

**EPPING FOREST LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP
BOARD MEETING**

Date: 25 September 2008

Time: 2.00 -3.20 p.m.

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Mrs Anne Grigg (Epping Forest District Council) (Vice-Chairman) (In the Chair)
Councillor Mrs D Collins (Epping Forest District Council)
Gay Ellis (Representing Epping Forest District Faith Groups)
Councillor Colin Finn (Essex County Council)
Jacqui Foile (Chief Officer, Voluntary Action Epping Forest)
Teresa Glynn (ACL Essex, representing the Learning Partnership)
John Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene, Epping Forest District Council)
Derek Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive, Epping Forest District Council)
Catherine O'Connell (Epping Forest Locality Director, West Essex PCT)
Yvette Wetton (West Area Co-ordinator, Essex County Council)

Supporting Officers:

Chris Overend (Policy & Research Officer, Epping Forest District Council)

Apologies:

Monica Bird (Learning and Skills Council)
Alison Cowie (Director of Public Health, West Essex Primary Care Trust)
Alan Hall (Director of Housing, Epping Forest District Council)
Councillor Ann Haigh (Epping Forest CYPSP)
John Preston (Director of Planning, Epping Forest District Council)
Peter Sadler (Principal, Epping Forest College)
Ray Skinner (Essex Fire and Rescue Services)
Clive Snell (Business Representative)
Councillor Brian Surtees (Representing Town and Parish Councils)
Colin Thompson (Representing Town and Parish Councils)
Paul Thomson (Superintendent, City of London - Epping Forest Conservators)
Lonica Vanclay (Epping Forest CYPSP)

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Councillor Mrs Anne Grigg welcomed everyone to the meeting and, in particular, Teresa Glynn who was attending a meeting of the Board for the first time. In turn, all introduced themselves and provided information on their background and roles.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

Derek Macnab reminded the Board that, in accordance with the terms of the LSP's Constitution, the Chairman and Vice Chairman were elected every two years, with the periods of office of the current Chairman and Vice Chairman to expire at this meeting and new appointments due to be made. Derek advised the Board that David Butler had retired from Epping Forest College on health grounds and the new

Principal, Peter Sadler, had now taken up post. As such, David's involvement with the LSP and his role as Chairman had come to an end at the time he left the employ of Epping Forest College. Councillor Anne Grigg had, as Vice Chairman, taken on the role of Chairman during the period of David's ill health.

Derek further advised the Board that one nomination had been received for the role of Chairman, that being for Councillor Mrs Di Collins, and one nomination for the role of Vice Chairman, that being for Catherine O'Connell.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The nomination of Councillor Di Collins for the office of Chairman of the LSP, having been formally moved, it was:

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Di Collins be elected Chairman of the LSP for the two year period ending September 2010.

COUNCILLOR DI COLLINS IN THE CHAIR

4. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

The nomination of Catherine O'Connell for the office of Vice Chairman of the LSP, having been formally moved, it was:

RESOLVED:

That Catherine O'Connell be appointed Vice Chairman of the LSP for the two year period ending September 2010.

5. PREVIOUS CHAIRMAN OF LSP - DAVID BUTLER

Councillor Di Collins placed on record her personal thanks to David Butler for work he had carried out during the time he had been Chairman of the LSP, for his general contribution to its setting up and development over a number of years.

6. MINUTES (12.06.08)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

7. MATTERS ARISING

Chris Overend advised the Board that the Youth Debate was now set for 19 November 2008 to be held at the Woolston Manor Complex. Confirming that to be the case, Derek Macnab said that the event was to be chaired by David Monk from Radio Essex and it was anticipated a number of representatives from the LSP would be in attendance. Councillor Di Collins said that the quality of the members on the Youth Council was very high and, in expressing hope for a satisfactory event, encouraged others to attend.

8. LSP ACCOUNTS AND FUNDING PROGRESS REPORT

Chris Overend circulated copies of the LSP's Statement of Accounts at 15 September 2008. Chris pointed out that the Statement reflected the fact that,

although the halfway point in the financial year had almost been reached, there had been no appointment to the post of LSP Manager as yet and, as such, no salary costs had been incurred. A provision of £20,000 for salary and employment costs for the remainder of the financial year had therefore been made. The final figure in terms of salaries and on costs also depended on the discussion later on the agenda regarding the appointment of the LSP Manager and work on the Community Strategy.

The Board noted that there was a current balance of £75,011.81. Provision of £4,000 had been made for the Away Day, Community Conference, website maintenance and sundry expenses, whilst an income of 6,404.68 relating to salary and employment costs in 2007/08 when the post of Community Strategy and Partnerships Manager had been vacant, would be returned to LSP funds from VAEF in due course.

9. RECRUITMENT TO MANAGERIAL POST/LSP ADMINISTRATIVE POST

Derek Macnab reminded the Board that, following the departure of the LSP Co-ordinator in January 2008, it had been agreed to transfer the post to the establishment of the District Council. With a greater emphasis on strategic and partnership development skills, and a re-evaluation under the Local Government National Job Evaluation Scheme, it had been hoped to make the job more attractive to potential candidates. In the event, despite extensive advertising, the post had attracted only 19 expressions of interest, resulting in a shortlist of five candidates. Three of the shortlisted candidates had withdrawn prior to interview and the Interviewing Panel had not felt able to offer an appointment to either of the two applicants interviewed. No further attempt was made to advertise immediately subsequent to the interviews, given that the summer period was renowned as being a difficult time to recruit. A secondment initiative which had been explored, also proved unsuccessful.

Derek Macnab also reported that the resource issue had been further compounded as a consequence of the departure of one of the LSP Part-Time Administrative Officers, who had been successful in gaining a new role with greater responsibility as part of the FAIR Scheme housed within Voluntary Action Epping Forest. The other Administrative Officer was a relatively new appointment, which the LSP had created to provide the necessary level of support to the Action Groups and the Multi-Faith Forum.

Derek Macnab said that, as a consequence of these staff changes and recruitment difficulties, the LSP had been struggling for capacity, particularly given the ongoing absence of a key post to progress its work. He stressed the need to determine a way forward especially given the requirement to respond to major issues such as the development of the new Sustainable Community Strategy, Essex Local Area Agreement 2 and the Comprehensive Area Assessment. Accordingly, Derek presented a report which set out a number of options for addressing the issue. These options centred around re-advertising whilst looking at the potential to re-evaluate the post and associated conditions to make the role more financially attractive, making an interim appointment through the use of agency staff or appointing on a consultancy basis to work on the development of the new Sustainable Community Strategy.

Both Yvette Wetton and Jacqui Foile felt that the LSP might now be in a better position to recruit. Both were mindful of the potential costs of using consultants and the fact that often, even when consultants were used, there was still a considerable

amount of work involved for staff at the various partner organisations. Jacqui pointed out that the District sometimes had difficulties competing with others in terms of the salaries it could offer and felt that an even more targeted recruitment process would be of benefit. Catherine O'Connell felt that there was some merit in exploring the 'interim' option. In taking account of these points, Derek Macnab suggested that it would be possible to break down the work involved on the Sustainable Community Strategy into a number of discreet phases so that, for example, consultants could be appointed to undertake the first phase(s) with the potential to undertake work on the later phases should that subsequently be deemed appropriate.

Having considered the various options, the Board agreed to re-advertise the post with careful consideration to be given to the advertising outlets to be used. The Board further agreed that, in the meantime, the various phases involved in the production of the Sustainable Community Strategy should be identified with a view to consultants being appointed to undertake the earlier phase(s), with the potential for carrying out further work on the later phases. Furthermore, in noting that the current Administrative Officer postholder was not in a position to increase their current hours by a further working day each week on an interim basis, the Board agreed that the other part-time administrative post should be re-advertised with a view to an appointment being made as soon as possible.

10. LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT - PERFORMANCE REWARD GRANT

Chris Overend advised the Board that the initial bids for Performance Reward Grant (PRG) had been submitted in early September and a schedule had been circulated, summarising the bids that were specific to the LSP and those of the Thematic Partnerships which impacted on the District. Chris pointed out that the bids specific to the Epping Forest LSP would, if approved, be funded from the District's indicative allocation of £453,000 whilst the other bids, if successful, would be met through the indicative allocations of the Thematic Partnerships. The Action Plans on which the bids were set out were, in effect, in draft and were to be updated and enhanced for resubmission in a finalised form by no later than 10 October. Prior to that date, the draft Action Plans were being updated through ongoing discussions with the County and the respective Target Leads and as a consequence of the outcome of discussions on the bids at various workshops which Chris had or would be attending. Those workshops covered the aspects of quality assurance, risk management and equalities and diversity.

Chris further reported that the revised Action Plans would be submitted to the Essex Management Board on 17 October which would make indicative, in principle, decisions to go forward to the Essex Partnership on 28 November. Even at that stage, there were some provisos in that final confirmation of the annual PRG allocation by the Government to the various districts was not expected until later in the 2008 calendar year and that any funding released by the Government was likely to be towards the end of the 2009/10 financial year, thus giving rise to some potential cash-flow issues. It could also mean, for example, that there would be an approved list of projects to commence on 1 April 2009, with an additional 'reserve' list.

Chris said that the advice received from the County was that although late PRG bids could be submitted, they were to be only in very exceptional circumstances and the very fact that they could not be assessed at the workshops would also make the chances of a successful bid more unlikely. Confirming this to be the case, Yvette Wetton said that anyone submitting bids and preparing the associated Action Plans in such cases would have to carry out a self-assessment in terms of quality assurance, risk management and equalities and diversity aspects.

11. LSP AWAY DAY - 8 OCTOBER 2008

Derek Macnab advised the Board that Catherine O'Connell, Nina Gavens, Alan Hall, Colin Rowell, Chris Overend and he had met on 5 September to carry out a scoping exercise to determine an agenda and structure for the LSP Away Day. In doing so, they had all concurred that it would be preferable, in line with the arrangements for previous LSP Away Days, for a facilitator to be appointed for the day. Subsequently, Derek had had discussions with a number of individuals who had experience in this area, with a view to an appointment being made. Derek had also had discussions with other LSPs, the East of England Network and Marina Sheriff, the former Community Strategy and Partnerships Manager with the LSP and now with Harlow 20/20, as a consequence of which Andrew Holder, a consultant working with local authorities and public service organisations across the UK and in parts of Europe, had emerged as an individual suitable for providing the facilitation service at the Away Day. Derek had circulated details of Andrew's CV, a facilitator's brief and draft programme for the day. Derek advised the Board that the daily costs of employing Andrew Holder to undertake the role were approximately £1,100. In noting the comments of Yvette Wetton that she had been present at Harlow 2020's Away Day and had been impressed by the service provided by Andrew on that occasion, the Board agreed to the appointment of Andrew Holder as the Facilitator for the 2008 Away Day.

Derek Macnab further advised the Board that the District Council's Management Board had recently received a presentation from Ian Davidson of the Audit Commission on the new Corporate Area Assessment Framework and its relationship with the role of the LSP. Ian had expressed an interest in giving a presentation to the LSP on this matter. In view of the close and vital links between the two, the Board agreed that provision should be made within the agenda for the Away Day for Ian to give a presentation on the new CAA Framework and its implications for the LSP.

Councillor Di Collins undertook to prepare a letter stressing the importance of the LSP and giving encouragement to the involvement of all partner organisations at the event and with the LSP in general. Councillor Di Collins re-emphasised the importance of all partners ensuring they were represented at the Away Day.

12. LSP COMMUNITY CONFERENCE - 21 JANUARY 2009

Derek Macnab reported that the Community Conference was to be held at Murray Hall, Loughton on 21 January 2009. He said that the programme for the event would be determined in due course but that there would probably be an emphasis on how the LSP would seek to deal with the main ongoing issues likely to be reflected in the new Sustainable Community Strategy. Derek added that the Steering Group, on 4 September 2008 (Minute 5 refers) had agreed to combine the consultation event on community safety issues in the District entitled "Face The Public", with the arrangements for the Community Conference. Confirming this to be the case, John Gilbert said there would be mutual benefits in bringing the two events together.

13. EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN

Derek Macnab advised the Board that Hertfordshire County Council and St Albans District Council had applied for a judicial review of the East of England Plan and that that was unlikely to be held until early 2009. Derek added that that, in turn, had resulted in delays on taking forward the consultation arrangements in respect of the Local Development Framework (LDF). Councillor Di Collins said that the main thrust at the moment was in respect of development towards the north of Harlow. From the Epping Forest District's perspective, it was not yet in a position where it had to accept planning applications in respect of development in the Green Belt.

As part of the LDF Core Strategy, the District Council was under a clear directive from Go East to accommodate more Gypsies and Travellers in the District. A consultation document on this matter was to be made public within the next week and the issue was to be debated at the District Council's Cabinet on 6 October. Derek Macnab added that there would also be a formal presentation on the matter at the Local Councils Liaison Committee on 5 November. In addition, other partners would have an opportunity to respond in terms of the implications for their own organisations. Councillor Di Collins said that a number of potential sites had been identified and the Government had stressed that not having any sites available in the District would not be an option.

14. NATIONAL INDICATOR SET 'PLACE SURVEYS'

Derek Macnab reported that the LSP Steering Group, at its meeting on 4 September 2008 (Minute 6 refers) had, subject to some minor comments and suggested amendments, approved the wording of the Epping Forest Place Survey, forming part of the National Indicator Set 'Place Survey' to be carried out during the autumn of 2008. Derek said that the Steering Group had commented to the effect that some of the wording was slightly confusing in terms of who was responsible for providing which service. Whilst ultimately there had been insufficient scope to accommodate any revisions in that regard, the addition of Italian to the range of languages used in the Survey, as proposed by the Steering Group, had been approved. Derek pointed out that the letter had been branded using the LSP logo and that BMG would be responsible for ensuring the required 1000 returns were received from Epping Forest residents, with those returns being from a range of individuals from different age groups, backgrounds, gender, etc. Derek added that the Survey was being mailed out at present, with reminders on 15 October and results expected in November 2008. A decision on how to take the information forward would be made early in the New Year.

15. CREATING STRONG, SAFE AND PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES - THE ROLE OF THE LSP

The Board considered a report prepared by Chris Overend summarising the provisions of the Government Guidance published on 9 July 2008 in the document 'Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities'. In particular, the report summarised the contents of the document insofar as they impacted on the role of LSPs. In noting that there were a number of potential implications for the LSP's constitutional arrangements, the Board agreed that it should be referred for consideration as part of the discussions on the Away Day on 8 October 2008.

16. REPORTS FROM PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

(a) Voluntary Action Epping Forest

Jacqui Foile reported that the FAIR Project had 'gone live' on 1 September with the three postholders now in place and these being namely, Richard Crone, the FAIR Manager, Kelly Tarling, the Funding Officer, and Nina Gavens, the Information Officer.

(b) Essex County Council

Councillor Colin Finn reminded the Board that funding opportunities were available through the County Council's Community Initiative Fund. The aim of the grant was to create a new, or renew an existing, community asset.

(c) West Essex PCT

Catherine O'Connell advised the Board that the consultation on the proposals with regard to Ongar War Memorial Hospital had resulted in a significant positive response. Catherine said that the fact that the response had been so positive might well mean that the proposals moved forward quickly. Catherine undertook to keep the LSP informed of progress in respect of the consultation on this matter.

17. LSP STEERING GROUP MATTERS NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

Derek Macnab reminded the Board that comments from the various Action Groups on issues and options for the new Sustainable Community Strategy and the LDF Core Strategy, had been received and would be taken into account as these two documents were progressed.

18. ESSEX COMPACT

Yvette Wetton reported that the new Essex Compact had now been signed off. It was agreed that WECAN should, on behalf of the Partnership, be responsible for identifying how the LSP could implement its responsibilities under the Compact Agreement as part of the West Essex brief.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the LSP Board was scheduled to be held on Thursday 18 December 2008 at 2.00pm.

It was also noted that the next meeting of the LSP Steering Group was scheduled to be held on Thursday 27 November 2008 at 2.00pm but that this arrangement could be affected by the discussions on the constitutional arrangements at the forthcoming Away Day.