



STEERING GROUP
26th May 2010
Minutes of the Meeting
RCCE Offices, 10.00am

Present:	Representing	Orgn	Initials
Cllr John Jowers	Chairman	ECC	(JJ)
Canon John Brown	Vice Chair	RCCE	(JB)
Suzanne Harris	CAG & EERF	RCCE	(SH)
Philip Wilson	EcAG	ECC	(PhW)
Dominic Petre	EcAG	EET	(DP)
Cllr Peter Baggott	EnvAG	EALC	(PB)
Cllr John Buchanan	EERF	EALC	(JBU)
Richard Woolley	EERF	RCCE	(RW)
Cllr. Mick Page	EERF	ECC	(MP)
Nick Shuttleworth	Facilitator orgn	RCCE	(NS)
Attending:			
Kirsty Monk	(minutes)	RCCE	(KM)
Apologies:			
Fiona Bryant	EEDA	EEDA	(FB)
Cllr Peter Chillingworth	LGA (Essex)	CBC	(PC)
John Hall	EnvAG	EWT	(JH)
Ed Gregory	Facilitator orgn	ECC	(EG)
Joy Sheppard	CAG	EALC	(JS)
Cllr Wendy Scattergood	LGA (Essex)	BDC	(WS)

1 Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Cllr. John Jowers welcomed all to the meeting.

**Action
By**

Apologies *(please see above for details).*

2 Minutes of the ERP Steering Group Meeting held on 13th March 2010

Matters of Accuracy.

No matters of accuracy were raised and those present agreed the minutes as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

Matters arising from the previous meeting were covered in the main agenda items.

3 Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) Consultation

SH reported that the Environment Action Group had been given copies of the Shoreline Management Plan consultation document and the Managing Coastal Change Report and they had looked at the potential issues concerning rural communities facing managed realignment or areas where there was no planned active intervention to manage sea defences.

PB felt that the EnvAG meeting had highlighted the importance of having input from farming organisations and land owners at the Groups meetings as their viewpoint was invaluable.

SH advised that she and KM had attended one of the SMP public consultation events in Southend run by the Environment Agency. It appeared that information exhibited at each event was specific to that particular local area.

JJ voiced his concern that the SMP was not a statutory document and was therefore without legislative backing. Some farmers had felt that the changes to the coastal frontline management would be beneficial as they could now maintain their own sea defences. Essex County Council is also focusing its attention to the issues affecting Essex Coastal areas. There was potential for the development of coastal industries such as tourism, sheep farming on salt marshes etc, alongside the proposed strategic coastal realignment.

RW added that it was important that the SMP and Marine plans were properly integrated. RW also felt that there was a real concern regarding who would oversee all the organisations that may be picking up the implementation of the Shoreline Management Plan. In addition to this, there should be a positive recognition that land activity could affect marine conservation.

4 **Update from the ERP Action Groups**

Community Action Group (CAG)

KM reported that the CAG had met on 29th April; the principle aim of the meeting was to identify the actual tasks that needed to be taken forward with respect to the Strategy priorities under “Active and Caring Communities” and “Greater Availability of Affordable Rural Housing”. With this in mind, the Group heard from relevant speakers on Community Led Planning and Affordable Rural Housing; the meeting was productive and the Group have already started work on some of the tasks identified.

The next CAG meeting is scheduled for 30th June 2010 and Brenda Towle has kindly agreed to speak at this meeting regarding the issues facing young people in Essex.

JB added that a small CAG sub group was arranging to meet and discuss the “Improving Communications with Communities” priority. Joy Sheppard from EALC had offered to develop an action plan regarding the development of the Parish and Town Council Sector for discussion at the next CAG meeting.

Economic Action Group (EcAG)

PhW reported that the EcAG had last met on 21st May and looked at the issue of rural broadband provision in Essex.

EcAG were given an update regarding the online Essex Parish Broadband Survey which is being hosted by the Rural Broadband Partnership website with the support of many of the ERP individual partnership organisations. *(For further details or to participate in the survey please follow this link: <http://www.community-broadband.co.uk/surveys/Essex.asp>).*

The parish broadband survey should give a clearer picture of broadband coverage in Essex and will help map the “not spots” areas in the County with poor broadband provision.

N.B: The Rural Broadband Partnership was created by the founder of County Broadband Ltd, a specialist Wireless Internet Service Provider.

The Rural Broadband Partnership aims are:

1. Help individuals connect to community broadband projects in their area.
2. Help communities create, fund, manage and run their own broadband projects.
3. Help suppliers and funding sources connect with the projects that need them.
4. Provide information and resources that help you get the community broadband service you want.

SH suggested that perhaps the ERP should also give its formal support to the parish broadband survey.

Action: SH to liaise with PhW regarding the proposed formal ERP support of the Rural Broadband Partnership online parish survey.

SH/PhW

Environmental Action Group- EnvAG.

PB reported that the EnvAG action group had held a successful initial meeting, in addition to a discussion on the Shoreline Management Plan and the Managing Coastal change report (*please see item 3 above for details*) the Group had also looked at the following:

- Purpose and Aims of the EnvAG
- EnvAG Draft Terms of Reference.
- Starting the process of identifying the key tasks and priorities drawn from the ERP Essex Rural Strategy under the “A Rich and Varied Environment” theme.
- Access to Natural Green Space- including rights of way.
- Agri Environmental Schemes
- County Records Centre – including pilot project underway in Tendring
- Essex Woodlands Strategy and Woodlands Creation
- Local Wildlife Sites and Living Landscapes
- Essex Biodiversity Project

5 East of England Rural Forum - EERF

SH reported that the launch of the EERF Rural White Paper had been postponed until the 8th September (venue TBA) due to the General Election.

The next EERF meeting will be held at Wimpole Hall on 9th June 2010, confirmed speakers are: Richard Morris (Wimpole Hall Estate Manager), Jason Redell (Head of Research at Smith Gore) and Tony Butler (Museum of East Anglian Life).

(*Please follow EERF website link for further details: <http://www.eerf.org.uk/calendar-dates.shtml>*).

6 Next Full ERP Meeting.

SH confirmed that Karen Thomas from the Environment Agency had kindly agreed to give a presentation regarding the Shoreline Management Plan at the next Full Partnership meeting to be held on 29th July in Maldon.

Following up a suggestion made by the Steering Group at their last meeting, Balanced Seas have been approached to see if a representative could also speak at the meeting about their project. Further speakers were under consideration.

The Steering Group also made the following additional suggestions for speakers:

- Tim Isaac – CLA
- David Nutting – Regional Flood Defence Committee
- Topsale Charters
- Richard Titchner
- Speaker on Coastal Tourism in Essex.

7 Impact of the General Election.

The Queens Speech, 25th May 2010 - Decentralisation and Localism Bill

PB reported that the Queens Speech set out the Coalition Government’s legislative programme for the next 18 months; it included plans for the “Decentralisation and Localism Bill” “ which aims to drive down powers to a local level.

N.B. The Queen’s Speech advised that the bill was designed to “devolve greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and give local communities control over housing and planning decisions.”

The bill will include measures to:

- **Abolish regional spatial strategies**, returning relevant housing and planning powers to local councils

- **Abolish the Infrastructure Planning Commission** and replace it an accountable system that provides a fast-track process for major infrastructure projects
- **Create Local Enterprise Partnerships to replace Regional Development Agencies**, described as “joint local authority-business bodies brought forward by local authorities to promote local economic development”
- **Create trusts to enable communities to provide homes for local people**

RW felt that it was important to note that although an ideological principle had been put forward in respect of changes to the regional structure; it was also a cost cutting exercise by the Government.

JJ felt that the abolition of regional structures would leave a policy vacuum; it was not yet entirely clear where the regional powers would be going.

New People in Post:

- Caroline Spelman is the new Secretary of State for Defra.
- Eric Pickles – is the new Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG)
- Bob Neill is the new Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for CLG

Spending Cuts Announced:

The Steering Group then discussed the various announced Government spending cuts – including (as understood as at 26 May 2010):

- *The government has announced the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) will be expected to ‘contribute’ £1.185bn towards £6.2bn of savings designed to tackle the £156bn deficit. This includes £405m that the department channels to local authorities.*
- *The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills will be cut by £836m*
- *Defra by more than £160m*
- *Education and Transport have both been stripped of more than £650m each*
- *EEDA (east of England Development Agency) funding has been reduced by 15%*
- *An emergency Budget has been announced for 22nd June*

JB felt concern that regional investment previously put in place was now in doubt and that the Partnership should consider the very real implications for the ERP. We should also ensure that newly elected MP’s were aware of the Essex Rural Partnership and the Essex Rural Strategy.

Action: Copy of the ERP Essex Rural Strategy and covering letter to be sent to Essex Members of Parliament SH/KM

Action: ERP Steering Group members to keep each other informed of the latest political developments, by e-mailing SH who would combine information received before forwarding to reduce e-mail traffic. SH/ALL

Action: Review of the political changes, spending and funding cuts, implications of the Decentralisation and Localism Bill and the demise of the regional model, to be discussed at the next ERP Steering Group Meeting on 29th July 2010. SH/ALL

8 **A.O.B.**

Date of next ERP Full Partnership Meeting and Steering Group Meeting:

The next ERP Full Partnership Meeting will be held on 29th July 2010 (Function Suite, Maldon Town Football Club - 9.30am Registration, Meeting Commences 10.00am to 1.15 pm- followed by a buffet lunch) **The Steering Group Meeting will be held at 2pm, following lunch.**

Meeting concluded 12.15pm