

ESSEX PLANNING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION**Minutes of meeting held on 3rd December 2015
at the Discovery Centre, Great Notley**

<p>PRESENT: Andrew Cook – ECC (Chair) Shaun Scrutton – Rochford DC David Green – Chelmsford CC Richard Hatter – Thurrock BC Nick Fenwick – Maldon DC Andrew Taylor – Uttlesford DC Laura Chase – Colchester BC Ken Bean – Epping Forest DC Gordon Glenday – Brentwood BC Steve Rogers – Castle Point BC David Lewis – Basildon BC</p>	<p>Amanda Parrott – Basildon BC Simon Meecham – Tendring DC Dianne Cooper – Harlow DC Emma Goodings – Brentwood BC Graham Thomas – ECC Sue Garwood – ECC (notes)</p> <p>Guests: Stuart Mockford – Planning Portal Keith Blackburn - ECC Sean Perry – ECC Deborah Fox - ECC</p>
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No.	Agenda item	Action
1.	<p>Introduction & Apologies: Introductions were made and the following apologies noted:</p> <p>Peter Geraghty – Southend Dominic Collins – ECC Ian Vipond, Colchester (<i>sub in attendance</i>)</p>	
2.	<p>Notice of AOB: Nothing raised.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes and Actions from Previous Meeting – 3.9.15 The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the last meeting. Transportation Modelling presentation by Jacobs at last meeting – Update from SP that they are still in the process of scoping out a single countywide traffic model and will have an agreed scope by next EPOA meeting.</p>	SP
4.	<p>Overview of the new Planning Portal <i>Presentation by Stuart Mockford, Head of Corporate Development & Regional Account Manager from the Planning Portal.</i></p> <p><i>(presentation)</i></p> <p>SM explained that 75% of the Planning Portal had been sold into the private sector in March 2015. New portal being set up - problems with current one due to large amount of applications submitted. Service will be updated in two phases: Phase 1 - new portal, faster, improved content, upgraded guidance, mobile app</p>	

	<p>ready. Phase 2 – addition of prior notification forms, self service interactive house with links to guidance, provision of minerals form, new payment option. All core services will remain free of charge to LPAs – will only charge for value added services.</p> <p>Questions: AC enquired about timing. SM couldn't confirm exact timing of phase 1 completion as need to be sure portal is 100% right before going live – should be in first 3 months of 2016. Phase 2 will be towards end of 2016.</p> <p>How long is data retained? Information is archived after 2 years. Data is backed up going back to 2002 but not kept on live site. Actual planning application sits on the portal for 5 years.</p> <p>How is Building Control going to be linked to planning applications? This will be seamless and information can be transferred at the click on a button.</p> <p>Will planning inspectors will be advertised on the website when it is on a more commercial footing? SM will check that has been incorporated.</p> <p>Will the new portal be helpful to people who are unsure how the planning system works? Yes, there will be diagrams and the interactive house is very useful for non-experts.</p> <p>What agreement was made when government sold the 75% to private sector? DCLG will make a decision in 2.5 year's time as to whether the system is working and, if not self supporting, then they may have to make a choice whether to revert back as before.</p> <p>SM is very happy to answer any questions anyone may have. His contact details are as follows:</p> <p>Tel: 07765 896959 Stuart.mockford@planningportal.co.uk www.planningportal.co.uk</p> <p><i>Post meeting note: SG provided SM with a contact list of principal EPOA members.</i></p>	SM
5.	<p>Essex Natural Capital Asset Check Presentation by Deborah Fox, Head of Commissioning for the Environment, ECC</p> <p><i>(presentation)</i></p> <p>The project supports Essex County Council's 2014-2018 Environmental Commissioning Strategy and is collating key national & local spatial, environmental & cultural datasets held by ECC and its partners which include Natural England and the Environment Agency. It models eco systems using EcoServe GIS toolkit. Natural capital is Essex's 'stock' of waters, land, air, species, minerals and oceans. The Environmental Commissioning Strategy recognises the need to undertake further analysis to understand the Essex environment including its assets, opportunities for enhancement and the</p>	

<p>requirements of local residents. The Essex Natural Capital Asset Check will represent a significant step towards establishing a meaningful baseline.</p> <p>DF presented a series of maps based on different criteria. Having data in one place is useful to identify gaps. Working with Public Health colleagues to identify where intervention is required. A query was raised about Local Habitat and English Heritage sites – DF will check why they don't appear to be listed.</p> <p>Workshops are being held in the new year and attendance is recommended at local levels. The University of Essex have a number of academics working on an income eco system for the whole Essex Area which might be useful to researchers. It is intended to publish a final report and DF would welcome early discussions and feedback from this group.</p> <p>Questions: Is each LA able to get information for their particular area? Yes - unsure if there would be a charge at this stage. Some data is commercially sensitive so permission might need to be sought to share it.</p> <p>Was the information obtained from local plans and was each LA contacted? Place Services would have been in touch with each LA – probably the GIS contact within each area.</p> <p>Canal walkways in Harlow, where there have been a lot of recent improvements, don't appear to be shown on the charts. DF said it is possible there may be more data to feed in from the LA's.</p> <p>EFDC are producing their own management plan and have a wealth of information and data. DF said that local groups will have their own data and she is interested in building out from this – it has taken a while to get to this point but this is still just the beginning.</p> <p>AT queried Place Services market testing. Uttlesford have already got their own information so why would they want to purchase it from Place Services? DF explained that it is an ECC project and they chose to commission Place Services to do the work. It has been arranged to support the Commissioning Strategy (DF can produce a copy if required). It has been identified that there is an opportunity to produce a product and she hopes the information is of use to people.</p>	<p>DF</p>
<p>What is the connection between this work and nature improvement areas and how this work will be taken forward? Is there an opportunity for this project to be linked to planning permission for applicants of nature improvement areas? DF will follow that up.</p>	<p>DF</p>
<p>SP mentioned the data they hold for the PROW network and cycling and walking networks. Sustrans information might be able to fill some of the gaps.</p>	
<p>DF said there is going to be a Pollution and Public Health exercise on open space and she is looking for suitable plots to do that. If anyone has any suggestions, please let DF know.</p>	<p>ALL</p>

<p>6.0</p>	<p>ECC Developers' Guide <i>(Presentation by Keith Blackburn, Senior Infrastructure Planning Officer, ECC)</i></p> <p><i>(presentation)</i></p> <p>Revision of the Developers Guide is nearly complete - expecting to be published just before or just after Christmas. Publication consultation was held and all responses are on the ECC website. There are about 6-8 main changes. Next step is formal adoption and KB would welcome the opportunity to go and present to LAs.</p> <p>AC mentioned that the document foreword makes interesting reading. He added that responses to planning applications need to be more robust in support of the planning process and resistant to development where it is contrary to the emerging LP process.</p> <p>SM queried what the hold up with this has been and AC said it was just due to the ECC internal approval process.</p> <p>KB mentioned an issue over secondary education and CIL review.</p> <p>AC confirmed the Developers Guide will be adopted as ECC planning guidance. Discussion among members of the group indicated that it wasn't necessary for the guide to be adopted by each individual district because of the complexities around consultation requirements but that instead the document would be formally endorsed by EPOA in the same way as previous documents like Parking Standards etc. Keith to action with appropriate logos etc.</p>	<p>KB</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Essex Development Management & Parking Standards Consultation <i>(Sean Perry – Head of Economic Growth & Development, ECC)</i></p> <p>Both documents are in the same position and SP would like to see EPOA members endorsing them. Interim review of Parking Standards taking place to bring them in line with NPPF. It is envisaged that a full review will take place in the future based on evidence collected since the 2010 revisions. Applications cause difficulties from a highways point of view. SP is In the process of getting Cabinet Member approval for public consultation. The documents will be out to consultation for 6 weeks, hopefully before Christmas but certainly before end of January. Hoping to publish a complete suite of documents by April 2016, comprising the Development Guide, Parking Standards and, if possible, Essex Design Guide.</p> <p>SP would like to give EPOA an advance copy of both documents along with key changes highlighted and would welcome any comments on the two documents.</p> <p>Questions: DC said that stronger guides regarding parking spaces on large housing estates would be welcomed. She mentioned vast tarmac'd areas requiring vegetation to break up areas. SP confirmed that the minimum parking space size has been removed from the document as it was causing confusion and consistency is required.</p> <p>SR agreed with comments about removing the minimum size and said a link in the document to the Design Guide would be helpful.</p>	<p>SP</p>

	DG said it was important to make the document time proof (i.e. to withstand changes in growth, jobs, houses) so it doesn't get thrown out in a few year's time. SP confirmed that they are very much consultation documents and would welcome any views anyone has. He will take stock of responses he gets back and will amend the documents accordingly.	
8.	Greater Essex Devolution: Essex Growth & Infrastructure Framework Due to the absence of DC, this item was withdrawn from the agenda and will be carried forward to next meeting.	DC
9.	<p>ECC & Local Plans – ECC role in Local Plans</p> <p>AC reported that portfolio members have raised the question of whether ECC could assist LA's in their delivery of local plans by providing additional resources and asked EPOA members whether they thought this would help. He added that it may be possible to allocate some funding to help with this.</p> <p>There was a consistent view that one of the main blockers on Local Plan progress was Essex Highways, their lack of capacity and their slowness to respond to modelling requests. Specifically the points raised were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the speed and consistency of transport modelling advice to local plans • Need more resource for both modelling and more general transport advice • Need ECC to play a stronger role in resolving strategic transport network issues (Highways England etc) • Have more resource to deliver business cases to SELEP or Government on strategic infrastructure provision <p>In addition the County could help with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More evidence base work on the viability of infrastructure • More clarity on engagement timescales for different ECC functions • Single ECC voice and response with internal tensions resolved before we respond <p>EG asked if there was a process in mind and how long it would take to engage with each department. AC will find out and feed that back.</p> <p>It was suggested that more clarity from ECC is required and more communication with the districts would be helpful. The question was asked whether the offer would be a senior planning resource - someone with a few years' experience would be preferable.</p> <p>It was generally felt that practical measures would be good but getting ECC involved would not help if the problem was a local political or governance issue.</p> <p>AC asked anyone who requires help to e-mail him by January and he will have some more information for the March meeting.</p> <p>Post meeting note: AT, as vice chair, issued a letter on behalf of EPOA to the ECC portfolio holder, detailing the above requests following a discussion between the two of them at a recent SELEP event.</p>	<p>AC</p> <p>ALL/AC</p> <p>AT</p>

10.	<p>ARU Training Programme No recent problems and feedback has been good. Viability session very good.</p>	
11.	<p>National Planning Update AC mentioned the SELEP workshop being held at Hylands House on 7th Dec. He will circulate details and the agenda to all.</p> <p>AC and GT attended a Canvey Island launch event at the House of Commons on 30th November. One of the key points raised by the minister was an expectation that the LEP would fund a wider range of projects than just economic growth related activities.</p> <p>GLA Summit - RH mentioned the wider SE summit being held next week. Invitations had gone to CE's and leaders and has hopefully filtered down to this group. Discussions around housing delivery and strategic infrastructure and how to prioritise those workstreams going forward. On the same day a separate paper is going to E of E CE's setting out suggestions for technical work. GLA are offering their model to test a range of scenarios - looking at separate expansion of their economic forecast.</p> <p>Regional activity – AC asked if everyone was responding to the CIL consultation. AT confirmed that a joint response is being worked on by the Policy Forum.</p>	AC
12.	<p>EPOA Budget Update AC reported there are still some outstanding payments to be made for EPOA subscriptions for 2015/16 - Chelmsford, Southend and Brentwood. DG asked SG to send reminder details to Stella Allen at Chelmsford CC.</p> <p>Regarding G & T payments – AT is in the process of compiling a list of purchase order numbers so invoices can be issued. All to let AT have their order numbers and he will send a list to AC.</p>	SG ALL AT
13.	<p>Local Plan Progress & Duty to Co-operate Most issues covered during earlier discussion. Details included in the Planning Policy Forum notes.</p> <p>Waste Plan - GT mentioned the M & W Stakeholder meeting on the morning of 17th Dec at Chapter House in Chelmsford. This will be a chance to see what has come out of the representations before it goes to cabinet in January.</p>	
14.	<p>Planning Policy Forum minutes (12.5.15) The minutes were circulated to all with the agenda. It was a fairly standard meeting – CIL consultation discussed. No further comments made.</p>	
15.	<p>Development Management Forum minutes The minutes had been circulated to all under separate cover. No comments made.</p>	
16.	<p>AOB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GG enquired about how other authorities Planning Committees were operated for a paper he was preparing. Member training usually takes place before the meeting. The training doesn't involve discussion about any of the agenda items and is on a chosen subject which has no bearing on agenda. 	

17.	<p>Items for future meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AC observed that the group made good use of the coffee break networking time and decided that at future meetings, less time should be taken up with presentations and more time for networking discussions. - KB mentioned that Brian Whiteley of Planning Aid England was keen to attend an EPOA meeting to give a presentation on what his service can offer. It was agreed that the Planning Policy Group would be a more suitable forum for this presentation. <i>Post meeting note: SG has sent contact details to AP at Basildon to action.</i> - Growth & Infrastructure – Dominic Collins - Recruitment Issue – Richard Greaves - Gypsy & Traveller update – Andrew Taylor - ECC offer of help in delivery of Local Plans – update from AC 	
18.	<p>Date of next meeting: Thursday 3rd March 2016 – 10 am start</p>	