



**Essex Rural Partnership (ERP) Full Membership Minutes**  
**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016**  
**Chelmsford City Racecourse, Gt Leighs, Chelmsford, Essex**

## **MINUTES**

### **1) Welcome and introduction**

**2) Apologies** - Nick Alston, Cllr Jo Beavis, Bishop Roger, Cllr Peter Davey, Lloyd Felton, Tracy Fortesque, Andrew Gardner, Tim Hayward-Smith and Tricia Moxey.

**3) Minutes of meeting held** - 2nd November 2016 - Approved

### **4) Cllr Hirst – Rural and Farming Network**

Cllr Hirst reported back on the Rural and Farming Network meeting he had attended, where he had represented ERP.

Minister George Eustice – LEPS and RFN members seem to be working better together, although there is a concern about poor relationships which still exist.

The prospect of funding from the LEPS is not getting rural areas excited in the way it should be. It was highlighted that Tees Valley is showing a good representation, North Yorkshire and East Yorkshire are working together but are not quite a partnership. The relationship between ERP and the Local Enterprise Partnership in South East could be improved; Kent businesses are responding better to the funding opportunity. There is a need for SE LEP to provide work in a timely constructive way. Overall this was a similar feel in other areas.

Andrew Robinson – new strategy:

- Clean and healthy environment
- Food and Farming large industry
- Rural proofing
- Avoid and protect – plant disease and flooding etc.
- Against value for money

Future for the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) – minister said it is here to stay and use as feedback for funding.

Rural Development Programme – Countryside Stewardship – the next round of the facilitation fund and other areas of EU funding and animal welfare integration.

Broadband – DEFRA officers are clear that the next stage must go through and are confident that 95% need will be met even though the ideal is 99%. So what about the 1%? We need to know who will not be receiving broadband; what can they do? What are the other options for them we need more detail including a map to show the 1% affected.

Cornwall rural proofing query - the local view on how to improve productivity and better promotion for LEP bids call for funding. Where the funding is accessible and how can people find it, what works and what doesn't.

CH - did raise the impact of the national minimum wage on rural businesses, such as some workers do have do have benefits in kind i.e. housing etc it was fed back.

## 5) Sean Marks Rural Strategy findings.

*Please see ppt presentation attached.*

### Question and answers:

JGR – It is clear a low number of respondents from the younger year groups have completed the consultation, how do we combat this?

There is a need to identify how to ask young people; look at schools, youth clubs, talk to voluntary sector and approach them. Young people should have their say they are the next generation.

DR – Young Farmers a good source.

SH – Response is disappointing, but the lower age groups do make up a small number in the rural areas.

TS - Who will exact the findings from the ECC?

SM - Purpose of the consultation is to influence the Strategy but it will feed into the ECC actions, we are publishing an evidence data sheet that will be used by ECC. Essex Insight will allow people to access and look at the data.

TS – Some rural areas are low in broadband and many old people will not be on the internet, there is a lot of valuable information how else can it be accessed?

CH – All information will be made accessible via the libraries

PC - Numbers involved in some districts are too small so the results could be quite dangerous to take literally?

SM – A warning will be placed on information highlighting the total number of respondents that took part.

AH -Tracker survey can we draw anything from that? It has a big sample.

SM – Yes we can certainly look to use.

## 6) Update Rural Strategy review Suzanne Harris, Marcus Roberts and Philip Wilson

The target respondents for the survey was 1,000, the actual number received was 1,600 which we are very pleased with. The Strategy Working Group and Steering Group have been meeting leading up to and during this time. Marcus Roberts has been working furiously and has found a substantial amount of data that we can use, including graphs and statistics.

This information needs to be linked to see how they correlate; due to the substantial amount of data the proposal is to produce an evidence document followed by a shorter rural strategy which will refer to the data found.

### Questions and answers

MM - What is the timescale? Has it changed?

SH- The next couple of months for the data evidence and to follow a launch in late June early July.

CH – Given the quality of data produced it is worth using and adding even though there is a delay. It is important to have a sound document.

JGR – How do we feedback to Districts and Borough's so they can use the information for their development plans? The arrival of this will hit the development planning stage which is the right time for them to have the information.

**PW** - Following a meeting we have had on a quarterly basis with EPOA it is anticipated that we will attend a meeting and say where we are with the strategy and provide the consultation results to see if this helps them with their plans. They do have their own statutory policies to follow also.

**CH** - Next LEADER and Chief Exec's meeting this needs to be on the agenda.

## **7) Lorraine George – South East Local Enterprise Rural Activities update**

SE LEP and EU funding and the Rural Strategy in the SELEP area.

What we do? Need to guide direction for sustainable growth in this area.

The focus is very high level - how do you engage with the LEP? Start by using GEBB (Greater Essex Business Board), chaired by Simon Brice. Graham Peters champions the LEP. Nick Sandford chairs the rural group and sits on the Strategic Board.

Funding is all about what is prioritised in the area and if there is a project in your area that is not being addressed then it needs to be put forward and channelled through the right people.

SELEP currently has no Chair and no Director.

Adam Scott is on the ESIF committee as the rural representative. 18 applications came in for SME support and each project was looked at. 11 were approved in outline sadly only 3 or 4 only got through to full application waiting to hear what DEFRA will do about that.

Still waiting for what the next full application call will look like. Advised no broadband or energy or skills yet.

Food and support for SME's likely to be subjects for next call - need to pressure DEFRA to allow us to have call of applications and aim again for Oct & Sept.

We don't know why DEFRA have delayed the call, we can only conclude that they are delaying things. This does not help us look favourable compared to The LEADER programme.

SELEP strategy: Stuart Gibbons works part time in consultancy he is very much involved on the DEFRA round table discussions. The consultation information would be very useful for discussions.

There is a big emphasis on food production in the LEP.

Need to raise opportunities - George Keiffer the Essex Vice Chair could help to deliver the strategy and the highlight the benefits – he could perhaps attend another ERP meeting.

### **Questions and answers:**

**CH** – Clear disconnect between DEFRA and the LEP communication issue. To me both parties need to get it to work.

**PW** – Nick Sampford and George Keiffer into ERP meet who else do we need also??

**LG** - Simon Brice a good candidate could add to the meet. If we do not engage then we will start to lose the money.

**CH** – Do we need an economic or business workshop from this group and ask for ideas from members?

**AS** – The first call was very short we need extended windows to develop applications and DEFRA are making it very unattractive to join.

**DR** – Are there any lessons to be learnt from the application that tried to get through?

**LG** – Yes – DEFRA are looking into it. We were 1 of 5 pilot areas and learn as you go along however the lessons learnt have not been listened to. These are capital grants for farmers etc and is all about the number of jobs created sometimes it is clear what looks like could be a contender. Then some projects miss the boat due to the window set. There is 14.5 million pounds to use would and I would welcome suggestions.

**SJ** – Are DEFRA committed to this??

**LG** – We do not have a representative here from DEFRA so I cannot answer that question however what I can say is they are not pulling out all the stops.

**CH** – No one here from DEFRA 10 days ago it was down to SELEP. To me looks dysfunctional something has to change.

**LG** - Graham Peters is the person to speak too.

**BD** – LEADER and SELEP need to work more closely together when cross overs arise with projects LEADER can get involved there is no reason why we cannot work together for groups.

**JB** – Transparency there is none why? Do we invite DEFRA, LEP, LEADER representative of each to discuss and ask questions and get them to answer.

**JGR** – Ask the Chairs and perhaps meet in smaller groups to discuss the principles?

**SH** – Delays are causing LEP and LEADER to work together.

Need to check our contacts at DEFRA and communicate, that way it's an effective formal route and that we should be taking.

**JB** – Can we ask a Yorkshire and Tees Valley representative to our meeting to help assist?

**TS** – Can we ask for JB's suggestion?

## **8) LEADER Update – Beverly Davies**

Recap on Process:

- Outline Application (as many drafts as they like)
- Full Application (again, I will help with drafts)
- Submitted
- Eligibility and Completeness Check (1 week minimum with no issues)
- Assessment (6 working days minimum)
- Quality Check – Defra (3 days but they have never yet passed on first submission, so need to leave 6 days)
- We then receive confirmation from Defra that they are happy with the application and can take it to the Local Action Group.

Where we are:

- 25 Outline Applications given out
- 7 completed and returned: 3 as draft, 4 as final Outline Application
- The 3 drafts have had comments and feedback
- 4 have been invited to submit Full applications
- Of those, 3 full applications received and one still waiting for planning permission before they can submit their application.
- One has been through the complete process and has been passed by the Defra Quality Check process, so it's ready to go to the LAG for determination.
- One is still in our process – it's at assessment stage
- One is still in the Eligibility and completeness check stage but issues have come to light which might render it ineligible, so I'm waiting to hear back from Defra.

Statistics:

Brentwood:	7 OAs sent out	Maldon:	12 OAs sent out
	1 FA received		3 FAs invited
	1 draft OA received		2 FAs received
Chelmsford:	3 OAs sent out		2 draft OAs received
Colchester:	3 OAs sent out		

Issues arising:

- The process is more time consuming than previously thought.
- Three valid quotes for every item are required.
- Valid meaning: in date, on headed paper, with company number and VAT number where possible and for the items as specified.
- The applicant has to give valid reasons for the project. To say that it's needed in the area isn't enough – evidence has to be provided.
- Cash flow forecasts have to be provided for three years after completion of the project. So if the project will take three years, you have to provide cash flow forecasts for the next six years.
- Proof of match funding has to be provided. This can be bank statements showing the funding available, a mortgage offer or a firm offer of a bank loan.

We need applications from the Chelmsford area please.

**Questions and Answers:**

**JGR** – What are the type of projects that need to go through?

**BD** – Farm diversification such as tea rooms and farm shops.

**JBr** – Lots of villages would like a small shop can this be done in the community?

**BD** – The project itself could be eligible but would need to meet all of the criteria.

## **9) Adam Scott NFU – Current issues for Farmer and Landowners –**

***Please also see ppt presentation attached.***

4 main areas:

- Money
- EU
- Disease and animal health issues
- Horticulture – national living wage

Money and the EU:

- Poultry – no specific funding
- Core cereal farms for Essex money has fallen from crops a huge proportion of farmers are reliable on EU money in which they receive an integral part from what is required.

Trading with China has decreased and with the ban in Russia this has had a knock on affect in Europe. The strength of Sterling against weakness of the Euro is another factor.

Diversified income in Essex is significantly higher and showing that livestock and dairy farmers are selling up and moving on with other resources such as conversion of barns for other use.

Europe – 1.8 % work in Agriculture and 40 % EU budget is returned to farming.

Debate regarding EU Referendum on 23rd June 2016 things will move quickly.

How EU impacts on farming: Income and amount of money that the UK puts into EU and how much is put back and the second on legislation how much does the EU cost: £153/person.

There are a number of countries not in the EU such as Iceland, Norway and Switzerland but they still have to put money into the EU. For example Norway put in and but have no influence on the EU therefore we will not walk away without a cost.

Legislation very efficient a huge number of directives are being placed and we have to comply.

EU – money into farms 60% basic payment scheme from the RPA, last year a new application process was put in place via digital on line and it didn't work. The idea was to map every field and tree that cannot be farmed, a source for people to record their land. Now a hybrid system is coming into place, waiting to see the new scheme and get the applications in by mid may.

Disease and animal health issues:

Livestock farmers: Foot and Mouth entered Essex 15 years ago it was a huge disease outbreak in the country and cost 5.5 billion pounds to businesses including the National Trust due to restrictions on visitation.

Diseases – not yet in this country and free from - blue tongue is showing signs of entering, the threat is only 200 km's from France. This is a virus is we are concerned amount with 80% chance that it will enter by September 2016 according to DEFRA. Vaccines are required and pharmaceuticals companies are not stock piling as they want a return therefore may have to wait for the disease to enter.

TB – Still a concern still in the south west - Dorset and Devon cattle herds still have a problem in both and wildlife. Essex has more outbreaks than any other county all connected with stock bought in from the south west. The testing is only 85% accurate so therefore some TB slips through, farmers here doing subsequent testing to help keep the wildlife clear.

There is not enough vaccine to vaccinate and to treat the badgers is not an option on TB.

Horticulture: National Living Wage:

The nation living wage is a real concern for the horticulture sector where labour is the high end of their costs and the NLW was introduced with no warning. This is a large increase for labour pickers. Pension reforms are also becoming a problem, adding to cash flow and liability issues on going.

How can this be addressed?

Need to be competitive V's Spain

Innovation and new technology do help to overcome this but then less are jobs on offer.

Comments:

JGR – Money slide better off out and paying less.

DR – NO support mechanism provided if out – the money we put in funds LEADER and LEP.

## **10) Superfast Essex Broadband - Philip Wilson**

***Please see ppt presentation attached***

## **11) AOB:**

Dates future Meeting: Full ERP Meeting **Monday 4th April 2016**

Other: Essex County Fire Service consultation open until 25 April; we will circulate in the minutes the link to get involved. <http://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/interactive/>

## Appendix 1

### Attendees

Ms	Angela	Balcombe	AB
Cllr	Jo	Beavis	JB
Revd Canon	John	Brown	JBr
Cllr	John	Buchanan	JB
	Andrew	Burgess	AB
Cllr	Peter	Chillingworth	PC
Ms	Joy	Darby	JD
Ms	Beverly	Davies	BD
Mr	Ken	Edwards	KE
Mrs	Lorraine	George	LG
Cllr	John	Gili-Ross	JGR
Mrs	Suzanne	Harris	SH
Mr	Paul	Hinsley	PH
Cllr	Roger	Hirst	RH
	Anna	Hook	AH
Cllr	Sheila	Jackman	SJ
Ms	Lorraine	Jarvis	LJ
Mr	Andrew	Lowing	AL
	Sean	Marks	SM
	Kerry	Martin	KM
Mr	Michael	Minta	MM
Mr	Christopher	Morris	CM
Revd	Janet	Nicholls	JN
Mrs	Rosemary	Padfield	RP
Cllr	Mick	Page	MP
Mr	Marcus	Roberts	MR
	Lizzie	Rose	LR
Mr	Stephen	Sadler	SS
Mr	Adam	Scott	AS
Mr	Tony	Shelton	TS
Mr	Nick	Shuttleworth	NS
Mr	Andrew	Thorpe-Apps	ATA
Mr	Paul	Williams	PWS
Mr	Philip	Wilson	PW