



Minutes of meeting held on 9th May 2007

Chapter House, Chelmsford RCCE

Attendees:

John Brown (JB)	RCCE – Chair
Suzanne Roast (SR)	RCCE
Theresa Coyne (TC)	Tendring Community Transport
Joy Sheppard (JS)	EALC
Kitty Barrett (KB)	BDC
Paul Williams (PW)	ECC
Wendy Jackson (WJ)	ECC
Kirsty Monk (KM)	RCCE (minutes)

Apologies

Judy Cuddeford	BDUSA
Sue Sumner	CVS Uttlesford
Elaine Woods	ECC
Angela Balcombe	ECC
Chris Allen	EEDA
Keith Blackburn	ECC
Graham Bushby	Essex SJA
Gemma Driscoll	ECC
Ken Edwards	Chelmsford Sport
Ed Gregory	ECC
Mike Hall	Writtle College
Dianne Hardy	ExDra
Ruth Juett	EREC
Neil Keylock	ECC
Gill Pike	UVC
Linda Riley	VST
Jenny Salisbury	ECC Library Services
Nick Shuttleworth	RCCE
Brenda Towle	ECVS
Miriam Stead	ECC
Tony Shelton (TS)	Age Concern Essex
Linda Smart (LS)	ECC

John Brown warmly welcomed attendees to the meeting and introductions were made.

1. **Minutes of the last meeting & Matters Arising**

No matters of accuracy were raised

SR reported that Maureen Frewin (formerly of Chief Executive of Southend CVS) had been elected the new Chair of ESTIC (Essex and Southend and Thurrock Information Consortium); this was felt to be a positive appointment as ESTIC would be the new Chair's primary focus.

JB asked whether it would be better to invite Maureen to come to a future meeting.

Action: SR to invite Maureen Furan to a future meeting of the CAG.

Market Towns

SR advised there had been some difficulties arranging the Seminar promoting Market Towns Partnerships. July or September had been suggested however these were proving to be very busy periods. Funding had not yet been confirmed by EEDA for the event.

The Group felt that if funding could be confirmed that if possible July could be attempted, although it did not give much time to publicise the event.

JS requested that parishes be involved in this event.

Action: SR to liaise with JS and Parishes via EALC.

JB suggested that if funding for the event could be negotiated that July should be aimed for; if not October 2007 should be looked at.

2. Update on RSCP Projects in Essex:

SR reported that the RSCP projects were continuing to run to schedule, however there was no further information on the continuation of funding after March 2008. A decision could not realistically be expected until January 2007.

JS explained to the group that the information being filtered down from the powers that be had indicated that DEFRA would be concentrating its money on Green Issues in the future.

JS went on to report that she had looked at innovative ways of using the RSCP funding to help fund the continued professional development of Parish Clerks by providing funding for training at the University of Gloucester, which had proved very successful so far.

JS reported that the "Plan for the Future of Community" courses had been oversubscribed and were very good.

A general discussion was held by the group reviewing the future funding of RSCP projects and the Essex Rural Partnership. Ways of securing funding and Group representation to RSCP, ECC were discussed.

Action: the following courses of action were suggested:

- Representation should be made to the LAA to get reward funding to keep these projects going. (SR/JB)
- A case with supporting evidence for the continuance of these projects etc should be put together (SR/JS)
- A meeting with the Essex Parliament, Rachel Stoppard, Directors from ECC and External Relationships and Partnerships should be sought -JS/SR to liaise about a possible meeting.

3. Community Planning Fund (CPF)

KM presented a written report on the Community Planning Fund (full report attached). The main focus of the Community Planning Fund is to assist the development and production of Community Led Plans. KM explained that in the last financial year (06/07) RCCE have awarded over 99% of the total Community Planning Fund available to 28 diverse groups.

RCCE were continuing to promote the CPF fund and field officers were arranging a series of events for this purpose. KM said that the fact that some Parish Councils gave no or as little as 3% in cash match funding to these Community Led Plans, highlighted the real need for the continuance of the Community Planning Fund beyond March 2008 when funding was due to finish.

JB felt that this showed how important this type of funding was to rural communities as they often received little financial support to enable them to carry out these sorts of community led projects.

Action: KB and JS asked KM to email a copy of the CPF report.

3. Impact of the Olympics on Lottery Funding

The Group felt that this issue was being responded to on an individual organisational level, for instance the National CVS organisation was lobbying government at present. The Group decided that it was more appropriate for individual organisations to pick up this issue and that they would not pursue the matter further.

4. Changes in Essex County Council and Portfolios

SR advised the Group that Peter Martin's Portfolio had changed and it looked likely that he would be stepping down as chairman of the ERP. Either Stephen Castle or John Jowers had been suggested and it was hoped that they would take on this on this role. *(It was later confirmed that John Jowers would most likely be taking on the role of ERP Chairman but that Peter Martin would oversee the meetings until this happened).*

WJ advised that her portfolio had also changed and that there had been a council wide change in portfolios.

TC suggested reviewing the newly assigned portfolios on the ECC website

TC thought the Group might like to look at Lord Hanningfield's Web blog (**webblog address:** lordhanningfield.essexcc.gov.uk)

5. Update on Essex Rural Partnership Activities

Closure of Rural Post Offices

SR advised the Group that the Post Office Working Group had met for its 2nd meeting he principle objective of that meeting was to review the Post office tool kits for rural communities. They had determined that 2 toolkits would be the most effective option:

- 1) How to Save a Post Office Under threat of closure; how to promote its services etc.
- 2) How to relocate Post Office Services to other Host services; advising how to select a host service provider, set up of the service and or attract one to the community.

They also set up a task group to identify the essential services and resources necessary to set up a host Post Office and contact the providers the potential locations such as schools, police stations, village halls railway stations to start to determine early links through central sources.

WJ noted that the post office in Chelmsford was to be relocated in WH Smiths

SR advised that the ERP were awaiting the results of their response to the DTI consultation paper submitted in March 2007. There would be no news expected until after the May elections results had been received and the dust had settled.

Regionally other groups had been tackling this issue using various methods, one of which was the community hub style pilot project in Norfolk which would also host Post Office Services. Bedfordshire had also looked at this idea as a way of tackling this issue.

Although the working group could see the benefits of such a pilot, due to lack of funding there was no guarantees that this or similar schemes could be continued and extended county-wide. They had therefore decided to opt for the toolkit solution which would extend the most benefit to a greatest number of communities.

Ed Gregory had agreed that the Essex Toolkit should be available to other Regions facing Post Office Closures in Rural Areas.

PW felt that the multi purpose centres in village halls worked well in rural communities in general.

JS felt that the choice taken by the working group would enable rural communities to do something for themselves and to lead the initiative.

4. liC Update

The Rural Access Points

SR reported that the rural access project had been given the go ahead by EEDA

The Rural Retail Advisor

SR advised that this project had also been agreed with the proviso that some research be completed before the end of May to justify the project. The project would not now start until April 2007 and would only be for 1 year as a pilot scheme.

JS asked if there was any chance of renegotiating this.

SR responded that unfortunately this has now been "signed off" on the business plan and could not be changed.

Action: SR to report back on further developments on these 2 projects.

6. Essex Rural Strategy Action Plan (ERSAP) – New Actions Tasks and Priorities

The Group looked at ways of more effectively tackling the tasks on the ERSAP. The Action Plan had already been prioritised to identify the most urgent "priority 1" tasks but it was felt that further revisions should be made, as follows:

- It should identify the task group assigned to each task.
- Give greater detail on the progress to date for each task and achievements
- State the review date for each task.
- The Action Groups Column should be reduced to make room for these changes.

It was felt that the revised ERSAP should be posted and updated regularly on the ERP website so that members had viewing access to ERSAP progress.

KB believed that the Group needed to say how we support these actions and tease out the most important as well as importing professional support in areas that are currently covered by existing Group members.

ERSAP Transport (2a)

SR explained that funding transport projects was a national problem at the moment with little or no funding available at the moment.

WJ had been working with Kris Radley (RCCE Rural Transport and Access Advisor) with regard to transport needs surveys, however once the needs had been identified, there was currently no funds available to make changes. There was also the prospect of things getting worse in 2008. For instance, although free buss passes were available to identified groups there was no funding to put in the extra bus services in rural areas. She felt that the big issue was where will the money come from?

TC believed that individual Transport and Access Surveys needed pulling together to give an overall snapshot of Essex. They should be reviewed and used to prioritise County transport objectives and prioritise them, so that we can focus on what's needed to be done.

PW said that there were sub groups tackling these issues such as business and accessibility planning task group.

TC suggested that looking at the 5 strategic areas we could identify those areas we the work had already been carried out and use this information to target the areas that had not yet been covered.

Action: Kris Radley (RCCE) and Wendy Jackson (ECC) to progress this item.

ERSAP Provision of childcare facilities (5E)

The Group felt that this was a wide ranging subject with many areas to cover; such as, provision of early year's childcare, after school care, Surestart, special needs, extended school projects, etc. The current Group members believed that suitable new expert members should be brought into the group to tackle this ERSAP task and advise the group.

Action: Group to invite/ propose County childcare provision experts to aid the undertaking of task 5e on the ERSAP and report progress at next CAG meeting.

ERSAP 6d – Provision of Affordable Rural Housing

Action: JS wished to liaise with Moira Groborz the Rural Housing Enabler at RCCE to tackle this action point; SR to facilitate the meeting.

7. Future Events

SR explained that she had included this item to increase awareness of upcoming events and invited members to add any of their events they wished to publicise, to this agenda item.

- **Compact Stakeholder Consultation** – 25th May 2007 Chapter House Chelmsford. Revising the Essex Compact between Voluntary Organisations and the Statutory Sector.
- **Farmers Conference**, 15th May 2007 Room in the Rodings, if you would like further information, please speak to Keith Blackburn
- **Transport Event** 19th June 2007 – County Hall, Contact Wendy Jackson for details
- **ERP Full Partnership Meeting-** 16th May 2007, Cressing Temple Barns, Cressing – ask Kirsty Monk for details.

- **RTAN Networking Lunch 29th May 2007, Chapter House, Chelmsford** - ask Kirsty Monk for details.

7. Date of the next meeting

This was later arranged for 4th July 2007, RCCE Offices, Feering; arrival for lunch 1.00pm, meeting commences at 1.30pm

8. AOB:

ERP Website

SR advised the group that the new ERP Website had been commissioned and she was in the process of finalising its format with the Web Designers (website address: www.essexruralpartnership.org.uk). The website currently holds SR's contact details whilst the site is being designed.

JB thought that it would be a good idea to have a link to the Oyster articles on the web site.

KB requested a Link to her website and RCCE

SR advised that she was also going to put in a Link to EALC's RSCP projects.

PW felt that it would be useful to have a revised version of the ERP Action Plan on the web site that clearly shows objectives and what has been achieved to date.

Action: SR to advise the Group on the website's progress to date at the next meeting

Patient Transport

WJ advised that there was a hopper bus which transported patients from rural areas to Colchester Hospital funded by North Essex PCT.

Meeting Concluded at 3.30 pm