

## Note of Chief Officers Meeting – 7 November 2024

	Agenda item	EPOA Sponsors/Actions
1.	<p><b>Introductions &amp; Apologies</b></p> <p><b>Apologies</b>            Karen Syrett - Colchester            Katie Fowler – EPOA Training Programme            Christine Lyons - Basildon            Sara Hill Sanders –(EPOA DM Chair) – Chelmsford            Richard Greaves – ECC            Bethany Jones – (EPOA Policy Forum Chair) – Colchester</p> <p><b>Attendance</b>            Nigel Richardson – Epping            Ashely Baldwin – Thurrock            Robert Davey – Basildon            Sarah Ashton – Braintree            Simon Cairns – Colchester            Emma Goodings – Brentwood &amp; Rochford            Amanda Parrott – Castle Point            Jeremy Potter – Chelmsford            Bethany Jones – (EPOA Policy Forum Chair) – Colchester            Graham Thomas – Chair Essex CC            Tanusha Waters – Harlow            Matt Winslow - Maldon            Kevin Waters – Southend            Gary Guiver – Tendring</p> <p><b>Guests</b>            Billy Parr - ECC Transport            Sam – Ringway Jacobs            Alethea Evans - ECC</p>	
2	<p><b>Air Quality Strategy</b></p> <p>Sam Pollard and Billy Parr introduced the work on the Air Quality Strategy presentation explaining that he has already met with several different pan-Essex groups and service areas with partners, with a view to the work on air quality being something which is owned by all including Essex Police, the NHS etc. The air quality strategy comprises three elements, including a high level summary, the strategy, and a supporting delivery plan.</p> <p>This work will make clear that by improving air quality we can reduce health impacts. Poor air quality generally affects the most vulnerable members of society. Equally new development affect air quality particularly indoor air quality is increasingly of concern which is less well understood.</p> <p>In response to the internal air quality challenge, is there is a climate change workstream on Net Zero carbon homes, one of the benefits of building to this Passive Haus standard is the improvements this give to health and better internal air quality. The other key positive which Local Planning Authorities deliver is the strategic air quality considerations which help in form where and what development is located in relation to producing a Local Plan. Local Plan preparation is strategically important in relation to the issue of air quality.</p> <p>Following helpful presentation and discussion, it was clear that we require an air quality planning policy from which any air quality guidance relates. It was agreed that EPOA will help develop the policy(s) and support the work of any best practice air quality guidance to supporting this. It was agreed that both the Policy Forum should lead on this with engagement with the DM Forum and Matt Winslow agreed to follow-up with Beth and Sarah's successor.</p> <p>It was also agreed that whilst the work prepared it focused on human health there are flora and fauna air quality considerations which need to also be addressed through policy and guidance.</p>	<p>Presentation by Sam Pollard and Billy Parr.</p> <p><b>Action</b>            Matt Winslow/            Sam Pollard to meet with the Policy Group DM Forum chairs.</p>
3	<p><b>Recruitment and Retention Task &amp; Finish work in response to the East of England LGA Essex report recommendations.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improving the profile of planning in schools and universities.</li> <li>2. Develop a support network for planners.</li> <li>3. Support with establishing a grow your own approach.</li> <li>4. Shared graduate and specialist staff roles.</li> </ol> <p>Kevin introduced the work of the task and finish group who have been working on this. We don't want to simply look to repeat the previous MoU approach of agreeing not to poach each other staff. This does not work. We are looking at other measures including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving the profile of planning in schools and universities, get people thinking about it as a positive career option. This could be as simple as each Chief Planner going to one school a year and talking about planning to maybe sixth form students who are thinking about what</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action</b>            Kevin Waters and Graham Thomas to meet with the ARU Planning leadership</p>

	<p>they do at university might be children in secondary schools just trying to engage people, raise the profile of planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving our engagement and maybe looking to start to give some constructive criticism to Anglia Ruskin University so that we can change the perception that seems to have occurred.</li> <li>We need to determine what promotional material is available from the RTPi to support local events when officers go into schools or colleges to promote and publicise town planning opportunities.</li> <li>How can we get different people into the profession that perhaps do not have a degree or have a different academic background?</li> <li>How do we develop a support network for planners? It could be at pretty much all levels of senior leadership. It could be at on certain issue.</li> <li>The next point is supporting, growing, and developing our own staff. Obviously, it's something I know a number of the councils are already doing quite successfully.</li> <li>The final area is one of sharing graduates and specialist staff roles within the family of Essex authorities. It would be helpful to do some cross authority skills mapping on these specialist roles. We already have some good experience on shared service delivery etc on RAMS, CAPU etc.</li> </ul> <p>All of these points need further work to bring these forward in a coherent package of measures in response to the EELGA report.</p>	<p><b>Action</b> Kevin to contact the RTPi to see if they have promotional material for school events/talks.</p> <p><b>Action</b> The task and finish team to develop a support package of ideas.</p> <p><b>Action</b> Skills mapping required.</p>
4	<b>Supported and Shelter Housing – update and next steps</b> Christine Lyons and Gary Guiver	Deferred.
5	<p><b>Planning Portfolio Holders – Cllr Spray – Braintree will raised the issue of time taken by Statutory Consultees.</b> Sarah Ashton outlined the issue that Cllr Spray raised at the last Portfolio Holders meeting. Statutory consultees notably Highways England are very slow in responding to planning applications. It was agreed that with the help of others Thurrock and Uttlesford a broader picture could be presented on the issues.</p> <p>It was felt helpful to invite Highways England to a future meeting of EPOA to outline their perspective.</p> <p>We could also invite other key consultees where we see issues. It would be helpful to have a frank conversations with consultees. We need to understand what their constraints are or whether they are struggling in the same way that we are in terms of trying to recruit staff etc. We could then raise any points with them at the meeting.</p> <p>The other option we have if consultees remain and continue to be unable to respond within the allocated time is to elevate the issue(s) to raise concerns with the Essex CEOs.</p>	<p><b>Action</b> All to feedback to Sarah.</p> <p><b>Action</b> Graham to invite HE to a future meeting.</p>
	<b>Break for Coffee</b>	
6	<p><b>Cllr Evans – Uttlesford Planning Portfolio Holder – Competent persons Question</b> At the last Essex planning portfolio holder meeting a month or so ago, my Cabinet member raised the issue of the provenance or the extent to which we can place weight on professional advice submitted with planning applications. It arose from a recent complaints which ended up requiring an expensive retrospective fix following a permission for a housing scheme where the applicant's acoustic consultant essentially dropped a ball and missed a significant noise issue.</p> <p>This generated a good level of discussion which was summed up by one person as "I think we do need to take reports at face value because otherwise frankly we have to completely reverse the whole planning system and the planning authority has to Commission all the reports at their own cost and independently, which is totally impossible clearly. And as I say, I think that's the result. The whole role of professional institutes. Surely if they are, if they claim to be appropriately qualified, I mean, where does it end? Do we don't have to contact every institute to check that that person actually has those qualifications."</p>	<p><b>Action</b> Dean to present at the next Planning Portfolio holders meeting.</p>
7	<p><b>EPOA Training updates</b> – apologies from Katie Fowler</p> <p>Note the previous request for Health Impact Assessment training.</p>	
8	<p><b>Gypsy and Traveller – update</b> Amanda provided an update on G&amp;T. Most Councils have now had reports, with the exception of Epping and Basildon, so everyone is now working directly with ORS to get their reports finalised. I actually got my final one through yesterday.</p> <p>Maldon who wasn't part of the EPOA Commission only receive their report just before all of the other Essex authorities did.</p> <p>There is still an issue with the transit work. I am not sighted on the contract or anything</p>	<p><b>Action</b> Simon to investigate where we are on the transit report and contract for this work.</p>

<b>9</b>	<b>Updates from EPOA forums</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development Management – None available</li> <li>• Policy Forum – None available</li> </ul> <p>We talked about how we refresh and reinvigorate these sub-group as they are really important, but clearly struggling to be used is intended. We perhaps need to discuss the challenge presented in more detail.</p>	Sara who is stepping down. Beth
<b>10</b>	<b>Developers Contribution Guide – 2025 Update</b> <p>Alethea reported on the next update to developer contribution guide. The last update was a really minor around the DfE costs, education, drawing those in that had been updated. We want to do something a slightly more comprehensive on Early years and childcare just to reflect delivery cost of changes that we're seeing. Consultation on the changes is likely to happen early in 2025.</p>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Chairman's Report</b> <p>I have been invited on two national groups, I'm now on the design Council's round table looking at new towns, which is quite interesting. They have had their first meeting. I have also this month been invited on the national group that is looking at strategic planning to support the Governments work on this. The Strategic Planning group have not met yet, I have received the terms of reference which came out yesterday.</p>	<b>Action</b> Graham to provide updates
<b>12</b>	<b>Updates by exception major appeal/Local Plan/NSIPs etc</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uttlesford will submit their Local Plan to the Secretary of State on 20<sup>th</sup> December.</li> <li>• Chelmsford was due to proceed with Reg 19 on 17 December but will now progress in January.</li> <li>• Castle Point are being advised by MHCLG to continue to publish their REG 18 Plan in December.</li> <li>• Norwich to Tilbury NSIP is getting a lot of political traction. There is now four Council leaders Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex are coming together in terms of how they can respond to this</li> </ul>	All
<b>13</b>	<b>Notes and Actions arising from previous meeting (attached)</b>	All
<b>14</b>	<b>AOB</b>	All