



Essex Rural Partnership

STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th February 2009

Reid Rooms, Margaret Roding. 2.00 pm

Present:	Representing	Orgn	Initials
Vice Chair – Canon John Brown	Vice Chair	RCCE	(JB)
Joy Sheppard	CAG	EALC	(JS)
Suzanne Harris	CAG & EERF	RCCE	(SH)
Cllr. Peter Baggott	EnvAG	EALC	(PB)
Peter Chillingworth	ELGA	CBC	(PC)
Cllr. John Buchanan	EERF	EALC	(JBU)
Philip Wilson	facilitator orgn	ECC	(PW)
Nick Shuttleworth	facilitator orgn	RCCE	(NS)
Cllr. Mick Page	EERF	ECC	(MP)
Richard Woolley	EERF	RCCE	(RW)
Chris Allen		EEDA	(CA)
Terry Taber	EconAG	(FSB)	(TT)

In Attendance

Kirsty Monk	(minutes)	RCCE	(KM)
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Apologies:

Cllr John Jowers	Chairman ECC (JJ)	Dianne Hardy	ECC (DH)
John Hall	EnvAG (EWT) (JH)	Ed Gregory	ECC (EG)
Cllr. Wendy Scattergood	ELGA (WS)	Sarah Prentice	Go East (SP)

Welcome and Introductions

Vice Chairman Canon John Brown welcomed all to the meeting.

Action By

Apologies were read *(please see above for details)*.

1 Minutes of the previous Steering Group meeting, 8th December 2008

Matters of Accuracy.

Pg. 1 sp'. DA amended to EEDA

No further matters of accuracy were raised and those present agreed the minutes.

2 Matters Arising

Marine Bill and Shoreline Management Plan

SH advised that KM had circulated a summary of implications of the Marine bill to the Steering Group.

Further matters arising were covered in the main agenda items

3 **Revision of the Essex Rural Partnership (ERP) Terms of Reference**

SH reported that after a request for the ERP's Terms of Reference she had reviewed the terms set out in 2005 and found that they were out of date; they referred to funding that had not been put into to place and did not reflect Partnerships working at present.

SH advised that she had circulated a copy of the revised Essex Rural Partnership Terms of Reference to the Steering Group for their comment as a matter of urgency. No amendments had been submitted.

SH: Proposed that

- A) The revised ERP Terms of Reference be adopted by the Steering Group on behalf of the Essex Rural Partnership
- B) That the above Terms of Reference be interim and be reviewed at the time of the drafting of the new Essex Rural Strategy by the Steering Group.

Proposal A and B were then agreed by the Steering Group

Action:

SH to circulate the revised Terms of Reference with accepted changes to the Steering Group and general Membership.

SH/KM

4 **Essex Rural Partnership Strategy Review**

Summary of Morning Activity (ERP Conference "A New Rural Strategy for Essex)

CA felt that the workshops had worked well and the input around the table was interesting and forward thinking.

RW reported that their group had discussed the time scale of the Essex Rural Strategy and questioned whether it should be 5 years or other as it needed to inform and influence other regional and county strategies.

SH felt that it should be a moving document without elements that will date quickly.

Action

Identify the completion dates for other key documents and circulate to the Steering Group.

SH/KM

Publicising the Work and Achievements of the ERP

PhW: felt that the key points that had been raised by the economic workshop group were:

- That there should be a mechanism to measure the success of the Essex Rural Strategy and its associated action plan.
- That successful outcomes/actions had already been achieved but the ERP had not publicised these well in the past
- That new measures to publicise ERP successes should be taken (and more generally the good news stories happening in rural areas) as often the media focus was on negative rural news stories.

JS felt that ERP member organisations should be made more aware of ERP achievements and work on rural issues.

PC felt that the ERP needed to develop a mechanism to inform Local Authority Officers of the work of the ERP so that it could influence their policies.

NS felt that the launch of the new Essex Rural Strategy would be an ideal opportunity to engage Local Authorities and other strategic bodies.

Proposed Actions:

The Steering Group felt that the aforementioned points were important and determined to work to raise the profile of the ERP and publicise rural achievements throughout:

- ERP Membership
- District and Borough Councils
- Stakeholders and other Partnership Organisations
- County Council, Regional level and National Level
- SH suggested that more feed back could be given via the reporting back to County through the Service Level Agreement mechanism.
- NS suggested an ERP Annual Review should be published and distributed to help raise awareness of the ERP work.

SH/KM/
ALL

Next Steps

Action

SH advised that the notes from the workshops would be typed up and restructured under the headings of the Key Rural Strategy themes and that these would be used to inform the first draft of the statement.

That the front section, vision statement and policy statement of the document needed to be revised and a draft version circulated.

Action:

The Steering agreed to form a working group to write, lead and shape the work of the Strategy Refresh.

It was decided that the working group should (where possible) be formed from those who led the key themes workshop (JH,NS, PW, JS, RW, JB), each responsible for their particular element of the Strategy.

KM/SH
Working
Group

It should also include a member of each action group if not already represented by the key theme leads.

Once the working group had met they would determine the practicalities of forming key theme sub groups. It was also suggested that perhaps other invited members participate to give a view beyond the group.

Once the final draft of the Strategy has been completed it should be presented to the Steering Group for approval.

SH

Action:

SH to circulate dates for the Strategy Refresh Working Group as soon as possible. (Wk commencing 22/04/09).

5 East of England Rural Forum (EERF)

SH advised that the December East of England Rural Forum meeting on Social inclusion had not been as informative as had been hoped, although the EERF Position Paper on Sustainable Rural Growth had been formally adopted at the meeting.

EERF Funding and Secretariat

SH reported that Government Office restructuring had led to match funding for the EERF being withdrawn.

DEFRA money has also been withdrawn from the EERF and Government Office had withdrawn its secretariat support to the EERF and put this role out to tender.

Secretariat support had since been awarded to a private consultant (Emma Powlett) until the end of the current financial year. This is due for review shortly.

JS requested that the EERF Steering Group review the timing for advertising the tender for the Secretariat role, the previous advert gave very little time for interested parties to submit a bid.

SH agreed but advised that the EERF Steering Group were dependent on the announcement of the DEFRA money awarded before this could go ahead and this will undoubtedly affect the timescales involved.

Chair of Chairs -

SH reported that one positive piece of news was that John Yates was to be Chair of Chairs which will help the EERF, but does not make up for the current resourcing problems experienced by the EERF.

EERF Annual Conference (Economic Downturn) 4^h March, Lavenham Village Hall Sudbury

6 Essex Rural Commission (ERC)

PhW asked SG members to give him suggestions for names of rural community elders to take part in a telephone survey for the ERC.

ERC Update

PhW reported that the ERC had carried out further evidence gathering sessions and would be presenting an interim report to the Policy Scrutiny Committee on findings to date.

7 Local Area Agreement Update

NS advised that the performance reward grants had been allocated and now the process of delivering these actions had begun.

Action

The Steering Group felt that there was a need to lend ERP support and lobby for a reduction to achievable targets regarding the government specified target LI 10.1 and N197 (Biodiversity and Living Landscapes targets) as the funding awarded was half the amount requested. They also felt that aspirational environmental targets should be supported for the future LAAs as part of a rolling process.

SH/NS/JH

8 A.O.B

Happy Retirement - Terry Taber (Federation of Small Businesses).

CA wished to say a very big thank you on behalf of the Essex Rural Partnership and its Steering Group for all his hard work over the years.

TT felt that the ERP had been a pleasure to attend, that the debate was lively and stimulating and he had enjoyed his time with the Essex Rural Partnership.

ERP Environment Action Group

Action:

PB reported that due to work on the LAA the last meeting for the Environmental Action Group had been cancelled and had not met as a group since last summer (2008). A meeting had been held to discuss the future of the group but no satisfactory outcome had been achieved to date.

NS thanked PB for his work in trying to keep the EnvAG going and in resolving its problems.

Action:

The Steering Group discussed several solutions to reinvigorate the Environmental Action Group. Key solutions suggested:

- 1) Reform the EnvAG as an independent ERP Environmental action group
- 2) Focus the EnvAG re-launch around the refresh of the Rural Strategy and its key themes.
- 3) Have representation from other ERP action groups on the EnvAG and vice versa to cover the cross cutting elements of the action plans.
- 4) Reinvigorate membership and recruit new members.

Action: This item to be added as an agenda item for the next ERP Steering Group Meeting 15/05/09.

SH/KM

9 **Date of Next Meeting**

The Steering Group Agreed that the date of the next Full Partnership Meeting and Steering Group Meeting would be 15th May and the subject would be Health.

Action

KM to circulate venue choices and liaise with the LINK organisation for contacts etc.

KM/SH

PhW: Invitation to Dr. Mike Gogarty Director of Public Health to present at the event.

PHW

Full Partnership Meeting (Health) 15th May 2009, Essex Records Office, Spalding Lecture Theatre (9.30am registration – 10.00am meeting commences – 1.15, followed by buffet lunch

ERP Steering Group Meeting will follow after lunch

Meeting concluded 3.30pm