

**EERF Steering Group**  
**10.00am – 1.00pm, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2008**  
**Rural Community Council for Essex offices**

**Minutes**

**Attendees**

Andrew Budden  
Emma Powlett  
Suzanne Harris  
Sarah Prentice

Diana Bradley (minutes)  
John Yates (Chair)  
Pat Holtom

**Apologies**

Kate Belinis  
Martin Collison  
Nicola Lloyd  
Sally Williams

Sarah Hughes  
Kirsten Bennett  
John Mullen

**1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everybody and introduced Emma Powlett to her first Steering Group meeting.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting.**

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

**3. Matters Arising**

Inward Investment Report

The Steering Group discussed issues relating to the Inward Investment Report. Points that were raised included:

- EEDA were approached to contribute funds for the paper
- Rural Forum has contributed £3,000.00
- Action for Market Towns took on the work to produce the paper.
- The Group felt that the scope of the Report is narrow in focus and concentrates on Market Towns but not the wider rural hinterland.
- Original bid for funding states that the paper would cover rural areas.
- Tick boxes on checklist of Primary Success Factors for Market Towns. What if answers are all No's rather than Yes answers? This needs to be addressed with some positive ideas, including something for smaller settlements to enable them to tick some of the boxes.

- Who owns the paper and who should it go out to?
- Economic Officers in Local Authorities and EEI should already be encouraging this type of Inward Investment.

The Inward Investment Report was presented to the Forum at the last meeting in September.

In order for it to be endorsed by the Rural Forum it needs to cover issues in the wider rural areas.

Emma suggested that an annex addressing issues in the rural hinterland could be added and then put together an overview of the Report that addresses some of the concerns.

Action for Market Towns have no extra money for this and may not be best placed to produce an overview on rural issues. A Rural Forum member with more of a rural overview might be better to do this.

**ACTION:** Rural Forum to decide who the Inward Investment Report should go out to.

**ACTION:** Emma and Suzanne to work with Sally to produce an annex and an overview to the Report.

#### Budget update

Sarah will send a mid year update on the budget to the Rural Forum next week.

County Forums – invoices have been received from CDA for Herts and Cambridgeshire Acre. Sarah reminded the Steering Group that invoices need to be raised for each of the County Forums before their funding can be paid out.

All other actions from the previous meeting have been completed.

**ACTION:** Sarah to send out mid year budget update.

#### **4. Update Report on 12<sup>th</sup> December Forum Meeting “Social Inclusion”**

The theme for the Rural Forum meeting is Social Inclusion. The afternoon session will be an EEDA RDPE Event.

The rooms have been booked at Woolpit Village Hall including an upstairs room for the next Steering Group meeting.

Andrew has helpers setting up rooms on the day and reminded the Group that the caterers require one weeks notice of numbers for catering.

Lunch will cost £10.00 per head and EEDA will pay for the lunch.

The agenda and speakers have been agreed with some minor amendments.

Emma agreed to speak to John Day about title and content of his presentation.

Sub Groups should produce a written update report rather than give a verbal report on the day.

The overview of the Inward Investment Report could be added to the agenda if completed in time.

John will Chair the speakers Q&A session.

Suzanne suggested that badges be produced to identify Rural Forum Members and Officers from EEDA delegates.

**ACTION:** Andrew Budden to check he has booked the PA system.

**ACTION:** Emma to speak to John Day about title and content of his presentation.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to send out details of 12<sup>th</sup> December meeting to the Rural Forum Members.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to send final numbers for catering and agree layout plan of rooms to Andrew one week before the meeting.

**ACTION:** Sarah to look into costs of a mini bus service to the rail station on the day.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to look into badges format with EEDA facilitator

## **5. Annual Conference: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

The proposed theme “The impact of the downturn of the economy in rural communities” was agreed. Pat said we should have more evidence on the effects of the economic downturn and any help available by March 2009.

The issues to discuss were also agreed. These are:

- Transport – Fuel
- Food
- Health
- Housing
- Skills/Education
- Enterprise

Suggestions for speakers were discussed. Pat raised the point that the speakers need to come to the meeting with a positive and optimistic approach and with ideas on how to mitigate these issues.

**ACTION:** John Yates to approach Marie Francis about Food issues, to approach Ron King, Chair of the Confederation of Small Businesses about Enterprise and Learning & Skills issues and to approach Health contacts to find potential speakers.

**ACTION:** Emma to approach Renewables East about Transport and Fuel issues

**ACTION:** Andrew to look into potential speakers around Housing issues and to speak to contact at Foundation East.

### Venue

Diana presented findings of venues contacted so far. Group agreed to book Lavenham Village Hall for the venue if it can be made available on the 4<sup>th</sup> March.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to book Lavenham Village Hall for the 4<sup>th</sup> March Annual Conference.

## Funding

The Rural Forum has £2,000.00 funding set aside for the Annual Conference. Booking Lavenham Village Hall keeps the costs of the venue down. The costs of a local catering provider to be investigated in due course.

## **6. Forward agenda for 2009/10 Action Plan**

### Review March 2009 AGM/Forum meeting

The next Rural Forum meeting is the AGM meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2009. The theme agreed was Land Use and Local Food and that the following areas could be included:

- Land Use – land needs to be available for job creation
- Planning – Parish Councils: change from how do they influence sub regional/regional agenda to how could they influence
- Need upwards influence in local planning rather than top down planning from above
- Regional Influence – how can make this happen?
- Food – What can we do that SFFS aren't doing already? What are they doing already? Can they talk to Forum about what they are already doing?

**ACTION:** John Yates to approach Mick Carr and explore possibility of inviting SFFS to talk to the Rural Forum AGM about their work and potentially consult the Forum on food issues. John to feedback the outcome of this discussion with Mick Carr/SFFS at the next Steering Group meeting.

### Agree themes for June/September/December/March meetings

Suggestions for topics for June/September/December 2009 and March 2010 meetings:

June or Dec – Health e.g. access to services and sport, aging population, LINKS

September – Credit Crunch: follow up from Annual Conference meeting

June or Dec – Transport/Access e.g. access to green spaces, environmental issues rather than lack of bus services

March 2010 – RDPE follow up

Need to consult with County Forums on firming up these topics.

**ACTION:** John and Emma to disseminate an outline programme of topics to the County Forums and ask them for their views on what they would like the Rural Forum to discuss at future meetings.

## Sub Groups

The next Learning and Skills Sub Group meeting is on 25<sup>th</sup> November and there is a Housing Sub Group meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December. John and Andrew will be attending these meetings. The Housing Group are reviewing their Terms of Reference.

## **7. Review Position Papers**

Some recent Position Papers had been sent out to contacts but it wasn't always clear who each paper should be sent to.

The Group agreed the Learning and Skills Paper needs to be sent to Jamie Merrick at EEDA.

It was agreed that all the Position Papers should be sent out the Rural Forum members and to make it clear that these papers should be cascaded to all relevant contacts.

Wheels to Work Paper – David Wood was going to send out a letter. Not clear if this has been done.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to send out Position Papers to Rural Forum asking for them to cascade these to relevant contacts and partners.

**ACTION:** Emma to chase up if David Wood has sent out the letter and to report back to the Forum that this has been done.

## **8. RRDF – Outcomes of Action Statement – EERF's Position**

The RRDF **Steering Group** has completed this years Action Statement following consultation and feedback from the EERF Task and Finish Group.

The final draft Action Statement was circulated to the EERF Task and Finish Group who did not come back with any fundamental changes so the Action Statement is now finalised for this year.

The RRDF Steering Group now needs to concentrate on an action statement for the forthcoming year.

A new EERF Task and Finish Group will be created.

Pat asked to join any new Task and Finish Group.

**ACTION:** Sarah and Emma to look into reconstitution of EERF Task and Finish Group.

## **9. Future Sustainability of the Forum**

John stated that he would like the Forum to continue particularly in light of current issues

He is attending a Ministers meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> November and hopefully the new Minister will continue with the Forums

The Steering Group needs strengthening perhaps with new members.

The Rural Forum annual elections for 2009 will take place at the Rural Forum AGM on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

Pat is happy to continue as Vice Chair.

Andrew will step down as Vice Chair from next March.

The Rural Forum will need to look for a new Vice Chair to give support to John.

### Funding

Could look into sponsorship but there are issues around independence.

Lack of future funding for co-ordinator post - some money given by GO East this year but it is unlikely the post will have this funding for next year.

Other organisations or partners could sponsor meetings.

John is happy to broach the subject of funding with organisations such as EEDA. The Group agreed that it would be best to make an approach with a Business Plan

**ACTION:** John, Pat and Andrew to discuss with Emma how best to produce a Business Plan.

### Future of County Forums

Major issue of funding for many County Forums. John offered to write to the County Councils to seek funding but those present felt that this may conflict and affect the funding they already receive from the RCC.

Essex Rural Forum has money from Essex County Council.

If County Forums fold then the credibility of the Rural Forum is reduced and their ability to consult in a wider context is affected.

Agreed that Chairs or representatives from each County Forum should meet to discuss who their current members are and how they are currently funded and how the County Forums will go forward next year.

**ACTION:** Emma to arrange meeting with County Forums to discuss the Future of the County Forums with Emma, John and Pat before March 09.

**ACTION:** John to explore how Forums are funded in other regions.

### **10. AOB**

None raised.

### **11. Date of next meeting**

12<sup>th</sup> December at Woolpit Village Hall

Diana Bradley

Secretariat

11<sup>th</sup> November 2008