

CHIEF OFFICERS' GROUP MEETING
Action Notes: February 2022

17 February 2022 10.00am – 1.00pm

Attendees:

Amanda Parrot (AP) – Castle Point
 Alethea Evans (AE) - ECC
 Ashley Heller (AH) - ECC
 Britney Lees (BL) - ECC
 Daniel Goodman (DG) - Rochford
 Emma Goodings (EG) - Braintree
 Gary Norse (GN) - Tendring
 Graham Thomas (GT) - ECC
 Ian Butt (IB) – Castle Point

Jeremy Potter (JP) - Chelmsford
 Kevin Walters (KW) – Southend-on-Sea
 Leanne Brisland (LB) - Chelmsford
 Cllr Lewis Herbert (LH) - Cambridge
 Nigel Richardson (NR) – Epping Forest
 Rich Cook (RC) – ECC
 Richard Hatter (RH) - Thurrock
 Simon Cairns (SC) - Colchester
 Tanusha Walters (TW) - Harlow

Apologies:

Richard Greaves - ECC
 Christine Lyons - Basildon

Matt Leigh - Maldon

	Agenda item	Action
1.	Introductions & Apologies	
2.	Notes and Actions arising from previous meeting on 9/12/21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KF asked to circulate draft Essex Solar Farm Guidance at last EPOA Chief Officers Group Meeting. The deadline for comments was 28/01/2021. 	<p align="center"><i>Essex Solar Farm Guidance to be brought to next EPOA meeting</i></p> <p align="center"><i>Further meetings to be arranged with NH on biodiversity</i></p>
3.	Notice of AOB	
4.	RAMs - EPOA Project Board Decisions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tariff Contributions EPOA to request that LPAs transfer to CCC contributions received, where development has commenced and complete the contributions spreadsheet, in accordance with the partnership agreement, LPAs transfer contributions to CCC on 1 January 2022, 1 April 2022, 1 July 2022, 1 October 2022 where development has commenced, and keep the contributions spreadsheet up to date. 2. Financial Scheme of Delegation A Financial Scheme of Delegation has been produced to inform those involved in the governance and delivery of the RAMS of the delegated financial responsibility of the RAMS Delivery Officer. It details the financial authority that the steering group is setting the RAMS Delivery officer in day-to-day operational spending – EPOA in agreement. 	

	<p>3. Partnership Agreement: The proposal was to change the quarterly Accountable Body Fees and DO Line management fees to a single annual payment in October – 6 months in arrears and 6 months in advance, to improve efficiency of fee collections – EPOA in agreement to add addendum to partnership agreement.</p> <p>4. Ranger Update: An agreement between Chelmsford City Council and Essex County Council (ECC) is being drawn up on behalf of the RAMS partnership, for ECC Country Parks Service to host the two Bird Aware Essex Coastal Rangers – EPOA in agreement</p> <p>5. RAMS Delivery Group: Proposed that a delivery and technical officers’ group is set up to support the RAMS implementation. The RAMS delivery group are to be known as Bird Aware Essex Coast Delivery Group (Essex Coast RAMS). There is scope to review the Term of Reference as we move along – EPOA agreement in principle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following on from the EPOA letter to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in September, seeking clarification over the issue of implementing mitigation, as required by Appropriate Assessment, on developments are permitted under the GPDO, the key questions and concerns were shared with other mitigation groups and the Solent Mitigation Partnership have shared their examples on dealing with this one includes how they are having to consider nitrates. 	
5.	<p>Essex Local Nature Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement from EPOA Chief Officers. 	
6.	<p>Essex Developers Group Climate Charter Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Charter has now been approved. The Essex Developers Group are working on a launch program and the publication of the Charter. There has been some discussion regarding getting a photograph of the EPOA Chair and EDG Chair shaking hands. This would be part of the Charters publicity. Climate Action Team: Interviews for Lead Planning Officers (Climate Change) have taken place. The appointed candidate is expected to be in post by May 2022. Interviews for Environmental Engineers are anticipated to begin in March 2022. Epping Forest District Council’s Climate Change Officer is on maternity leave. The Council are currently looking for someone to temporarily cover this role. 	<p><i>GT to share Essex Developers Group Climate Charter</i></p> <p><i>Chief Officers to contact NR should their Climate Change Officers have capacity to provide support in Epping.</i></p>
7.	<p>Planning Guidance for Digital Connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This builds upon what Peter Dawson (Place Services) shared at December’s EPOA Chief Officers Meeting. The additional guidance complements the 5G guidance on the Essex Design Guide website. This guidance has been produced to assist local authorities, digital infrastructure providers and developers/planning applicants in respect of digital connectivity infrastructure and its delivery through planning processes. The plan going forward is for EPOA Chief Officers to review guidance and share within own councils. There will also be wider engagement with developers and service network providers. RC is looking for guidance to be endorsed by EPOA. JP delegated this to the Policy Forum. The guidance should be sent to Policy and Development Management Leads for review. The deadline for comments is 04/03/2022. 	<p><i>Digital Connectivity guidance to be sent to Policy and DM Leads for review.</i></p> <p><i>Policy Forum to pick this up on 19/04/2022.</i></p>

8.	Staffing and Resourcing Issues in Essex LPAs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was general agreement that there are not enough experienced staff resulting in LPAs becoming under resourced. • DLUC are looking to gain a better understanding of the scale of the problem. • GT interested in number of vacancies across Essex LPAs, workload and whether LPAs are using Public Practice to recruit staff. 	
Comfort/Coffee Break		
9.	EPOA 2022 Planning Skills Training Series <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LH proposed a series of eleven events. These would focus on enhancing the skills of junior/middle level Planning Officers in areas such as negotiation and viability. • This training is to run online most Wednesday afternoons until July 2022. • The cost is around £20,000. 	<p><i>Chief Officers to send comments to LH by 24/02/2022</i></p> <p><i>LH to draft questions for survey to better understand skills</i></p>
10.	Other EPOA Working Groups Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking Standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Part I is nearly ready for consultation. They are considering whether they use Jacobs or do the work themselves. ○ GT: There is £12,000 remaining for the completion of Part I, however there is no funding allocated for Part II. There are several stands of money being considered. • AH: There was a workshop held with EPOA and HGGT colleagues in October 2022. • The general consensus was that larger communities had specific issues and opportunities in regard to parking. • The broad strategy adopted to incorporate a range of parking standards. Recognition that the work must build on and form part of the current EPOA parking standards review. 	<p><i>Discussion to be had with KW about how PI can be completed quickly</i></p>
11.	EPOA Forum Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Forum: Steve has data from Essex County Council relating to travelling activity. The travelling community appeared to be sensitive to the risks of COVID-19, in turn avoiding exposure. • The report will be completed by April 2023. 	
12.	EPOA Administration Matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget cannot be fixed until EPOA know the work programme for the 2022/2023 financial year. • JP to soon finish his tenure as EPOA Chair. EPOA in agreement that EG will take over. • Vice Chair to be decided at next EPOA meeting. 	<p><i>Further discussion around budget to be had</i></p> <p><i>Vice Chair to be decided</i></p>
13.	Local Plan Preparation/Examination Updates/Appeal Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basildon Borough Council: Emergency motion on 10/02/2022 to withdraw Local Plan, however they did not have the power to do this. They alternatively served themselves a s5 notice, a decision likely to be unlawful. They have a meeting on 03/03/2022 where they will agree to either: a main modifications consultation; do further work on main modifications; or withdraw the plan. This needs to be a formal process • ECC Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Call for Sites between February 11th and March 25th. • Rochford District Council: Completed public enquiry on large site. Refused by members on highways grounds. 	
14.	AOB	
Next meeting 21 April 2022		