



Essex Rural Partnership

STEERING GROUP
20th October 2011
Minutes of the Meeting
Bentley Golf Club, Brentwood, 2:00pm

Present	Representing	Orgn	Initials
Cllr John Jowers	Chairman	ECC	JJ
Nick Shuttleworth	Facilitator	RCCE	NS
Suzanne Harris	CAG & EERF	RCCE	SH
Daisy Martlew	Minutes	RCCE	DM
Philip Wilson	EcAG	ECC	PhW
Cllr Mick Page	EERF	ECC	MP
Dominic Petre	EcAG	EET	DP
Cllr John Buchanan	EERF	EALC	JBu
Matt Searle	EnvAG	ECC	MS
Joy Darby	CAG	EALC	JD
Apologies			
Canon John Brown	Vice Chair	RCCE	JB
Cllr Peter Chillingworth	ELG rep	Colchester BC	PC
Revd Julie Nelson	EERF	Church of England	JN
Cllr Peter Baggott	EnvAG	EALC	PB
Cllr Wendy Scattergood	ELG rep	Braintree DC	WS
Richard Woolley	EERF	RCCE	RW

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

Chairman Cllr. John Jowers welcomed all to the meeting.

1.1 **Apologies**

Apologies were taken as read (see above for details).

2. **Minutes of the ERP Steering Group Meeting held on 7th October 2011**

2.1 **Accuracy**

Agreed as accurate.

2.2 **Matters Arising**

No matters arising.

3. **ERP (full) Meeting**

3.1 **Review of full ERP meeting**

JJ felt that it went very well and all agreed that we should send a letter of thanks to Simon Brice. It was felt that Sid Cooper's presentation on wood fuel was too long and too specialised for the audience. DP felt that it focused more on the positive side and didn't address the negatives.

SH

NS found Simon Brice's presentation very interesting – it gave a broad scope to follow up; how are Essex farmers facing the challenges? JJ praised PhW's broadband update. All enjoyed the cooked lunch – this was the same price as a cold buffet.

JJ commented on the low number of delegates. SH explained that she had looked at attendance over the past year, which appears to have decreased by around 10 delegates. This is mostly due to redundancies and increased workloads rather than people choosing not to attend. We were expecting more people to turn up and as a result over-catered. We will in future ask people to fill in a booking form indicating whether they want lunch.

DM/SH

PhW asked if we could invite John Spence to a future meeting. JJ felt that this would be useful as he is in a very powerful position and is pro-rural. MS suggested that John Spence and Jon Regan be added to the ERP Monthly Bulletin distribution list – it was agreed that Jon Regan and Simon Neilson (ECC, LEP Secretariat) be added.

DM

4. Strategic Developments

4.1 Defra's Rural and Farming Network

SH explained that the network will involve 10 – 20 people and meet once or twice a year with the Defra minister. The steering group needs to think about whom will represent us – it has been suggested that our seat may be joint with Kent, but we are in a strong position to make it an Essex representative. Perhaps it should be someone with a holistic view on rural issues?

JJ agreed and added that the representative should be linked to the Defra brief and not an officer or politician. JJ proposed DP as a suitable candidate as he has knowledge of different areas of rural life (community, economy and environment). DP felt that perhaps he was the obvious choice but not the best and would rather wait and see what the structure will be – he will think about it. Rosemary Padfield, Pennie Wallace and Richard Woolley were also suggested as potential representatives. It was agreed that the steering group would think about it and discuss further at the next meeting. SH reminded the group that we had not yet been informed we were successful and the intention was to 'get people thinking' rather than make any decisions at this stage.

AI

JBu suggested that we need to see the terms of reference, as we are unsure what Defra is expecting. There needs to be some infrastructure that briefs the representative. It was agreed that this should be through the ERP.

SH explained that Defra has suggested that ERP consider future links with Kent. Consideration could be given to a joint annual meeting. NS supported the idea of the steering group meeting with Kent's equivalent (Kent Rural Board) once a year.

SH explained that the Rural Fora Ministers quarterly meetings used to be themed, but because there are to be no more than two meetings per year this will not be possible. The Defra Network meetings are likely to be broad and cover more than

one topic; therefore the representative needs to be someone who has an understanding of more than one field. EERF are likely to put forward a farmer, and we would be wise to try to place emphasis on other areas of rural living/working.

4.2 EERF

SH explained that the EERF is in the same position as the ERP. If they get a seat on the network, the representative will be decided by a narrow number of people, which SH may be a part of. JJ added that we should push for EERF as well, as the network is a very important group to be on.

4.3 Local Enterprise Partnerships

JJ explained that the integrated strategy fills the vacuum between the local planning authority and secretary of state.

The SELEP is way behind – Cornwall's LEP is doing well and coming up with a lot of innovative projects. The SELEP is so big it's difficult to prioritise issues.

4.4 Essex Partnership

Nothing to report.

5. Items to Report

Agreed as covered in the morning.

6. AOB

Nothing to report.

6.1 Date of Next Meeting

Dates to be circulated

DM

The meeting concluded at 2:40pm