



Essex Rural Partnership

24th May 2017 2pm – 5pm

Essex Young Farmers Club HQ, Chatham Green, Chelmsford

Minutes

Attendees

Ms	Stephanie	Adams	Volunteer Centre Uttlesford
Ms	Lindsey	Allen	Forestry Commission
Mr	Will	Bibby	Essex County Council
Ms	Lisa	Bone	Essex County Council
Revd Canon	John	Brown	Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)
Mr	Mark	Carlo	Braintree District Council
Ms	Mandy	Cohen	Essex Association of Local Councils
Ms	Joy	Darby	Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC)
Cllr	Peter	Davey	Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC)
Mr	Colin	Dobinson	Crimestoppers
Sgt	Paul	Downes	Essex Police
Mr	Ken	Edwards	Galleywood Good Neighbours
Mr	Brett	Edwards	Basildon District Council
Ms	Lianne	Edwards	Engagement and Communications
Mr	Robert	Erith	Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Partnership
Ms	Rachel	Fahie	Braintree District Voluntary Services Association
Ms	Jane	Gardner	OPCC
Cllr	John	Gili-Ross	Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC)
Mr	Neil	Harper	Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)
Mrs	Suzanne	Harris	Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)
Mr	Chris	Heaffey	Essex Police
Mr	Paul	Hinsley	Essex County Council
Dr	Andrew	Impey	Essex Wildlife Trust
Cllr	Sheila	Jackman	EALC
Archdeacon	Robin	King	Diocese of Chelmsford
Pc	Andrew	Long	Essex Police
Mr	Andrew	Lowing	Rochford District Council
Ms	Tricia	Moxey	CPREssex
Mrs	Rosemary	Padfield	National Farmers Union
Ms	Lizzie	Rose	Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)
Cllr	Peter	Schwier	Braintree District Council
Mr	Adam	Scott	National Farmers Union
Ms	Trisha	Staerck	Essex Police
Cllr	Simon	Walsh	Essex County Council
Ms	Anna	Watson	Essex County Council
Mr	Philip	Wilson	Essex County Council

1 Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman, Cllr Simon Walsh, welcomed those present to the meeting.

2 Apologies

SH advised that apologies had been received from Chief Inspector Ian Gennery, who was due to lead on agenda item 4; his absence was unavoidable as it resulted from the Essex Police response to the latest terrorist attack.

Please see appendix for list.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 24th January 2017

- **Approval** - The minutes were approved
- **Matters arising** – Sheila Jackman raised a query on page 4. This was addressed by Will Bibby under item 5.

4 Rural and Environmental Crime – presentations

- **Introduction** – PS Paul Downes (Essex Police)

PD provided an overview, recognising that public perception is that crime is rising and that rural areas are sacrificed in place of urban areas. It is possible that encouraging the public to report crime has led to an increase in rural crime figures. PD shared information from the PCC Rural Crime Forum – comments made included lack of visible patrols, lack of visual awareness and poor call handling.

PD updated the group with regard to Essex Police activity:

- Traveller and Rural Engagement Team (based within Local Policing Support Unit) is soon to expand.
- Operation Galileo – to address hare coursing; land owners were invited to input.
- Essex Police have also worked with local authorities to help tackle rural issues, this included two operations targeting areas known as hotspots for fly tipping. PD stated that they are also working closely with the Environment Agency.

Going forward Essex Police will:

- Attend Farmwatch meetings.
- Ensure representation at key events such as the Young Farmers Show.
- Hold awareness days to promote tactics and crime awareness products.
- Improve call training for call handlers regarding rural areas.
- and highlight good practice, such as the introduction of cameras on the Dengie.

In conclusion PD stated that the definition for ‘rural crime’ is to be updated to be more fit for purpose.

- **What you told us** – Suzanne Harris (RCCE)

SH introduced the workshop sessions. She presented some previous research and consultation findings.

The Essex Rural Strategy was launched in 2016 and the lead-up consultation received over 1600 responses; this included questions (and free text responses) on crime and safety. *See presentation for consultation questions and responses.*

The Essex Police Rural Crime Awareness Day, also in 2016, had included a consultation with attendees, and findings from this were shared. This event was aimed at farmers and so the results showed a farm-crime bias.

SH summarised the key priorities as follows:

- Essex Rural Strategy consultation: road safety and personal safety and visibility.
- Rural Crime Awareness Day: theft and hare coursing

- **Wildlife Crime** – PC Andy Long (Essex Police - Rural and Heritage Crime Officer)

It was explained that wildlife crime is a specialist area and requires trained officers. Part of the training takes place at Heathrow Airport at the animal section centre. The UK is a transit point for China and Africa with regards to smuggling. Boxes of ivory, stuffed

leopards, skins, etc. , do pass through.

AL provided facts about wildlife crime involving poachers and traffickers.

Key areas that are seen frequently:

- **Badger baiting**, ten thousand are killed per year.
- **Deer poaching** involves organised gangs and sold on the black market.
- **Bluebells** and **snowdrops** are removed and sold on to garden centres.
- **Hare Coursing** is a big problem; it was outlawed in the UK by the 2005 Hunting Act. AL explained that hare coursing is a cultural activity which is lawful in other countries, making it hard to eradicate in the UK. The simplest way is by disrupting the seasonal meets. Typically May – harvest, activity is low due to crops in fields; once harvest is complete then typically coursing starts up again. AL explained **Operation Gallileo** which runs nationally, and was originally launched in Lincolnshire. The sole purpose is to disrupt the perpetrators through any means such as capture and prosecution. Stop cars, search if necessary, issue speeding fines and send them away.
- AL stated that informing the public about wildlife crime helps tremendously, awareness is key and is assisted by organisations spreading the word.

AL explained the role of **Operation Buzzard**, an initiative to coordinate all rural crime related operations in Essex. It encourages engagement with the public, who are additional eyes and ears. For example **badger baiting** – key to identify the sets and work with organisations/groups that play a vital role as lookout for the sets; if a problem occurs report it to the police. Part of the initiative includes new technologies such as the force **drone** which can help the police gather evidence to crack down on offenders. AL highlighted criminals are already using drones and there is a need for Essex Police to keep up.

Overall the aim is to provide more training for officers and civilian staff (in particular the call centre), seize vehicles and crush them.

It was questioned if hare coursing was really a cultural thing or more a thrill; AL answered by saying that it happens in other countries where it is legal and once was here in the UK; these people are following tradition and do not want to stop.

It was also questioned if there was a connection between farmers TB and baiting, however it was pointed out that this is not a dairy farming area and badgers are not responsible for TB. Which then raised a point about an explosion in the badger population and a decrease in hedgehog numbers, and a suggestion that the legislation has unbalanced the natural population.

- **Gypsy and Traveller Liaison – PS Paul Downes (Essex Police)**
PD reported that the Gypsy Traveller Engagement Team have seen an increase of 40% in unauthorised encampments, currently there is no reason identified. He continued by saying that they have worked in partnership with the OPCC to develop a protocol, which will be launched tomorrow. PD warned that unauthorised encampment and criminal behaviour is on the increase and the problem ‘won’t be sorted overnight’. PD highlighted that one area which requires attention is the identification of land ownership.
Currently the team’s primary role is unauthorised encampments and secondary are other rural issues. This will include engaging with communities trying to resolve issues regarding the understanding of unauthorised encampments with traveller groups. In conclusion PD stated that the team will be targeting industrial fly tipping, and ensure the message is clear that Essex is not the place to commit crime and fly tip.

Q&A

It was asked when the launch of the protocol will take place and PD confirmed the following day; there is a need to be consistent when dealing with unlawful encampments. PD continued by advising the group that all calls made are dealt with by the Essex County Wide Traveller Unit; Police response is based on threat, harm or risk factors (as with other crimes).

A new team of three officers is currently being sourced, who will be available 7 days a week 8am – 10pm. The team has been established to remove the burden from local policing teams. PD reminded those present that the Nomadic lifestyle is protected and it requires a sensitive approach. Single point of contact is currently PD.

- **Active Citizens** – Chris Heaffey (Essex Police) (Please see ppt presentation)
CH provided an insight into *Active Citizens* and the reasons for volunteering to help Essex Police. He stated that the volunteers should be a movable group of reliable and professional people, keen to make a difference in the community and become a valuable local resource. They should be a visual deterrent and a link between the public and Police, to achieve more cohesive communities, interact with residents and help to make Policing more transparent.
Each recruit is vetted and checks are done, full training is provided and once completed they can undertake accompanied patrols. There has been a good uptake – all from various backgrounds.
CH explained that volunteers are a positive visual deterrent and also help for the public. Active Citizens duties involve beat surgeries in the local community where information can be collated and passed on.
Active citizens are also involved in:
 - Fraud and scams
 - Coffee mornings
 - Training Days – giving crime prevention advice
 - Partnership Events.

Rural and Environmental Crime – Facilitated Workshops

Attendees broke into workshop groups to consider the following questions:

- *What is rural crime – what should the definition be?*
- *Do we agree with the RCA day and strategy survey findings?*
- *What are the biggest concerns for rural communities/businesses/environment?*
- *How can these concerns best be addressed?*

It was explained that a new Essex Police Rural Crime Strategy would be launched in the autumn. This would be preceded by a paper/online consultation with ERP members and other key stake holders.

5 Essex Vision: Update – Will Bibby (Essex County Council) (please see ppt presentation)

WB provided an update on three areas: summary of engagement, an update on where Essex Vision is now / key dates and to seek feedback on key themes of the vision. During question time Will encouraged the group to attend the workshops; it is a self-nominating process and to contact Will direct. The Workshops will start end of July and restart after the summer holidays in September.

It involves 6 themes as follows:

- **Prospering** – this theme is about inclusive growth and making sure the economy works for everyone.
 - **Flourishing** – this theme is about making Essex the healthiest and happiest place in the UK.
 - **Connecting** – this theme is about capitalising on Essex's great location and making it
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easier to get around and spending less time stuck in our cars.

- **Fulfilling** – this theme is about closing the gap for the most disadvantaged children in Essex so everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- **Supporting** – this theme is about growing strong communities and putting communities at the heart of new developments.
- **Celebrating** – this theme is about the perception of Essex and celebrating all the things that makes Essex great.

These themes have emerged following the commissioning of a long term vision for Essex. A process of engagement took place with the public, partners, public sector employees, senior leaders, community workshops, schools and parish councils, and approx 1,500 responded to a micro website.

Aspirations and what is to come out of the workshop will be broad themes but are to include specific related actions. WB explained the need to capitalise on connections, seek to help disadvantaged children and to close the gap in opportunities. He talked about growing communities and the need to shape a positive image of Essex that reflects the positivity of the county.

Question:

PD – Regarding the Dementia and AGE UK conference and trying to get local councils involved, to understand it and embrace it – does this strategy incorporate this big issue?

WB – Yes within the health workshop.

6 **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Calls for Applications**

Adam Scott (ESIF committee) (Please see ppt)

AS provided an update on the scheme highlighting that the uptake from Essex is slow, and the need for more applications; communication is key. The money is available to businesses, including those working in food processing. The SELEP covers Essex, Kent and East Sussex.

£14 million is available over 2 years; it is a tight deadline. Approx half has been allocated which is divided between several areas.

Monthly meetings are taking place to monitor applications and spend.

Problem with initial applications: Business development only 6% entering Essex

We are clearly low on applications, percentages are low compared to the other counties.

Questions and **Answers**

RE – Is a pub as a community asset fundable under business or tourism?

AS – Creating jobs and growing the economy are the key aims of the fund; there are other pots of money for more specific areas, e.g. LEADER maybe more suitable.

PD – 40% match funding requirement?

AS – Yes

7 **Task and Finish Group Update : Industrial Fly Tipping** – Adam Scott (NFU)

(Please see ppt)

AS provided an overview of the Task and Finish Group, reminding ERP that it was formed due to an epidemic of large scale fly tipping, consisting of 116 lorry loads between autumn – Christmas 2016. Since that time it has become apparent that this is organised crime and the Task and Finish Group has brought together key organisations to work in partnership to approach the issue. Raising the profile has been a key step. AS said that enforcers have met behind closed doors, to share intelligence, resulting in some waste handlers being investigated.

At the NFU AGM Andrea Leadsom was questioned on the issue of fly tipping; it was an ideal opportunity to get the message out due to the high press attendance – who quickly picked up on it. Overall the work has to continue; political pressure will help, alongside the courts taking appropriate action.

Comments:

SW – We have four new MPs in Essex who should be targeted and made aware of this problem. The ECC does have direct communication at government level and I will continue to push.

A query was made regarding crushing vehicles when caught. PD stated that this can be done, however it is not a sufficient deterrent to the fly tippers and it is common for the vehicle used to have been stolen anyway.

8 **Delivering the Essex Rural Strategy** – Suzanne Harris (RCCE)/ Anna Watson (ECC)

SH reported that each chapter has an appointed lead. Templates have been distributed to these leads, to be completed with basic information about current activity and potential gaps and opportunities. The original deadline for return has passed and some remain outstanding.

Work is in progress to develop an action plan over the next few months; overall it is moving in the right direction.

JGr – A request for contact details for the lead people to be posted on the ERP website. SH confirmed that this can be done is all leads consent to this sharing of information. - LR/SH
TO ACTION

9 **A.O.B.**

- Future Dates - Next ERP 25th September 2017 – To be held at YFC- Chelmsford.
- Other (*please notify by the start of the meeting*)
Fly tipping information please take and can be distributed electronically

Appendix:

Apologies

Ms	Stephanie	Adams	Volunteer Centre Uttlesford
Ms	Rosemary	Alexander	The Farming Community Network
Mr	David	Burch	Essex Chambers of Commerce
Mr	Anthony	Buston	Essex County Council
Ms	Sue	Carter	Royal Horticultural Society
Cllr	Penny	Channer	Maldon District Council / Essex County Council
Mr	Nicholas	Charrington	Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)
Mr	Spencer	Clarke	Chelmsford City Council
Ms	Beverly	Davies	RCCE - Essex Rivers
Mr	David	Eniffer	Volunteer Centre Tendring
CH INSP	Ian	Gennery	Essex Police
Mrs	Lorraine	George	South East LEP
Mr	Tim	Hayward-Smith	CDA Herts
Mr	Roger	Hirst	Police and Crime Commissioner
Mrs	Anna	Hook	Essex County Council
Mr	Darren	Horsman	Essex Police
Mr	Mark	Iley	Essex Biodiversity Project
Ms	Wendy	Jackson	Essex County Council
Ms	Amanda	Johnson	Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Ms	Andrea	MacAlister	Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Ms	Cheryl	Milton-White	Rochford District Council
Mr	Michael	Minta	Diocese of Chelmsford

Mr	Michael	Neale	Environment Agency
Revd	Janet	Nicholls	Diocese of Chelmsford
Mr	Mark	Nowers	RSPB
Ms	Melanie	Rundle	Colchester Borough Council
Mr	Stephen	Sadler	Voluntary Sector Training (VST)
Mr	Nick	Shuttleworth	Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)
Mr	Matt	Wilson	Maldon District Council
Ms	Dawn	Woolcott	Essex Police