

**ESSEX PLANNING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION****Minutes of meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2017**  
**at Discovery Centre**

<p><b>PRESENT:</b>          Andrew Cook - ECC (Chair)          Richard McEllistrum Basildon          Ben Brook ECC          Graham Thomas ECC          Keith Holmes – Chelmsford CC          Steve Rogers – Castle Point          Richard Hatter – Thurrock Council          Cath Bicknell – Tendring DC          Emma Goodings – Braintree DC          Gordon Glenday – Uttlesford DC          Dianne Cooper – Harlow</p>	<p>Lisa White (minute taker)</p> <p><b>Guests:</b>          Pete Dawson ECC          Alethea Evans ECC          Richard Greaves ECC          Lee Heley ECC</p>
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No.	Agenda item	Action
1.	<p><b>Introduction &amp; Apologies:</b>            Introductions were made and the following apologies noted.</p> <p>David Green &amp; Jeremy Potter Chelmsford CC (<i>Keith Holmes rep</i>)            Andrew Millard, Thurrock            Matthew Winslow &amp; Amanda Parrott Basildon (<i>Richard Mcellistrum rep</i>)            Matthew Thomas, Rochford            Shaun Scrutton, Rochford            Nigel Richardson, Epping Forest            Peter Geraghty, Southend            Phil Drane, Brentwood            Ian Vipond, Colchester</p>	
2.	<p><b>Minutes and Actions from Previous Meeting 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016</b>            Agreed as an accurate record</p> <p><i>Post note – GG identified comments on page 6 Holding a series of workshops in November - review of LDF. Not LBS</i></p>	
3.	<p><b>Election of a new Chairman for EPOA from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017</b></p> <p>AC informed the group that he will step down as the Chairman for the EPOA meeting and today's meeting will be his last. Due to changes in his role he will no longer have the responsibility for Planning as and from the 1<sup>st</sup> April. LH asked if the secretariat is provided by the organisation?            AC confirmed this is correct.            DC advised that if the Chair is from a small organisation they will need to consider providing the secretariat role in-house.</p>	

4.	<p><b>Notice of AOB:</b></p> <p>Public Health and Planning Conference” being planned for June 2017  EPOA training feedback  Recruitment and retention</p>	
5.	<p><b>Essex Design Guide – Update Presentation – by Peter Dawson</b></p> <p>PD spoke about the design guide progress made since the last update given in September 2016. PD explained the funding has now been sourced and work has commenced on the Essex Design Guide which started at the beginning of March. He gave a presentation on the timetable and how he proposes to progress this work and the Charter for Growth working closely with the City/Districts/Borough Councils and other key partners.</p> <p>He explained the Design Guide will cover new areas of activity which are particularly relevant and will help provide useful guidance for LPA’s and developers alike including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design principle which address health and wellbeing</li> <li>• How to design effectively the housing requirements and needs of an ageing population,</li> <li>• How do we embrace digital technology and what does good design look like- how it would look in 10 years’ time</li> <li>• Design principles for strategic growth sites including Garden Communities.</li> </ul> <p>PD explained that in meeting with the EPOA policy members recently, this work was positively received, and members were pleased the Design Guide is now underway. However, there is a desire for this work to be progressed quickly to support the work underway with emerging Local Plans.</p> <p>As EPOA is the sponsor and owner of the Pan-Essex Design Guide he emphasised that Districts and Boroughs would be very important with helping to shape the EDG document. And that the two EPOA representatives will be invaluable and of considerable assistance as nominees representing the views of EPOA on the Reference Group along with the other partners who are funding this work. The EPOA reps will also be key in helping to shape and moving this work forward.</p> <p>PD felt that a good proportion of the existing Design Guide is still valid. The new EDG this time will be provided in an on-line format, and therefore interactive and easy for people to access. Addressing different rules and regulations, checking the case studies and ‘how to’ guides for each District and Borough council. There may be opportunities to develop some social media contents which will enable the sharing of common issues, problems and solutions.</p> <p>GT explained the funding for this work comes from different sources. He had secured sponsorship from Sports England, and funding from Public Health, and Digital and work is underway to find an external Digital sponsor who is keen to actively engage to help articulate what digital in the form of good design guide looks like. GT and PD are looking at other forms of sources of funding and currently trying to secure the external sponsor.</p> <p>GT explained he is looking for two EPOA representatives to join the Reference Group and this will involve engaging with all the sponsors. This</p>	

will probably involve 4-5 meetings over the duration of this work.

#### Questions

AC – asked GT about ownership of the document and the need to think about the wider remit and the current status. The document was previously owned by EPOA members. He explained it is worth thinking about the sign off process, discuss the key themes and the previous sign off guide, we need to be sure that officers are not choosing what they want to action. There is a need to reinforce this to all members, making it a stronger document.

GT – EPOA will own this document and we will put this to the sponsors and ensure they feel comfortable with that. The responsibility will be for every one of the officers of this group to update and own it.

Regarding the sign off process, GT informed the group that he will need to reflect on this point and this will be something the reference group will be able to help navigate a way forward with. Unfortunately he can't give an instant answer.

CB will new issues such as Sustainable Urban Drainage systems be addressed.

PD yes, there is already some helpful guidance on SUDs available on the ECC website.

DC – welcomed the new settlement angle given the number and scale of Garden Communities now planned. Adoption will be something down to individual local authorities.

GT explained the Design Guide and indeed the Charter for Growth are nudge documents providing guidance on what works and moving the Place Making agenda forward, after all we are all trying to deliver “balanced growth” but deliver good quality places in which people can live and work with good quality infrastructure and a pleasant environment.

RM - Is the document going to be live document, with micro changes, part of the adoption as this makes keeping on top of things very difficult if constantly being changed.

PD – this is a good point, no we will need to manage any such changes and do this is an orderly timely way. I expect the work will initially be developed by groups of districts at a time. Documents like this need to be adopted with a guidance element in it with the districts' own policies sitting alongside that.

RH – when the initial document was published there was an agreement that it would be a self-build document going forward. How do we plan and undertake that work?

DC – had been involved in the design guide when it was previously prepared. There was some difficulty trying to get districts to adopt it. Everyone trying to update it but no one was keeping on top of the changes especially the subject of car parking.

GT this Design Guidance is just that it is guidance and will illustrate best practice, and how to deliver quality which does not necessary mean expensive as we all know.

AC- noted there will be big changes going forward regarding the car usage and the residential car parking. Estates parked with cars with the design

guide principals in mind and actually seeing in reality.  
RG – acknowledges that it is often less than straightforward to get developers on side. It might be an idea to take this discussion to the developers’ forum to engage and get developers on board.  
DM managers’ forum is due to take place on the 6<sup>th</sup> April

AC – would be interesting point to link with the developers’ forum.

PD- is due to attend the developers’ forum (Jamie Carswell’s forum). Already set up with these meetings and link all together. Indeed engagement with developer representative will be important.

KH – this work will need to link to each local authority websites. Adopting the document and allow officers to point to relevant design guidance and the LPA’s relevant planning policies.

PD - create the best of the design guide. Planning websites. User hub,

AC - the current design guidance and current policies in district/ boroughs plans have not adapted to address new technology for example providing car charging points. Moving forward the best practice is the implementation of new technology.

AC – Most new houses come with superfast broadband. With digital control and building control issues, where does the design guidance sit?

GT – the house building industry has a product that sells, house building is at a much slower pace than is required despite the number of granted planning permissions there is perhaps not the level of motivation from the industry to adapt innovate and change as with other business sectors. Hence the importance of the Design Guide being a very important nudge document.

SR – agreed the Design Guide should be a nudge document rather than being too prescriptive.

GG – Strategic developments that are being planned today need to be looking to address the smart city agenda.

PD - 10 % renewables on site, show casing what it means, includes broadband, all these ideas on smartphone technology, what it means for Essex. Design guide a little mixed up and need to unpick that

LH – referred to a design guidance piece of work being undertaken by DCLG which ECC policy and strategy colleagues have been working on this work was launched the 23rd March, which he confirmed he is happy to share with the notes of this meeting.

RG – referred to a smarter city take good examples of what has been done. How it affects planning, space design. Predicting the future and engaging with new technologies.


GT – requested EPOA nominees. He suggested it would be helpful to have someone on board who would have experience in new communities and new settlements. The requirement is very light touch, possibly 5 times during the year.

**Action - Steve Rogers and Gordon Glenday were nominated as the two EPOA representatives on for the Design Guide Steering/Reference**

**PD/LW**

	<p><b>Group.</b></p> <p>The time frame to have the document going live will be end of the year. Working alongside the web company, additional marketing agencies. PD spoke about a plan to hold workshops through the year and plan to take the updated document to the Developers' forum to see how they can develop the document further.</p> <p>Action – PD send presentation to LW to attach with minutes.</p>	
6.	<p><b>The Housing White Paper</b></p> <p><i>LH proposed questions to the group –</i></p> <p>Should all authorities decide whether they will respond to the White Paper and what are the key themes?</p> <p>SR – feels the White Paper has not covered the key problem especially in South Essex which is delivering more homes and yet still protecting the Green Belt. The document was inconsistent and did not make the plan-making system any simpler, faster or less complicated. There are smaller proportions of new homes from emerging sources of supply and yet a big input is being required from LPAs on matters such as build to rent, self-build and builds for aging population.</p> <p>EG - feels disappointed about the content and what the planners get in return. Is the aim to get developers to build faster?</p> <p>GT – The political leaders group met recently with EOE. There are concerns about holding the local planning authorities to account. Some Members didn't have answers to that?</p> <p>GG - CLG officers advised the document contains a housing figure that did not come through on the White Paper. Information would be shared as soon as possible. 10 senior CLG in the meeting - drive from housing.</p> <p>LH – asked what is it that would take to deliver the builds. Do we need to be equipped with the correct tools?</p> <p>GG - need to let them know what they need to delivery to meet x &amp; y, CLG officers seemed to be very keen to engage working in partnership.</p> <p>LH – Capacity/loan fund the delivery schedule not met, CPO it and move it to a builder of your choice.</p> <p>SR – Need to unlock the delays behind the delivery to keep it moving. In one case of which he was aware, the developer is ready to go in but is still waiting for the all-clear on narrow technical issues and he may not prepared to wait.</p> <p>LH – what if we could draw down the funding earlier?</p> <p>AC – advised they would face building issues, no mechanism in planning to secure contributions. For example the A127 is a crucial development but if a project sits adjacent to it, this could affect the funds.</p> <p>LH –another example is Crossrail.</p> <p>AC – the ability to pull money from a wider remit to more strategic development is crucial and to avoid people paying too high a premium and planners don't want that.</p> <p>LH – acknowledges supply is low for supply in demand. Agricultural land available to build on the price shoots up. Infrastructure and enough sites to hit target. Support the delivery test as a principal, agree to have residential target.</p> <p>SR - is this set out in the White Paper? Need to take into account that local plans will need to have tweaks to follow this proposal. A delivery test with appropriate tools may be useful, but not the one described in the White</p>	

	<p>Paper, which appears overly prescriptive. What are the consequences of a failure to meet the delivery test, other than the risk of uncontrolled development in the area?  GT- couple of points to address  We know the appeal process giving us a development well thought through from an inspector’s point of view. Planning examination process and the land developer taking a back seat - deliverability test should be more robust. Picking up if a developer is in several sites.</p> <p>SR – proposed housing delivery test itself is a further burden on already scarce resources. Already obliged to carry out annual monitoring reports.  DC – discussed if you have one developer on one site or 5 developers on one site and building for housing association, the capacity is so much slower.  LH – discussed the 20% increase on fees. Highlighting the treasury is not keen on fees being raised.  AC – the increase needs to be agreed and signed off by a section151 officer.</p> <p>Ben –spoke about the garden settlements and what are the views of the group and what powers could be useful.  EG – advised that this is not an easy way to capture land value or trying to negotiate with land owners.</p> <p>RG - 1992 regulation highlights selling land with planning permission. Opening the door again to deal with own planning applications.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Essex CC Local Plan Delivery – Alethea Evans</b></p> <p>RG –introduced Alethea and gave a brief outline on the Waste local plan and how this plan is just complete, a little earlier than expected and the completion date is set for July.  AE Principal planning officer in the Planning Policy Team spoke about the past couple of years and how successful the team has been with the delivery of mineral and waste local plans. ECC’s new waste local plan will be adopted in July 2017 and includes site allocations for future development and policies to manage how such development is implemented. AE confirmed that these successes have led to the identification of capacity to support local plans across Essex, with support already provided to Basildon and Tendring.</p> <p>Following the presentation, AE raised a question to the group - if the districts need support with their Local Plans as Place Services/Planning Team have now got the capacity and can offer their services as a competitive cost.  SR – asked if this support from ECC is a short or long term capacity?  AE – Advised the Business plan for this service offer they could provide support for the next 2 to 3 years to assist with both long and short term projects. This is because the minerals plan is not due to be reviewed for the next 3-4 years. AE noted that options for support included flexible options around remote working from County Hall or from district offices to keep the cost down.</p> <p>GG – Advantage to all would be to have better management policies, running short term projects, there might be a series of projects his person could be allocated to. Consider long term placements too.</p>	

	<p>DC – asked about the issues around what specific offer they can provide, for example infrastructure  AC – advised infrastructure would sit outside the remit, suggestion to Alethea to inform the group what services they offer and enter this with the slides.  AC – there is a need to understand the expertise in the team.</p>  <p>EPOA_Essex Local  Plan Delivery Service_</p>	
8.	<p>The Government proposals to increase planning fees (for discussion)</p> <p>This was covered as part of White Paper discussion</p>	
9.	<p>Minutes of DM forum</p> <p>No comments made.</p>	
10.	<p><b><u>Planning Protocol update - AC provided an update on behalf of Jamie:</u></b></p> <p>Three members have kindly agreed to sit on the working group  These are -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Richard McEllistrum, Basildon</li> <li>• Simon Cairns, Colchester</li> <li>• Keith Holmes, Chelmsford</li> </ul> <p>There was a general consent to a joint collaborative approach across the wider Essex. Touched on the benefits from the design guide. There was also recognition of the advantages of a consistent approach to PPA.</p> <p>Planning protocol - there as a discussion at the first pan-Essex forum where a number of private developers have volunteered to sit in on the project. Jamie is in the process of organising the first meeting that will take place in April and will bring forward this discussion and report to the group in the June meeting.</p> <p>Issues already identified are:  Consistency and ease application of PPAs  The role for member training and involvement at pre-app  Delays in discharge of pre commencement conditions  Highways issues between pre app discussion and post completion signoff</p> <p>GT – suggested it would be helpful to have an industrial developer as a member of the pan Essex forum preparing the protocol.  AC will feed this comment back to Jamie Carswell</p> <p>LW to send the Kent document on a separate cover due to the size of the document.</p>	<p>AC/JC</p> <p>LW(actioned)</p>
11.	<p>AOB:</p> <p><b><u>Public Health and Planning Conference” being planned for June 2017</u></b></p> <p>GT – spoke about Public health colleagues working with NHS to work together to gain better public health aspirations.  TCPA agreed to work with Public health and NHS in Essex –  Suggestion to hold a conference/workshop to go through day to day</p>	

practice. Take it forward in the next couple of months with an insight to have a better programme. Main purpose of the event, health infrastructure practical commissioners. Aiming at senior heads of services, part of public.

### **EPOA training feedback**

AC highlighted to the group that there is one more training session to run of the current series.

In principal need to get an idea from the group if they would like to run the courses for next year. Lewis has informed AC that he can run the same amount of courses for next year and keep to same cost. Will we continue to budget from the EPOA fund going forward?

Do we need a training session for Members?

This year's training courses were applicable for officers and not for Members, the course needs to be tailored for them as an audience.

Group agreed they will continue with the courses for next year.

SR - will link with Lewis to help co-ordinate for next year.

**SR**

### **Recruitment and retention - RG**

RG – A recent survey was carried out to work on the development of management. The aim is to retain 15 – 30% staff attract new employees/staff. The difficulty in recruiting new planners and retaining experienced planners is not new in Essex or the wider East of England region.

EOE met with ECC, RG was not at this meeting to highlight the need for planner recruitment. However GT is working alongside Joshua who is a keen member and he will be looking at how we should approach the recruitment problems, enticing graduate schemes.

Essex County Council (ECC) is now working to remedy these and would like to invite Essex LPAs to take part in the design and delivery of the options summarised in this presentation ( see attached)



EPOA Recruiting and  
Retaining Planning Of

GG – informed the group the next gypsy and traveller meeting will be held on the 20<sup>th</sup> March at 2pm.

*Suggested to keep “Local plan update” as a standing item on the EPOA agenda. Group to provide updates from each district.*

R McE - DM forum indicated a potential 6 figure fine which has led to data being accessed where files left unattended. Basildon is contesting the fine.

Graham Thomas has agreed to take over the responsibility of the Chair of EPOA meetings for the next year.

The next meeting will take place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017.

Please forward your agenda items to Graham Thomas prior to the meeting.