

EPPING FOREST LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Sustainable Communities Theme Group Meeting

Date: 24th September 2010

Time: 14:00 – 16:00

DRAFT MINUTES

Present

Cllr Anne Grigg (AG) Chairman	Epping Forest District Council
Cllr Mary Sartin (MS) Vice Chair	Environment Portfolio holder, EFDC
Sarah Creitzman (SC)	Environmental Co-ordinator
Jacqui Foile (JF)	Chief Officer, Voluntary Action Epping Forest
Felicity Hall (FH)	Arts Officer, EFDC
John Houston (JH)	EF LSP Manager
Jim Nolan (JN)	Assistant Director, Environment & Streetscene
John de Wilton Preston (JP)	Director of Planning & Economic Development, EFDC
Kassandra Polyzoides (KP)	Asst Director of Planning, EFDC
Nick Roberts (NR)	Passenger Transport Co-ordination Centre Manager, ECC
Barbara Stock (BS)	EF Lifelong Learning Partnership Coordinator, EFC
Vicki Willis (VW)	Economic Development Officer, EFDC

Guests

Janet Whitehouse (JW) EFDC

Presenting

Alison Davies	Essex Savers Credit Union
Jenny Smith	Harlowsave Credit Union

Apologies

Keith Brown (KB)	Essex Regional Organiser, Federation of Small Businesses
Alan Hall (AH)	Director of Housing EFDC
Keith Hughes (KH)	East Of England IDB
Claire Martin (CM)	Policy officer, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
Pauline Nischal (PN)	Jobcentre Plus
Chris Overend (CO)	Policy and Research Officer, EFDC
Heather Thirtle (HT)	Chamber of Commerce
Gill Wallis (GW)	Council Community Development, EFDC

Minutes

Colin Rowell (CR) LSP Admin Support

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies.

2. Minutes of last meeting / matters arising

2.1 Minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record.

- 2.2 JH gave an update on the West Essex Schools Primary Prize. He asked if anyone had ideas for sponsors. The total cost for the 2010 event was £6,000 but it could be reduced for subsequent events.
- 2.3 Some local organisations (the Council Management Team, PCT and EF College) have been approached concerning Credit Union payroll deductions. In principle they were all in favour.
- 2.4 Item 10.2 – Successful new business registration rate. The draft press release is in hand.
- 2.5 Item 11.3 – Pilot LEP. An application has been submitted to establish a Local Enterprise Partnership covering Essex and Kent.
- 2.6 Item 14.1 – Broadband development. JH enquired about Broadband development. KB is liaising with EFDC on this matter.

3. Update on Credit Union development from Essex Savers and Harlowsave.

- 3.1 A presentation from Alison Davies of Essex Savers (ES) had been previously circulated. Alison gave an overview of the services offered by Essex Savers and pointed out the areas where external support would help, namely promotion of the service, service funding, additional volunteers. AD also noted that ES had loaned £87,000 over 1800 loans in the last 3 years and was looking to 2013 as the sustainability point.
- 3.2 A general discussion took place and the following points were noted
 - 3.2.1 ES offers a pre paid debit card
 - 3.2.2 ES could use more volunteers. JF offered to investigate volunteer options at VAEF **Action : JF / AD**
 - 3.2.3 There is a problem getting the Credit Union message out to the community. JF offered publicity in the Fair's Fair magazine and a presence at the Voluntary Sector Forum **Action : JF / AD**
- 3.3 A number of questions were asked
 - 3.3.1 What happens with loan defaulters? There is a defined process for loan defaulters which can include retrieving payment from benefits.
 - 3.3.2 Why do people save in Credit Unions? There is usually a mix of savers. Some save because it is seen as a benefit to the community, others due to favourable interest rates (against door step lenders and loan sharks) on loans.
- 3.4 Alison Davies left the meeting.
- 3.5 Jenny Smith (JS) from Harlowsave gave a presentation setting out how the Credit Union was developing, its staffing and operation. A number of questions were asked
 - 3.5.1 Is Harlowsave licensed to operate in the Epping area? Harlowsave has not yet applied for an extension of the common bond. However JS noted that this was not usually a difficult or lengthy process.
 - 3.5.2 Does Harlowsave have any links with Harlow 2020? JS sits on the Harlow 2020 Health Inequalities Board and Harlow 2020 have provided Harlowsave with useful contacts.
 - 3.5.3 Does Harlowsave have any current payroll deductions in place? It does, with the PCT.
 - 3.5.4 Does Harlowsave operate in East Herts? No it does not, but is looking to operate in Uttlesford.
- 3.6 Jenny Smith left the meeting.
- 3.7 Discussion followed on next steps. It was agreed that JH and CO should work up a paper to be presented at the next meeting looking at recommendations for practically supporting the development of credit unions. **Action : JH/CO**
- 3.8 It was noted that Harlowsave currently covers certain postcodes, Essex Savers covers Essex.
- 3.9 Essex libraries have offered their premises to Essex Savers as collection points.

- 3.10 Community Development could be a vehicle for raising the awareness of credit unions with vulnerable groups as could the council / social landlords.
- 3.11 After Harlow Save left the meeting, Cllr Sartin raised the question of whether there would be ring-fencing of funds in respect of Epping Forest district. This will be confirmed with Harlowsave. **Action : JH**

4. Update on Environmental Charter

- 4.1 SC gave an update on the Environmental Charter. It is intended to promote the charter on the internet. Technical issues mean that it cannot be added to the EFDC website. SC asked for thoughts on alternatives to the EFDC website.
- 4.2 JH asked whether it was planned to approach any large organisations for sign up to the charter. SC is intending to approach EFDC and possibly Tesco initially.
- 4.3 Once the charter is agreed it is intended that it should be available for download.
- 4.4 The text of the charter was approved by the meeting.
- 4.5 Promotion of the charter will begin with Business Enterprise Week on 15-19 November.

5. Update on progress of Transport T&F Group

- 5.1 NR gave an update on the group. Each meeting is focusing on a particular aspect of transport. The last meeting looked at buses. There are generally 3 operator types, Transport for London, Arriva – high end provider, Regal Buses – small local operator which secures work mainly from submitting tenders. Key issues highlighted for operators were fuel prices and accessibility to tube stations for buses.
- 5.2 Bus operators have asked that they be involved in
- 5.2.1 route planning and
 - 5.2.2 early notification of housing development to assist with their capacity planning. JP agreed that the planning department could make contact with Regal buses.
- 5.3 It was noted that there are a significant number of organisations providing transport to various groups. JH asked if anyone was looking at how these might be combined. ECC is working with 5 PCTs to consider merging operations, with the objective of having something in place in 2012.
- 5.4 JP asked if there are any opportunities for transport development around the Olympics. It was suggested that Olympic committee chaired by Derek Macnab be approached. **Action : NR**
- 5.5 VW asked for information re quality taxi partnerships. This is an initiative started in Basildon and intended to improve the image of taxi services. VW will speak with local taxi services to find out what local progress is being made. **Action : VW**
- 5.6 NR outlined issues with bus timetabling in Waltham Abbey causing overlapping services from different operators, potentially leading to operators going out of business. NR will investigate the situation further. **Action : NR**

6. Update on Business and Volunteer Charter

- 6.1 JH gave an update on the charters. The Business Charter has been presented to the Council Management Board. The 10 day invoice payment requirement was considered to be too short. It was recommended that this be changed to 20 days with a target of 10 days where possible. Other local employers will be approached to test this principle. **Action : JH/CO**
- 6.2 Comment was made that most businesses would be happy to receive payment within 20 days and that a 10 day target would not usually be business critical.
- 6.3 It was agreed that a business champion for the charter be appointed. CO will contact the EFDC business champion and, and if he agrees will invite him to join the Group. **Action : CO**

- 6.4 It was noted that as procurement processes develop they are becoming more centralised and web based. This is making it very difficult for small, local businesses to tender for work.
- 6.5 CO will look to get local organisations/businesses to sign up to the charter and will look to getting the process in place by the next meeting. **Action : CO/VW**
- 6.6 The Volunteer Charter has also been presented to the Council Management Board. An issue was highlighted concerning the proposal for 2 days paid volunteering leave. It was suggested that, given the current climate, the proposal should be for 5 days unpaid leave.
- 6.7 Essex CC already operates a 2 days paid leave policy. It is likely that the time is not taken as 2 days consecutive days, but in smaller time slots, resulting in minimal impact on the workplace. NR noted that all members of his team have the 2 day volunteering policy written in to their performance document. It was agreed that it is important to understand the experience of ECC in this matter. NR will get more information from ECC on how this is working. **Action : NR**
It was agreed that the 2 day is preferred by the Group, but that more work is needed.

7. M11 Economic Partnership update / Local Enterprise Partnerships

- 7.1 KH sent his apologies. VW is looking to build a database of event related businesses.
- 7.2 LEPs are replacing RDAs. LEPs will represent real economic geography and will be chaired by business representatives. 56 LEP submissions have been made, Essex/Kent being one of them. The M11 partnership will provide local access to the LEP.
- 7.3 JP noted that the 56 bids are in review using a traffic light system. It was also agreed that the M11 partnership would need to be such that it can voice local needs to the LEP. It was also noted that the Essex/Kent LEP bid was not signed by all districts in the counties.

8. Local Development Framework Update

- 8.1 LDF development is continuing, but the content is likely to be shaped by upcoming legislation changes in December. Wider planning policy changes (such as abolishment of PPSs) will also impact the LDF content.
- 8.2 Public consultation on the 1st stage of the LDF is scheduled for early summer 2011. The question of how growth will be managed in the future currently rests with the Management Board. No decision has been made on the speed of development.
- 8.3 Green belt development will in future include a public consultation, but there is no real information about this yet.

9. Update on Furniture Recycling Scheme

- 9.1 JH gave an update on the scheme progress. EFDC have made a commitment to provide some money to the project. Further funding is subject to bids which are currently being developed. JW asked the group whether any partners know of available premises that might be available for the project. JH will email KB/KH to see if they know of any available premises. **Action : JH**
- 9.2 JH referred to the final paragraph of the report which reads
'The support of the other partners on One Epping Forest is sought for the general concept of the re-establishment of a scheme in the District, through involvement (active or otherwise) in the scheme, or direct or 'in kind' financial provision.'
This was agreed.

10. Feedback from LSP Board

- 10.1 The final impact of cuts in PRG funding is close to being confirmed. Some projects may be extended. The possibility of creating a West Essex LSP is being reviewed.
- 10.2 The 2nd tranche of the Future Jobs Fund intake (FJF) is underway.
- 10.3 JP noted that the calibre of people taken on under the FJF has been very high. Two people have had their contracts extended. The scheme has highlighted a mass of untapped talent.
- 10.4 JP noted that one of the early FJF employees has since taken up another role.
- 10.5 JF noted that VAEF had been able to take on a person with learning difficulties under the scheme.

11. Funding Alert

- 11.1 The Funding Alert report was previously circulated for information.

12. AOB / Open Forum

- 12.1 VW reported that a district business event is taking place on 14 Oct covering marketing and access to finance.
- 12.2 Enterprise week is in November.

13. Date of next meeting

- The next meeting is on 19 November at 2:00 pm.