

ESSEX PLANNING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12 September 2013****9:30am – 12:00pm****AT THE BRAINTREE DISCOVERY CENTRE**

PRESENT: Laura Chase (Colchester) Andrew Cook (ECC) Diane Cooper (Harlow) Emma Goodings (Braintree) Derek Lawrence (Maldon)	Derek Lewis (Basildon) Jeremy Potter (Chelmsford) John de Wilton Preston (Epping) Steve Rogers (Castle Point) Shaun Scrutton (Rochford) Andrew Taylor (Uttlesford)
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	Attention was drawn to the fire exits and location of toilets at the request of the Centre Manager	
1.	Apologies Catherine Bicknell (Tendring) Andy Millard (Thurrock) Clive Simpson (Basildon) and Ian Vipond (Colchester)	
2.	Notice of AOB Items were suggested concerning concerns raised by Fire Brigade, and call in of cases by Local Councils.	
3.	Minutes of meeting of 13 June 2013 and Action list, and matters arising The minutes were agreed and the action list had been completed. There were no matters arising.	
4.	Replacement of Vice Chairman As Eleanor Dash had retired, there is now a need to find a new Vice Chairman, who would be likely to become the Chairman during 2014. As relatively few members were present it was agreed that Steve Rogers (the immediate past Chairman) would assist until the December meeting at which time a new Vice Chairman will be sought. John recognised the assistance provided to him and EPOA by Eleanor, and recorded that EPOA wished her a long and healthy retirement.	
5.	Co-operation with South East Local Enterprise Partnership Steve Rogers reported on the recent SELEP meeting last week. EPOA had not yet been successful in getting SELEP to come to an EPOA meeting, but EPOA members have been inputting to their work. SELEP are presently going through a period of change with on-going discussion about a new federated structure, they have a new Chairman in Peter Jones. There may well be amendments to where the secretariat is located away from Essex. One scenario for future working had been for SELEP to have three County based	

	<p>groupings at an operational level, but it appeared that the Unitary Authorities were not keen on that arrangement. Nonetheless, work continued on the Strategic Economic Plan, Local Transport and a focus on bringing the Enterprise Zones forward successfully.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>EPOA Budget</p> <p>Andrew Cook reported that the previous funds held by EPOA and EHOA for use on a GTAA had now been fully expended on GTAA3, A small supplementary invoice had been issued to cover the complete costs of this work, and most invoices have been paid.</p> <p>Andrew politely reminded those present that the verbal agreement at these meetings was not sufficient to achieve payment, but that Purchase Orders must be raised by each authority, so that when invoiced by ECC the accountancy staff at each authority had the necessary arrangements in hand to be able to achieve payment of the invoice promptly. Andrew and colleagues at ECC were chasing some of these.</p> <p>The invoices sent out for the main EPOA subscription had mainly been paid and the ARU invoice for the Training Programme had recently been received by ECC. When all the subscriptions are received, and the ARU invoice is paid there will be very limited budget left.</p> <p>There will be a further invoice for the annual demographic update, to which there is in principle agreement from all 17 relevant authorities.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Networking</p> <p>There was useful discussion.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>Planning Update</p> <p>John Preston drew attention to the changes mentioned in the notes of the DM and Policy Forums, to the further changes to permitted development rights being heralded for agricultural buildings to be converted to residential, and for residential change of use of some retail premises.</p> <p>A consultation is underway about Hazardous substances; in particular the storage of heavy oil. Few of the Essex authorities had experience of such issues, but Castle Point do. There was a reminder that the return of fees regime is about to be implemented, and there was some discussion about how different Authorities were intending to deal with applications (in particular those with large fees) to ensure that they received a decision prior to a refund being possible.</p> <p>Attention was drawn to the consultation on the draft web based Planning guidance, which was now underway, and to a consultation concerning some streamlining proposals concerning appeals procedures which appear to assume that the officer with conduct of the appeal is always instantly available to respond.</p> <div data-bbox="1050 1841 1117 1908" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Hunston Properties Ltd v Secretary of State</p> <p>Andrew Taylor drew attention to the following case,</p> <p>Guidance is expected in the next month about extending time periods for decision taking. Lastly Andrew Cook drew attention to a consultation concerning PPS 10.</p>	

9.	<p>Essex Integrated County Strategy and Deal for Growth</p> <p>Steve Rogers reflected that the Officer working group on the ICS had been concentrating its efforts on the SELEP Strategic Economic Plan, and the associated EU structural funds (see 5 above.) There were separate meetings being held in the sub groups or “quarters” to feed into various pieces of work which Shared Intelligence were undertaking. There was still no response from Government in respect of the Essex Deal for Growth.</p>	
10.	<p>Retirement of key staff</p> <p>John Preston and several of those present had attended the recent retirement celebration of Roy Lewis following his 41 year career at Essex County Council. In similar vein to the comments made then, tributes were paid to the work of Roy throughout that career, but, in particular, his work in the last few years on population modelling work. His is, and will be, a hard act to follow. His quietly spoken approach masked a determination to serve the public with the best possible data, and its translation into useful information.</p> <p>Roy is one of several officers to have left ECC in the last year (3 officers had in excess of 120 years of experience.) Whilst it was understood that in an era of significant downward pressure on Local Government budgets that the staff costs would be pressured; that level of experience is not replaceable by those with less experience, and no matter how good the remaining staff or the replacements are. In forty years one will have seen several economic cycles, ideas come and ideas go, and the different experiences of different functions and parts of the area. Few new recruits to the workforce will be able to gain that type and level of experience in their careers.</p>	
11.	<p>Health/NHS Planning Issues</p> <p>Jeremy Potter drew attention to the previous discussion at EPOA (24 March 2011 and 14 March 2012) about the changing arrangements within the NHS and the suggestions of a one point of contact. Graham Seward was proposing a further meeting to discuss experience of the changed arrangements, which Jeremy will attend.</p>	
12.	<p>Future Demographic work</p> <p>Jeremy Potter reported that Roy Lewis had gained in principle agreement from all the authorities involved in the work undertaken by Edge Analytics for the need for such work to be continued, and the forecasts to be run on an annual basis. The previous data has been put within a Corporate Unit at ECC, and can be accessed by the contributing authorities by contacting Duncan Wood.</p> <p>Jeremy will continue his involvement by using a small corporate steering group of officers from across Essex.</p>	
13.	<p>GRT Update</p> <p>Andrew Taylor explained that the first draft report from ORS on GTAA3 was expected very shortly.</p> <p>Once received it will be put to be considered by EPOA and EHOOG officers, and it will also be put to Councillors. It was requested that the Councillors have a similar presentation session to that used previously with GRT and population/demographic work, and that County Councillor John Jowers be asked to chair this session. It was also requested that there is an item early on in the agenda for that meeting stressing the importance of this work, and the manner in which it was being conducted being a good example of the Duty to co-operate. GTAA3 will then subsequently be released into the public domain.</p>	

14.	<p>Local Plan progress and Duty to co-operate; including strategic issues and the work for ECEA.</p> <p>There was a round table discussion regarding recent consultation on development plan documents at Brentwood and Maldon. Working party meetings continue to be held to understand emerging guidance and practice regarding the Duty to Co-operate, and a suggestion will be considered regarding Member training on this issue.</p>	
15.	<p>Planning Policy Forum</p> <p>Minutes of meeting of 2 May were noted.</p>	
16.	<p>Development Management Forum</p> <p>Minutes of meeting of 12th July were noted.</p>	
17.	<p>Website Update</p> <p>Andrew Taylor reported that the Uttlesford District Council website had been renewed and that it now contained the EPOA webs pages. Link attached. http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/epoa</p>	
18.	<p>Any other Business</p> <p>There was an interesting discussion about promoting the use of sprinkler systems within buildings to limit the spread and damage caused by a fire. The conclusion was that this is understood to be a matter for the Building Regulations to control, rather than a matter calling for new planning policies to be developed and then managed.</p> <p>A similarly interesting discussion concerned how the different Authorities deal with Parish and Town Council views, including the triggers for such views to be considered at Committee. Each Authority appears to have developed its own arrangements over time.</p> <p>It was agreed to have a budget discussion at the next meeting. One matter for consideration is the extent to which Pre application charges for specialisms at ECC can be met by developers. Matt Searle of ECC is asked to attend to present on this at the next meeting.</p>	
19.	<p>Items for Future meetings</p> <p>Thurrock is a smart planning champion, and wishes to present some of their experience in promoting the use of the Planning portal.</p> <p>Budgets. Given the considerable budget pressures, it is considered useful to reflect on what each Authority is doing and how this impacts Planning budgets.</p>	
20..	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting would take place on 12 December 2013 at 9:30am at the Discovery Centre Braintree</p> <p>The meeting closed at 12:00</p>	

