

**ESSEX PLANNING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION****MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12 December 2013 9:30am – 12:30pm**  
**AT THE OAKLANDS MUSEUM CHELMSFORD**

<b>PRESENT:</b> <b>Catherine Bicknell (Tendring)</b> <b>Paul Clark (Thurrock)</b> <b>Andrew Cook (ECC)</b> <b>Diane Cooper (Harlow)</b> <b>Ellie DeGory (OMDA)</b> <b>Emma Goodings (Braintree)</b> <b>Bill Newman (Brentwood)</b> <b>Jeremy Potter (Chelmsford)</b>	<b>John de Wilton Preston (Epping)</b> <b>Steve Rogers (Castle Point)</b> <b>Matt Searle (ECC)</b> <b>Shaun Scrutton (Rochford)</b> <b>Clive Simpson (Basildon)</b> <b>Andrew Taylor (Uttlesford)</b> <b>Colin Vint (Boxford Build CIC)</b> <b>Ian Vipond (Colchester)</b>
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	<b>Attention was drawn to the fire exits and location of toilets at the request of the Centre Manager</b>	
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies</b> Jennifer Candler (Brentwood) Peter Geraghty (Southend) Andy Millard (Thurrock)	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Notice of AOB</b> No advance items were indicated.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Minutes of meeting of 12 September 2013 and Action list, and matters arising</b> The minutes were agreed and the action list had been completed. There were no matters arising.	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Replacement of Vice Chairman</b> Andrew Cook of Essex County Council was appointed as Vice Chairman for the remainder of this Municipal Year, and is intended to succeed John Preston as Chairman of EPOA for 2014/15 for two years starting in April 2014. Andrew was thanked for taking on this role, and thereby ensuring a smooth transition.  (NB Whilst ECC remain the “banker” this will require AC not to be Treasurer when he is Chairman)	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Co-operation with South East Local Enterprise Partnership</b>  Steve Rogers reported on the recent SELEP meeting. SELEP have a new Chairman Peter Jones, and other new staff. Mr Jones is pushing hard for funds devolved to the LEP to be spent, and for them to be multiplied where possible to increase the economic output of the SELEP area. The SELEP Board are due to meet on 13 Dec to discuss the draft Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and the draft Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) Quite a number of the EPOA members, and other colleagues who have been involved in the Essex Integrated County Strategy have been inputting to their work. SELEP are presently going through a period of change with on-going change to Governance arrangements	

<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Self Build</b></p> <p>Matt Searle of ECC introduced Colin Vint and Ellie De Gory who provided a stimulating presentation about self build; copy attached.</p> <p>The discussion which followed asked whether there were examples of Local Plan policies to which particular attention was drawn; Cambridgeshire and Suffolk appear to have more experience than Essex. In answer to questions it was suggested that self build schemes typically take one year to build out, compared to other forms of housing provision. Granted permissions are usually built out rather than being land banked. For Boxford CIC Asset lock means that the funds are held in the organisation and cannot be distributed as a dividend. The Government, and in particular The Treasury, appear keen to promote self build. Although sites suitable for self build can take a variety of forms (including fit out of converted buildings rather than only new build) high land prices in many parts of Essex were seen as a challenge. Self builders are known to have paid high prices for land in the open market, but can achieve good outcomes by avoiding some of the developers profit and developers costs. Harlow had spent considerable effort trying to secure skills training for budding self builders.</p>	
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Networking</b></p> <p>There was useful discussion. Ian Vipond had kindly supplied some mince pies.</p>	
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Planning Update</b></p> <p>John Preston drew attention to suggestions that the requirement to have a Local Plan may be made a statutory requirement (perhaps strictly even more of a statutory requirement.)</p> <p>The Autumn Statement had good news in that the top slicing of New Homes Bonus (NHB) to fund Local Enterprise Partnerships had been dropped; however, there was an indication that Authorities whom refuse perfectly acceptable developments which are then granted at appeal may see their NHB reduced in future years.</p> <p>Others, including Andrew Taylor and Matt Searle gave indication that the web based Planning guidance may be issued in January 2014; that there may be timescales for determining applications to discharge conditions with a default position that the submission is granted after a set period. There is also a pressure to reduce the number of pre commencement conditions being applied.</p> <p>The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which covers the Stour Valley to the south of Suffolk, may be extended to include its natural valley within Essex as something of a priority. The Dedham Vale AONB may also have a case for an extension, but is seen as a lower priority.</p> <p>An indication has been given that of three options being considered for a Lower Thames Crossing that option B has been dropped from further consideration.</p> <p>A proposed new electricity line running between Branford and Twinstead, which is a National infrastructure project, has been postponed.</p>	
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>Essex Integrated County Strategy and Deal for Growth</b></p> <p>Steve Rogers again 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.) Ian Vipond (who chairs the ICS</p>	

	<p>group) reflected that the work streams included a significant emphasis on the economy, but included work on delivery of Housing and the 2015 houses by 2015 initiative. Lastly reference was made to a number of the national political parties encouraging attention to whether sites were available that could accommodate new Garden Cities. The group recognised that unless such a site was already in public ownership, that hope values and expectations of land owners were very different to what they had been when the “original” UK Garden Cities were brought forward.</p>	
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>EPOA Budget</b></p> <p>The current payment of issued invoices for activities this year was good, but not quite perfect. The likely level of subscriptions for 2014/15 would need agreement at the next meeting.</p>	
<b>11.</b>	<p><b>Determining 5 year housing land supply</b></p> <p>On the basis of experience gained from their Local Plan examination, Uttlesford had sought to understand if there was a common approach in Essex. There appear to be two approaches in use nationally; a Liverpool approach where future supply is boosted going forward if there has been lower than expected performance in the past, or a Sedgefield approach. The Policy Forum have a sub group working on this to see if a pan Essex approach can be achieved, and what points it would include. The approach is unlikely to suggest that there is only one method, but that there will be a variety of factors which each authority should be aware of, and to consider what the local evidence is for each.</p>	
<b>12.</b>	<p><b>Health/NHS Planning Issues</b></p> <p>Jeremy Potter drew attention to material which had been added to the website on this topic, to a recent meeting and an upcoming workshop. One Authority had been surprised to be asked about Section 106 obligations on such matters where previous records do not seem to have been available to those with present responsibilities.</p>	
<b>13.</b>	<p><b>Future Demographic work</b></p> <p>Jeremy Potter reported that the first update from Edge Analytics would be available early next year, and then in each May of subsequent years.</p>	
<b>14.</b>	<p><b>GRT Update</b></p> <p>Andrew Taylor explained that the first draft report from ORS on GTAA3 had only just been received and had been circulated to the steering group.</p> <p>The report was still awaiting release of a section concerning Basildon. Clive Simpson explained that a report to his Authority was imminent, and that once his Authority had considered that report, it should facilitate the wider release of the Basildon assessment. Attention was drawn to the fact that those occupying the area historically within Basildon, and whom had a growth of subsequent generations were likely to be recognised, but that Basildon members were likely to distinguish those at Dale Farm differently.</p> <p>The Group recognised the need for a joint meeting of officers from EPOA and EHO, and the subsequent need for a timely meeting with Members.</p> <p>Concern was expressed about numbers ranging from zero in Southend, to high numbers elsewhere. Several Authorities have used up to date analysis of their</p>	

	<p>general Housing waiting lists to introduce local occupancy periods, and so on, which have significantly reduced the scale of the lists, but which have also made the general waiting lists rather more realistic.</p> <p>It was considered that the information from the Gypsy Traveller Unit needed to be considered carefully and in more detail to make sure whether those on waiting lists were effectively indicating a preference, or whether they were presently without a site. Whilst it was recognised that asking for more work had various consequences, if it was not checked there was a risk of double counting, and if double counted numbers were then multiplied to get to suggested numbers to be provided that this would not be seen favourably.</p>	
15.	<p><b>Local Plan progress and Duty to co-operate; including strategic issues and the work for ECEA.</b></p> <p>The minutes of the recent sub group had been circulated and the indication of a January date for the issue of final DCLG planning guidance would help. Colleagues continued to note examples of other Authorities who were being examined on their Duty to Co-operate efforts and being found wanting.</p>	
16.	<p><b>Planning Policy Forum</b> Minutes of meeting of 12 Nov were noted.</p>	
17.	<p><b>Development Management Forum</b> Minutes of meeting of 11 Oct were noted.</p>	
18.	<p><b>Website Update</b></p> <p>Andrew Taylor reminded everyone that the Uttlesford District Council website had been renewed and that it now contained the EPOA webs pages. Link attached. <a href="http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/epoa">http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/epoa</a> The pages and the links to the old site are gradually being dismantled. The new site has had information added about health.</p>	
19.	<p><b>Feedback on recent EPOA/PAS training</b></p> <p>The discussion considered some issues which had arisen; there were problems with ICT, but also some of the feedback was not as positive as could have been expected. None the less the holding of such training was seen as valuable. One matter appeared to be reaching all parts of an audience with variable existing understanding of the topics being considered.</p> <p>It was apparent that several of the Members had gone on to attend the subsequent Politicians in Planning session, and which had been more</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>PIPA 2013.pptx</p> </div> <p>positively received.</p>	
20.	<p><b>Joint EPOA and Cambridgeshire meeting</b></p> <p>John Preston had previously circulated an e-mail on this which arose from discussion with Graham Thomas (who had been in EPOA and was now working at Cambridgeshire County Council.) It was agreed that a joint meeting would be useful, and that seeking to include Hertfordshire also made sense, as did the consideration of a site or topic of interest at or near the venue. It was suggested that Stansted Airport might</p>	

	make a sensible venue for all to reach, and that it might also make an interesting site to visit for those who have not been to it before.	
<b>21.</b>	<b>ARU Planning Skills Series</b>  The feedback on this was still good.	
<b>22.</b>	<b>Any other Business and items for future meetings</b>  It was agreed to have a budget discussion at the next meeting. This needs to consider not only future subs, but also 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.  There should be a report back on the item re 5 year housing land supply.  The Administrative Officers met on 2 December. Minutes to follow.  There was a brief discussion about how accessible and comfortable this venue was compared to the usual venue. It appears that several of the County Groups such as ECEA and the Policy and DM forums meet here. However, the cost of today was higher than the normal cost incurred at Braintree. Consideration can be given to the future use of Oaklands if a sensible price can be achieved. In considering future budget as the EPOA subscriptions pays for the venues for EPOA, DC and Policy Forums the venue cost for the meetings will have to be considered carefully.	
<b>23.</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>  The next meeting would take place on 13 March 2014 at 9:30am at the usual venue of the Discovery Centre Braintree  The meeting closed at 12:30	