

**Chief Officers' Group Meeting****Meeting Action Notes – 17 September 2020**

	<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>ACTION(S)</b>
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Introductions &amp; Apologies</b></p> <p><u>Apologies received from:</u></p> <p>Ian Vipond - Colchester  Karen Syrett – Colchester  Trevor Saunders – Southend  Leigh Nicholson – Thurrock  Amanda Parrott – Castle Point (Policy Forum)</p> <p><u>Member attendees:</u></p> <p>Jeremy Potter (JP) (Chair) – Chelmsford  Emma Goodings (EG) (Vice Chair) - Braintree  Ian Butt (IB) - Castle Point  Phil Drane (PD) – Brentwood  Sandra Scott (SS) - Colchester  Graham Thomas (GT) – ECC  Richard Greaves (RG) – ECC  Alethea Evans (AE) – ECC  Alison Blom-Cooper (ABC) – Epping Forest  Alex Crusciak (AC) – Harlow  Matt Leigh (ML) – Maldon  Daniel Goodman (DG) – Rochford  Mark Sheppard (MS) – Southend  Graham Norse (GN) - Tendring  Richard Hatter (RH) – Thurrock  Gordan Glenday (GG) – Uttlesford</p> <p><u>Essex Housing Officers' Group (EHOG) attendees for Item 4:</u></p> <p>Tina Hinson – Colchester  Paul Gayler - Chelmsford  Lee Healy – ECC  Peter Russell - Tendring  Judith Snares – Uttlesford</p> <p><u>Other Contributors/Presenters:</u></p> <p>Lee Norris – Essex Police  Connie Kerbst - ECC  Lewis Herbert – Place Services</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Notes and Actions arising from previous meeting on 18 June 2020</b>	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Notice of AOB</b>	

**4. Government Planning Reforms**

**Planning White Paper**

*Discussion:*

*Pillar 1: Planning for Development*

- CPBC- Removing the DTC, but White Paper doesn't insert a replacement. With housing numbers increasing through the standard method, leaves small/constrained districts without an accepted/valid route to discuss and agree a way forward.
- Zoning- a concern about zoning from a protection perspective- the approach suggested would seemingly result in large swaths of land being designated as appropriate for development at a high level. There is a need for layering/additional detail exploration to allow protection of localities (conservation areas, nature areas, open space) within the high-level zones.
- Given changes highlighted in the White Paper, and turnaround times for new local plans indicated, there could be a significant slowdown in LP preparation.
- DM Policies- national level policies could remove repetition in local plans. But it might be useful for some local nuances to be introduced, so some elements of choice about the use of these national policies. There were concerns about national DM policies being the lowest common denominator, but there is every chance that this could deliver a higher standard nationally where the government is under the microscope to deliver quality development everywhere.
- Fixing a quantum of development through masterplanning might be a better way forward, and would stimulate engagement, in advance of the Local Plan.
- The principal of 'allocated in a local plan and should receive planning permission' is sensible. But changing the level of detail for local plans, and engagement in that LP process could mean those allocations are less well evidenced.

*Pillar 2: Planning for Beautiful and Sustainable Places*

- Principals supported, but fast track is a concern- how is beauty to be judged?
- Current system allows decision maker to use context of a site/locality
- Training for planning staff will need to change/re-focus
- Health needs to be much more prominent in the planning for beautiful and sustainable places.

*Pillar 3: Planning for Infrastructure and Connected Places*

This is the area of most concern.

- Written as if LPAs are all Unitary authorities- and the suggestions would probably work best in that set up. So transitional arrangements are going to be key.
- Principal in capturing a proportion of land value uplift is supported. Huge concerns about the lack of detail with how much and when funds might be introduced

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risks to local authorities in delivering infrastructure prior to levy funding is considerable.</li> <li>• The proposals don't seem to address land banking and lack of delivery by developers</li> <li>• The concept of a single levy removes the fundamental principle of such contributions mitigating the impact of Development.</li> <li>• Thresholds are a concern- we anticipate developers to come in under these to avoid paying the levy. And lots of areas in Essex see small developments regularly, and for these not to contribute to mitigating impacts is a real worry.</li> <li>• If PD development is to be subject to the levy, it should also be covered by other national standards- quality/space etc</li> <li>• Off-site affordable housing numbers are rarely as high as on-site delivery and requires suitable sites.</li> </ul> <p>Alternatives: the national levy needs to be a minimum. A jumping off point for negotiations. Needs to link with IDP. Evidence in Essex suggests contributions need to be at least £35-50k per home.</p> <p><b>Changes to the current Planning System</b></p> <p><i>Discussion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliverability of standard method is questioned- developers have identified this.</li> <li>• Benefits of over providing will be removed</li> <li>• No clarity on how a deliverable number will be assessed- what evidence will be accepted.</li> <li>• Some developers are concerned that the First Homes initiative will be a problem because there is no capital receipt up front as with traditional AH.</li> <li>• The suggested move to change AH threshold is a real concern in areas dominated by smaller sized developments and would increase land value and reduce cashflow for SMEs.</li> <li>• Suggested route to offer a better way forward in our response: encourage government to offer support to SMEs or via Homes England to prioritise AH through a fund.</li> <li>• Permissions in Principle potentially would not be permissible as most development from 1 dwelling requires Appropriate Assessment under HRA due to Essex Coast protected sites.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A response to the White Paper to be prepared jointly by EPOA and EHOA. JP, IB, AE to have a draft by 9/10 to circulate for EPOA/EHOA approval.</b></p> <p><b>Planning Portfolio Holder meeting on 16/10 to discuss with a view to endorse the final EPOA/EHOA response.</b></p> <p><b>A response to the Changes to Current Planning System consultation to be prepared jointly by EPOA and EHOA. IB, JP, AE to have draft by 25/9 to circulate for EPOA/EHOA approval.</b></p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Health and Wellbeing Initiatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TCPA Healthy Homes Act</li> </ul> <p>Graham Thomas explained the importance of getting fit for purpose healthy homes which meet people's need and noted an act which is currently going through parliament.</p> <p>The group agreed to write a letter of support to the Act to set out what we have done in Essex and what we are trying to do. The group also noted that it was important to add the health and wellbeing issues into the groups White Paper response</p>	<p><b>GT to draft text for a letter of support from EPOA</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Livewell Development Accreditation Launched in July and want as many developers as possible in Essex to go through, so can it be promoted by Policy and DM teams</li> </ul>	<b>All to promote</b>
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>Essex Digital Connectivity Strategy</b></p> <p>Connie Kerbst gave presentation on the emerging new strategy (Context note circulated with agenda). There is a focus at looking at mobile and 5G network across Essex, but developers were struggling with planning engagement.</p>	<b>PD to lead small EPOA group to help Connie. EG and ML to be in group to cover rural and DM perspective</b>
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>Protocol for Managing Cross-Boundary/Strategic Pre-app Proposals</b></p> <p>Further discussion required regarding LPAs working together on strategic pre-apps.</p>	<b>AL to contact CL to discuss way forward</b>
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>EPOA Working Groups Updates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking Standards Review</li> </ul> <p>Rachel Forkin provided a written update. The working group has been set up with the first meeting 10<sup>th</sup> Sept. key areas of discussion were the zonal approach, electric vehicle, walking and cycling, Garden Communities, use class revisions and how design and place making will be considered. Notes will be sent out and scope, sub-groups will be determined. Rachel to come along to the next meeting and provide an update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gypsy and Traveller Transit Site Assessment</li> </ul> <p>ORS have started telephone interviews and social distant interviews were appropriate but the normal travel patterns have not been seen. Will be looking at historic data and potentially arrange focus groups. Keen to get 5 years of data for encampments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing Delivery Test</li> </ul> <p>Work has paused at completion data is not representative of normal practice at this time.</p>	<p><b>RF to report progress at 3/12 meeting</b></p> <p><b>AE to contact ECC traveller unit to get the data required.</b></p> <p><b>JP to pick this up with colleagues in Kent.</b></p>
<b>9.</b>	<p><b>EPOA Planning Skills Training Update</b></p> <p>Lewis Herbert noted that a new schedule of training had been circulated. Sessions online with the exception of a design site visit, the detail of which would need to be considered including through risk assessments which may significantly limit the numbers. The courses are also being made more short and snappy. Three new green infrastructure training is also available by separate booking for three course programme.</p>	<b>All encouraged to look at the courses again and sign up for additional courses as there will no limits to numbers. Further Comments to LH</b>

<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>EPOA Forum Feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Forum No forum has taken place. AP will be confirming meeting dates.</li> <li>• DM Forum ML to provide a written update on the DM Forum</li> <li>• New Design Forum Initial meeting held. Working on terms of reference, membership and to have a first meeting before the next EPOA meeting in December.</li> </ul>	<p><b>All to consider before next meeting as to any work streams we may wish this group to consider.</b></p> <p><b>Paul Sallin and Andy Bestwick to arrange</b></p>
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>Local Plan Preparation Update</b></p> <p>AC and EG gave a brief update on the ONS population projections affecting Local Plans.</p> <p>PR noted at Brentwood that work was ongoing with the Inspector and hope to get dates and the format of the examination.</p> <p>GG noted the appeal on the Stansted planning application which is expected to take place quicker than expected.</p>	
<p><b>12.</b></p>	<p><b>EPOA Chief Officers Group Terms of Reference</b></p> <p>Draft TOR circulated with agenda.</p> <p>Group discussed adding sub-groups, purpose, funding and training to the ToR JP asked for comments to be submitted to him by the end of next week. Aim to agree the ToR before the next meeting via email.</p>	<p><b>Comments to JP on TOR by 25/9/20</b></p>
<p><b>13.</b></p>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><b>Climate Change – Graham Thomas</b> Asked if the group would encourage all staff to fill in the climate change survey</p> <p><b>Digital Planning – Alethea Evans</b> ECC engaging with University of Essex to consider how we can get more data and open access of data. For noting and potentially Alethea will be in touch with others when necessary.</p> <p><b>EELGA Housing Data Request</b> Richard Hatter raised an issue of data collection which has been sent to him and Jeremy.</p> <p><b>Planning Support and Admin Forum</b> GG asked for support for a forum to be set up for the admin and validation side of planning. Agreed that this would be an excellent idea.</p>	<p><b>JP to send data request to EPOA Members</b></p> <p><b>UDC were tasked with setting this up.</b></p>

	<b>Confirmed Next Meeting Dates</b>	
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Agreed at the last meeting we would have 5 meetings a year to allow for shorter meetings, perhaps a couple of hours long and make them more responsive to emerging issues. On that basis the new dates for the meetings are below and will be held remotely until further notice:

- 3 December 2020
- 4 February 2021
- 22 April 2021
- 22 July 2021