

ESSEX PLANNING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION**Minutes of meeting held on 12th June 2014
at the Discovery Centre, Great Notley, CM77 7FS**

<p>PRESENT:</p> <p>Andrew Cook – ECC (Chair) Elizabeth Fitzgerald – Harlow Derek Lawrence – Maldon Andrew Taylor – Uttlesford Dianne Cooper – Harlow Nigel Richardson – Epping Forest Laura Chase – Colchester Emma Goodings – Braintree Steve Rogers – Castle Point</p>	<p>Richard Hatter – Thurrock Paul Sallin – ECC Jeremy Potter – Chelmsford Dominic Collins – ECC Tony Pierce – Brentwood Cath Bicknell – Tendring Shaun Scrutton – Rochford Sue Garwood – ECC (minutes)</p>
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No.	Agenda item	Action
1.	Apologies: Ian Vipond – Colchester David Lewis - Basildon	
2.	Notice of AOB: No advance items were raised.	
3.	Minutes of meeting of 13th March 2014 and Action list, and matters arising: The minutes were agreed as an accurate record. The outstanding items on the action list were as follows: Item 3 – SS confirmed the date for the next meeting of the sub group was work in progress. Item 4 – AT confirmed that the GTAA3 presentation for officers and members will be carried out within the next few weeks – awaiting suitable date from Cllr Jowers. Item 5 – links to website – work in progress. Item 6 – venue costs – item included on this agenda.	SS
4.	Place Services – Developer Pays Pilot  105951 GUIDANCE FORMv2.pdf  EPOA_HeadsofService_120614 [Compatibi	

	<p>PS gave a presentation on the partnership support Place Services provides to Harlow Council in relation to design, conservation and historic environment. Place Services provide specialist pre-application and follow-on design, conservation and historic environment advice for a range of developments. This complements the wider pre-application advisory service provided by Harlow Council and links in with advice provided by Place Services on submitted applications.</p> <p>EF explained that Harlow entered into this pilot scheme in November 2013 to assist in bottoming out any problems. Harlow were experiencing budget constraints and increasing costs so they brought in pre application charging. Pointing people in the right direction speeds up the process and the quality of the applications is improving as a result. Overall, the customer seems to be happy and the process is proving to be effective but it has still only been running a short period of time.</p> <p>SS queried how the model would work for ancient monuments records. If there is no SLA in place and if this model is adopted, who pays for ancient monument records? PS explained that you would still need an SLA in place and this would be an additional service. The advantage of the scheme is that it saves time and when the Planning Application comes in, a vast amount of the work has been done already. SR suggested this would be an advantage at Castle Point as they have complaints about pre application advice not being quick enough.</p> <p>It was queried whether ECC were proposing to charge for highways and whether this could be charged under the umbrella of a district's pre-application? . AC confirmed that this wasn't a proposal at present but that he would take this question away from the meeting.</p>	AC
5.	<p>ARU Training Programme</p> <p>As requested by the group, AC has met with Lewis Herbert in the last few months and has received positive feedback from the group about continuing with the training programme. All felt that it was of great value. AC said that more value could be obtained from ARU by ensuring courses are fully subscribed and people don't drop out at the last minute. It is important to make sure the right messages are getting back.</p> <p>AC had previously circulated a list of potential topics to all EPOA members and, following discussion, it was agreed to go with the following 11 topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Planning law and process update including NPPG, recent changes on Permitted Development and prior approval and update on Duty to Co-operate. 2. Viability and managing changes that favour developers, including additional issues influencing land value. 3. Objectively assessing housing need and link to land supply, plus affordable housing policy, funding and delivery including for semi-rural areas. 4. Planning for future retail need including town centres, retail parks and public realm design including linked to new development. 7. Environmental Impact Assessment. 8. Planning for the natural environment, biodiversity and landscape. 12. Planning for gypsies and travellers. 	

	<p>13. Planning and politics – getting the most from working with councillors.</p> <p>14. Examination of local plans, training and giving evidence – primarily for policy officers.</p> <p>18. Producing effective planning briefs for expected development sites, layout options for dormant sites and wider master planning.</p> <p>19. Planning training for non-planners (i.e. technical and admin support staff).</p> <p>AC will feedback the choices to Lewis, who will build the programme and set the dates. AC will then circulate the information via EPOA members with an indication of which sessions would be suitable for Members to attend.</p>	AC
<p>6.</p>	<p>Planning update AC explained that this section is open to everyone to share any information they have.</p> <p>SR mentioned a green belt application which was refused locally, recommended for approval by an Inspector but dismissed by the SoS at appeal, then challenged in the High Court. Challenge was turned away but Court of Appeal have allowed developer to appeal on grounds that green belt was not saved in 2008 and will determine the matter in the autumn.</p> <p>SC mentioned a legal challenge about a sustainability assessment. Plan adopted on 25th Feb but challenged on inadequate consultation carried out on the plan. Also made application for protective costs order. Hearing took place yesterday - won protective costs order. More information on that soon .</p> <p>AC asked if anyone had encountered a judicial review since the new process but no-one had.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Essex ICS, Economic Plan and Planning Compact Dominic Collins, Commissioner for Place Services and Head of Economic Growth and Future Development, introduced himself to the group.</p> <p>ICS/EPFE – Strategic document was published in December 2010. ICS working group remains a helpful group and reports to South East LEP. All districts have members sitting on the group. ECC are hosting a workshop on the afternoon of 24th June to discuss what the group should be doing moving forward. The ICS strategic document has been overtaken by the Economic Plan for Essex, which continues to be a draft. It was taken to cabinet in April as a draft document. Over next 3-4 months, we will be making sure information is correct, making sure the projects are the right ones and how much we are getting through the LEP through economic growth process.</p> <p>Each of 39 LEPs have to produce an economic plan to bid for a share of the pot. The EPFE was submitted at the end of March which begins negotiation between LEP and CG. Government are currently going through the information clarification process. 70% of the pot is made up of highways and growth money and 30% allocation for growth projects. On 7th July it will be decided how much money LEP will get.</p>	

	<p>Planning Compact – This will be a way of working with districts and boroughs. It was an offer to CG and we need to have a discussion amongst ourselves as to what the barriers are and what we can do to support developments. ECEA are looking at work streams around planning. The Chief Exec of Uttlesford, John Mitchell, is taking the lead. Planning Compact is on the agenda at the next ECEA. DC will get in touch with JM to understand what a Planning Compact might be, how it can help the districts and boroughs and also developers. He offered to assist whoever wants help via this group and asked for volunteers for a sub group from round the table. The volunteers were as follows and DC will be in contact in due course:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dianne Cooper (Harlow), Andrew Taylor (Uttlesford), Colchester, Chelmsford, Tendring, Brentwood and Thurrock.</p>	DC
8.	<p>EPOA Budget</p> <p>AC reported that there was £5,000 in the EPOA budget and £3,000 in a separate account for EA. Invoices will be doing the rounds shortly for this year’s subscriptions. Cost comprises training, venues and refreshments for meetings.</p> <p>It was agreed at the last meeting to compare the venue and refreshment costs at Oaklands and the Discovery Centre and, on investigation, it turned out that there is virtually no difference in costs. On that basis, it was agreed to leave the meetings as they currently are for all the groups.</p>	
9.	<p>Demographic Update</p> <p>JP explained that consultants, Edge Analytics, provide all Essex Authorities with updated demographic forecasts. Phase 5 report was published in April and can be accessed via the EPOA website. Phase 6 is currently underway. They will be using the latest 2012 published projections at the end of May and census information. The last phase in this tranche is Phase 7, forecast for completion in the first quarter of next year. This will take into account the latest economic forecast and latest household forecasts. The scenarios will have to stay the same as once you start to change them, there are significant costs. JP highlighted the issue of continuing with this consultancy going forward because of the previous item on budget. He added that he believes it has been really valuable work and most authorities are using it. The demographic forecasts are a standing item on the Policy Forum agenda and final versions will be circulated to the Working Policy Group and Policy Forum.</p> <p>AC asked if there was any indication as to when the next invoice will be received. JP was unsure but said he would find out. A fixed price was agreed over a 3 year period. AC indicated that additional funds will need to be sought but added not to press the button on that just yet.</p>	JP
10.	<p>Local Plan Progress and Duty to Co-operate</p> <p>a) Strategic issues including work for ECEA & London Plan: A number of authorities have made representations. EPOA have issued a letter but haven’t had a response yet from London. London are keen to come and do a presentation to EPOA. AC asked for them to be invited to the December meeting for a</p>	AC

	<p>presentation and discussion.</p> <p>RH mentioned a meeting on Friday where a presentation on household projections for the next 10 years was given. The Plan itself took a fairly robust approach about the housing numbers. Duty to Co-operate - issuing draft consultation this summer - this is the first step. It was suggested there would be further discussion next week. The consultation process is very much for us to influence.</p> <p>b) Outcome of local elections and implications for strategic planning: It was agreed it was difficult doing strategic planning at any level but doubly so since the recent elections. There are new scenarios in quite a few areas and substantial change in Brentwood. It was questioned whether there was a way of making progress. Concerns were raised about plans not getting off the ground and work having to be re-done if plans shifted 5 years forward.</p> <p>DCollins said the ECC members were very interested in economic growth and were starting to have discussions about housing at high level.</p> <p>RH mentioned DTC and said a lot of members don't understand the implications. It will be September when dust settles. There is a process in place and a workshop taking place in a couple of months. The outcome should be better joint working. Background work has got a time expiry date on it. It was thought there may be an opportunity at the CE's meeting. Probably a year treading water to see what happens. Everyone involved in cross border conversations. All taking place at officer and member level which is crucial.</p>	
11.	<p>Planning Policy Forum Minutes JP confirmed that the minutes attached to the agenda were in draft and the Plan Preparation Schedule would be recirculated and put on the website next week. A presentation given by CLG, entitled 'Planning Practice Guidance', focused on the technical side of things. There were no further comments on the minutes.</p>	
12.	<p>Development Management Forum Minutes NR apologised and explained that the minutes were still in draft form but would be finalised and circulated shortly.</p>	NR
13.	<p>Update on the GTAA AT reported that there had been significant steps in the last couple of weeks and a number of drafts issued this week, with another one yesterday. The document was unfortunately not ready to be presented to the group today. AT explained that it is a technical document and updated methodology makes it much clearer – it will be much more robust than the draft everyone has seen previously. The final document will be presented to officers and members in the last couple of weeks of school term. Cllr Jowers will chair the meeting – a date has yet to be confirmed. Following this, individual authorities will take it forward as necessary.</p>	

14.	<p>AOB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - London Plan Review – covered already. - Website traffic update – there were 171 hits on EPOA website and a further 250 hits across different pages of the website. Most visited area is where all the guidance documents are stored. - Income generation from planning services. AC asked if anyone had any ideas to offset reducing budgets in planning activities. Tending to do a special deal on land search charges if people use their building control services – targeting that at the moment. Quite a few of the authorities are charging for pre planning applications. AC requested that anyone coming up with any new ideas to generate income, to please circulate it to the group. 	ALL
15.	<p>Items for future meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building information modelling – AT would like to do a power point presentation. - Local Government Strategy Forum – Aylesbury Vale. Possible to reduce resources by getting local development orders in place and charging more. Maybe something for Policy Forum agenda? - Gwyn Owen from ECC is undertaking a pilot project on housing and land supply issues – how we can get wins in terms of quality of housing, specialised and affordable housing. Could ask him to do presentation. - Report back from sub group on Planning Compact issues (DC) 	
16.	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>9.30 to 1.00 on Thursday 4th September – Discovery Centre, Great Notley.</p>	