



## **Community Action Group**

**Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013, commencing at 10:00am**

RCCE Offices, Threshelfords Business Park, Feering CO5 9SE

### **Present:**

John Brown (Chair) (JB)  
Suzanne Harris (SH)  
Amanda Plummer (AP)  
(Minutes)  
David Ennifer (DE)  
Joy Darby (JD)

Ken Edwards (KE)  
Darren Smart (DS)  
Linda Riley (LR)  
Julie Nelson (JN)  
Sarah Sapsford (SS)

Chris Rust (CR)  
Sheila Jackman (SJ)  
Paul Williams (PW)  
Paul Gayler (PG)  
Brian Goodwin (BG)

## **1 Welcome & Introductions**

### **1.1 Apologies**

Apologies had been received from: Rachael Price, Lorraine Jarvis, Judy Cuddeford, Gill Burden, Melanie Rundle, Philip Wilson, Brenda Towle and Gary Raynor.

## **2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

### **2.1 Accuracy**

Approved for accuracy

### **2.2 Matters Arising**

JB had invited Cllr John Aldridge to the meeting; he was unavailable to attend but had promised to attend a future meeting. **JB**

KE had not been able to find any revision to the funding formula. He will approach ECC to see if they are able to assist with this. JB felt that it was important to try to pursue this. Further details under agenda item 6.2

ToR to be added as an agenda item at the next meeting. **AP**

### 3 Neighbourhood Plans – an Essex update

Sarah Sapsford gave a national overview. Since the Localism Act, 300 areas had been designated as neighbourhood development plan areas. Approximately 200 more are being processed. There are currently 11 neighbourhood plans being undertaken in Essex. SS outlined some of the approaches used when deciding to undertake a plan. As an example, Mid Sussex local planning authority had requested each of the parishes in the area to undertake their own plan. The district council would then write their own local plan based on these neighbourhood plans, and therefore the housing numbers in the district. Nationally there are four business areas designated as neighbourhood planning areas, none so far in Essex. 27 localities are in the final consultation stage. These will then go to an independent examiner, then on to a referendum.

JD - Will there still be financial assistance to help with neighbourhood plans?

SS – Yes until 2015, or until the money runs out.

SH – The money goes to the local planning authority to support the parishes and not directly to the parish itself.

SS informed the group that there was however up to £7K available to parishes and neighbourhoods to help them negotiate the process. The local authority has a statutory obligation to provide support. Planning Aid is one of the partners paid to provide practical support with regard to planning. As of the 1<sup>st</sup> May there are currently 11 plans in progress in Essex. Attendees were provided with a list (see attached). Others are still considering their position. The reasons for considering a plan are usually led by the desire to have more power with regard to land use.

Nationally there are 3 plans that have gone through to the referendum stage and are now policy. None of these are in Essex. SS informed the group of one area in Cumbria where 17 parishes came together as they had concerns regarding affordable housing and an inability to convert old farm buildings due to their proximity to a national park, so felt this would be a way to maintain some control over the outcomes.

SS explained that the cost of a parish plan could vary widely from £1,000 up to in excess of £90K in the case of Thame in Oxfordshire. It is also possible to undertake a neighbourhood development order instead, which is significantly cheaper. Although this would only be site or area specific. There are none currently being undertaken.

DS What is the incentive for a parish to invest a large percentage of their budget?

SS It does affect any CIL payment, as it increases from 15% to 25% if there is a neighbourhood plan in existence. SS highlighted that it may be worth a parish investing in a neighbourhood plan if they know that development is going to occur, due to the financial incentive attached. No local authority presently has their CIL schedule in place.

JB commented on the example of the 17 parishes working in partnership and suggested this may be something we should promote to others as a way to reduce costs. JB Do you actively promote this idea?

SS I give independent advice. I focus on facts. I do not encourage a particular path of action, but I do hope that by giving good advice they will see any benefits, and then be in a position to make their own decision.

JN Do you agree the threat of housing is the key driver?

SS Yes it quite often is.

SJ voiced serious concerns over the potential cost implications.

JB Are all areas going to have to have a neighbourhood plan?

SS No. Some areas are more likely than others to be susceptible to potential development, for example there is no drive to build in the Tendring area.

KE We have focused on the potential cost implications to parishes, but surely parishes may struggle to find the time and resources to deal with this.

SS For some it can be challenging, but there is support available. Parishes need to consider carefully when they use planning consultants.

KE In your experience is this one of the biggest concerns when the decision is made whether to undertake a parish plan

SS Yes, this is why consultants are widely used.

JD I think it is good planning on behalf of parishes to try to build up a fund to undertake a parish plan, but some of the councils are not encouraging this.

SS I agree, it is a good idea to take this view.

#### **4 An Update on the changes to the Benefits System**

Presentation made by Paul Gayler the Strategic Housing Manager for Maldon District Council: Update to changes in housing, localism and Welfare.

## **5 Rural Parishes**

### **5.1 EALC work**

JD provided document outlining the current status of the EALC action plan. Copy attached.

JB enquired as to the uptake of membership to EALC across the county. JD informed the group that currently there is only one council that is not a member. SJ highlighted to the group that the relationships between Borough Councils and Parishes in a few areas across the county were not as good as they could be. A discussion took place as to the split of parishes across the county.

## **6 Health and Wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthwatch Essex (HE)**

AP informed the group that Andy Payne had left Healthwatch Essex as he had been recruited by Healthwatch England as a consultant. The recruitment process for a new Engagement Manager and Research Manager was close to being finalised and it was expected for them to be in their new posts for the beginning of September.

AP updated the group about the upcoming diary events for Healthwatch. Three welcome events had been planned across the county for voluntary and community groups to attend; these will take place on 20<sup>th</sup> June at Barleylands in Billericay, 2<sup>nd</sup> July at Chelmsford City Football Club, 9<sup>th</sup> July at Firstsite in Colchester. The events will all run from 9.30a.m. to 12.30p.m. AP asked members to circulate the invitation to any groups they are in contact with.

The first new members training session will take place on 21<sup>st</sup> June. The next Strategic Board meeting which is open to members of the public will take place at 4p.m. on the 21<sup>st</sup> June, at Chapter House in central Chelmsford, where Sir Tom Hughes-Hallett will address the meeting about his report "Who Will Care".

The Healthwatch A.G.M. will take place on 15<sup>th</sup> June also at Chapter House, Chelmsford, from 6p.m. to 7.30p.m. SJ informed AP that as a previous member of Links she had not been approached by HE with regard to transferring her interest. AP confirmed she would pass this information back to the member of staff that dealt with membership at Healthwatch. JN provided the contact information regarding hospital chaplains to AP as discussed at the previous meeting.

### **6.2 National Campaign to End Loneliness – Funding Formula**

KE Explained to the group that this campaign was originally set up by the

Rural Commission, which has now ended. Defra is now the lead on this. The funding formula is going to change, but it has been difficult to find out what the changes will be and who is going to be the lead contact.

## **7 Strategic Developments**

SH had been approached to attend a meeting with the Environment Minister Richard Benyon, along with Joy Darby and others from the Essex Rural Partnership and Defra. The focus will be regarding coastal and water issues, as these are his remit. She was only given one week's notice, so if anyone had any specific questions they would like Suzanne to ask, then she would need them by tomorrow morning, nor could she promise the opportunity to raise them due to time constraints.

## **8 Forthcoming Events & Round Table Information Sharing**

LR reported to the group that Voluntary Sector Training will be running a course: Commercial Skills for Public Service Delivery. This will be held on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> October in Tendring. The cost is £25 for 2 days. There are currently only 4 places left. If anyone is interested and would like to book a place then further information is available on the VST website. [www.voluntarysectortraining.org.uk](http://www.voluntarysectortraining.org.uk)

## **9 Any Other Business**

BG gave an update regarding the Village Agents project. It is still going very well. He had worked with partners on their bids for funding from the Community Builders Pilots, which are part of the strengthening communities work stream of the Whole Essex Community Budget.

JB asked how we could find out the 4 pilots that had been successful in their bid. BG will inform AP if he finds out. **AP**

CR informed the group that they have put in a bid for an Older Peoples Champion to cover the Maldon area. They will find out very shortly if their bid has been successful.

PW requested that the group resurrect their visits to local parishes. The group agreed that it should still do these.

JN requested we invite Jasmine Frost to the next meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> August. She is the lead on the Essex Community Budget. **AP**

**10 Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> August at 10.00 am

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November at 10.00 am

All meetings to be held at the RCCE offices; coffee will be available from 9.45 am