

MEETING OF THE BOARD
Monday 22 November 10:00 – 12:00
Civic Offices, Epping

MINUTES

Present

Councillor Di Collins (DC)	(Chairman)
Councillor Penny Smith (PS)	(Chairman Safer Communities Partnership)
Councillor Valerie Metcalfe (VM)	(Essex County Council)
Julie Chandler (JC)	(Chairman Children's Partnership)
Derek Macnab (DM)	(Acting Chief Executive, EFDC)
Colin Thompson (CT)	(Representing Town and Parish Councils)
Councillor Brian Surtees (BS)	(Representing Town and Parish Councils)
Quentin Buller (QB)	(Epping Forest College)
Keith Brown (KB)	(Federation of Small Businesses)
Jacqui Foile (JF)	(Chief Officer, Voluntary Action Epping Forest)
Paul Thomson (PT)	(City of London Corporation)
Alan Ray (AR)	(Essex Police)
Ann Haigh (AH)	(Chair of Epping Forest Faith Forum, EFDC)
Stuart Macmillan	(Essex Fire and Rescue)

Presenting Items

John Houston (JH)	(LSP Manager)
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Supporting Officers

Colin Rowell (CR)	(LSP Administrator)
David Wright (DW)	(LSP Administrator)

Apologies

Catherine O'Connell	(NHS) (Vice-Chair)
Sue Wainwright	(Job Centre Plus)
Stephen Wilkinson	(Lee Valley Regional Park Authority)
Councillor Anthony Jackson	(Essex Police Authority)
Yvette Wetton	(Essex County Council)
Simon Williams	(Essex Police)
Councillor Anne Grigg	(Chairman Sustainable Communities),
Pam Hall	(Chairman Healthier Communities)
Geoff Mangan	(14-19 Area Planning Group)
Mark Samuels	(Essex Fire and Rescue)
Jeannie Wright	(Epping Forest College)

1. Welcome/ New Members/Apologies

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and read out the list of apologies.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting (17/06/2010)/Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting we agreed, there were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

STRATEGIC ITEMS

3. Potential Implications of Comprehensive Spending Review Announcements

JH introduced this item which would give each member of the partnership an opportunity to update colleagues on how the recently announced Comprehensive Spending Review would effect their organisations and possible initial thoughts on impacts on services in the district. Government guidance indicates that local partners should be working together to reduce duplication and avoid 'cost shunting'.

DM updated on the district councils position and circulated a paper with more detailed financial information. Overall the council was in a relatively strong position, and well placed to address the required reductions without major impacts on services. The district had the second lowest council tax in Essex. Although there were clearly challenges ahead (at least a 28% reduction in government grant) the council has set out a planned reduction programme over four years. It would be engaging in consultation with residents and key partners on how the reduction programme should be managed. It was likely that a recruitment freeze would be put in place immediately. New arrangements for sharing services with Harlow and Uttlesford were being explored but a number of proposals were well developed. Questions were raised on filling maternity cover posts during this phase and it was confirmed that for the post in question cover would be sought. Issues around the difficult settlement for parish and town councils were highlighted and details sought about future payments to support councils who froze council tax increases.

AR updated from Essex police who were facing significant reductions (£35-50m over 4 years), the total annual budget for the west division was £22m. Police were planning to change the way the force was organised, shift patterns, deployments and back office support, including developing new shared services with Kent Constabulary. A reduction in the number of senior officers was also likely. The priority would be to minimize any impact on frontline policing whilst maintaining effective local partnership working. It is unclear at the moment how new proposals around the Police Commissioner model and the future of local Community Safety Partnerships would develop. Questions were raised about consultation with the public and key partners on proposals emerging from the police reviews, and it was confirmed that partners would be consulted. **After discussion it was agreed that the Board should write to Essex police setting out its opposition to any loss of local Community Safety Partnerships which members felt were the most efficient and effective means of partnership working. ACTION 01 JH**

SM saw the fire and rescue service as in a similar position to the police, with a significant reduction planned and a number of reviews into structure, roles and facilities already underway. Almost 85% of the budget is people. It was too early to say what the final outcome would be, but the service would prioritise the frontline in its review.

KB raised the issue of funding of services to business such as business link. In Essex this had worked really well, concerns about the performance of replacement services based online and through call centres nationally were raised.

PT set out the position with regard to the role of the City of London Corporation who manage Epping Forest. They were funded in a different way to local authorities. Reductions of 7.5% for next two years and 2.5% thereafter were being sought. Most of the costs of the operation were people based.

VM set out some of the challenges facing ECC which could be looking at reductions totaling up to 40% over four years. A number of efficiency programmes were running at the minute, but reductions of this level would involve difficult decisions. It was important

that places such as Epping Forest set out their needs effectively and ensured that the area got a fair share of diminishing resources.

QB highlighted the position facing the college. In the area of 19-24 students, 50% of course costs would now have to be paid, and funding removed from post 24 year olds. Train to Gain funding had been exhausted. The Education Maintenance Allowance had been reviewed, which would affect the ability of many young people from low incomes to participate, means tested funding for this group would be administered by the college. Cuts also in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) funding. On the positive side 75,000 places for apprenticeships are to be created nationally, and the college will be targeting this growth area with new facilities. Overall the college has made efficiency gains, looked at streamlining operations and is currently exploring with other institutions a range of shared services.

JF felt this was a particularly challenging time for the voluntary and third sectors. They already operated on very slim margins and any reductions would hit the sector hard. VAEF wanted to explore opportunities to make the Big Society work locally and expand its services with groups such as the police, fire service etc.

The Multi Faith Forum had discussed some of these issues and AH reported that concern had been raised about the impact on local communities. BS felt that many of the reductions would hit those least able to cope hardest and we should ensure a moral framework as well as a financial one drives decisions. The Faith Forum was anxious to see how some issues such as hate crime would be managed with reduced budgets.

Members were concerned about the resilience of the local economy to such widespread reductions in the public sector. It was reported that Epping Forest was in the bottom three districts in Essex for dependence on public sector jobs. The new business led Local Enterprise Partnerships would be a key mechanism for growth and regeneration and the M11 corridor would have its own representation. It was important that this was used effectively to put the case forward for the three districts and resources secured.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their input, and a very useful discussion and felt that it was important that we kept each other closely informed as we move through this difficult period.

4. Development of Sustainable Community Strategy.

The draft community strategy was with the district council for final approval. The number of objectives had been reduced from 50+ to 11, focused on areas where value could be added to work and around issues of importance to local people. Each of the Theme Groups had now begun work on their delivery plans, the practical steps they would take over the next 12-18 months to deliver the objectives. Partners were asked for any comments to be fed back. JH thanked all the partners for the effort they had put into drafting the strategy.

OPERATIONAL ITEMS

5. LSP Managers Report

JH introduced a paper setting out a range of operational issues and setting forward a number of recommendations for the way forward.

PRG funding reductions had thrown the future of LSPs into doubt. If costs were reduced the partnership could run in a reduced form until March 2012, but new approaches and funding would need to be found before that time. **Members agreed the cost cutting measures put forward in the paper.**
ACTION 02 JH

It was proposed that a new task and finish panel be set up with partners in west Essex to look at retaining capacity for partnership working, and helping the areas to jointly meet the challenges around budget reductions, Big Society and better public services. A briefing paper and draft terms of reference for the task and finish panel were circulated before the meeting. VM felt that the paper was a very good one but that it was important to get this work underway as quickly as possible in order for something meaningful to be reported in this financial year. **The Board agreed to support the establishment of the Task and Finish team and agreed to assist it in its work once established.**

ACTION 03 JH

It was proposed that the primary prize scheme should be run again next year with financial support from partners sought.

ACTION 04 JH

The Annual Stakeholder conference had now been confirmed for 4 February at Epping Forest College. The theme of the conference would be making the Big Society work in Epping Forest, and the keynote speaker would be Eric Pickles MP, minister for Communities and Local Government. Everyone was invited to attend and partners were very much looking forward to hearing the government's latest thoughts on this important issue at first hand.

The Future Jobs Fund continues to deliver high quality placements to long term unemployed young people in the district. The scheme has proved popular with employers and employees and over 90 young people have been through the scheme so far with another 80 being recruited. Many of the young people have managed to stay on with their employers in jobs at the end of their placements and feedback from JobCentre Plus on all aspects of the west Essex scheme is very positive.

6. Report from Theme Groups

Oral report from the four Theme Groups.

Children's Partnership

JC reported on the very successful children's partnership away day looking at priorities for the next year locally and plans for developing commissioning across west Essex. A paper was circulated setting out the main points of discussion. There are a number of key challenges, not least the potential impact of the growth of Academies and how joint services could be funded and coordinated. The available pot of funding for the whole of commissioning across west Essex was now £133k, significantly down on the previous sum which had also been supported through PRG. Partners had raised concerns about how local views could influence decisions on commissioning and other issues, particularly shortcomings in the system, e.g. Head teachers not being told promptly about children with child protection plans, and real problems over the complexities of the CAF (Common Assessment Framework) form and difficulties in completing it. West Essex is the only part of Essex to retain its Children's Partnerships which are very active, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders, from head teachers to health professionals and police, to plan and coordinate services focused on the needs of children. VM asked if the problem with notification of head teachers had been rectified and agreed to confirm that this had been sorted out. **VM expressed concern over the situation re CAF and agreed to work to ensure a more appropriately structured reporting arrangement was put in place.**

ACTION 05 VM

Safer Communities Partnership

PS gave an update on the work of the partnership which continued to perform strongly. Planning and delivery on Crucial Crew and Reality Roadshow, which various members of

the Board had praised in the meeting, were again proceeding well. The Safe 'n' Sound programme was also delivering important services to vulnerable local people, and new programmes to work effectively across borders with London were now in place, while funding the crime analyst post was giving an important insight into crime and offending locally. A major Face the Public event has been organised for 6.15pm on 25 November at Epping Forest College, and all Board members were invited to attend. Concerns had been raised about changes to the organisation of Safer Communities Partnerships following announcements by the Home Office.

Sustainable Communities

JH reported outcomes from the last meeting of the Theme Group on 19 November. Good progress was being made on the environment, business and volunteering charters. A package of support for Credit Unions had been agreed. A new initiative to link up more formally with the North London Strategic Alliance to ensure better coordinated working with neighboring authorities was underway. A joint seminar with the west Essex councils and NLSA was planned for the new year to look at issues such as the environment, economic development, transport, housing etc.

Healthier Communities

JC reported on two exciting projects that had been supported by the Theme Group. The Healthy Living project and the Health Works programme. The Healthy Living project had been successfully piloted in Ninefields and was now being rolled out. This gives families a range of advice on eating well, exercise etc in fun packages. The Health Works programme has secured £100k from Harlow Health Centres Trust to target work with young people in Waltham Abbey. Staff had been recruited and this project was now ongoing involving all the key partners. The partnership is aware that much of the architecture of delivery is changing; the demise of PCTs, the growth of GP Consortia, and the new Health and Wellbeing Boards would provide new challenges for joining work up locally and ensuring the needs of the area were effectively acknowledged by new bodies. A key element of work will be to ensure effective representation on these new groups.

7. AOB / Open Forum

It was agreed that discussions should be led by the LSP manager on how we implement the objective in the Community Strategy on developing a higher education presence in the district linked to the green and unique environmental heritage of the district. JH and PT agreed to look at this issue and report back. **It was agreed that meeting dates for the next year should be confirmed as soon as possible and a list circulated to Board members.** **ACTION 06 JH PT**

PT informed the meeting that the City of London's Open Space department, together with ECC, is looking at a transport strategy for Epping Forest that would involve changes to speed limits, cattle grids and road closures. Consultation on the changes is currently taking place.

8. Date of Future Meetings

Date	Time	Room	Building
15 February	14:00 -16:00	Committee Room 2	Civic Offices, Epping
17 May	14:00 -16:00	Committee Room 1	Civic Offices, Epping
The two meeting dates below were added after the meeting			
6 September	14:00 -16:00	Committee Room 1	Civic Offices, Epping
13 December	14:00 -16:00	Committee Room 1	Civic Offices, Epping