

EERF Steering Group

2.30pm, 10th June 2009

Swaffham Assembly Rooms, Market Place, Swaffham

Minutes

Attendees

John Yates (Chair & Cambs)

Suzanne Harris (Vice Chair & Essex)

Mick Carr (GOE)

David Wood (Secretariat)

Pat Holtom (Vice chair & Norfolk)

Martin Collison (L&S Subgroup)

John Mullen (Suffolk)

Apologies

Francis Bedding (Suffolk)

Graham Hedger (Housing Subgroup)

Sarah Hughes (Beds)

Sally Williams (Market Towns Subgroup)

Kirsten Bennett (Cambs)

Kate Belinis (Herts)

Nicola Lloyd (CRC)

John Simmons (L&S Subgroup)

1. Minutes last meeting 18th March 2009, Great Saling

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

2. Actions and matters arising of last meeting (9th February 2009)

The Steering Group noted the response from EEDA regarding the grant aid to publicans that they had acted quickly to use funding that became available at short notice and had to be spent within the financial year.

Review of EERF membership is ongoing. Economic representatives are still being sought from the county councils.

David Wood was checking through records received from GO East and needed clarification from Steering Group regarding full members of Forum and those on distribution list.

3. Actions and outcomes of morning Forum meeting on Access

There was general agreement that the content and speakers had been good. Also the format of the meeting had worked well, with the table discussions and participation of members successful. This approach was beneficial in generating a feeling of active involvement by members.

The morning discussion had confirmed the importance and relevance of "Access" as a topic of concern for the Forum and that a policy positioning paper on the subject would be beneficial. This must include objective qualitative data on the subject and the results of published research into rural transport.

ACTION: David Wood to commission the production of an EERF policy paper on Access.

The number of members present was low and disappointing. The long distance to travel to Swaffham may have been a deterrent and future meetings should be more central.

4. EERF Development

4.1 The general approach by the Forum regarding production of policy papers across a broad range of topics was proving successful at raising the profile and perception of relevance and value of the Forum by its regional partners and by government departments.

The Steering Group felt that the individual positioning papers needed to be set in the context of a broader, long term vision for rural in our region – an “*East of England Rural White Paper*”. The scope should embrace economic, social and environment, including climate change and define our vision for (say) 10 years hence. In the context of rural mainstreaming, it should include a quantitative valuation of rural and its contribution to the overall success of our region. The document would require considerable effort to research and produce over approximately 6 – 8 months. It was important that key major private businesses that operate in rural locations, not just land based industries, must be included within the scope of the paper.

It was agreed to meet to define more fully and precisely the Steering Group ambitions for the document with the purpose of commissioning the drafting of a detailed requirements specification for the white paper. This would then be used to invite tenders for production of the final document.

ACTION: John Yates, Pat Holtom, Mick Carr, Martin Collison, David Wood and Suzanne Harris to meet to refine ideas and objectives for regional rural white paper.

At the national level, a similar proactive approach would benefit the network of rural forum chairs. John Yates had agreed with his colleagues to hold private business meetings to develop their ideas and achieve a better understanding of the different circumstances in the various regions. The network was also planning to meet with Conservative shadow ministers, Nick Herbert and Jim Paice. Pat Holtom suggested meeting with other shadows ministers such as Caroline Spelman (CLG) and Ed Davey, rural culture. Meetings with all three main parties would be beneficial.

4.2 Learning and Skills Subgroup Martin Collison reported on recent discussions. After a hiatus, the subgroup was now back on track with a recent successful meeting attended by representatives of key regional bodies. The impact of the current economic recession had been discussed and the increased importance of improving skills as a contributing factor for recovery. The rural skills paper was important to framing the discussions but was now out of date. The Steering Group agreed to commission Martin Collison to produce refreshed rural skills paper.

ACTION: David Wood to agree with Martin Collison work to refresh to rural skills paper.

4.3 Housing Subgroup The Steering Group noted the written report from Graham Hedger and its concerns regarding community land trusts competing for limited expertise on social housing provision with Housing Associations. The Steering Group felt that CLA should be involved in discussions on regional housing strategy.

ACTION: John Yates to discuss housing action plan and issues around CLTs with Graham Hedger

4.4 Market Towns Subgroup The Steering Group noted the continuing problems with support for this activity.

ACTION: Pat Holtom and John Mullen to meet with Sally Williams and discuss relationship of subgroup with Regional Cities East

Finally, the Steering Group reiterated its desire and the benefit of maintaining a close liaison with the Sustainable Food and Farming Strategy group, with which Mick Carr could assist.

5. Future EERF Meetings

5.1 September "Health"

This was planned for 16th September and NFU venue in Newmarket had been booked. The Steering Group identified the following potential presentations.

- Nicola Lloyd regarding recent CRC paper on rural health.
- Mike Render from Forestry Commission was scheduled to present on strategy for public owned woodland and he should be briefed to include health and well-being within his talk.
- The Plowright surgery in Swaffham was an example of taking service out to patients.
- Work by Norfolk PCT, chaired by Shelia Childerhouse, would provide overview of policy and response to delivery challenges (via Martin Collison).
- Village agents out-reach support was another practical response (via Suzanne Harris).

We should also invite following organizations to attend and participate in discussion:

- Help the Aged – Age Concern
- Regional Director and Chairman of Regional Strategic Health Authority
- Healthy Schools / Sure Start children's health contact (via Mick Carr)
- Health & Social Care VCS network (via COVER)

A copy of the CRC rural health paper should also be distributed with the agenda.

5.2 Other EERF Meetings

The Steering Group noted and confirmed topics of "Recession and rural economy" for December and "Rural development" for March. Detailed planning would be picked up at next meeting of Steering Group.

5.3 Conference

There was still concern at having normal EERF meeting and annual Conference in same month (March). It was agreed to move the conference and use it either to launch or to discuss and consult on draft of the planned regional rural white paper.

6. Administration and Support by Rural Action East

David Wood outlined the finances and payment in advance procedure agreed with Defra and the formal role of GO East to approve invoices. The outline budget was accepted but would be reviewed at September meeting of Steering Group.

The outline work programme for Rural Action East to end September was agreed.

The SLA was noted but Steering Group members had had insufficient time to consider it.

ACTION: Steering Group members to review SLA from Rural Action East and feedback comments to David Wood for confirmation of agreement at next Steering Group meeting.

7. AOB

7.1 It was agreed to invite Mike Appleyard, LANTRA and lead for LandSkills East (RDPE Training network), to be member of EERF.

ACTION: David Wood to write to Mike Appleyard inviting him to join EERF.

7.2 The Steering Group had received a request from the East of England Sustainable Transport and Rural Access Forum (EESTRAF) to come under the umbrella of the EERF as one of its subgroups. The Steering Group reviewed the terms of reference for EESTRAF and discussed the proposal from its Chairperson, Jacque Grant. Although the work of EESTRAF was relevant to the EERF and its work could usefully inform its deliberations, it was felt that its approach and activities were too narrow and insufficiently linked to the work and principle objectives of EERF to act as a forum subgroup.

ACTION: David Wood to respond to EESTRAF informing it of Steering Group decision but inviting it to nominate an individual to become a member of EERF.

8. DONM

Afternoon of 16th September at NFU, Newmarket, following EERF meeting. David Wood reminded the Steering Group that its Communications Strategy had agreed a bi-monthly meeting schedule.

NEW ACTIONS

Ref	Action	Status
Jun09/01	David Wood to commission the production of an EERF policy paper on Access.	
Jun09/02	John Yates, Pat Holtom, Mick Carr, Martin Collison, David Wood and Suzanne Harris to meet to refine ideas and objectives for regional rural white paper	
Jun09/03	David Wood to agree with Martin Collison work to refresh to rural skills paper	
Jun09/04	John Yates to discuss housing action plan and issues around CLTs with Graham Hedger	
Jun09/05	Pat Holtom and John Mullen to meet with Sally Williams and discuss relationship of subgroup with Regional Cities East	

Ref	Action	Status
Jun09/06	Steering Group members to review SLA from Rural Action East and feedback comments to David Wood	
Jun09/07	David Wood to write to Mike Appleyard inviting him to join EERF	
Jun09/08	David Wood to respond to EESTRAF informing it of Steering Group decision but inviting it to nominate an individual to become a member of EERF	

PREVIOUS ACTIONS

Ref	Action	Status
Mar09/01	John Yates to speak to John Mullen and Frances Bedding about Suffolk's representation on the EERF and Steering Group	Ongoing
Mar09/02	Sarah Prentice to set up a handover meeting with Rural Action East and forward a copy of the existing Service Level Agreement to David Wood <i>Meeting held and information transferred</i>	Discharged
Mar09/03	John Yates to obtain a copy of the Service Level Agreement that exists between the SWRAF and SWAN for secretariat support <i>Done</i>	Discharged
Mar09/04	Martin Collison's presentation to be sent to the county RAFs	Ongoing
Mar09/05	John Yates (?) to liaise with Marie Francis about how best the EERF can feed into the 'balanced policy agenda' position paper and how the work of the EERF and the SFFS groups aligns	Ongoing
Mar09/06	Sarah Prentice to find out who within EEDA the Growth position paper was sent to and to send copies to Jamie Merrick, Fiona Bryant, Richard Ellis and Edward Iveagh	Ongoing
Mar09/07	John Yates to write a covering letter to be sent out with the Inward Investment position paper	Ongoing
Mar09/08	John Yates / members of the Steering Group to explore and set up meetings with key individuals - Richard Ellis, EEDA, James Paice MP, Andrew Lansley MP, Grant Shapps MP, Norman Lamb MP	Ongoing
Mar09/09	John Yates and Suzanne Harris to explore the possibility of a meeting at the House of Lords with eg Lord Hanningfield and Gillian Shepherd	Ongoing
Mar09/10	John Yates to speak to Beds, Cambs and John Mullen from Suffolk about their representation on the Steering Group	Ongoing
Mar09/11	Emma Powlett to pull together the key points from the conference report into an executive summary and circulate both documents to the Steering Group <i>Done</i>	Discharged
Mar09/12	Suzanne Harris to draft an agenda for June forum meeting the Steering Group. <i>Done</i>	Discharged
Mar09/13	Steering Group members to speak to their RCC to identify a decent multi-function place and a decent cluster. <i>Done – Swaffham</i>	Discharged
Mar09/14	John Yates to invite Huw Irranca-Davies to attend the 10 th June meeting. <i>Cabinet reshuffle changed minister</i>	Closed