

**MEETING OF THE BOARD**  
**Friday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2014, 10:00 – 12:05**  
**Civic Offices, Epping**

**MINUTES**

**Present:**

Cllr Richard Bassett (RB) (in the Chair)	Lee Valley Food Taskforce
Dr Kamal Bishai (KB)	Epping Forest Health and Wellbeing Board
Julie Chandler (JC)	Epping Forest Children's Partnership
Jacqui Foile (JF)	Voluntary Action Epping Forest
Cllr Anne Grigg (AG)	EFDC
Ann Haigh (AH)	Multi-Faith Forum
Alan Hall (AHa)	Director of Communities, EFDC
John Houston (JH)	LSP Manager
Derek Macnab (DM)	Deputy Chief Executive, EFDC
Cllr Valerie Metcalfe (VM)	Essex County Council
Penny Morgan (PM)	Principal, Epping Forest College
John Price (JP)	Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce
Cllr Brian Surtees (BS)	Town and Parish Councils
Cllr Gary Waller (GW)	Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership

**Supporting Officer:**

Vivien Kelly	LSP Administrator
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**Apologies:**

Cllr Chris Whitbread (Chairman)	EFDC
Cllr Joan Bowerman	Town and Parish Councils
Quentin Buller	Tourism Taskforce
Andy Fusher	Essex Police
Bryan Mansfield	Essex Fire and rescue Service
Denise Morrissey	Essex Police
Karen Smallwood	Department for Work and Pensions
Paul Thomson	City of London Corporation

**1. Chairmanship of the Meeting**

In the absence of Cllr Whitbread (Chairman) and with the agreement of Jacqui Foile (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Richard Bassett was appointed as Chairman for the meeting.

**2. New Members / Apologies**

Penny Morgan – Principal of Epping Forest College, was welcomed to her first meeting of the LSP. Apologies for absence were noted.

**3. Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

**4. Matters Arising**

The Board received an update report on actions which had arisen from the previous meeting. In relation to Action 09 it was noted that, despite extensive efforts, no alternative sources of funding had been identified and Epping Forest Homestart would therefore be closing. Essex County Council had withdrawn funding because the cost of providing support through the Homestart project amounted to £2,000 per family and this was not considered to offer value for money. The Children's Centres and their

outreach staff would be expected to provide the support previously offered by Homestart.

Members of the Board emphasised the importance of the home visiting service provided by Homestart, particularly for families which included children with disabilities, who would find it difficult to attend the Children's Centres. The value of the work carried out by Homestart's team of 50 volunteers was also emphasised and was considered to have avoided the need for more costly interventions. JF advised that VAEF's Volunteer Centre would be assisting former Homestart volunteers to find other suitable placements.

It was **AGREED** that the issue of how the work previously carried out by Homestart was to be covered would be discussed by the Children's Partnership and a presentation made to the next Board meeting.

**ACTION 01: JC**

#### **5. Welfare Reform Mitigation Action Plan – Update**

Alan Hall – EFDC Director of Communities, presented a report on the progress of the Council's Action Plan, which had been introduced in October 2012 to mitigate the effects of the Government's welfare reforms on local residents.

The Action Plan included over 60 actions which aimed to address the three main effects of the welfare reforms:

- Removal of the 'spare room subsidy';
- Introduction of the Benefit Cap; and
- Replacement of Council Tax benefit with the Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

To date, 70% of the actions had been achieved and progress on the remainder was dependant on the introduction of the Government's Universal Credit scheme. Actions which had provided to be of particular assistance to both tenants and the Council included:

- The recruitment of two additional Housing Management Officers, to help with implementing the Council's response to the welfare reforms and dealing with the resultant rent arrears;
- Housing Management Officers visiting all Council tenants (who wanted to meet) who were due to have their "spare room subsidy" removed or have their benefits capped, to advise them of the options available and, in particular, how to apply to transfer to smaller Council accommodation;
- The provision of grant funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau, to appoint two full-time Debt Advisers for 18 months;
- The creation of a new post of Housing Under-occupation Officer, to assist Council tenants wanting to downsize;
- The targeted provision of Discretionary Housing Payments to those most affected by the Welfare Reforms and who were taking steps themselves to mitigate those effects; and
- The introduction of a new Housing Allocations Scheme, which included measures to assist Council tenants wishing to move to smaller properties.

The success of the Action Plan was illustrated by the availability of smaller accommodation for Council tenant wishing to 'downsize', a reduction in rent arrears of 27% over the past 12 months and the provision of 143 Discretionary Housing Payments during 2013/14.

JF advised that older people who wished to move to smaller accommodation often needed support with the practical issues associated with moving and VAEF was working on a proposal for a scheme which would provide such assistance. Alan Hall indicated that he would consider ways in which partners and the Council could work together to assist tenants in these circumstances.

#### **6. Role and Structure of the LSP**

JH informed the Board that the LSP had been in place for nearly 15 years and was considered to be one of the best in Essex in terms of partner engagement and successful project delivery. The structure of the Partnership had been reviewed on several occasions, but there had not been a review for over 5 years. During that time there had been a number of changes which had impacted on the funding available to the LSP, including the end of Local Area Agreements (LAA's) and the setting up of the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Consideration now needed to be given to the Partnership's future role, structure and funding, including issues such as the roles and objectives of the Board and the Steering Group and the relationship between the LSP and ECC's Epping Forest Locality Board.

It was **AGREED** that a half-day session, with an independent facilitator, should be arranged to allow the Board to consider options for a future operating model for the LSP. A briefing document would be circulated prior to the session.

**ACTION 02: JH**

#### **7. Superfast Broadband in Essex - Update**

JH reported that Essex County Council was working with BT on a £24m project to deliver broadband with a minimum speed to 2Mb, to all parts of Essex. The project had a special focus on how superfast broadband could support businesses and Loughton College, on behalf of the LSP, had recently hosted a free breakfast seminar to advise local businesses on the advantages of the service and how it would be provided in the Epping Forest district.

It was noted that ECC would be producing leaflets and posters to encourage feedback about broadband service provision and Board members were asked to help ensure that these were widely distributed. In the meantime, partners could report issues to JH for referral to the Superfast Essex Communications Team. The Board also noted that ECC had indicated that District Councils could contribute to the funding of Superfast Broadband in order to speed up delivery in their area.

It was **AGREED** that:

- a) The provision of free wi-fi in town centres in the district should be referred to the Superfast Essex programme for consideration; **ACTION 03: JH**
- b) An item be placed on the agenda for the next meeting of the Local Councils' Liaison Committee to publicise the Superfast Broadband programme; **ACTION 04: DM**
- c) Essex County Council be asked to indicate the amount of additional funding that would be required to ensure 100% coverage of the district. **ACTION 05: JH**

#### **8. Volunteering Charter**

The Board noted a draft Volunteering Charter, which had been produced following previous discussions. The draft included requirements which some partners would have difficulty in meeting and therefore needed to be revised. JF offered to work with VAEF's Volunteer Centre Co-ordinator to update the Charter and requested that partners provide comments on what they would want to see included.

**ACTION 06: ALL**  
**ACTION 07: JF**

## 9. Reports from Theme Groups / Task and Finish Groups

### a) Community Safety Partnership

GW presented an update report on issues which had been discussed at a recent meeting of the CSP's Strategy Panel. It was noted that the Crucial Crew event for Year 6 pupils was taking place at Gilwell Park from 9<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> June and LSP members were welcome to attend the VIP session on 17<sup>th</sup> June. Completion of the district's second Domestic Homicide Review had been delayed due to the resignation of the Chairman. Cllr Waller had taken over as Chairman and the Review report would be completed by John Gilbert and Caroline Wiggins. Appointments had recently been made to two new Safeguarding posts in EFDC's Community Safety Team and the post holders were reviewing the Council's Safeguarding procedures. When this work was completed, it might be possible for the post-holders to assist partner organisation with safeguarding issues.

### b) Children's Partnership

JC advised that the Children's Partnership would be joining with the local 'Think Family' group, which had similar membership. The name of the new group had not yet been decided. The priorities set by the Children's Partnership would be taken forward by the new group.

The Board noted an update report on the progress of the Epping Forest Youth Futures project, for which the LSP had funded the Co-ordinator post. The project had initially concentrated on mapping existing provision for young people in the district and consultation with local youth service providers from all sectors. The aim of this work was to establish the level and success of local services for young people, provide support and advice where required, identify gaps in provision and introduce new services where feasible. The second phase of the project had focussed on initiatives to support, develop and encourage young people to adopt more positive behaviours and aspirations, which would allow them to engage more in school and, in the longer term, to be 'work ready'. Residual funding would enable the appointment of a part-time Youth Futures Worker until April 2015 and work to be undertaken would include further development of the Council's Youth Volunteering Programme, workshops to build on the key messages of the reality Roadshow project for Year 9 pupils and a full review of the Council's Paid Work Experience Pilot Project.

### c) Health and Wellbeing Partnership

KB advised that the former Healthier Communities Theme Group was now part of the local Health and Wellbeing Partnership, which had been formed to enable partners to work more effectively with West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The CCG had recently appointed a new member of staff, whose role would be to work with district councils and local community groups. The post holder and the Chief Executive of the CCG would attend a future meeting of the Board to discuss the CCG's vision for future working with the LSP.

### d) Tourism Taskforce

JH gave a brief update on the work of the Taskforce. A seminar on 'Making The Most of Le Tour' had taken place at the Marriott Hotel, Waltham Abbey on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. A range of businesses and voluntary sector organisations had attended and a number had indicated that they were planning events relating to the visit of the Tour de France to the district. In response to requests for a means of co-ordinating and publicising tour-related issues, an updateable page had been created on the Visit Epping Forest website to provide information on events, accommodation and travel. A draft job description had been prepared for the part-time Tourism Officer post which was being funded by EFDC. It was hoped that partners would provide additional funding to increase the number of hours allocated to the post.

- e) Youth Employment Taskforce  
JH advised that an officer group was currently working to establish a feasible target for reducing youth unemployment in the district and a possible timescale for achieving that target.
- f) Lee Valley Food Taskforce  
RB presented the first draft of the Taskforce's interim report 'Growing Prosperity', which would be considered by the Taskforce at a meeting that afternoon. The report set out the background to the establishment of the Taskforce, the work streams which were being undertaken, initial findings and proposals for future action. It was noted that the work of the Taskforce had recently attracted local and national publicity and that there was a possibility that its work would be the subject of a presentation to the European Union.

## 10. Any Other Business

- a) Awards to Young People  
BS advised that a recent report of young disabled people receiving awards had referred to them achieving the awards 'despite their disabilities'. Local groups for disabled people felt that this was inappropriate and BS requested that more care be taken when communicating on such issues.
- b) Young People's 'Seedbed Centre'  
JP indicated that he was keen to establish a 'Seedbed Centre' in the district as a base for arts and enterprise activities for young people and providing facilities such as meeting rooms and an art gallery. At a recent meeting of the West Essex Alliance, reference had been made to the availability of Government funding for such projects and JP queried whether an application could be made by the LSP. JH advised that the funding referred to was allocated by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and it was likely that their priorities had already been set. PM advised that there were facilities at Epping Forest College which were not used for part of the year and might offer an opportunity for additional uses.

It was **AGREED** that:

- i) An outline proposal for the establishment of a 'Seedbed Centre' for young people in the district be developed and presented to the next meeting;  
**ACTION 08: JP/JH**
- ii) Efforts be made to progress the possible use of the ECC facility in Borders Lane, Loughton as a Youth Hub;  
**ACTION 09: M/JH**
- iii) Possible additional uses of facilities at Epping Forest College be considered.  
**ACTION 10: JP/PM**

## Actions from This Meeting

Ref	Action	Owner
01	Children's Partnership to discuss how the work previously carried out by Homestart will be covered and a presentation made to the next Board meeting.	JC
02	Half-day session with an independent facilitator to be arranged, to consider options for a future operating model for the LSP. Briefing document to be circulated prior to the session.	JH
03	Arrange for issue of provision of free Wi-Fi in town centres in the district to be considered as part of the Superfast Essex programme.	JH

<b>04</b>	Put item on the agenda for the next meeting of the Local Councils' Liaison Committee to publicise the Superfast Broadband programme.	DM
<b>05</b>	Ask ECC to indicated the amount of additional funding that would be required to ensure 100% coverage of the district	JH
<b>06</b>	Provide comments to JF on content of Volunteering Charter	All
<b>07</b>	Produce revised Volunteering Charter for next meeting	JF
<b>08</b>	Prepare outline proposal for 'Seedbed Centre' for young people, to present to next meeting	JP / JH
<b>09</b>	Action to progress the possible use of the ECC facility in Borders Lane as a Youth HUB	VM / JH
<b>10</b>	Discuss possible additional uses of facilities at Epping Forest College	JP / PM