

ESSEX PLANNING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of meeting held on 9th June 2016
at the Discovery Centre, Great Notley

<p>PRESENT: Andrew Cook – ECC (Chair) David Green – Chelmsford CC Dianne Cooper – Harlow DC Matthew Winslow – Basildon DC Graham Thomas – ECC Emma Goodings – Braintree BC Kim Fisher – Castlepoint DC Andy Millard – Thurrock BC Ian Vipond – Colchester BC Amanda Parrott – Basildon BC Peter Geraghty – Southend on Sea BC Emma Woods – ECC Cath Bicknall - TDC</p>	<p>Lisa White – ECC (notes) Sue Garwood– ECC (notes)</p> <p>Guests: Dr Michael Harris Jason Fergus - ECC</p>
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No.	Agenda item	Action
1.	<p>Introduction & Apologies: Introductions were made and the following apologies noted. Representatives were in attendance for all authorities other than Epping Forest & Uttlesford</p> <p>Richard Greaves – ECC Kenneth Bean – Epping Forest DC Nigel Richardson – Epping Forest DC</p>	
2.	<p>Notice of AOB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommendations for Vice Chair (AC) - GTAA update (AC) <p>IV mentioned an e-mail from St Albans CEO regarding recruitment planning in EoE. A Stakeholder group has been set up, led by the CEO, and a number of recommendations have resulted. IV attended a focus group meeting in Cambridge to highlight the issues and problems. He thought it would be useful if there was an EPOA rep on the focus group. GT said that Richard Greaves also attended the Cambridge focus group meeting and he intends to take the item to the DM Forum shortly.</p> <p>Action for RG to report back here.</p> <p>AC asked for views on setting up an EPOA sub group linked to design issues and whether people thought it was a good idea. GT mentioned the Essex Design Guide refresh item later on the agenda and the possibility of setting up a task and finish group to look at the quality agenda in this context. He put his hand up to take this</p>	RG

	<p>forward.</p> <p>GTAA update – Suzanna Wood has taken over this task from Andrew Taylor. Survey work has been done and sending through site summary this week. Making progress but not quite there yet. .</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes and Actions from Previous Meeting – 3.3.16</p> <p>The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the last meeting. To note Emma Goodings is from Braintree DC and not Brentwood.</p>	
4.	<p>Presentation on the Economic Value of Planning. (Presentation by Dr Michael Harris RTPI)</p> <p>Discussion held – AC spoke about the planning element and how the development tools they have had to help them in the past have been taken away. They find themselves struggling. Need to lobby a strategy on how we promote planning going forward and what direction we are taking.</p> <p>MH said they are continuing to work on this and want to add some numbers and economic value. We will see if we can provide a simple toolkit to help locally.</p> <p>AC advised there are hundreds of schemes that are in the process of planning but then there is no emphasis on the schemes that have already gone through the system and processed on time.</p> <p>MH – need to bring forward the development plan and try to do this locally, some of the districts are telling the story well and how their schemes are successfully going through. The key thing is to measure the results.</p> <p>GT – Every Local Plan that is prepared should be viewed as investment plan that will secure billions of development funding for new homes, business and jobs. It is important that we understand the financial value of Local Plans and the opportunities this provides to facilitate and stimulate growth. The assumption is that private developers know what their market is and get best value from that. Barrett’s development in south Cambridge is a good example of where the planning process delivered a far better housing product than the developer had expected, and the developer secure a far high return than expected and they were very supportive of the added value the planning process achieved and the good quality housing delivered. MH agreed that is a good story to share.</p> <p>IV – Feels with the government body unlikely to change their policies, we are limited to our resources, and we can’t influence what is going through parliament. Highlighting the people don’t want to develop certain communities, focusing on delivering high quality and what benefits the business.</p> <p>AC – asked if there is a difference that we can make with challenging the government re their policies.</p> <p>PG – feels the government are not going to change their policies. Focussing on the limited resources we face, we have done lobbying for this with little changes taking place. The difficulty we face is the quality of developments highlighting poor gardens/green areas with poor design and emphasising poor planning.</p> <p>MH – we are faced with a much bigger economic debate from financial markets. There has been a decline in trust from the government, people know it’s not working but what they want is to make the markets work and have it properly regulated by planners to produce the outcomes they want.</p>	

	<i>(copy of presentation to be forwarded under separate cover)</i>	
5.	<p>Active Essex/Sport England & Public Health (Presentation by Jason Fergus ECC)</p> <p>Active Essex work in partnership with Sport England and work across all 14 local authorities. It sits within the Public Health team at ECC. They are involved in community sport and school sport.</p> <p>The drive behind this is to engage physical activity and get more people active. There is a big push by government to get the population more active. A new Cycle Strategy paper going to Cabinet in 2 weeks time.</p> <p>Questions</p> <p>IV – highlighted the most disappointing outcome is the low activity in school children, feel like it’s a formal exercise and unable to tackle the multiple use of schools and facilities at schools. Some of the buildings remain dormant in the evenings. He queried how we could make use of those facilities.</p> <p>JF – Is aware Essex has buildings that overlay with the school activities, we should have access to these sites so we can offer more opportunities. Recently Basildon have opened a brand new sports hall, the Head teacher is keen for the community to use the facilities.</p> <p>PG – spoke about the design in parks and housing schemes. Could we adopt an approach that creates the type of facility where people don’t realise it is helping them to be active. Europe are further ahead than us.</p> <p>GT is working with JF and public health team to help shape and frame some of the planning policies.</p> <p><i>(copy of presentation to be forwarded under separate cover)</i></p>	
6.	<p>Devolution Update</p> <p>ECC update is that activity has paused. The CEO and leaders met and discussed the issue of a mayor and this has not progressed and the work stream activity is on hold.</p>	
7.	<p>Progress report on the Essex Growth and Infrastructure Framework</p> <p>GT referred to the last meeting when IV volunteered to join the interview panel to select the consultants to undertake the GIF study. AECOM were appointed in early April. They have met with a number of districts/boroughs and have collated a lot of information, moving to the final stage of phase 1, which should be completed by the end of June, to taking a more detailed workshop type approach in phase 2. We will be setting up meetings as we move into Phase 2. The expectation is to set up a reference group which Dianne and Andy have already volunteered for this but further volunteers are required. A small group (between 5-7 people) is required representing members from this group and IGF group.</p> <p>A planning policy leads meeting on 18th May went well and has received positive feedback. Workshops are underway meeting with utility and emergency services and meeting with NHS & Health this coming afternoon. The meetings are themed around flood, transportation and highways. AECOM are wading through a vast amount of information/data at the present time. We are looking for something that</p>	

is beginning to show us where the gaps in future infrastructure funding are and what the issues might be.

IV advised a huge amount of work has already been carried out on the back of devolution. One of the strengths of AECOM is their commitment to work with all the components. Regarding the substantial work already done, there will be some of the pipeline stuff that is historic and will be worth looking at.

PG enquired how it will be kept up to date and GT said that whilst Kent were the first to do this process, we don't want to keep bringing in consultants. That is a question for the reference group to consider as we will have a live GIS data base in place at the end of this process which will enable the GIF to become a live document.

GT requested volunteers for the GIF reference group. The following have come forward:

- Harlow
- Thurrock
- Basildon
- Chelmsford

South, West and Chelmsford have identified a volunteer for the ref group - North to confirm

8. Design and Quality Issues – Kent & Essex Design Guide

Planning is all about getting the right balance with jobs, quality homes and leisure facilities. The quality design for growth agenda consists of 3 parts.

- A Quality Charter which is owned by the community of Essex. Elsewhere this approach has been helpful in fostering an understanding that growth is a good thing provided it is kept in balance and is of a good standard of development. The Cambridgeshire Quality Charter is a good example of where this has been successful.
- Second part will see the refresh of the Essex Design Guide, accepting the focus will be around growth and development.
- Third part – is to establish self-funded Architect Review panel of major and strategic development proposals to enable an independent review to be undertaken prior to the formal planning application process. There are various models available including the Kent model.

As discussed earlier this is an area of work that will progress once the GIF has been finalised and GT will be looking to establish a small Task and Finish group to take this area of work forward.

DG - Essex follow that design - felt it was very useful able to discuss with the developer and raise independent concerns about the design and the quality.

AC - happy as a group for GT to look into the costings.

IV – noted the strength of the Essex Design Guide is it is not simply a County Council document, if going to be redone EPOA will need to take ownership as it is owned by all of the Essex local authorities. GT confirmed it is everyone's document and very supportive of a collaborative approach to help shape and refresh the Design Guide.

	<p>Presentation at last meeting from Kent – GT looking to set up something similar for Essex. It was confirmed volunteers from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colchester • Basildon • Braintree • Southend. <p>GT to bring this item back to the next meeting and discuss the stakeholder reference to that group.</p>	
12	<p>ARU Training Programme</p> <p>Attached page circulated to the group. AC recently met with Lewis, Steve and Jeremy, they discussed next series of training sessions, Lewis is keen to close this and confirm courses to commence in September. The cost of training is £31k for series they provide 10 or 11 courses. That cost has not changed in the last 10 years but the cost this year is exceeding that amount. Lewis has proposed a cost of £33, 300.</p> <p>We are faced with two choices - agree a small uplift or reduce the number of sessions to keep within the cost. Cost and overheads stay fixed – probably need to lose 2-3 sessions. We are probably okay to run this year but need to be aware we are getting to the pressure point in respect of what we collect and what is going out – there is no residual. Do we want to continue a 10 session programme or look at a lower number being provided? We will need to get funds next financial year. It was agreed that there was no other training on the market coming in at this value.</p> <p>The cost to each authority is £2.5k each which includes training, meetings and sub forum expenses.</p> <p>KF advised that Steve Rodgers was concerned about the increase of cost. We need to make sure that officers are committed and attend. IV suggested maybe a charge for non-attendance – all agreed this was a good idea.</p> <p>AC - feedback he received is very DC focused for the last session. DC said that is why Harlow had added other suggestions to the coursers.</p> <p>Members were asked by AC to indicate their preferences taking into account the additional suggestions of Castle point, Uttlesford and Harlow, must be sent by close of business tomorrow – all to send to LW to collate.</p> <p>Action: LW to collate</p> <p><i>Post meeting note: LW received preferences and sent on to Lewis. 2/3 authorities still need to respond.</i></p>	LW
10.	<p>Demographic Modelling – recommendations from Policy Forum</p> <p>General view from Policy Forum was that it was a good idea but don't want to be duplicating work – the schedule shows targets and housing capacity, discession around underlying demographic/economic development – more depth required between housing and growth.</p> <p>South east work around GLA</p> <p>Next steps –procurement exercise, tackle future population and growth - need a steer from this group.</p> <p>AP will share briefing with group for all to consider - put on the agenda for next meeting.</p>	

18.	Items no 14, 15 & 16 were not covered at this meeting due to time pressures and will be brought forward to the next meeting.	LW
19.	Date of next meeting: Thursday 8 th September – 10 am Hadleigh Park	