



Economic Action Group

Friday 13th May 2011, commencing at 10.00 am

RCCE Offices, Threshelfords Business Park, Feering CO5 9SE

MINUTES

Present:

Philip Wilson (Chair) (PhW)
Daisy Martlew (Minutes) (DM)
Keith Brown (KB)
Lloyd Felton (LF)
Dominic Petre (DP)

Suzanne Harris (SH)
Linda Riley (LR)
Phil Smith (PS)
Paul Williams (PW)
John Gili-Ross (JGR)

1 Welcome & Apologies

Apologies had been received from:

John Buchanan (substituted by John Gili-Ross), Keith Hughes, Jenny Lewsey

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 29th October 2010

2.1 Accuracy

Agreed as accurate.

2.2 Matters Arising

Terry Burgess is taking over from KH – invite to future meetings.

DM

The priorities of the LEP Board are broadband, food security, energy security and sustainability, regeneration of coastal towns and procurement. A separate secretariat has been established at ECC to focus on the LEP agenda. The team, led by Simon Nielson, includes Fiona Bodle, Anna Watson and Adam Bryan.

3 Broadband Update

PhW reported that ECC withdrew their expression of interest in the WAVE 2 BDUK funding as it was felt that the timing was not right, but will submit a bid to the open round by the end of August 2011. It is estimated that up to half a billion pounds is needed to upgrade rural broadband in Essex alone. BT is investing £1.4 billion nationally in broadband infrastructure; there has also been a lot of interest from the City regarding investment. PhW is

working on a broadband strategy, which outlines a plan for rural broadband in Essex and will involve lots of stakeholders from different sectors.

KB reported that the LEP board is working on a development work programme post 2015. Uttlesford DC is launching a radio broadband scheme, due to go live in August.

LF suggested that the role of the EcAG could be to coordinate all stakeholders and bring them to a central point. The Rural Broadband Partnership (RBP) has been approached by various authorities wishing to work with the organisation and is officially recognised by BDUK. RBP is concentrating on communication, along with INCA who previously focussed on the technical aspects. A national tool designed to assist different stakeholders will be launched at the end of the month.

4 Future Shape of SME Support

KB reported that in west Essex an enterprise group is looking at how business support will operate post November 25th. Maldon NWES delivers business support in various locations across Essex and, from July, is setting up an advice centre at shopping centres one day a week. KB suggested that the EcAG invite a representative from NWES to a future meeting. KB will provide contact details.

KB/DM

It was also suggested that the EcAG invite Councillor Kevin Bentley, Economic Development and Waste and Recycling Cabinet Member, to the next meeting (end of September). Councillor Bentley's responsibilities include regeneration, economic development, trading standards and the promotion of recycling and waste minimisation within Essex. Tracey Chapman has been appointed as the new Cabinet Member for transport, whom KB suggested we invite to the meeting after next.

**PhW/SH/
DM**

PhW recommended that some future meetings be held at County Hall, so that cabinet members are more easily able to attend, if only for part of the meeting.

PhW

It was agreed that an open invitation to other members of the ERP to attend a meeting at County Hall would be issued, however it will be stated that the meeting will have an economic focus.

SH

5 Round the Table Catch-up

5.1 Federation of Small Businesses – KB

BIS Local - a team of three people, led by Ian Gregory, has been set up, based at Cambridge and covers London and the East. The FSB have met with them.

All councils have to publish any expenses over £500, but the FSB are asking for the first part of the post code to be published also, in order to see how much is spent locally. So far Brentwood BC has agreed to do this from

May.

KB has requested to lead a task group on the LEP looking at how to harmonise procurement and open it up to small businesses; he welcomes any ideas from other members via email. KB is also working with Balfour Beatty looking at ways to develop the local supply chain. A number of events have been held, attracting around 200 people.

5.2 Essex County Council – PW and PhW

There has been a lot of change at ECC with a focus on getting more for less. ECC buildings are no longer allowed to be 'silos'; different departments must share office space where possible. ECC is looking at how to best use assets to their full capacity, including holding Police meetings in libraries and delivering training in youth clubs etc. Several departments have been changed; PW is now involved in adult learning, heritage, arts and culture.

There has been a big push on apprenticeships, with an emphasis on the young. There has also been a big push on income generation for libraries, including suggestions that libraries diversify on the services they offer.

The Big Society Fund is fully underway, totalling £1.4 million. Some grants have already gone to pubs, community shops and Post Offices.

5.3 Voluntary Sector Training – LR

It is a time of great change in the voluntary sector, shifting towards partnership working. VST is setting up a trading arm as, in order to best provide services that can generate a re-investable return, a commercial model needs to be adopted.

With regards to procurement, VST is trying to support the voluntary sector to access contracts. Paul Murphy, Chief Exec of Maldon CVS is currently working on secondment at ECC.

A number of voluntary sector learning and training organisations/consortia have been involved in discussions with the shortlisted organisations bidding to the DWP work programme tender. Each of the bidding organisations required a significant amount of information from potential sub contractors in different forms but with a great deal of overlap. A report – the 80/20 – has been developed that brings together the information that was requested in a document that is being promoted as a possible common format.

5.4 Tourism – DP

The extra public holiday in April skewed the figures for tourism in Essex, although there are mixed feelings over whether figures are up or down – extra spending per head is down.

Visit Essex is launching a business tourism arm at Hylands House next

Thursday (19th May) to encourage local business awareness of venues available to book in Essex, and to attract business from London. The website is now live and includes a database of venues to search <http://www.visitessexforbusiness.com/>. DP welcomes feedback.

5.5 Broadband Delivery UK – LF

See item 3.

5.6 EALC – JGR

Nothing to report.

5.7 Rural Shops Alliance – PS

The RSA have had input into issues arising from the Localism Bill, in particular the Community Right to Buy. Regarding the Postal Services Bill, CWA have carried out some research which highlights a possible 9, 000 more closures.

PS attended a six hour workshop on the future ownership of Post Office Ltd. Three possible ownership models were considered – owned by employees, by the consumer and a hybrid arrangement. A report from a trade association will be presented to Government shortly.

5.8 RCCE – SH

Sophie Blythe has been recruited as the new Edible Essex Project Manager, due to start on Monday (16th May). The project will seek to encourage and enable Parish Councils to establish and renovate orchards and allotments for community use across Essex, including delivering training events. The targets over a three year period are 30 allotment sites, 10 orchards and four events per year.

6 AOB

6.1 Forthcoming Events

- 21st May – Maldon 'Think Local' campaign launch, 3:30pm
- 21st/22nd May – Tendring Coastal Event
- 21st June – Essex NextGen Roadshow
<http://www.nextgenevents.co.uk/events>
- 20th July – Full ERP meeting, Writtle College

6.2 Date of Next Meeting

Dates to be circulated

The meeting concluded at 12:00 pm