

EERF Steering Group: Minutes

9 June 2010 at 1.45pm

Wimpole Hall, Royston Cambridgeshire

Present

Pat Holtom (Chairman & Norfolk)
Suzanne Harris (Vice Chairman & Essex)
Martin Collison (Vice Chairman & L&S Subgroup)
Mick Carr (GO East)
Martin Aust (Housing Subgroup)
Kate Belinis (Hertfordshire)
John Simmons (EEDA)
David Wood (Secretariat)
Mags Lambert (Secretariat)

Apologies

Kirsten Bennett (Cambridgeshire)
Frances Bedding (Suffolk)
Sarah Hughes (Bedfordshire)
Nicola Lloyd (CRC)

Welcome

Pat welcomed Martin Aust to the Steering Group as the new Chair of the Housing Subgroup following Graham Hedger's recent resignation.

1. Minutes of meeting on 25th March 2010

The minutes of the meeting on 25 March 2010 were **agreed** with no changes.

Pat started with point 6 on the agenda

2. RAE Secretariat

Funding

Mick Carr said that GOE had received the first quarter payment from Defra and that Defra had said they were "happy to commit" to the second quarter. Together these had to cover both the running of the EERF and its RWP production and launch event in September. Mick said that he would ask for the second quarter payment to be confirmed in writing and that David should produce a forecast showing what the payment would be spent on.

Review and Approve 2010/11 SLA

The SLA was essentially the same as last year but with activities and associated budget to support RWP production, launch and dissemination. This would need to be revised to match the money on offer from Defra, viz £10,000 to end September. Subject to these changes, the steering group agreed the SLA and Pat and Mick signed it accordingly. (*Revised SLA with budget matched to Defra offer sent to Pat and Mick 14 June.*)

Action Point: David to send an invoice for the first quarter to Mick. (Done - Mick subsequently confirmed receipt of £10,000 to end of September and RAE has invoiced for this full amount.)

Review & Approve Report for 2009/10

The SG reviewed the report, particularly the Highlights section in the context of financial stringency and the intended audience which was Defra. It was important that the report was positive, promoted our successes and identified the solid plans for more good work dependent on receiving sufficient funding.

The report should be revised to:

- Take out the negative comments on county rural forums replacing with “over the year we have been building on links and consideration is given...”,
- Record that there has been input and benefit from people who have given their support and input effort in kind (**Suzanne** to draft wording for David)
- Add in an extra point stating that there is a huge range of knowledge and expertise in the voluntary sector and areas of private, public and third sector are engaged.

Once the third page has been rephrased with a positive feel **David** will circulate to SG members.

Action Point: **David** to revise report, send to Pat, Suzanne and Martin for approval and then submit to GOE and Defra.

3. Access and Transport Subgroup

The RCC led network, EESTRAF (EE Sustainable Transport and Accessibility Forum) has declined to become an Access and Transport Subgroup of the EERF as they wished to remain focussed solely on Transport. It was felt that access was an extremely important issue and it was agreed to set up an Access Subgroup. The EESTRF could then have a similar relationship to the Subgroup as RCC RHEs had to the Housing Subgroup. However, Mick and Martin felt that we would get a negative reaction to the idea of creating another regional group at a time when so much regional structure was uncertain. It was agreed to put it on hold and use the Rural White Paper launch event as an opportunity to float the idea and gain wider support for its. Ideas for its membership and Chairman could be solicited from the audience, members and county forums.

4. Regional White Paper Update and Approval

Martin had taken on board all comments and suggestions and hoped the Rural White Paper was now in its final form with the exception of photos.

Martin Aust had only recently seen the draft and was not convinced that the Affordable Housing Issues and Recommendations in the Paper were the most important ones. However, given the late stage, he accepted that it was too late to change these but they should be updated at a later date.

David Wood asked about what was meant by the phrase “Next Generation” when referring to broadband issue. This phrase had been dropped as people were assuming different speeds in connection with it. The objective was to achieve access speeds of at least 10Mbps in rural areas and leave out the issue of rural access to super-fast 50-100Mbps.

The RWP was **approved** by the SG. However, the action plan would need to be revised before the launch in view of the current uncertainties on regional bodies.

John Simmonds offered the EEDA image library as a source for relevant photos.

Action Point: **ALL** to suggest/provide pictures that represent aspects of the RWP from across the whole region.

Design & Publication

It was agreed that there should be both a text only version for quick downloading (no resource-heavy pictures but with full references). Also a printed version for MPs and similar individuals would be produced where the removed eight pages of references could be replaced by eight pages of photos keeping the document length to ~64 pages. An electronic Adobe version of this could be made available electronically as well at no extra cost.

Action Point: **John Simmons** was to check the costs of printing the paper at EEDA

Action Point: **Suzanne** would get prices from printers.

The Executive Summary and the recommendations from each of the chapters with a few pictures could be put together to produce a short "overview document" which could either be printed locally or by commercial printers if price reasonable.

Launch Event

It was decided that due to funding constraints the event should now not involve lunch and should be held on 8 September between 2-4pm at the Trinity Centre, Cambridge with an hour for coffee and networking afterwards.

Outline format (115 mins)

Pat to Chair

Welcome & Introduction (5 mins)

Opening keynote speaker - Deborah Cadman, CEO EDA (20 mins)

Second keynote speaker either Lord Matthew Taylor, Chairman National Housing Federation, Chairman Rural Coalition (Taylor report on planning system). OR

Richard Benyon, Defra Rural Affairs minister (20 mins)

EE as a rural region, OCSI data, David Wood (15 mins)

The RWP issues, recommendations and recommendations, Martin Collison (20 mins)

Rural from Essex perspective, TBC (15 mins)

Rural broadband, BT TBC (15 mins)

Concluding remarks, Pat Holtom, Chairman EERF (5 mins)

Action Point: **Suzanne** was going to try to get a speaker (potentially Peter Martin or John Jowers).

Action Point: **David** to contact **Frances** to see if she has managed to get a speaker from BT.

Invitations would be sent to EERF Membership and they can suggest people that they would like to be invited to. **Martin Aust** would put together an invitation list using the Housing Subgroup, **Mick Carr** would do the same for those at GO East and **John Simmons** would do the same for those at EEDA. To reduce duplications and to keep a track of numbers, **Mags** would issue the invitations and maintain the database of invitations.

Action Point: **Martin, John and Mick** to send their invitation list to Mags for consolidation in to single record.

Action Point: **David** to send invitation to keynote speakers as soon as practicable.

Action Point: **Mags** to send hold date warning invitation to guests as soon as names available. This to be followed up with firm invitation and agenda when available.

A Steering Group meeting would be held in the morning of 8 September before event (bring your sandwiches).

Subregional Events

This funding is less than the submitted budget for production and launch of the RWP. The secretariat is currently holding £10,800 as an offer of £1,800 for each of the RCCs to hold an RWP event locally later this year. However, because the funding is less than planned (hoped for), we shall have to reduce that payment amount to around £600.

The topic of the 6 themes for the sub-regional reviews was raised and it was discussed about what should happen if all the counties wanted to choose the same theme rather than different ones. It was agreed that it would be okay if (say) two counties chose the same theme but more than that may be problematic. The events should relate to the topics in the draft Action Plan and county forums should be invited to focus their event on one (or two) of them). A decision could then be made July by SG and the events would be held between September and December 2010.

Action Point: David to appraise county forums of budget cut, distribute Action Plan and invite proposals for subregional events.

5. EERF Development

Pat is going to draft a newsletter for distribution.

The next Steering Group meeting will review EERF progress against its sustainability plan and communication strategy and update them accordingly.

Martin Collison told the SG that in April the meeting to discuss Regional Skills Strategy was cancelled but now needs to happen. Pat asked **Martin Collison** to write a paragraph for her to include in the newsletter.

Martin Aust says that there are regular attendees at the Housing Sub Group but there are also persistent non-attendees and he is going to address this issue.

Future Forum Meetings

David prompted a discussion on the value and purpose of the current members only, topic based approach to quarterly meetings. He suggested the RWP offered an opportunity to focus in more depth on a particular issue/theme, invite a broader range of appropriate people knowledgeable on that topic and have a more open invitation list of participants. The idea was to really explore the subject in some detail, and get greater understanding and ideas for solving problems. This would relate directly to the RWP recommendations and contribute to achieving the Action Plan. He also felt that meeting in December was too soon and stretched both RAE and the SG resources. Martin Aust also asked what was the intended outcome of the meetings (such as this morning's).

After a discussion, the SG felt it might be worth delaying next meeting until January but it was decided that the **8 December** date should be held in the diaries for time being. A decision would be made after the September launch. A Steering Group meeting would be held then regardless.

6. Any Other Business

David brought to the Steering Group's attention that since Sarah Hughes had resigned, there was no SG member for Bedfordshire.

Action Point: Pat to write to Janet Ridge of Bedfordshire RCC and ask if she would like to join EERF as member and represent Beds on SG. (*Suzanne drafted suitable letter which Pat has sent to Janet.*)

DONM

8 September, Trinity Centre, Cambridge, morning before launch event

8 December, Venue TBD

Close of Meeting