

**Essex Rural Partnership (ERP) & East of England Rural Forum (EERF) Joint Meeting
Minutes of the Meeting held at 10:00am on 18th January 2012
Hylands House, Chelmsford**

Present:

RA	Rosemary	Alexander	Farm Crisis Network
RB	Rebecca	Banks	Essex Biodiversity Project
KBl	Keith	Blackburn	Essex County Council
GB	Gareth	Bradford	Department for Communities and Local Government
JB	Canon John	Brown	Church of England
KB	Keith	Brown	Essex FSB
JBu	Cllr John	Buchanan	Essex Association of Local Councils
ABZ	Alex	Butler-Zagni	NFU
JC	John	Carr	Essex and Southend LINK
JCa	John	Carrick	Tourism & Leisure - East of England Rural Forum
PC	Cllr Peter	Chillingworth	Colchester Borough Council
MC	Martin	Collison	Rural Consultant
GC	George	Courtauld	Rural Community Council of Essex
GD	Gareth	DalGLISH	Natural England
JD	Joy	Darby	Essex Association of Local Councils
KD	Keith	Davis	Farm Crisis Network
KE	Ken	Edwards	One Chelmsford/Active Chelmsford
VF	Val	Fulcher	Brentwood Housing Trust Ltd
PG	Paul	Gayler	Maldon District Council
JGI	Jim	Geldhill	Town and parish councils Beds
JGn	Cllr John	Goodwin	Elected local authority member Suffolk
SH	Suzanne	Harris	Rural Community Council of Essex
JH	Jeremy	Hill	Environment
PH	Pat	Holtom	Sub Regional Rural Forums Norfolk
SJ	Cllr Shelia	Jackman	Essex Association of Local Councils
JJa	Jasmine	Joolia	Chair, RCAN EE Sustainable Transport & Rural Access Forum
JJ	Cllr John	Jowers	Essex County Council
CK	Caroline	Kay	Moat Homes Ltd
GK	Geoffrey	King	Disability Essex
SL	Sue	Lake	Norfolk Association of Local Councils
ML	Mags	Lambert	Rural Action East
JL	Jenny	Lewsey	Maldon District Council
AL	Andrew	Lowing	Rochford District Council
PM	Pooneeta	Mahadeo	Essex County Council
DMw	Daisy	Martlew	Rural Community Council of Essex
DMs	David	Matthews	Town and parish councils Norfolk
JN	Revd Julie	Nelson	Church of England
RN	Cllr Richard	North	Essex Association of Local Councils
RP	Rosemary	Padfield	NFU

MP	Cllr Mick	Page	Elected local authority member Essex
DP	Dominic	Petre	Visit Essex
SP	Cllr Stuart	Pile	Elected local authority member Hertfordshire
KR	Kelly	Redston	Essex and Southend LINK
LR	Linda	Riley	Voluntary Sector Training
CR	Chris	Rust	Maldon District Council
SS	Sarah	Sapsford	Rural Community Council of Essex
WS	Cllr Wendy	Scattergood	Braintree District Council
NS	Nick	Shuttleworth	Rural Community Council of Essex
DS	Darren	Smart	Essex County Council
PS	Phil	Smith	Rural Shops Alliance
MT	Michael	Talbot	Essex Association of Local Councils
IT	Ian	Trouse	Natural England
PW	Paul	Williams	Essex County Council
AW	Andrew	Wood	Natural England
RW	Richard	Woolley	Rural Community Council of Essex

Apologies:

LBM	Laura	Beardsell-Moore	Sub Regional Rural Forums Suffolk
FB	Frances	Bedding	Sub Regional Rural Forums Suffolk
KB	Kate	Belinis	Sub Regional Rural Forums Hertfordshire
RC	Rachel	Carrington	Land based industries
HC	Cllr Henry	Cordeaux	Elected local authority member Norfolk
JC	Judy	Cuddeford	BDVSA
NC	Nicola	Currie	Businesses located in rural areas
RF	Cllr Rosemary	Farmer	Town and parish councils Herts
AF	Alex	Francis	Businesses located in rural areas
JGR	John	Gilli-Ross	EALC
MG	Michelle	Gordon	Tendring District Council
AMH	Anne Marie	Hamilton	Health & Beds subregional rural forum
PH	Paul	Harris	Maldon District Community Transport
PHa	Philip	Hayes	Town and parish councils
RH	Rob	Hayne	Essex County Council
THS	Tim	Hayward-Smith	LINK
MI	Mark	Iley	Essex Biodiversity Project
EI	Edward	Iveagh	EEDA Board Member Rural
GL	Greg	Luton	Culture
JM	Jo	Middleton	Norfolk CC
TM	Tricia	Moxey	CPREssex
NP	Nick	Phillips	Leader -Chilterns and Aylesbury Vale/Milton Keynes
RP	Rachael	Price	Essex County Council
KR	Kris	Radley	Sustrans
MR	Melanie	Rundle	Colchester Borough Council
MS	Mike	Seville	Land based industries
HW	Cllr Hazel	Williams	Rural, voluntary and community sector Cambridgeshire
PhW	Philip	Wilson	Essex County Council
SW	Sarah	Wilson	Natural England

1 Chairman's Introduction

Essex Rural Partnership Chairman Cllr John Jowers welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were taken as read (please see above for details).

2 Minutes of the EERF Meeting held on 16 November 2011

Minutes were approved.
No Matters Arising.

3 Minutes of the ERP Meeting held on 20th October 2011

Minutes were approved.
No Matters Arising.

4 Presentation: 'The Opportunities Offered to Local Councils by the Localism Act' – Joy Darby, Essex Association of Local Councils & Sue Lake, Norfolk Association of Local Councils

Presentation is available to download from the ERP website (and a copy has been circulated with the minutes). Following the presentation a 10 minute DVD 'Your Community, You Decide' was shown. *Please contact SH if you wish to purchase a copy.*

5 Presentation: 'The Localism Act and Community Planning' – Sarah Sapsford, Rural Community Council of Essex

Presentation is available to download from the ERP website (and a copy has been circulated with the minutes).

A 20 minute interval was taken for refreshments at 11:05 am

6 Presentation: 'DCLG and the Localism Act' – Gareth Bradford, Department for Communities and Local Government

Presentation is available to download from the ERP website (and a copy has been circulated with the minutes).

7 Questions to the Panel – Chaired by Pat Holtom (Chair of East of England Rural Forum)

Questions were taken from the floor as follows:

SJ Q to GB – *The frontrunners are receiving grants. What about those following on?*

GB – The issue is how we provide support to groups. There are problems with funding, given the current economic situation, but there also has to be a cut-off point for funding – how do you determine this and what happens? Lots of frontrunners are also raising their own funds to pay for the Neighbourhood Planning work. Others are getting business to sponsor them or approaching other Government sources. We are giving local authorities money to support communities and we are seriously looking at how to enable communities to do all the Community Rights.

JC Q to all – *How are the ERP and EERF dovetailing connexions with the Health and Wellbeing Board et al.?*

JJ – The Health and Wellbeing Boards are important and should be involved in community led planning. The question is, should you proportionate an amount to health? The Health and Wellbeing Board could drive this and feed into Community Budgets.

RW Q to GB & SS – Will there be an effective dialogue between the community and the planning authority?

SS – At the local level relationships are variable across the county. With Neighbourhood Planning, RCCE has worked with local authorities and others to produce guidance and training. There needs to be a partnership between local government and the community, but building relationships takes time and building trust is important.

GB – The ‘Duty to Support’ ensures that local authorities have to engage. We took the view that this is helpful because local authorities have a ‘duty’ to support communities. We are undergoing a series of communication events to try and get planning officers to realise what their role as a facilitator is; to engage with people.

DP Q to All - With regards to Community Right to Buy, who decides what assets go on the list of value and how long the sale should be held up? What’s to protect the local council from compensation claims for restriction of freehold?

SL - the community decides what goes on the register.

JJ – There are two options with local authority assets – 25% discount off the market price is offered to communities or asset transfer, whereby the local authority gives back assets to the community they are located in.

GB – There have been lots of debates about the impact. The widely held view is that the Act sets out the framework but the regulation deals with the details.

MT Q to GB – If an offer is made under the Right to Buy, does that preclude a private treaty between landowner and Parish Council?

GB – If you have the power now, you will still have it in the future. The government has just added another tool.

JD Q to GB – The EALC is passionate about Parish Councils, but not so keen on Neighbourhood Forums. Would it be better to parish them first? Essex will pilot it!

GB – We are committed to looking into how easy it is to form a Parish Council. It would be great if communities looked at broader governance issues, but some just want to do a Neighbourhood Plan. We should allow the whole country to undertake Neighbourhood Plans whether parished or not, but we are looking at how to encourage and support people to become a Parish Council.

KR Q to All – How will the new legislation help new towns to get back their communities and facilities?

SS – When you look at parished areas compared to unparished, there is a clear boundary for the community, which is harder to define in an unparished area. Housing Associations have often defined the area in [unparished] cases where we have worked. The process requires support, but communities in unparished areas can look at preserving green spaces and developing facilities.

MC Q to All – There are lots of villages not large enough to do it on their own and some work as a cluster already. How do we encourage clustering? Without businesses and jobs there isn’t a sustainable local plan – a lot of them miss this out. EERF produced a vision for the region a year ago and 150 were involved. One key concern was for new jobs, businesses and wealth creation.

GB – One frontrunner involves lots of parishes working together on a Neighbourhood Plan. The issue was brokering a solution and getting consent from all parishes, therefore a steering group developed. We see a community being made up of

residents, businesses and schools, and all can be included in the Neighbourhood Plan.
JD – One of the aims of EALC is to protect local councils. Clustering should be their choice. It's good in some cases but it must come from the bottom up.

RP Q to All – *We would love to do a Neighbourhood Plan, but not sure we have the expertise. Also there is the major issue of how to fund it?*

GB – You don't pay for a referendum or examination, the government covers this. The Duty to Support should help to develop a plan and the Government has formed a support group which will give free advice. We are looking at increasing the level of support. Funding is one of the reasons why Neighbourhood Plans are not compulsory.

SS – We go out to Parish Council meetings to talk to you about the options, we produce guidance and offer membership of our Community Led Planning Network for £35 per year. We set this at such a low rate because we wanted to make it as inclusive as possible.

JD – We are running a free course on 29th February with free resources.

GB – The frontrunners will provide excellent case studies and examples of best practice. It is refreshing to hear how much enthusiasm and the positive approach you have.

KE Q to GB – *In the referendum, are business interests represented? How is the constituency decided and by whom?*

GB – The local authority makes the decision. For areas wholly commercial e.g. industrial sites, the non-domestic sector gets a vote.

JCa Q to GB – *Once the Neighbourhood Plan is done, does this mean that the Parish can go ahead and implement the actions or do they have to go through the planning system?*

GB – The Neighbourhood Plan is used by the local authority to inform.

8 Update from EERF Chair on Recent Activities – Pat Holtom

Very pleased to announce that both the EERF and ERP have been invited to join Defra's new Rural and Farming Network. The Network is being established to promote rural, farming and food issues and the Chair of each member group will have direct access to the minister to inform policy.

The East of England Rural Forum (EERF) joined forces with the newly formed Farming & Agriculture Board (FAB) to submit a joint bid, under the group name '**Farming & Rural Network East**'. It is this joint body that has been awarded a seat on Defra's new (national) Rural & Farming Network. Farming & Rural Network East will have an independent Chair (yet to be elected). Its Executive Board will comprise this Chair, plus members from EERF and FAB - *namely the Chair and Vice-Chairs of EERF, the Chair of FAB, one representative from the CLA, and one representative from the NFU* – and representatives from all 5 LEPs.

9 ERP Action Groups and taking the Essex Rural Strategy forward

9.1 Report from the ERP Steering Group – Suzanne Harris

Defra was originally offering 10-20 seats for the Rural and Farming Network – 14 invitations have so far been issued. The seat awarded to Essex Rural Partnership is in addition to any representation by EERF. Kent Rural Board has also secured a seat,

which is another important connection for us because of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP).

9.2 Report from the ERP Community Action Group – Canon John Brown

JB posed the question ‘How well do you think you know Essex?’ The CAG is organising visits to different parts of Essex to see what the communities are doing on the ground. So far we have visited Great Saling, Stisted and Harwich. We are hoping to organise four visits per year.

9.3 Report from the ERP Economic Action Group – Suzanne Harris

The EcAG has not met since the last ERP meeting, but is working with the EnvAG on planning a joint meeting looking at the use of redundant farm buildings.

9.4 Report from the ERP Environment Action Group – Suzanne Harris

See 9.3.

10 AOB

None.

10.1 Dates of future meetings

Full ERP Meeting – late April and early July. DM will circulate dates.

EERF Meeting – 25th April, theme will be housing and the new LEPs.

DM

The meeting concluded at 1:05 pm