

EPPING FOREST LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Sustainable Communities Theme Group Meeting

Date: 20th November 2009

Time: 14:30 – 16:30

MINUTES

Present

Cllr Anne Grigg (AG) Chair
Cllr Mary Sartin (MS) Vice Chair
Keith Brown

Epping Forest District Council Vice-Chair
Environment Portfolio holder, EFDC
Essex Regional Organiser, Federation of Small
Businesses

Jacqui Foile (JF)
Alan Hall (AH)
John Houston (JH)
Keith Hughes (KH)
Chris Overend (CO)
Kassandra Polyzoides (KP)
Nick Roberts (NR)

Chief Officer, Voluntary Action Epping Forest
Director of Housing EFDC
EF LSP Manager
Business Link In The East Of England
Policy and Research Officer, EFDC
Asst Director of Planning, EFDC
Passenger Transport Co-ordination Centre Manager,
ECC

Louisa Sadlers (LS)
Vicki Willis (VW)
Amanda Wintle (AW)

Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce
Economic Development Officer, EFDC
Planning Officer, Epping Forest District Council

Apologies

Barbara Stock (BS)
John de Wilton Preston (JP)

EF Lifelong Learning Partnership Coordinator, EFC
Director of Planning & Economic Development,
EFDC

Minutes

Colin Rowell (CR)

LSP Admin Support

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies from BS and JP. It was also noted that NR would be arriving at around 3:00 pm. Group members introduced themselves to the meeting.

2. Minutes of last meeting

KH pointed out that the name of Business Link is actually Business Link In The East Of England.

VW said that she was at the last meeting but was omitted from the attendance list. Minutes were amended and agreed.

3. Referring to the actions list

- Item 1 – deferred until NR arrives
- Item 2 – Complete

Items 3 – 11 are included on this agenda

4. Review of Terms of Reference

JH suggested that there should be a Council Community Development representative on the group. **It was agreed** that Gill Wallis should be invited to attend.

Action : JH / CR

AH, KP and AW said they had been left off the circulation list. This will be amended.

Action : CR

KH referred to item 5 saying it was not clear how from the TOR statement how the stated actions would be taken forward. AG said that Task & Finish groups would be set up once the work programme had been agreed.

AG noted that Alan Hall had suggested previously that a health representative should be invited and we would enquire as to whether this would be possible.

9. EERA Consultations and Local Transport Plan

The last LSP Board meeting raised the issue of the East of England Plan extension and submitting an LSP response which would be problematic given the timetable. Some papers had been just circulated but a decision was required on whether a submission should be adopted now or deferred pending wider discussion with an agreed submission made by the LSP in the next consultation phase in the new year. Very few group members have had a chance to review the paper. AH noted that this group was not in a position to respond on behalf of the LSP.

JH suggested running a group workshop to review the consultation. KB was wary that any delay in response may pose a problem. Could a default position be adopted saying that no response from the LSP by 12:00 on Monday 23/11 means that the group agrees the response?

KB said that the content of the response was in the remit of this group.

JH said that the Board needed to agree the response and was concerned that the timescale for response was too short. He suggested that the council response next week should include a note saying that the LSP will respond in the next round in March 2010. Following more detailed discussions **this was agreed** as was the action of holding a workshop in Jan / Feb 2010 to agree an LSP response.

Action : KP / JH

8. Performance Indicators and Performance Reward Grant Projects

JH stated that the Steering Group wanted projects funded by the £450,000 PRG money to be overseen by Theme Groups. An initial paper allocating projects to this theme group had been circulated. JH asked the group if the group was happy with the projects that have been allocated. **This was agreed.** In the initial round of bidding a number of Essex wide projects were identified. KB noted that these were not included in the current project list. CO stated that although these projects were not on the list, they do need to be reflected locally. KB will give details of projects underway to the LSP admin team to add.

Action KB

The Steering Group has also requested that each theme group be responsible for monitoring a core set of Performance Indicators. The previous list of over 100 PI's has been drastically reduced and a suggested allocation each theme group put forward. The PI list is interim and will be reviewed once the refreshed Community Strategy has been published. The PI's on the list are relative to current PRG targets. **The suggested allocation was approved.**

5. Setting the Scene

As agreed at the last meeting a number of topic papers had been produced to help guide the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy and influence the theme groups work programme. Each topic paper was discussed.

VW gave an overview of the **Economy paper**. The report highlights 7 main priorities and suggested undertaking a business survey. VW addressed each priority, asking the group to comment. She stated that there needs to be a more detailed discussion on the report. AH asked if there was an objective to grow the business community. VW replied that there was. KH would advocate growth, but asked how this is measured. It is not simply a count of businesses, but could be a measure of the value that each employee generates.

AW stated that a review is underway to determine the expectation for growth and how future support should be organised..

JH complemented VW on her report. It will provide excellent input to the Community Strategy. He noted that the role of the West Essex Partnership should be flagged up and its strategic support to local economic development covered.

AH gave an overview of the **Housing paper**. The report outlined how the future housing needs are being driven. It referred to the East of England Plan and the quantity of additional housing required to be provided in the District. AH pointed out that house prices are the 2nd highest in the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region. The Recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) showed joint borrowers needed an income £65,000 - £75,000 to buy. A recent survey showed that 7,000 households were unsuitably housed. The Housing Needs Survey 2003 had assessed that 18% of households have someone with a disability. Other points noted were:

- 34 new Gypsy and Traveller sites are required by the East of England Plan
- Affordable houses in villages need to be increased
- There are a number of properties in the private sector in need of improvement
- Local parking and fly tipping are issues

There is a need to increase the amount of affordable housing. Also, the Council's Local Plan requires that 10% of houses on developments of 10 or more should be lifetime homes. The Paper raised the question of possibly increasing this to 100% KB pointed out that there was no mention of infrastructure to support house building. AH agreed and will add it to the report.

Action : AH

JH asked how we could set about bridging the affordability gap, how we go about building sustainable communities and that this information should be covered by the Community Strategy. KH pointed out that if residential building is to increase without an increase in development footprints, one possibility was the provision of high rise building. AH said there is also constraints on building on green belt land. The Group considered that high rise may be a better option in certain areas. JH stated that the Local Development Framework (LDF) will need to be informed by the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). AW agreed, noting that there is always a conflict between more housing and protection of Green Belt.

JH stated that the benefit of the SCS will be to show how the Partnership can influence development of the District. KP said that public consent was very important and should be kept in mind. JH asked if she wanted to use this group as a Board / Reference Group for any draft reports. **This was agreed.**

NR gave an overview of the **Transport paper**, he highlighted key points.

The H1 bus service from Epping to Harlow is to end. This is a good example of a valuable service that cannot be maintained commercially and would benefit from Council support.

Environmentally friendly transport was highlighted – walking and cycling, but there are safety issues here.

Local people see a much better transport system in London, but legislation is very different

There is a problem with commuter parking. Should we be looking at better bus services into stations? Community transport and dial-a-ride is a possible option here. A report has been produced by Rural Community Council of Essex which highlights issues with access to doctors and hospitals etc. There is an opportunity here to work with the PCT to improve access to their services.

Taxi partnerships were highlighted. There is a perception problem with taxis. Work is underway with the District to improve image and quality.

A District wide review is taking place in 2010. NR suggested that this group get involved. **This was agreed.**

A consultation on the next Local Transport Plan is taking place on Dec 7 2009. NR felt it was important to get input from the District.

KH asked about input from parishes. NR said that this was included in the Rural Services Report and County meets regularly with parishes on transport issues..

KH said that there was a problem of responsibility when bus services cross county boundaries. NR said there are discussions with neighbouring Authorities on local services.

JH thanked NR and said there is need to look strategically. He gave examples of long term projects that the partnership could champion and put in the SCS and be the focus of this group.

There was discussion concerning the focus of the group and what it should concentrate on. It was agreed that there were a number of issues of varying degrees of length and complexity, meaning that the group would have mixed programme of work ranging from short, through medium to long term projects.

KP supported this and said that the group needs a wish list of projects. These could then be evaluated for relevance. KH agreed that there was a need for short medium and long term focus, but his immediate interest was in short to medium term projects with a 3 year planning horizon.

AW presented the topic paper on the **Environment**. She said this was an initial assessment and there will be items to be added later. AW identified the key issues. The current SCS did not refer to climate change and was locally focused on areas such as habitat and green belt protection. The following areas were highlighted, what influence can this group have (over and above EFDC) on the historic environment, how does increasing traffic levels impact on local wildlife, development of Lee Valley Park, maintenance of the existing land providing wildlife habitat. AW has yet to consult with interested groups, but will do this and report back at a later date.

Action : AW

KB pointed out that a key element in reducing carbon footprint is the provision of reliable, fast broadband. He also said small business can benefit from support being given to farmers to convert farm buildings to small units. AW stated that there are existing Local Plan policies in place to support this type of development. KH added that work has been done in this area and that if all conversion requests were met the total land need would be fulfilled.

KH asked, should land be used for other uses, e.g. generation of fuel sources. KB pointed out that Basildon council have teamed up with a wood burning stove manufacturer in Southend to recycle wood.

KP said that there is an opportunity to build on environmental tourism. JH how we could market this, the LSP Board has someone from Lee Valley and the City of London. Can we use them to support any initiatives?

KP said that there may be a potential consideration to attract Londoners to the District and develop environmental tourism more generally.

JH added that three of the workshops at the Stakeholder Conference are in the remit of this group. AH suggested that further discussions be held over until after the conference. **This was agreed.**

JH outlined to the group how the Conference groups should feed in to the Strategy. Groups will feedback to the Conference in a plenary session and notes will be taken to provide a more detailed document of the sessions.

JH also gave a summary of the progress made by Essex Savers Credit Union. A CU has been set up locally and is starting to publicise its services. JH asked if the group would agree for the LSP to support the publicity with £185 for posters etc. **This was agreed.**

CO gave an overview of the **Credit Crunch topic paper** and the work programme following from this. He set out an initial order of the priorities for approval. KH asked what was meant by 'joining up existing support' in Item 7. It is not clear that everyone knows what other organisations are doing across the district. LS stated that the Chamber of Commerce has changed and is more active and present in the district. The Chamber is looking to help highlight signposting and co-ordination.

KB agreed with the priorities in the paper. He asked how we take forward future actions identified. VW was asked if she would liaise with relevant partners (FSB and Business Link) to bring ideas to events and key meetings to ensure progress can be made. **This was agreed.**

CO suggested that actions to be tackled should have deadlines for completion. JH suggested that an economic strategy be developed to flag up the big picture. He said that Uttlesford has surveyed local business to determine their needs.

KB added that the FSB was involved in this survey. He also said that we must be mindful of the short term as well as longer term issues. A recently held breakfast meeting about business rates was very successful.

CO felt that there was a tendency to let development of a strategy overshadow progress of short term projects. JH said that development of a strategy should underpin short term projects.

JH suggested that a sub group be set up to work on the work programme from the Credit Crunch paper and add key dates and activities. **This was agreed** and would be made up of VW, CO, KB, JH and should report back by the next meeting.

7. Local Development Framework Update

As previously requested an update was given on progress with LDF.

AW recapped the drivers for the LDF, i.e. the SCS and the East of England Plan along with local drivers such as housing, economy and green spaces.

AW reviewed LDF development to date. The requirement for a LDF was introduced in 2004. The final version of the East of England Plan was published in May 2008.

Progress on the LDF has been delayed due to the Direction issued by the Secretary of State requiring that the Council make provision for Gypsies & Travellers. This Direction required that the document should be submitted by Sep 2009. However, this has been delayed due to the overwhelming public response to the Gypsy and Traveller consultation.

The Core Strategy is the key document within the LDF, and it is currently intended to consult on Issues and Options in July 2010. There is no firm timetable beyond that at present, but there will be further consultation approximately 8 months after the first

session, with final adoption about 3 years away. The timetables are currently unknown due to the continuing uncertainties around the coordinated working that will be required to deliver the regeneration and growth of Harlow.

JH suggested that the LDF could be reviewed as part of the workshop on the East of England plan. **This was agreed.** The group will continue to be updated on progress on development of the LDF with a standing item on the agenda.

10 Stakeholder Conference

An update was given on the annual conference which would look at refreshing the SCS.

CR confirmed the current delegate numbers at around 70. JH outlined the purpose of the guidance questions for the workshops. Once agreed CR will send the workshop questions to workshop Chairs. **Action CR**

CR will also circulate the list of delegates to Chairs. **Action CR**

JH said that the workshop packs will be sent out one week before the conference and will contain the 'Shaping the Future' (District profile).

11 Open Forum / AOB

VW thanked everyone for their input to the Credit Crunch edition of The Forester.

12 Date of Next meeting

The next meeting is on Friday 22 Jan 2010 at 2:30 pm agenda. KB asked that proposed dates for all of 2010 be circulated. This was agreed.

Action CR

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 4:50 pm