



**Essex Rural Partnership Full Membership Meeting  
Minutes of the Meeting held on**

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2008  
Best Western Hotel, Marks Tey  
10am - 1.15 pm**

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**Present:**

Chair – Cllr. John Jowers	Vice Chair – Canon John Brown (JB)
John Yates (EERF)	Cllr. Mick Page – EERF (MP)
Ken Edwards – Chelmsford Sport (KE)	John Hall– EWT (JH)
Cllr, Wendy Scattergood – ELGA (WS)	David Eniffer - Volunteer Bureau Tendring (DE)
Philip Wilson ECC- PhW	Cllr. Peter Chillingworth -ColchBC (PEC)
Nick Shuttleworth – RCCE (NS)	Keith Blackburn – ECC (KB)
Cllr. Peter Baggott - EALC (PB)	Mike Hall – Association of Universities in the East of England, AVEE (MH)
Jenny Fuler (FSB) JF	Phil Smith - Rural Shops Alliance (PS)
Suzanne Roast - RCCE (SR)	Dianne Hardy – ECC (DH)
Ed Gregory- ECC (EG)	Rosemary Padfield – NFU (RP)
Wendy Jackson – ECC (WJ)	Keith Cheesman – ECC (KC)
Sue Sheppard – RCCE (SS)	Richard Woolley – RCCE (RW)
Cllr. John Buchanan – EALC (JBu)	Brian Stacey – ECC (BS)
Pris Colchester Farm Crisis Network FCN (PrC)	Gill Burden –TDC (GB)
Minutes -Kirsty Monk RCCE (KM)	Dan Gascoyne (DG) ECC

**Apologies:**

Chris Allen –EEDA (CA)	Terry Taber – FSB (TT)
Sandy Cruickshank -Go East (SC)	Yvonne Layton ECC (YL)
Jane Cryer –EET (JC)	Chris Philpot- Barleylands (CP)
Alistair Pollock - Thames Gateway South Essex (AP)	Clive Mardiner - EREC (CM)
Paul Williams ACL (PW)	Geoff Wilkinson – ECC (GW)
Simon Neilson – (SN)	Geoffrey King – EDAL (GK)
Joy Sheppard- EALC (JS)	Sue Sumner Uttlesford CVS
Jenny Fuler (FSB) JF	Melanie Rundle -Colch DC (MR)
Richard Bailey ExDRA (RB)	Rosemary Alexander (FCN) RA
Sophie Blythe – CERA (SoB)	Kitty Barrett - BDC (KB)
Sarah Willsher - CERA (SW)	Dominic Petre – Essex Tourism Assoc (DP)

Mavis Webster RDC (MW)	Anthony Shelton (Age Concern Essex) Ash
Alex Butler-Zagni NFU (ABZ)	Neil Keylock ECC (NK)
Kathryn Berry (Sports Essex) (KAB)	Rachel Payne – Cambs ACRE (RP)
Anthony Buston – ECC (AB)	Susan Rom – RDC (SROM)
Keith Lawson – ECC (KL)	Dan Gascoyne – ECC (DG)
Steve Brewers – Environment Agency (SB)	Theresa Coyne- Tendring Community Transport (TC)
Jenny Salisbury ECC (JeS)	Cllr. Roger Walters –ECC
Michael Porter (MPO)	Judy Cuddeford BDVSA (JC)
Brenda Towle (ECVYS)	A Buston – ECC (AB)

## 1 **Vice Chairman’s Introduction**

The Chairman Cllr John Jowers welcomed and thanked all for attending the meeting. The apologies were read out.

JJ felt that the new Local Area Agreement structure represented a sea change in the way local government involves and relates to the wider community.

The LAA2 will provide a route to open up facilities to rural areas, with over 72% of Essex classified as “rural” the focus most shift from an urban centric focus to also providing services and catering for the needs of rural communities.

The Sub-national Review and reorganisation of how government operates in the East of England will have a major impact on the region; the Regional Assembly is dissolving and its planning function will go to the Regional Development Agency (RDA).

In addition to this some counties in the East of England may become unitary authorities and the face of local government in this region will change.

The Essex Rural Partnership needs to set up structures where we can be involved in and work together with local government and rural communities to state coherently what is best for our rural population.

## 2 **Minutes of the previous meeting, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2008 & matters arising from those minutes**

No matters of accuracy were raised regarding the meeting minutes.

The minutes were agreed by those present.

**The following were reported as updates/ matters arising from those minutes;**

### **Item 3- Action Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA) planning event for Members**

KB reported that progress had been slower than anticipated, 2 meetings and the circulation of the comments to 14 districts had resulted in more changes required before the working group could proceed. The report was due to be published in the Autumn 2008 and it was hoped to hold a planning event after this had been published.

SR felt that more agreement was needed before we can get to the stage of planning an event.

JJ felt that there was an opportunity whilst the Local Development Frameworks (LDF) were being formulated for crucial informed input by the Essex Rural Partnership. Ideally it was hoped to get planning officers as individual bodies (used to working in isolation) to alter their structure to allow for closer working with rural areas.

JH asked if the timescale for completing the LDFs in the County was known.

JJ replied that the LDFs countywide were at different stages of completion with some districts nearing completion and others just starting the process

**Action:**

KB to circulate an email outlining the current “state of play” for all districts LDFs and to let members know about the planned EPOA event later on this year.

KB

**Further matters arising were covered within the main agenda items.**

**3 Discussion Session with John Yates, Chairman of the East of England Rural Forum (EERF)**

JY explained to Members the role, background, work and objective of the EERF and its relationship with the ERP.

**Role of the East of England Rural Forum (EERF).**

The EERF seeks to challenge and advise national and regional policies and report and inform on their appropriateness to “rural”; so that the “rural” voice of stakeholders (and communities) may be heard at the heart of government.” The EERF have a clear role as a 'critical friend' to government and public bodies, both nationally and in the East of England.

**EERF Background**

The EERF currently functions under the umbrella of the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) within the regional governance structure. It works with seven other Regional Rural Affairs Forums. EERF has an influencing and informing role at national level via regular contacts with Ministers in Defra and is now working with many other Government departments

**Work of the EERF**

JY explained that the EERF have been working with Government to inform and reshape the Regional Integrated Strategy (RIS). They highlighted the diversity of the East Of England Region and are pressing that “rural” is acknowledged. They use an evidence based approach to prove and present their case.

The EERF have been working closely with Jonathon Shaw (he is responsible for all the regional ministers) and he has asked the EERF for its views on the Regional Development Agency. EERF have now passed on its comments supported by evidence to back up those comments.

The EERF had set an Agenda for the year and written position papers. They wish to create debate and also suggest actions and solutions which enhance rural life.

They had been encouraging regional chairs of the Six Counties to talk about the regional programme and how it affects rural communities. The EERF also felt that the new LAA’s presented a capacity to deliver, especially in the following areas:

- Affordable Rural Housing
- More cohesive master planning
- Development of rural economies

**Current EERF Position Papers** (*available on the EERF website: [www.eerf.org.uk](http://www.eerf.org.uk)*).

The East of England Rural Forum has developed a suite of Position Papers on a number of subjects.

- Learning and Skills
- Water Resources
- Planning

The EERF sought to analyse problems and offer solutions, not complain about them.

**EERF Grant** – each of the 6 counties Rural Forums/Partnerships has been given a grant.

JJ thanked John Yates for his extremely informative overview of the work and objectives of the EERF and hoped to continue the Essex Rural Partnerships good working relationship with the EERF Forum.

### **Key Rural Concerns Identified by ERP Members at the meeting.**

The members then discussed rural issues with John Yates (EERF), with key concerns as follows:

- Difference in life expectancy between wards in Essex can be as much as 18 years.
- Rural business cannot expand due to policy planning statement changes which mean that they fail on the travel plan element.
- Encouraging the production of local food and review the use of land in Essex.
- Developing local rural enterprises and pride in rural communities with the accent on a holistic approach.
- The need to look at the big picture in Essex as a whole and not just to separate rural issue into “silos”.
- Affordable housing- to look at ways of improving support and funding for rural housing enablers.
- Lack of affordable housing/ rented accommodation/ tied cottages for migrant and farm workers

### **Year of Food and Farming (YOFF)- Philip Wilson, Essex County Council**

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PhW reported that due to the success of the existing Year of Food and Farming (YOFF) that the work to get the message across to inform and educate children about the “field to fork” message would continue in the next school year with more educational events planned.

The May 1<sup>st</sup> event had proved a great success with 3000 children participating in a day that turned out to be the children’s version of a farming Glastonbury; supported and enabled by Writtle College, Essex County Council and the farming community.

### **5 LAA2 Update - Dan Gascoyne Essex County Council**

(A full copy of the presentation is available electronically with these minutes).

DG advised the meeting that the current LAA2 had 68 indicators, these were broken down as follows:

#### **68 Indicators =**

- 33 designated targets
- 19 local indicators
- 16 DCFS indicators

DG explained the complex delivery structure (please see attached presentation).

DG advised that responsibility for achieving the ten LAA priorities is shared across

#### **6 Thematic Partnerships:**

- Children and Young People’s Strategic Board – CYPSPB
- Community Well-being and Older People Partnership - CWOP
- Safer Essex Partnership
- Essex Working Group for the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games - 2012
- Sustainable Essex Partnership
- Greater Essex Prosperity Forum -GEPF

**LAA2 Key Priorities:**

1. Fewer children and young people missing education or not in education, employment or training
2. More people supported to live independently in their own homes with better support for carers
3. Better public health and longer lives
4. Children and young people realise their potential in education
5. Essex roads are safer, less congested and everyone has access to essential services
6. More participation in sport, culture and volunteering
7. Essex is a safe place to live
8. Essex has a strong and competitive economy
9. A smaller carbon footprint with less waste
10. A well managed environment

DG advised that the Rural Community Council of Essex had been very helpful in assisting the Essex Partnership in evaluating the specifications for Rural Proofing:

**Rural Proofing of the LAA will enable:**

- Identification of LAA indicators where comparative disadvantage can be explored
- Analyse data re. desegregation using CLG rural / urban classification
- Analyse baseline data used in LAA to explore urban / rural difference  
Levels - District (all) / Rural & Urban (14)/ Ward (5)
- Report & refresh LAA

**Refreshments were served between 11.40am-12.10 pm**

**6 Reports from the ERP Steering Group and Action Groups:**

Full written reports by Suzanne Roast (SR) and Peter Baggott (PB) regarding the Environmental Group (please see below), ERP Steering Group, ERP CAG Group are attached in electronic format with these minutes. Extracts below taken from them:

**ERP Steering Group**

SR reported that the ERP Steering Group met on 16 January and 18 March 2008.

**January 2008**

The meeting followed the Full Partnership meeting and many key issues had been discussed during the morning.

Reports were received from EERF rep and the 3 action groups.

It was agreed to invite John Yates to Full Partnership meeting.

**March 2008**

Discussed representation of EEDA/GO-East at Essex Rural Meetings. Chris Allen returned to rural role within EEDA; Stuart Crowgey identified as GO-East rural rep.

Received a presentation on LAA 2 and advice on how to become involved and to influence.  
*Report elsewhere on agenda re LAA.*

RSCP – the end of this programme was discussed, and it was acknowledged that Essex County Council are enabling many of the affected projects to continue.

Rural Retail, Market Towns and Post Office work was discussed.

Refreshing of the Strategy was discussed and it was agreed to look at revising its content in the autumn.

**ERP Community Action Group**

CAG met on 20 May 2008. New members invited to May meeting, at which 16 people attended.

Agenda items included:

- *Revision of Terms of Reference*
- *Rural Services Survey*
- *Post Offices Update*
- *Market Towns*
- *Local Area Agreement*

## **6 Counties Group Meeting**

This group met on 13 May, in Framlingham. The main topic of discussion was rural proofing, in relation Local Area Agreements. The meeting was attended by Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

## **ERP Post Office Working Group**

The group last met on 25 April 2008. The meeting was attended by Dr Stuart Burgess, Chair of CRC and Rural Advocate to the Government.

In the morning Dr Burgess visited some post Offices in Essex – this included a closed site, a relocated office and a saved office.

## **Economic Action Group EconAG (Philip Wilson -ECC)**

PhW reported that there had been a joint working group visit by the CAG and the EconAG to a community shop scheme in Langford. This project had received Essex County Council capital to help start it up. The members of both groups also gave useful advice to the project leads and it was a beneficial visit to assess projects at a grassroots level.

PhW advised that ECC have commissioned Andrew Fieldsend to carry out studies into the rural economy and jobs in Essex. He will be looking at rural jobs and rural employment patterns and how and how far people travel to work in rural communities.

### **Also still on the EconAG work plan:**

- Social Enterprise
- Market Towns – encouraging new Market Town Partnerships
- Renewable energy sources and their carbon footprint.
- Signage -tourism and economic implications
- Diversification
- Essex Planning association working group seminar
- Migrant Workers – help with English skills

## **ERP Environmental Action Group (Cllr. Peter Baggott) Written Report (extract) –Meetings 12<sup>th</sup> February 2008, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2008, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2008**

Since the last meeting of the Essex Rural Partnership on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2008, there have been three meetings of the Environment Group all virtually exclusively concerned with the environmental items being included within the developing LAA2 and Essex Partnership, which together will cover a total timeline of ten years. A brief synopsis of the meetings is given below.

**12<sup>th</sup> February 2008** This was the first meeting of the group where the format had changed to concentrate upon LAA2.

Analysis was taking place of the National Indicators and how they compared with established priorities.

John Hall of Essex Wildlife Trust gave an extensive review of actions that were being undertaken within his organisation and suggested six basic indicators for managing relevant environmental matters.

Other environmental items that were discussed were Waste and Recycling and Carbon Reduction. The comment was made that water resource should have also featured.

**8<sup>th</sup> April 2008** The development of the environmental content of LAA2 continues. Two of the six indicators presented at the previous meeting by EWT as part of Priority 10 – A well managed environment have been highlighted as important - N I197 – Improved Local Diversity and Local Indicator 10.1 - Progressing the Living Landscape Vision.

JJ felt that it was important that all the ERP action groups maintained their communication and worked together on crosscutting issues to provide a sharp and accurate focus on the wider issues and partnership action plan.

## 7 Post Offices- Update Suzanne Roast (RCCE)

SR reported that in the current **South Essex, South Herts and Bucks Area Plan**, 5 post offices in Essex have been proposed for closure.

### **Affected Sub Post Offices in South Essex:**

- Dovervelt Road Canvey Island
- New Thundersley, Benfleet - Castle Point
- Sutton Road, Southend-On-Sea
- London Road, West Cliff on Sea
- Hathaway Road – Thurrock

These Sub Post Offices are not particularly rural, of these 5, Dovervelt Road and New Thundersley would come under the ERP and ECC remit.

### **ECC Negotiations**

JJ advised that John Symonds (Essex County Council) had been seconded from his role at ECC as Area Co-ordinator for Mid Essex to oversee the ECC groundbreaking initiative to help reopen some of the Post Offices closed or proposed for closure in Essex.

PS felt concern that the long term viability of keeping these post offices open would be in doubt unless help was given to bring back customers that had left since their closure.

SR explained that because of EU legal implications the respective ECC models for partner or hosted outreach post office solutions (which would replace some of the closed post offices) had created the need for a complex contractual situation and had protracted negotiations with Post Office Limited.

SR also reported that the reopened post office services would include a community information point, ECC hoped to involve other services and partners in this project.

SR advised that the ERP Post office working group was sending advice sheets and posters to the affected post offices, councils, voluntary sector and immediate communities.

### **Post Office Card Account**

SR reported that there is a threat to the future delivery by Post Offices of the Post Office Account Card (POCA) which is currently being put out to tender. It could mean in future that Post Offices do not have sole control and delivery of POCA and this may detrimentally affect future viability of post offices already struggling against competition in rural areas

## 8 Soapbox

### **Farm Crisis Network (FCN)**

PrC from the Farm Crisis Network (FCN) wished to thank Essex County Council for funding the travel expenses of the Essex FCN representative, Rosemary Alexander. FCN have continued to support the farming community in Suffolk and Essex during what has been a very difficult year.

JJ said that ECC would do what they could to help the FCN deliver this vital support.

### **LAA Environmental targets:**

JH advised that Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) were working on the new Local Area Agreement (LAA) as one of the block leads. Amongst the environmental targets in the LAA, were two of particular interest.

- To encourage private owners to create living landscapes (using the national criteria) that can be used by anyone.
- To create more biodiversity wildlife sites in Essex.

**Action:** to identify the funding sources for these environmental targets.

ECC/JH(

**Government Office for the East of England.**

SR reported that Sandy Cruickshank role in Government Office for the East of England is to change and Stuart Crowgey will be taking over his place within the Essex Rural Partnership.

**EEDA Representation.**

SR advised that Chris Allen from EEDA has returned to his rural remit. EEDA holds its internal meetings on Wednesdays usually, so if possible it would be best to choose another day for our Partnership Meetings to ensure EEDA attendance.

**Rural Services Survey (RSS) 2008**

SR (RCCE) reported that the returned surveys had been converted in to a database and the RSS report was in the process of being written. SR advised the meeting that if members wished data for a particular purpose before the report itself was published, they should contact her directly.

10 **Date of next full Essex Rural Partnership Meeting**

The next full ERP Partnership meeting was agreed to be held on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2008, 9.30 am registration, meeting commences 10.00am Blackwater Sailing Club, Heybridge Basin followed by Lunch. (The ERP Steering Group Meeting commences at 2.00pm).

**Meeting concluded: 1.20 pm**