet. How can we assume this will continue?

SB – China and India assume that the Western lifestyle is better than theirs; however they are now experiencing problems with obesity as their bodies are not accustomed to the diet.

Q (DP) – How long do you think Europe and the UK can maintain 'head in sand' over GM?

SB – The debate has been on-going for some time. A lot of the rest of the World is growing GM, but people think GM is bad. The press have also hyped up GM as negative, but there are a lot of benefits – insulin gene can be added to wheat and vitamins A and B can be added to rice to prevent rickets in children.

Q (SS) – There seems to be a lot of land that is unproductive. Are there plans to bring more land into production?

SB – It's about finding the right balance between producing enough food and protecting the environment.

JJ thanked SB for standing in at short notice.

8 Report from East of England Rural Forum (EERF) (Suzanne Harris)

The EERF has not met since the last full ERP meeting. The next meeting will be held on 16th November, with the theme of environment and sustainability.

9 ERP Action Groups and taking the Essex Rural Strategy forward

9.1 Report from the ERP Steering Group (Suzanne Harris)

Last met on 7th October to discuss how to get the best from Jon Regan. The new ERP website has been launched – past presentations, latest minutes and other documents are available to download. Any feedback is welcome. We have submitted an Expression of Interest for a seat on the new Defra Rural and Farming Network and are hoping to know by the end of October who the invited attendees will be. The unofficial feedback suggests that we may have a joint seat with Kent. EERF have also applied for a seat and it looks possible that they will get one. This potentially gives us two routes to Defra. We will include any further updates in the monthly bulletin.

9.2 Report from the ERP Community Action Group (moved to earlier slot)

9.3 Report from the ERP Economic Action Group (Philip Wilson)

Nothing to report as the group has not met since the last full ERP meeting.

9.4 Report from the ERP Environment Action Group (Matthew Searle)

Last met on 20th June. The Group are building on what came out of the presentation on biodiversity at the last ERP meeting.

The EnvAG discussed use of redundant buildings and the possibility of having a joint meeting with the other Action Groups.

10 Soapbox items

None had been put forward

11 Any Other Business

None, apart from 11.1

11.1 Dates of future meetings

Community Action Group meeting – 29th November, 2:30pm, RCCE Offices

Environment Action Group meeting – 30th November, 2:30pm, RCCE Offices

Next Full ERP meeting – 18th January 2012, 9:30am, Hylands House

The meeting concluded at 1:00 pm