



Essex Rural Partnership

ERP Full Partnership Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting held at 10:00am on 11th November 2014

The Essex Golf and Country Club

1 Welcome and Introductions

Canon John Brown welcomed those present.

2 Apologies would be reported in the minutes:

Rosemary Alexander	Mark Iley	Rachael Price
Jo Beavis	Sheila Jackman	Melanie Rundle
Geoffrey Bray	Lorraine Jarvis	Jenny Salisbury
Ken Edwards	Rosemary Padfield	Jacqui Stone
Rachel Fahie	Cllr Mick Page	Pet Thornton
Andrew Gardiner	Chris Philpott	

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2014

These were approved and no matters arising were raised.

4 Appointment of new Chair

Canon John Brown explained that Cllr John Jowers, whilst remaining an elected member of Essex County Council, has stepped back from his Cabinet Member duties. Canon Brown sought support from ERP to write to Cllr Jowers, thanking him for his commitment and dedication to the Partnership as Chairman; this was agreed.

Canon Brown introduced Cllr Roger Hirst, who has inherited the portfolio previously held by Cllr Jowers (including responsibility for communities, rural affairs, arts, culture), with additions including customer services and coroners.

Cllr Hirst introduced himself to those present: he has served as a Councillor for Brentwood Borough for a number of years, representing the Hutton area. He was elected to Essex CC in 2013 and has been a Cabinet Member since March 2013. He has held his current role as Cabinet Member for Libraries, Communities and Planning since September. Whilst having a career spanning three decades in the city, Cllr Hirst was keen to inform ERP that he has both background and interest in rural affairs, with family links to farming and personal involvement in country pursuits.

Cllr Hirst was unanimously approved as the new Chair of Essex Rural Partnership; he thanked members for their support and gave assurance that he would represent their views within and beyond the county.

JB

5 South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP) Update – Lorraine George

Cllr Hirst introduced Lorraine George.

Lorraine began by explaining that whilst SELEP had been given many of the responsibilities of EEDA (East of England Development Agency), the staffing levels are minimal, principally consisting of Lorraine and the Director, David Godfrey. This picture is similar across the 39 LEPs.

Lorraine's presentation was accompanied by PowerPoint slides which are available to accompany these minutes.

Key points:

- Three main funding streams:
 - ERDF: European Regional Development Fund
 - ESF: European Social Fund
 - EAFRD: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
 - the Local Implementation Plan (LIP) is due by end of the year
 - Rural projects and activities can benefit from all three funds, not just EAFRD.
 - The 'Growth Hubs' will, to a great extent, replace the role previously undertaken by Business Link, primarily through web-based advice.
 - debates include:
 - how are (non-land-based) rural businesses different to urban ones?
 - to what extent do rural areas need dedicated business advice?
 - £16.5m low carbon fund could support supply chain activity for alternative energy means
- EAFRD**
- Defra would like EAFRD budget of £14.5m to be used for 'more strategic projects' – what is strategic?
 - As yet there are no published eligibility criteria for EAFRD
 - There is debate about using EAFRD as a top-up fund for LEADER Local Action Groups – reaction from Defra is mixed and no agreement reached
 - EAFRD might support
 - SME's
 - tourism
 - skills (unspecified)
 - broadband (last resort funder)
 - renewables
 - No detail as to what projects might look like
 - Expected that sub-themes will be announced, prior to call for applications Shadow ESIF committee
 - George Kieffer is creating an ESIF committee; ERP could get feedback via AS, via SE NFU rep on this group
 - £420m growth deal projects this year and next, mainly capital funding
 - Lorraine is planning first meeting in SE, to include
 - leaders of 6 top tier authorities

- Chairs of federal boards, incl Simon Brice for Essex
- 50% women and ethnic

Q - How will ESIF look?

A - Draft on website – ESIF LEP-wide, LIP – more local focussed

Q – timeframe

A – all approved by end of year

- being encouraged to be ambitious – e.g. cross-LEP
- Technical assistance in future could mean more staff can be funded
- Defra SE have said that because SELEP is a new working area a rural strategy is required
 - Stuart Gibbons, Nick Sandford and Graham Peters are leading
 - a small critical friends group is being formed
 - need evidence for ‘intervention logic’
 - need evidence of need (e.g. SME, tourism, b’band, renewables)
- LEADER details unconfirmed at present
 - LEADER project ideas to SH

Q – What is needed from ‘Essex’?

A – Support with developing strategy

Q – What has happened to LEP Rural Working Group?

A – SELEP Board withdrew support for thematic working groups

Q – Will strategy be about specifics, or wide themes?

A – ESIF will be e.g.s of best practice; strategy will be more of an overview

6 Superfast Broadband in Rural Essex

PW gave a presentation, which is separately available.

Q – there are problems because many users are 2-3 times the distance from the cabinet, compared to cabinet distance to exchange?

A – in 5% hard to reach group, different providers may still be able to increase the speed

Q – will other (non-BT) providers bother to seek customers?

A – the situation is improving – evidence can be seen in cabinets

Q – concern re lack of regulation and competition for wi-fi, which may be best option for 5%

A – there is national regulation. Rural Challenge cannot fund wi-fi provision.

Comment – need for greater understanding by customers

7 LEADER Local Action Groups: latest developments

SH gave a presentation, available separately.

SH reported that bids had been submitted by the four LAGs covering Essex and outcomes awaited.

SH gave a presentation outlining the priorities set for the Essex Rivers LAG and

explaining the process and aims of LEADER in general.

LEADER is a French acronym which stands for *Liaison entre actions développement de l'économie rurale*.

It is an economic programme to create jobs and growth, by providing grants to businesses and other organisations. A minority part of LEADER funding can support social projects.

LEADER uses the following principles and process:

- A Local Action Group (LAG) is formed in a given area, consisting of representatives from private, public and voluntary sectors
- The LAG is area based with population not exceeding 150,000

Nationally 87 LAGs have submitted bids, in the form of Local Development Strategies (LDS's), which will be assessed by Defra. Four of these LAGs are in Essex:

- Essex Rivers
- Wool Towns
- Heritage Coast
- Eastern Plateau

Essex Rivers is the only LAG entirely in Essex, and covers parts of 6 local authority areas. It has population of 146,623 and includes 11 major rivers and significant coastline. One of it's recognised assets is proliferation of small and micro businesses; it's key focus will be to support tourism and the land economy, including food and drink industry.

The bids were submitted by 5 September. Each LAG has been advised of a minimum and maximum budget, if successful – for Essex Rivers this is £1.7 – 2.4million. It is expected that allocations will be confirmed in mid-November as the programme is due to begin in January 2015.

In anticipation of success, project ideas can be fed to SH at suzanne.harris@essexrcc.org.uk

8 Bradwell Legacy Partnership

Russell Everard and Michael Veasey jointly presented on this topic.

Information had been circulated in hard copy to those present.

The BLP is looking at the impact of the closure of the Bardwell Power Station on the surrounding community. This is being led by the Local Authority (Maldon DC (MDC)) which is seeking to mitigate the loss. The Power Station was constructed in 1957 and has generated since 1962. Between 2002 and 2008 it was defueled. In 2006 – 2014 it was prepared for 'care and maintenance'. 2015 – 2087 will see a 'care and maintenance' programme.

MDC has formed a working group, now known as the Legacy Group.

Magox has provided some funding to help mitigate the local impact; it may be possible to bid for further funding.

Research is being carried out by Regeneris Consultants.

At the BLP meeting in summer, 4 themes were identified:

- tourism
- skills
- business and community support
- business premises

Michael Veasey explained that he had developed an action plan. This was adopted in September and ratified by MDC in October.

The action plan recommends projects:

1. identity
2. marketing plan
3. business advice service
4. site to deliver – business support and innovation centre
5. broadband
6. skills
7. saltmarsh 75 – ultra marathon

Process:

1. selecting consultants
2. prepare invitation to quote
3. invitation to quote

Update on Rural and Farming Network

SH gave a presentation, available separately.

SH reported on the national RFN meeting which she had attended in October, as ERP had been 'between Chairs' at that time.

Key news items from Defra included that Elizabeth Truss MP was appointed as new Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Issues raised following an update from the Growth Board included:

- businesses will need signposting to know where to go for support, re new funding and LEPs
- there is encouragement for big and small schemes, but what about market towns?
- what will happen where there are gaps between Leader areas?
- who will be eligible to bid for and manage flood defence funding?

There will be a national review of the Rural and Farming Network. The structure has been in place for 2 ½ years and Defra will be seeking views from members.

George Eustice MP attended a short part of the meeting. His report included:

- Defra's activity following long spells of wet weather
- CAP and the greening policy
- Environmental Land Management Scheme, which is more targeted than HLS
- RDP development, including Leader and LEPs
- Progress on broadband and mobile

Workshop sessions were held on:

- agri-tech strategy
- RDP programme development

All attendees attended both sessions and notes are included in the presentation.

9 Standards of Practice Scheme for Parishes

Joy Darby gave a presentation, available separately.

In Essex the combined number of Local Councils and Parish meetings is 283. Local Councils serve 35% of the population in England.

The Standards of Practice Scheme will replace the Quality Councils scheme, which has been in place since the Rural White Paper of 2000. 1/5 of Essex Parishes have achieved quality status.

The old scheme focussed on recognising achievement, whereas the new scheme aims to encourage development. The new scheme has six aims:

- Encourage development
- Promote excellent working
- Share best practice
- Drive up standards
- Develop Councils to reach their full potential
- Serve communities better

Both old and new schemes appeal to a range of Councils – the smallest quality council had under 300 electors, whilst the largest were Town Councils.

The new Standards of Practice scheme has 3 levels:

1. Foundation
2. Quality
3. Quality Gold

Accreditation will be web-based, with peer reviews.

Essex is a national pilot for the Standards of Practice scheme. At the time of presentation 2 councils have submitted applications and EALC is working with a further 10. These will all be reviewed by a pilot panel. JD is optimistic that

Essex will achieve at least one Quality Gold council, with others at Quality and Foundation level.

Any council currently holding Quality Status under the old scheme will automatically receive Foundation status until 2016.

10 ERP Action Groups

Reports were given by the Chairs of each Action Group

Community Action Group (CAG)

Canon John Brown had reported on the 10 June meeting, at the 13 June ERP. The CAG would next meet on 27 November and all interested parties would be welcome.

Economic Action Group (EcAG)

Philip Wilson reported that many EcAG members had been heavily involved in Leader and that the group would be meeting again now that the Leader bids had been submitted. The EcAG had been an effective network to help recruit members to the new LAGs.

Environment Action Group (EnvAG)

Paul Hinsley reported that issues of concern for group members included flooding and a recent increase in planning applications for large scale solar farms to be sited on agricultural land. The group would next meet on 8th December.

11 Soapbox

There were no issues raised.

9 AOB

There was none.

Present at the meeting:

	Title	Forename	Surname	Organisation
RA	Ms	Rosemary	Alexander	Farm Crisis Network Essex
JB	Revd Canon	John	Brown	Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)
JBu	Cllr	John	Buchanan	EERF ex-officio, EALC
PCr	Cllr	Penny	Channer	Maldon District Council / Essex County Council
PCh	Cllr	Peter	Chillingworth	Colchester Borough Council
GC	Mr	George	Courtauld	Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)
JD	Ms	Joy	Darby	Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC)
PD	Cllr	Peter	Davey	Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC)
RD	Mr	Robert	Davidson	Essex Rivers LAG
RE	Mr	Russell	Everard	Maldon DC
LG	Mrs	Lorraine	George	South East LEP
JG	Cllr	John	Gili-Ross	Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC)
AH	Mr	Adrian	Harris	Essex County Council
SH	Mrs	Suzanne	Harris	Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)
THS	Mr	Tim	Hayward-Smith	Herts CDA
PH	Mr	Paul	Hinsley	Essex County Council
RH	Cllr	Roger	Hirst	Essex County Council
SJ	Cllr	Sheila	Jackman	Ongar Town Council/EALC
LJ	Ms	Lorraine	Jarvis	Chelmsford CVS
HJ	Cllr	Hylton	Johnson	Braintree District Council
CM	Ms	Christine	McGrath	Community Agents Essex
MN	Mr	Michael	Neale	Environment Agency
JN	Revd Dr	Julie	Nelson	Diocese of Chelmsford
DP	Mr	Dominic	Petre	Visit Essex
SR	Mr	Stephen	Rhenius	Uttlesford District Council
BR	Mr	Barney	Richardson	Essex Rivers LAG
SS	Mr	Stephen	Sadler	Voluntary Sector Training (VST)
AS	Mr	Adam	Scott	National Farmers Union
TS	Mr	Tony	Shelton	Age UK Essex
NS	Mr	Nick	Shuttleworth	Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)
RT	Mr	Richard	Taylor	Essex Rivers LAG
ATA	Mr	Andrew	Thorpe-Apps	
MV	Mr	Michael	Veasey	Bradwell Legacy Partnership
PWs	Mr	Paul	Williams	
PW	Mr	Philip	Wilson	Essex County Council