



**Minutes of Community Action Group meeting
29th April 2010.
10.00 am RCCE, Offices, Feering**

Attendees:

Canon John Brown (JB)	Rural Community Council of Essex – CAG Chair
Angela Balcombe (AB)	Essex County Council
Keith Brown (KB)	Federation of Small Businesses
Jan Cole (JC)	Rural Community Council of Essex
Judy Cuddeford (JCu)	BDVSA
Ken Edwards (KE)	Active Chelmsford
Moira Groborz (MG)	Rural Community Council of Essex
Sheila Jackman (SJ)	Ongar Town Council
Pooneeta Mahedoo (PM)	Essex County Council
Chris Rust (CR)	Maldon District Council
Rachel Price (RP)	Essex County Council
Joy Sheppard (JS)	Essex Association of Local Councils
Darren Smart (DS)	Essex Libraries
Paul Williams (PW)	Essex County Council
Philip Wilson (PhW)	Essex County Council

Attendance

Kirsty Monk (KM) RCCE (minutes)

Apologies

Kitty Barrett (KBa)	Braintree District Council
Paul Murphy (PM)	Maldon DC Vol. Service
Linda Riley (LR)	Voluntary Sector Training
Melanie Rundle (MR)	Colchester Borough Council
Alison Jennings (AJ)	IN-Tend
Keith Cheesman (KC)	Essex County Council
David Eniffer (DE)	Volunteer Centre Tendring

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Chairman's Introduction

Canon John Brown (JB) (Chairman) welcomed and thanked all for attending the meeting, introductions were made.

Apologies: (please see above for details)

2 **Minutes of the previous meeting (22nd Feb 2010) & matters arising.**

Matters of Accuracy:

No Matters of Accuracy were raised.

Those present then agreed the minutes as a true and accurate record of the last meeting.

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

Matters Arising

Report on Previous Action: (DS to investigate if Essex Libraries could provide a link to information regarding grant sources for Parish Councils and local voluntary groups). DS advised that he had circulated a funding information document for review from members and had received feedback from the Group. He explained that he had met with Chelmsford CVS to ask for their input when pulling together the document.

JCu had responded to DS's document and thought that the role the CVS's played in providing funding advice should be better sign posted.

DS agreed that this should be included, further amendments needed to be made and Angie Balcome from ECC had also signposted some further funding sources which should also be included.

Action: DS to amend document and circulate to the Group for review/approval.

DS/KM

Parish Clerks Forum (Maldon) (PCF)

CR advised that the PCF in Maldon had gone well, representatives from the Dengie Project Trust and Essex Police attended.

Action:

JB/JS advised that the EALC board had asked that the Vice Chair might attend future meetings of the PCF –JB asked if it might be possible for CR to send an invitation to JB for the next meeting. CR to send invitation.

CR

Further matters arising were covered within the main agenda items

3 Discussion of the Previous Meetings Workshop Outcomes and Community Action Group Priorities and developing an Action Plan.

(The following Documents were circulated to the Group: Workshop Outcomes Report, Top 3 Active and Caring Communities Priorities and Top 3 Affordable Rural Housing Priorities).

KM explained that she had pulled together the workshop comments and votes (please see the above documents for full details) from the previous CAG meeting. The top 3 priorities for Active and Caring Communities and Affordable Rural Housing (taken from the ERP Essex Rural Strategy) had been voted for by the CAG and it was hoped that today's meeting would be used to start work on identifying the actual tasks/actions linked to these priorities.

KE asked if CAG would be sensible to set a timeframe to review progress on the priorities chosen for action by the group and to look at the remaining priorities or any new urgent issues.

The Group agreed this was a sensible proposed action.

Action: CAG to review its priorities and Action Plan in 9 months Time (Jan 2011)

SH felt that the Group should determine its own milestones and target dates, SH added that individual ERP member organisations may also wish to pick up on these or any of the other priorities identified in the Essex Rural Strategy.

Top Action Plan Priorities: Active and Caring Communities –

“ERP believes Strategic Policies should be provided for the Promotion of Community Engagement (including Community Led Plans) and other enabling skills to aid local people to influence decision making” –

JB welcomed Jan Cole (Community Engagement Officer -RCCE) who was invited to present an overview of Community Led Plans (CLP's) and Community Engagement in Essex to the Group.

JC felt that Community Led Plans fit neatly in to the Local Authority's Sustainable Communities Strategy and underpinned the Local Area Agreements NI4 target (influencing decisions).

JC advised the Group of her RCCE work with community groups and Parish & Town Councils which helped and enabled them to carry out Community Led Plans and consultations. The Community Engagement team were pleased to see that the CAG and the ERP were going to be working on this priority, as it appeared to link into what's happening and would help to fill in the gaps in information.

JC explained that although value was placed on Community Led Plans and there were mechanisms in place to take these forward in some Local Authorities, other Local Authorities did not have the current resources to do this or were unsure of how to take CLP's forward. This inconsistency was proving a barrier in some areas.

PW added that this inconsistency was sometimes due to the lack of a dedicated officer dealing with CLP's within the Local Authority.

JS felt that it was very important to involve the Parish and Town Councils from the start of the Community Led Planning Process.

JC felt that an important task was flagging up and promoting the benefits with Community Led Plans with Local Authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's) and perhaps the ERP could assist with this. JC advised that the Regional Empowerment Partnership (REP) was about to issue a briefing aimed at Councillors and Officers explaining the benefits of CLP's that this could be disseminated to ERP networks.

JB asked the CAG/ERP to identify in what ways the partnership could promote the CLP's to Local Authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships as well as at Officer and Councillor level to ensure their consistent use Countywide.

KE advised that he usually attended the LSP Essex Chairs Meeting- KE proposed that CLP's could perhaps be raised as an agenda item at that meeting.

Actions

JC to send the following info REP CLP briefing to KM for circulation to the CAG:

JC/KM

- Regional Empowerment Partnership CLP briefing
- Defra /ACRE Adapting to climate change for Parish Councils- signposting Community Led Plans and Parish Plans in Chapter 4 Link:
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climate/action/documents/adapt-localcouncilguide.pdf> -
- AMT /ACRE 'LEAD' framework <http://towns.org.uk/files/100317-DR5258-AFMT-POLICY.pdf>.
- List of Parishes that are working on/ have completed a Community Led Plan to be circulated to CAG
- Circulate Linda Hadley's (RCCE) contact details to CAG

Action: KE to raise CLP's as a possible agenda items at the LSP Chairs Meeting.

KE

Action: CR to speak with Lynn Marston (Maldon District Council) to ask about the possibility of JC or Stella Meesters speaking at a future Maldon Local Strategic Partnership Meeting.

CR/JC

Action: AB to possible put an article regarding CLP's in the Making the Links publication

AB

Proposed Action: DS suggested that that perhaps the Group could highlight positive case studies of Community Led Plans.

SH/ALL

JC reported that many Community Led Plans such as Parish Plans were now due for refreshment and that the RCCE Community Engagement Team were working with Groups to do this, they were also encouraging a broader vision for the refreshed plans that also looked to the future, not just the here and now.

CR advised that she welcomed the refreshing of these Community Led Plans, as planners would be less likely to perceive the CLP's as being too out of date to be useful.

JC advised that there was currently monies available for Parish and Town Plans Groups from "Making the Links" allocated in 2 phases. (up to £400 for phase 1 and up to £2000 for phase 2); there was currently a lack of funding for un-parished areas for neighbourhood plans and for Village Design Statements.

KE suggested that perhaps some of the monies allocated to the production of 106 agreements could be set aside to fund Community Led Plans.

JC advised that the RCCE had previously set up a Planning Officers Network. The Officers had signed up to a protocol regarding CLP's some time ago. However since this agreement was made there have been staffing changes in many districts. The Officers who had originally signed the agreement on behalf of their Local Authority (LA) may well have now left. Some LA's were even unaware that they had signed up to such an agreement.

Top Action Plan Priorities: Active and Caring Communities Cont'd

“ERP supports the Work of the Village Agents, Neighbourhood Action Panels (NAPS) and other such projects to assist rural communities. These projects should be encouraged to link with other existing networks.”

Neighbourhood Action Panels (NAPs).

SJ advised that a new Essex Police consultation was taking place regarding a change to existing locality meetings in Ongar and the surrounding villages to meetings covering a wider area. This would mean some communities travelling to attend NAP meetings in the future. This would change the basic concept of the scheme and move away from the original idea of NAPs which was that it should be based on localism.

KB reported that this move may be due to stretch on police resources and how best a community policeman's time can be used.

JS felt that a key issue was that the way NAPs were hosted was different throughout the county. The rules governing NAPs were also interpreted differently across the County and this lack of consistency had led to dissatisfaction in some areas, although some NAPs worked extremely well elsewhere.

Action CR to liaise with KM regarding the Essex Police representative contact name in respect of NAPs.

The Group felt that a key task would be to help improve the consistency of how NAPs were implemented throughout Essex.

Top Action Plan Priorities: Active and Caring Communities Cont'd

“ERP will encourage and support efforts by young people to get more engaged with their local communities.”

JB advised that an invitation to speak regarding this priority had been sent to Brenda Towle (ECVYS) at the next CAG Meeting. Provisional dates for June and July had been discussed and we are currently waiting to hear from Brenda.

Top Action Plan Priorities: Greater Availability of Affordable Housing.

JB thanked Moira Groborz (RCCE) for returning to speak to the CAG regarding Affordable Rural Housing.

MG began by reporting on the My Village, My Home Event regarding Affordable Rural Housing, held on 16th April 2010. MG advised that the event had been well attended. Presentations and talks from Parish Councils that had undergone the process had been well received. An Affordable Rural Housing guide pack was now available and had been launched at the event. (Moira circulated a copy to those who wished one).

PW reported that he had attended the event and felt it was well planned and executed, He found that the Parish Councils personal experiences had the greatest impact and suggested that perhaps having someone who had benefited from Affordable Housing would make a powerful case

MG said that she was hoping to include a personal case study in the new ARH DVD; which was currently being planned, they were hoping to film for the DVD by the end of June.

Action: DS to be sent 12 Affordable Rural Housing (ARH) Guide Packs and Posters to put as reference copies on Mobile Library Services in Essex.

MG reported that the Seeing is Believing Tours would take place later in the year. The LAA had also funded a further My Village, My Home event to be held in the Autumn.

Top Action Plan Priorities: Greater Availability of Affordable Housing.

“ERP will encourage every Parish Council to identify the housing need in its community and to take steps towards addressing outstanding need”

Proposed Actions:

- MG suggested that a letter of support from the ERP to a targeted audience of Parish and Town Councils / Local Authorities could be sent out in a managed campaign targeting this particular audience and this could then be distributed via ERP networks. MG/CAG
- KE suggested that perhaps a “special offer” or “working in your area” campaign targeting specific areas might be an option and add an incentive to Parishes.
- PhW reported that he had recently met with the Country Land and Business Association Limited (CLA) regarding landowners who might have land suitable for Affordable Rural Housing sites and that they were looking at ways to highlight this issue.
- MG said that she would be interested to hear more about this and that she would like to link into ERP networks and partner organisations such as the CLA, National Farmers Union etc to see if awareness could be raised on this issue and bring forward potential ARH sites. – MG and PhW to liaise. MG/PhW
- Joint Action Group meeting with EconAG re Affordable Rural Housing Proposed SH/KM/ALL

Top Action Plan Priorities: Greater Availability of Affordable Housing.

“ERP will support the Rural Housing Enabler project and recognises it as a means of ensuring that development is initiated in accordance with local need”

“ERP will engage with the Rural Housing Enabler project to raise awareness of the socio-economic benefits of affordable housing to rural communities”

MG reported that she had just received confirmation of LAA funding to evaluate the actual benefit of existing Affordable Rural Housing Schemes. With regard to the socio and economic benefits of affordable rural housing, MG is keen to get input from rural businesses and employers and if the funding is forth coming she has suggested that a questionnaire could be designed and she is keen to work with ERP members such as RSA, FSB and Business Link to target the viewpoint of rural employers/businesses.

4 A.O.B

Potential Project Strategic Sustainability to Underpin Community Development in Rural Areas - draft paper written by Joy Sheppard EALC.

JS circulated a copy of the above paper to the members present. JS explained that the document was a rough draft which looked at the action plan priorities from a strategic planning from a sustainability view point.

JS highlighted that Parish Council and Town Councils can act as the central focus and entry point to rural communities. It was therefore important to enable and support them to engage, empower and develop their communities, use their precepts and also look at participatory budgeting as a means of letting communities get involved in the decision making process. It was also important to help support non parished areas that wished to become parished.

SH felt it would be useful to have details of areas that are currently not parished that would benefit from this process.

PW also felt that mapping non parished areas would be a good idea. It was traditionally harder to reach and connect with non parished areas.

Action:

JS to develop an action plan for the development of the Parish and Town Council Sector for discussion at the next CAG meeting. JS

Potential Action:

ERP to look at mapping of non parished areas in Essex which may be suitable for Parish or Town Councils to be set up in.

5 **Date of next CAG group meeting and other meetings/events dates.**

- **Action:** KM to circulate potential meeting dates to CAG Members (-Next Meeting 30th June, 10.00 am, RCCE Offices, Feering) KM
- 29th July 2010 Full Partnership Meeting, Maldon Town Football Club. (Time 9.30am Registration to 1.15pm followed by buffet lunch) Theme: "Shoreline Management Plan"

Meeting concluded at 12.30pm