

EPPING FOREST LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Sustainable Communities Theme Group Meeting

Date: 19th March 2010

Time: 14:00 – 16:30

MINUTES

Present

Cllr Anne Grigg (AG) Chair	Epping Forest District Council Vice-Chair
Cllr Mary Sartin (MS) Vice Chair	Environment Portfolio holder, EFDC
Jacqui Foile (JF)	Chief Officer, Voluntary Action Epping Forest
John Houston (JH)	EF LSP Manager
Keith Hughes (KH)	Business Link In The East Of England
Chris Overend (CO)	Policy and Research Officer, EFDC
John de Wilton Preston (JP)	Director of Planning & Economic Development, EFDC
Nick Roberts (NR)	Passenger Transport Co-ordination Centre Manager, ECC
Gill Wallis (GW)	Council Community Development, EFDC

Apologies

Keith Brown	Essex Regional Organiser, Federation of Small Businesses
Sarah Creitzman	Environmental Co-ordinator
Alan Hall	Director of Housing EFDC
Claire Martin	Policy officer, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
Kassandra Polyzoides	Asst Director of Planning, EFDC
Louisa Sadlers	Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce
Barbara Stock	EF Lifelong Learning Partnership Coordinator, EFC
Vicki Willis (VW)	Economic Development Officer, EFDC
Amanda Wintle	Planning Officer, Epping Forest District Council

Minutes

Colin Rowell (CR)	LSP Admin Support
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1. Welcome and apologies

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies. JP gave apologies from Sarah Creitzman.

2. Minutes of last meeting / matters arising

Minutes of the last meeting (22/01) were agreed without amendment.

Matters arising were reviewed.

Ward profiles. These are now complete and available on the One Epping Forest website (http://www.oneeppingforest.org.uk/MiniObs_Main.html)

Future Jobs Fund. This will be covered under the item from CO.

Stakeholder Conference. A draft report has been produced and will be available for circulation within 2 weeks.

Sustainable Community Strategy. This is currently being developed. The recent LSP Board Away Day agreed that an SCS Drafting Group be set up.

3. Feedback from Board Away Day

During discussion about the recent Board Away Day, the following points were noted:

- turnout was good.
- duration of the meeting (half day) was about right, it meant that delegates were more focused.
- structure of the LSP – Theme Groups and Task and Finish was working well.
- better use of the West Essex Partnership (WEP), with a strand looking at cross border working with London boroughs.

JH has produced a draft annual LSP review, which was circulated with the agenda. Members were asked to suggest any successes from partnership working that they would like to see reflected in the document. The final report is due in 2 -3 weeks.

4. Credit Crunch Work Programme Report

The meeting received a presentation from CO on progress on each recommendation in the Credit Crunch Work Programme, highlighting issues for decision.

4.1 Recommendation 1 – Funding Alert. This was covered under agenda item 11 – Funding Alert.

4.2 Recommendation 2 – Future Jobs Fund. JH gave an update on the current status of the fund. Of the 79 opportunities in the first group, 33 placements have been filled, the remainder are either awaiting start dates or at interview status. If the scheme reaches 80% of the target 79 this will trigger an opportunity to bid to have funding doubled.

The scheme is receiving excellent feedback from employers. The next tranche is awaiting approval and will have 95 posts across West Essex with the Primary Care Trust providing a significant number of new placements.

4.3 Recommendation 3 – Future Events. There are a number of events in place, the question was asked, 'is the group clear about what outcomes are expected from these events'. It was felt that events helped people to network, make connections, and share information on important local economic issues. There was a general sense that outcomes were positive but that the meetings themselves were not the end of the process.

4.4 It was noted that Mrs. Collins is chairing an event on behalf of M11 LSPs and local authorities with EEDA and local business's. There was discussion about partner business processes and how these might be improved to help local businesses, e.g. commitment to timely invoice payment. After further discussion it was agreed that JH and CO should draw up a 5 point charter to be agreed by the SC Theme Group and subsequently circulated to LSP partners for adoption. This would set out good practice in supporting local business.

Action 01: JH/CO

It was agreed that such a charter would only work if all parties agree to it and that suppliers could be encouraged to adopt the charter. JF noted that payment terms need to take a balanced view of the needs of both parties, immediate payment of invoices can compromise cash flow of customer organizations.

4.5 Recommendation 4 – CAB . EFDC has provisionally agreed further funding for the CAB and will be meeting more regularly with the CAB to ensure any issues are dealt with in a timely manner. EFDC has also provided additional accommodation for the CAB at Hemnall St., although this has not yet been taken up due to IT issues. It was also noted that the Future Jobs Fund has posts with the CAB.

4.6 Recommendation 5 - Volunteering. This is a very active area in the district however there is an opportunity for partner organizations to improve the volunteering ethos and opportunities. The recommendation sought to encourage employees into

volunteering in their free time. ECC has introduced a pilot for employees to volunteer for 2 days per year, with paid leave given to support this. Funding has also been given to Volunteer Centres to support this initiative. It was agreed that a partner volunteering charter should be developed which would set out a commitment to support volunteering in a practical way by all LSP partners and highlight the key priority areas for volunteering linked to the Community Strategy priorities. CO / JF / JH will meet to draft an initial charter to be presented to the theme group and board for approval.

Action 02: JF/CO

It was noted that initial take up of the Essex scheme was slow. It was agreed that it was key to get the support of managers to keep the scheme going.

It was agreed that the LSP could support this initiative by negotiating with partners to sign up to the charter. Perhaps 3 or 4 key partners could sign up, thus encouraging others.

There was a discussion about volunteering and the Olympics. It was noted that there are 70,000 volunteering opportunities for the Olympics and that 320,000 have registered to volunteer. Voluntary Centres are looking for Olympic inspired schemes to accommodate these applicants.

4.7 Recommendation 6 – Credit Unions. There was a discussion around what outcomes the partnership was interested in achieving through expanding access to credit unions in the district. It was agreed that it was primarily around improving access for those on lowest incomes in the most deprived areas to savings and loans facilities which promoted sustainable money management and gave access to credit at very low rates of interest. Currently many of the people with lowest incomes and greatest need were paying the highest charges to access credit. Two Credit Unions operated in Essex and were currently providing services, Essex Savers and Harlowsave. It was noted that Essex Savers, which was already operating and growing its service in the district with a grant from ECC, was staffed primarily by volunteers and promoted through the churches. Harlowsave one of the largest CUs in the region was supported by Harlow Council and the PCT and had just been selected as a government partner for rolling out its saving promotions, has a mix of volunteers and paid employees, and is willing to expand its service into the district. There was agreement that for a CU to be successful in the area it must have capacity to provide a regular service and money for loans, and have the confidence of savers.

It was agreed that discussions should take place with both CUs to establish what they can offer clients in line with the objectives outlined above and what they might need by way of support from the LSP partners. A further report to be brought back to the next meeting of the theme group.

Action 03: JH/CO/JF

4.8 Recommendation 7 – Business Champion.

Keith Brown was due to report on this item. It was deferred until the next meeting.

4.9 Recommendation 8 – Economic Development Strategy. VW is currently working on a timetable for delivery of the plan. A Town Centre Cover Officer has been appointed to support this work. There was discussion about the possibility of creating a higher level (WEP) strategy to build links along the M11 corridor. It was noted that EEDA is funding work at regional level but it is only intelligence gathering. There was agreement that a west Essex strategy could be of benefit in competing with 'Havens' and 'Gateways' but a local one was also needed to maintain a clear local focus. It was agreed that a meeting of Heads of Economic Development of each WEP district should be sought to discuss the situation and explore reestablishing the West Essex Economic Partnership (WEEP). It was reported that there is already a meeting in April that may achieve this and it was agreed that if a WEEP initiative doesn't emerge from this meeting that the

partnership should facilitate a meeting of the three economic leads from the district to help get the ball rolling.

Action 04: JP

5. Update of Area review of Transport Services

An Epping district transport review to be carried out by ECC. It will look at all aspects of the current service across the district. The main aim of the review is to improve efficiency and reinvest any money saved back into local transport. After summarising progress to date NR asked whether the meeting whether there is a role for a Task and Finish group to undertake some of this work. It was noted that Community Transport (CT) has been consulted as part of the review. There are a number of CT schemes currently underway, but some of them need to be more dynamic and to deliver a strong business case for their projects. It was also noted that the district is in the top three deprivation areas for access to services, and that there were many service providers moving people around independently. This current delivery platform may well be challenged by the need for greater efficiency and joined up services from the Total Place initiative. There could be an opportunity for Task and Finish group to look at developing a more coherent service. NR reported that ECC is working towards joint commissioning of transport services with other agencies such as the PCT.

It was proposed that a Task and Finish group be established under the One Epping Forest banner and led by NR. **This was agreed.**

NR will draft the Terms of Reference and suggested membership for the group and send it to JH. JH will discuss this with AG. Members were asked to indicate if they would like to be involved over the next few days

Action 05: NR / JH / AG

NR suggested a 6 month timespan for the Task and Finish Group

JF pointed out that Cllr Syd Stavrou is on the VAEF CT Group.

JH suggested that information on the review be published in the members bulletin to raise awareness of what was going on. NR will email information to JH.

Action 06: NR / JH

6 Oral update on PRG funded projects aligned to SC TG. JF provided the first of a regular series of updates to the group on progress on the three projects run by VAEF under the remit of the Sustainable Communities Theme Group.

6.1 EPP5 – Supported Volunteering Project. The project started in June 2009. The project has been set up to help people with mental health problems to access appropriate volunteering opportunities and help support them back into employment. There have been 37 volunteer referrals to date of which 20 have been placed. The yearly target for the project has already been met. Comments received from volunteers have been very favourable and the group heard how the project was helping change peoples lives. It is expected that the project will exceed targets next year.

6.2 EPP8 – Supported Arts Project for people with learning difficulties. The project started in June 2009. The project consists mostly of group activities.

A music group runs once every two weeks with 8-10 people.

An interactive drawing project is running in Loughton. It is designed to create a visual conversation between the supporting artist and the volunteer.

There is also a drama group running at Woodredon House.

Work is currently underway with EFDC to see whether additional funding for the project can be obtained to expand the programme. There may be an opportunity to expand it across Essex due to its uniqueness and the positive outcomes being secured for clients.

6.3 EPP14 – Access to out of school club at St. John's. This project was slow to start up due the small size of the club at St. John's. Closer connections with schools are now being developed through the Epping Forest Children's Partnership to increase take up. Following approaches to ECC Transport and PRG Team a series of changes to the

operation of the scheme have been suggested but which still fit the overall aims. It was proposed and the agreement of the theme group sought to expand the project to include more schools and more children, including transporting of gifted and talented children to study venues. The project would also look to transport users to Sportability classes at Davenant School.

After further discussion it was agreed that different CT schemes will benefit from being merged and demonstrating flexibility as has been illustrated by the refocus and expansion of the EPP14 project. It is also important that CT is used more and diversifies into other areas.

It was noted that the refocus of EPP14 was in line with the original PRG project proposal; it is an expansion of the project. Changes of this nature can be ratified by the local theme group. The proposed changes to EPP14 were approved by the group. It was agreed that JF would give regular updates on these projects at subsequent meetings. JF also pointed out that the Learning Disabilities project would be exhibiting at the Essex Partnership Forum on 23 March.

7. Community Engagement

A paper outlining the function of the Community Development section was circulated by GW. The core focus of the Community Engagement project is Limes Farm, Ninefields, Oakwood Hill and Shelley. There are various levels of engagement depending on need, importantly the projects are about capacity building and involving local residents as much as possible. A recent review of provision by Inspire East identified issues around delivery on NI 4 (people's ability to Influence Decisions). The consultant undertaking the review was brought in via One Epping Forest and was looking at current performance and suggesting possible improvements. GW read out the initial feedback from the consultant which will be set out in more detail in the final report which will be available at the next meeting.

8. Local Development Framework update

JP reported that progress on the LDF had been hampered by the resources required on the Gypsy and Traveller work. A meeting of the Local Development Cabinet had recently taken place to review the document status. JP reported that issues and options for the LDF could be available this summer but this may be delayed.

JH asked whether the transport Task and Finish group should feed into this process. JP replied that it should be taken into account.

9. EERA Consultations update

JP reported that a meeting took place on 12 March to move the plan forward. It was noted that EERA will cease to exist after March 2010. The draft plan will be taken forward by the East of England Local Government Association and the East of England Development Agency. It has been recognised that along with new housing there is a need for supporting infrastructure and jobs growth. Amendments to the waste policy have also been proposed.

An LSP workshop to review the plan is still proposed, the date for the workshop is yet to be finalised but will be held to feed into the next round of consultation by EERA/EEDA.

10. Meeting the Carbon Reduction Challenge

JP reported that EFDC is currently carrying out an assessment of its use of natural resources. Part of this assessment will challenge partners to assess their own use of resources. Once the review is complete it will be shared and will ask questions of partners.

JH noted that the recent consultation (Your Voice Matters) put the environment very high on the list of residents concerns (2nd top priority for issues today, and top priority

for future issues). It was agreed that the Sustainable Community Strategy will contain carbon footprint targets and the LSP will develop an environmental charter that partners will be asked to sign up to. It was agreed that a presentation on current good practice on carbon reduction and future challenges should be given to the next meeting of the theme group.

Action 07: JP

11. Funding Alert

The Funding Alert is Recommendation 1 from agenda Item 4. JH asked that partners pass any new funding opportunities to the LSP Admin Team for distribution across the partnership. This would hopefully ensure that potential funding opportunities would not be missed.

Action 08: All / Admin

12 Open Forum / AOB

KH reported that there will be a West Showcase event taking place in Nov 2010. VW is working with KH and KB to determine the local requirements for representation at the event. KH will bring more information to the next meeting.

Action 09: KH

13 Date of Next meeting

21 May 2010 at 2:00pm – Committee Room, EFDC Offices