



STEERING GROUP
Minutes of the Meeting
6th November 2009
RCCE Offices, Feering, 9.45am

Present:	Representing	Orgn	Initials
Cllr John Jowers	Chairman	ECC	(JJ)
Canon John Brown	Vice Chair	RCCE	(JB)
Suzanne Harris	CAG & EERF	RCCE	(SH)
Joy Sheppard	CAG	EALC	(JS)
Philip Wilson	EcAG	ECC	(PhW)
John Hall	EnvAG	EWT	(JH)
Cllr. Peter Baggott	EnvAG	EALC	(PB)
Cllr, Peter Chillingworth	LGA (Essex)	CBC	(PC)
Richard Woolley	EERF	RCCE	(RW)
Chris Allen	EEDA	EEDA	(CA)
Ed Gregory	facilitator orgn	ECC	(EG)
Nick Shuttleworth	facilitator orgn	RCCE	(NS)
 Attending:			
Kirsty Monk	(minutes)	RCCE	(KM)
 Apologies:			
Dominic Petre	EcAG	EET	(DP)
Cllr. Mick Page	EERF	ECC	(MP)
Cllr Wendy Scattergood	LGA (Essex)		(WS)
Cllr. John Buchanan	EERF	EALC	(JBU)

1 Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Cllr. John Jowers welcomed all to the meeting.

**Action
By**

Apologies were read (*please see above for details*).

2 Minutes of the [SG] meeting held on 9th September 2009

Matters of Accuracy.

No matters of accuracy were raised, those present agreed the minutes.

Matters Arising from the previous meeting were covered in the main agenda items.

3 Strategy Document Update

SH advised that the Strategy had been revised as a result of a wider consultation process and the last draft had been circulated to the Steering Group for comment. Any further amendments had been made before sending the text and photos to the printers for layout and design.

SH circulated a copy the current proof of the Strategy that she had received from the designers.

SH advised that as agreed, the honeycomb of Essex photos imagery had been retained with refreshed photos on the main cover. Each of the 6 section header pages also has a honeycomb with photos representing its theme. SH had conducted a photo tour of Essex to bring together the photo images for the Strategy and ensure that they were all current photos taken within the county!

3 refreshed ERP banners had also been designed to reflect the updates to the ERP vision statement; the photo honeycomb on the banners mirrors that on the front cover of the new Strategy.

SH invited comments from the members present.

The Steering Group Members were pleased with the look and content of the document.

JJ: Congratulated the Drafting Team and RCCE Staff on the production of an excellent Rural Strategy Document.

4 **Launch Event (24th November 2009 Ingatestone Hall).**

Arrangements to date

SH outlined the arrangements and programme for the ERP Strategy Launch

- Registration 10.30 with Teas and Coffees
- 11.00pm Launch Commences
- Photo Session for ERP members weather permitting
- Buffet Lunch

Event Structure and speakers

SH envisaged that Lord Petre would welcome visitors to Ingatestone Hall, perhaps with a few words about the history of the Hall, its rural location, etc. SH proposed that John Jowers chaired the event, saying a few words about rural Essex, its role, importance, etc and then commending the Strategy to those present.

SH proposed that perhaps John Brown highlight some of the key themes of the Strategy (possibly with accompanying PowerPoint presentation)

SH then perhaps that the two Johns could talk about the importance of delivery, the role of the action groups, the desire for those present to continue to be involved with the ERP; John Jowers to perhaps round off with some further comments about the Strategy and rural Essex.

This could then be perhaps be followed by a formal response to the Strategy from Lord Hanningfield and then a few 'views from the county', suggested for approach:

- **Rosemary Padfield**, NFU Chair in Essex – a farmers view
- **Wendy Scattergood**: Braintree Member for Rural and ERP Steering Group member – a districts view
- **George Courtauld**: RCCE Chair (and various other roles) – rural communities view

This could all finish off with a Q&A session with all the above as panel members, joined by some of the drafting team, chaired by John Jowers.

Followed by photos in the courtyard and lunch in the summer parlour.

Guests

SH advised that Ingatestone Hall's capacity was 80-100 people and she had encouraged members to book their place if they had not already done so as places were limited.

KM advised that she had spoken with many key VIPS and invitations had been sent to all District, Borough and County Council Chief Executives, Leaders, Chairman and key strategic senior offices. VIP invitations had gone out to all key Essex stakeholders, Services; CVS'S and volunteer sector and key rural figures and the media. All ERP Members had been emailed an invitation and a hardcopy had been sent to them also. KM advised that she had received over 50 bookings already for the Launch Event.

5 Environment (and Coastal) Action Group

SH reported that RCCE was happy to undertake the secretariat for the EnVAG as part of its existing SLA with ECC, which would be consistent with the service RCCE provided to the other two ERP action groups.

SH felt that what was really needed was a strong Chairman to lead the Environmental (and Coastal) Action Group to motivate and draw together membership and to develop the group's action plan in line with the ERP environmental strategic aims. A strong Chairman would need knowledge and expertise to set the right agenda, and knowledge and connections to help to refresh and reinvigorate the membership of the Group.

JH expressed a reluctance to take up the Chairmanship of the Group due to his other commitments and work on the LAA.

PhW advised that the ECC's Matt Searle would be happy to chair the group if needed and had offered support to the EnvAG from his team.

JJ felt that the group needed to focus on practical action plans with deliverable outcomes and that linkage with coastal environmental issues and the Shoreline Management Plan were important.

JB suggested meeting with JH to discuss how to move the action group forward.

6 Follow-up to the Essex Rural Commission Report

PhW advised that the ERC report had been launched successfully on 11th Sept in Maldon. It had also gone before the Scrutiny Committee; the committee had interviewed several "witnesses", (including PhW and NS) and had broadly supported the report; they then put it to Cabinet for consideration. The ECC official response to the report was due imminently.

ECC Rural Transformation Programme, 4 key proposals:

1. Broadband Pilot in Maldon
2. Tree Nursery in Weald Country Park
3. Improved Grazing and training for agricultural workers in this respect.
4. Pub is the Hub – to help rural pubs survive this economically challenging time.

7 Dr Stuart Burgess Visit, Rural Advocate (Commission for Rural Communities)

JJ invited topics members wished to raise on behalf of the ERP with the Rural Advocate.

The Steering Group raised the following points:

- The new ERP Strategy - explain the differences and linkages to the ERC report
- Affordable Housing
- Rural Broadband
- Role of Voluntary Sector and Communities
- Funding for Commercial buildings
- Loss of top slice for the Haven Gateway
- Rural planning issues and training planning officers to understand rural issues
- Lobbying elements from the ERP Strategy.

Actions

SH to extract lobbying issues from the Strategy and take forward to the meeting

SH

Any other issues to be emailed to JJ by Monday 9th November.

ALL

8 Rural Broadband Update

PhW elaborated on the Maldon Broadband pilot scheme.

- They aimed to satisfy demand and register take up

- Sort out 'not spots'
- Use data to convince key providers to improve their service provision in rural areas countywide
- Role out across the County.

9 **Economic Assessment Duty**

EG circulated documents relating to Economic Assessment Questions. He invited members to participate and asked how best to raise awareness of legislation, involve and raise awareness with the ERP membership.

NS suggested that Parish Plans and Appraisals may answer some of the questions and provide some useful evidence.

ALL

Action:

Steering Group Members to feedback comments to EG regarding the Economic Assessment Questions.

A. O.B

East of England Regional Assembly

JJ expressed his concern regarding the possible ramifications of the abolishment of the Regional Assembly on the 31st March 2009 and future changes to the Regional Structure.

Essex Design Guide, Rural Supplement

JJ reported that he has spoken with Lord Hanningfield regarding an update to the Essex Design guide with a rural supplement and felt that the ERP should feed into this.

RW felt it was important to allow local views feed into rural planning (Village Design Statements etc) so that communities could help determine their own environment.

PC felt that a key need was to assess the overall character and nature of the surrounding environment of rural communities when planning.

PhW reported that the Highways Department had taken on the idea of highways designed to blend into the natural environment.

Affordable Housing

JJ explained that he was in the process of speaking to the Strategy Group (ECC) regarding Affordable Housing, key issues were:

- The current LDF format doesn't specify "social" affordable housing.
- Possibility of the Essex Bank providing mortgages/funding
- Affordable Housing based on a 100 m² minimum, passive 90%,
- Prices not more than £140,000 per unit
- Affordable Housing for local people and relations, key workers
- Possibility of shared equity in homes.

JJ had also spoken to Lord Hanningfield regarding plot price and the need to build in an expectation for higher plot prices between £3000 and £15,000, as there were not always benevolent land owners in areas which needed affordable housing.

The Steering Group discussed the problems and benefits of affordable housing schemes in rural communities. For example:

- Problems encountered overcoming local opposition.
- Schemes that had worked successfully such as the affordable housing in Thaxted
- Benefits of Housing Needs Surveys in identifying need
- The importance of working with Parish Councils and communities and developing community support.

Reports from Meetings Attended

CA reported on EEDA's destination Growth event which was well attended by small business across the region. (please see details on EEDA's website – link: <http://www.eeda.org.uk/622.asp>)

SH/KM

Several members reported that they had not received any information regarding the event.

RW reported on the Essex Partnership Mitigating Climate Change summit.

PB reported that the NALC conference had been successful and details and presentation downloads were available on the NALC website. (link: http://www.nalc.gov.uk/Conferences_and_Events/Annual_Conference_2009/NALC_annual_conference_and_exhibition.aspx)

Uttlesford Leader Funding

PhW reported that the LA Group for Eastern Plateau the leader funding RDPE funding had been moving forward steadily and would be supporting schemes in North Herts, East Herts and Uttlesford, with 3 million over 6 years to distribute to applicants. Applicants were required to find 50% match funding to be eligible.

Date of next Steering Group Meeting

Action: SH to circulate dates for the next Steering Group and Full Partnership Meeting
Meeting concluded 3.30pm