

**ESSEX PLANNING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION****Minutes of meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017**  
**At Discovery Centre**

<p><b>PRESENT:</b></p> <p>Graham Thomas – ECC (Chair)  Richard Hatter – Thurrock  Gary Guiver – Tendring DC  Amanda Parrott – Basildon BC (EPOA Policy Chair)  Matthew Winslow – Basildon BC  David Green – Chelmsford CC  Dianne Cooper – Harlow DC  Nigel Richardson – Epping Forest DC (EPOA DM Chair)  Kim Fisher-Bright – Castle Point BC  Richard Greaves – ECC  Richard McEllisham - Basildon</p>	<p>Sam Graves (minute taker)</p> <p><b>Guests:</b>  Lewis Herbert – Anglia Ruskin University  Mike Gogarty – ECC Public Health  Lee Heley – ECC Policy &amp; Strategy</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>Ian Vipond – Colchester  Steve Rogers – Castle Point  Catherine Bicknall – Tendring  Diane Logue – Castle Point  Andy Millard – Thurrock  Matthew Thomas – Rochford  Simon Rowberry - Maldon</p>	
2.	<p><b>Minutes and Actions from Previous Meeting 16<sup>th</sup> March 2017</b>  Agreed as an accurate record</p> <p><b>Place making - Quality Agenda</b>  A presentation was given by Pete Dawson to both the EPOA DM and EPOA policy meetings. Feedback received was that the Design Guide Steering Group needed to be expanded to include an EPOA representative from North Essex which is furthest ahead in relation to the Garden Communities, Emma Goodings from Braintree was identified as the right person and Emma has since joined the Steering Group.</p> <p><b>ARU – Training Programme</b>  Anglia Ruskin University had followed up with Steve Rogers and will present their proposal to this EPOA meeting.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Notice of AOB</b></p>	

	None were given.	
4.	<p><b>Agreement of the 2017/18 Planning Training Programme</b></p> <p>Lewis Herbert from Anglia Ruskin University presented on the responses received to date on the proposed Planning training programme for 2017/18.</p> <p>The options for the next series of planning training sessions were discussed. Lewis explained that half the councils had now responded to him already and wanted to use this information to discuss with EPOA colleagues to agree this year's training programme. He circulated information which ranked the choices available based on the responses received. This identified the following categories: 'definite', 'preferred', 'runner up' and not 'supported'.</p> <p>He explained the feedback response to the last planning skills series was very good overall. He accepted some trainers were better than others for certain programmes, and the attendance was very good, averaging around 25-30 people per session. Hence the training format will remain the same.</p> <p>After discussion the programmes going forward will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Housing Issues for Planner (option1)</li> <li>• Maximising Planning Gain (option 3)</li> <li>• Enforcement – What DM Officers Need to Know (option 4)</li> <li>• Understanding Permitted Development and Building Control (option 7)</li> <li>• Major Development – master planning for garden towns and urban extensions (option 8)</li> <li>• Applying Best Practice to Local Plans and Planning Policy (option1)</li> <li>• Planning for an Older Population (option12)</li> <li>• Development Management Skills (option13 )</li> <li>• Environmental Impact Assessment (option14)</li> <li>• Extra Practical Consultation Skills (new)</li> </ul> <p>Those for the future are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Heritage, Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas (option10)</li> <li>• Transport, Planning Streetscape and Quality Public Realm (option 5)</li> <li>• Understanding Landscaping and Best Use of Trees and Shrubs (option 6)</li> <li>• Retail Planning (option 9)</li> <li>• Healthy Planning – planning for recreation and sport (option11)</li> <li>• AM – Understanding Planning Policy (option15)</li> <li>• DM, Planning Decisions, Committee Practice and Probity (option16)</li> </ul> <p>It was agreed that training items 1, 3, 8 and 14 above need to be provided early in the programme, after the autumn statement.</p> <p>Training option 13 needs to focus on theory, what makes a good DM, and the value of the role.</p> <p>LH also explained that in relation Town Planning courses Anglia Ruskin University provides, he felt the ARU Planning MSC course is of a good standard which normally has an intake of around 30 people a year. He also explained that the university are now looking to re-introduce the undergraduate degree course in partnership with another university. Unfortunately the degree course closed back in 2010 as demand for places fell away in 2010. Work is also underway at providing conversion courses to encourage undergraduates onto the MSC course.</p> <p>LH explained he had been asked by the Combined Authority Mayor to lead on strategic planning in Cambridgeshire and offered present his thinking on this to</p>	<p><b>LH to action</b></p> <p><b>LH to action</b></p> <p><b>GT/LH to action</b></p>

	the next EPOA meeting in September.	
5.	<p><b>Town Planners – Recruitment and Retention – Next Steps</b></p> <p>Richard Greaves, who is the EPOA lead working with the East of England LGA colleagues on the recruitment and retention of Town Planners, updated the meeting on his work.</p> <p>He explained, that the LGA who are leading this work at the regional level, are very concerned about the dearth of experienced Town Planners available, particularly within the public sector. Reference was also made to the restricted number of planning graduates choosing to work in the public sector. This retention and recruitment piece of work is being coordinated and led by the Council HR leads.</p> <p>He reported that there is a lot of planned work that will commence shortly that will look at a range of possibilities in relation to recruitment and retention. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A promotional piece of work which will promote Town Planning as a career. Within our area we will be able to look at what challenges there are and try to formulate an EPOA position and agree what steps are needed to take next.</li> <li>• HR leads working with the LGA are looking at introducing a golden “hello scheme” to encourage graduates into public sector planning posts.</li> <li>• Technical apprenticeship – allowing people who are interested in planning to train on the job and build up there experience. Reference was made to Moulton College Northamptonshire who are now offering technical planning courses see <a href="http://www.moulton.ac.uk/Moulton/media/GeneralMedia/M12686-Apprenticeship-in-Town-Planning-Technical-Support-WEB.pdf">http://www.moulton.ac.uk/Moulton/media/GeneralMedia/M12686-Apprenticeship-in-Town-Planning-Technical-Support-WEB.pdf</a></li> <li>• Degree planning apprenticeships – which are being introduced as “pilot projects” in areas such as Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Districts - Suffolk.</li> </ul> <p>Richard explained that he felt that if the local authorities in Essex worked together in providing a range training opportunities, this would be beneficial for all as collectively we will have a much stronger offer by “pooling” the training positions across a number of authorities. He was looking to establish an EPOA task and finish group to investigate how we could work collaboratively to ensure we can maximise the opportunities, and see how we can work with the East of England LGA and others.</p> <p>In terms of career paths there was also some discussion on how we can each look at our organisation and giving employees more career choices to switch professions. To look at the broader area, courses and professionals in the council to enable them to become a planner. Need to look at the best way of fast-tracking</p> <p>RG proposed that an EPOA task and finish group be set-up and asked for volunteers. EPOA colleagues supported this proposal with the group comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nigel Richardson – Epping Forest DC</li> <li>• Tessa Lambert – Braintree DC</li> <li>• Dianne Cooper – Harlow DC</li> <li>• Richard Hatter – Thurrock UA</li> <li>• Richard Greaves – Essex CC</li> </ul> <p>There was a request for this group to work with the EPOA DM officers who will provide the core support for this work. It was also requested that this area of work</p>	<p><b>RG to Action</b></p> <p><b>RG</b></p>

	<p>be reported back to the next EPOA meeting in September with the any progress and recommendations.</p> <p>DC and DG referenced the need to also address the lack of experienced planners. Recruiting experienced mid-level principal planning officers with the right skills is increasingly difficult. Others endorsed this point referring to the need to rely on expensive consultant planners costing £40- £50 per hour.</p> <p>LH agreed there is a need to introduce a technical planner training role, looking at HND/HNC level, as well as reintroducing an undergraduate BSC course at Anglia Ruskin University. <b>Action</b> – RG and LH to follow –up.</p>	<b>RG/LH to review</b>
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>Health and Planning working closer together</b></p> <p>Mike Gogarty, Public Health Director ECC, presented a PowerPoint presentation which set the context for the forthcoming Town Planning and Public Health on 29 June 2017.</p> <p>It was apparent that there are multiple ways in which planning can link up to health, MG proceeded to give a brief historic overview.</p> <p>He explained a series of influences on health, which clearly showed that employment is a key driver of health, whilst access to health services is not really a barrier to health. There are many problems associated with deprivation and health. Many people are migrating into Essex and the population is growing whilst there is only a 0.6% growth in the economy.</p> <p>He explained that the work town planners do in providing for new places to work, and how we plan for the new places in which people will live, how we do this is linked to the health of the people in Essex. Public health is once again a key influence on what constitutes good planning, and planning policies and land allocations need to be alive to public health outcomes.</p> <p>As a country there are key challenges in Public Health including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoidable death by disability including mental health, and;</li> <li>• Adult obesity - UK is the fattest country in Europe based on BMI figures.</li> </ul> <p>MG explained there was a recent case in Scotland of a primary school getting all their pupils to run 1 mile in the morning (fit to play, fit to learn) in which the number of obese children almost disappeared, and this was a low cost option.</p> <p>He also explained the power of social media as a tool in strengthening communities. And the desire by people who want to help and make a difference to the health of local people.</p> <p>How can good planning align with public health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing for more open green space, and the opportunity to access green space is proven to increase the quality and life expectancy. Green spaces are good for both our physical and mental well-being. Open space and green infrastructure should be central when preparing and implementing Local Plans and the planning permissions that follow on form this.</li> <li>• Good planning can have a great impact on quality in health measures and reduction in anti-social behaviour.</li> <li>• The quality of design of housing (i.e. lifetime homes) and providing for elderly person housing which is well connected to local facilities rather isolated from facilities provide two examples of how new homes can have a positive impact on health.</li> <li>• By ensuring fast food restaurants and outlets are not allowed with a certain distance of primary and secondary schools.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To take account of the health infrastructure requirements when planning for new developments and account for this in relation to Section 106 requirements.</li> </ul> <p>MG was pleased that he had found that increasingly LPAs' are beginning to be ensure that Local Plans have well written planning policies to address the health and wellbeing policy requirements. Whilst more needs to be done, Public Health will take a much stronger role to intervene with the LPAs to help ensure the planning policies put forward fully embrace the Public Health requirements and ensure they also properly provide the narrative to the policies.</p> <p>MG explained that the role of ECC funded public health posts working in the districts are there for what the districts need them to so. For example they could be used to help with the HIA assessments and shaping planning policies. He is aware that several of these officer may however not be engaged with their planning colleagues to shape Local Plan policies or site allocations.</p> <p>Reference was made to the refresh of the Essex Design Guide which will specifically address a number of the issues covered in the presentation. In particular the EDG will seek to articulate what good planning/place making is required to address health. Equally the EDG will look at elderly person accommodation types etc.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Feedback from the 16 May meetings with DCLG, and preparation for the planning portfolio holders meeting on 13th September</b></p> <p>Lee Heley feedback on both discussions.</p> <p>At the DLCCG meeting, the Housing White Papers focus on the delivery test was one of the main items of discussion. The aim of the delivery test is to put pressure on developers. An action plan around the delivery test was discussed.</p> <p>People understood the recent appeal decision where planning applications within the greenbelt were trumping other considerations.</p> <p>LH explained that DLCCG are in a very different position post the general election because of two reasons, the Government is in a different place (election, Brexit) and Grenfell Tower. The focus for DCLG has changed it is likely to be much more focused on social housing and building regulations. Hence the conversation we had with DCLG in May is in a very different place due to the recent events.</p> <p>Colleagues felt DCLG officers were somewhat defensive at times during the meeting when discussing the Housing White Paper. Chelmsford colleagues raised points which pointed out that some of what was proposed in the Housing White Paper was already in the National Planning Policy Framework, indicating perhaps that this work had been led more by generalist rather than having been prepared by subject specialists.</p> <p>At the meeting it was made clear that the housing delivery test will not work in most of the Local Authorities in the county, and the actions are going to be put back. It was also pointed out that the LPAs grant planning permission for homes, they do not build homes, and the fact that planning permissions have been increasing in pace and yet the rate new homes have been built has not kept pace. There will be a pause to reflect and work out what the next still will be.</p> <p>The advice from the Planning Advisory Service is that we can expect a much</p>	

	<p>slower pace from DCLG in taking the Housing White Paper forward.</p> <p>MW reported on a recent conference he had attended, where he explained that the House Builders Federation are not keen on the Housing Delivery Test as they view this as not being deliverable.</p> <p>In relation to the second conversation with EPOA leads which was about preparation for the Planning Portfolio Holder meeting in September, Lee Heley reflect on the some of the key conclusion from the meeting to be taken forward.</p> <p>After discussion it was felt the following are matters of interest which planning portfolio holders will want to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A common approach to the assessing housing need;</li> <li>• There is a role for EPOA/ECC to provide a shared level of expertise in relation to viability, public health advice and S106 support;</li> <li>• There is a common need to strengthen the local authorities' position in our ability to both recruit and retaining experienced town planners. All the local authorities need to work together to offer a recruitment package which enables Town Planners to work across the county, so there is not stagnation in one district and we can offer the variety to compete with the market.</li> <li>• More work is needed to secure timely transport modelling advice to help shape and inform the Local Plan preparation work. There is lot of concern that highway contributions to planning applications were not good enough, both in respect of the timeliness of response and the quality of what is being submitted.</li> <li>• There is a need to work more co-operatively on the strategic/larger planning applications. LPAs are looking for ECC to respond to planning applications in a single response.</li> <li>• Specialist skillset is needed to identify different ways of funding infrastructure associated with development. This is a question of how do LPA's produce Local Plans which are informed by the infrastructure funding environment – learning from the GIF.</li> </ul>	
8.	<p><b>Coalition government housing and planning minister – share – news/updates</b></p> <p>There is still no coalition government in place at present. The new minister has no experience with either Planning or the Built Environment. The previous minister did not take the opportunity to update the building regulations.</p> <p>It is expected that the planning fee increase would still be introduced expected in July 2017.</p>	
9.	<p><b>Local Plan – Updates</b></p> <p><u>Epping Forest</u> – Currently still sifting through consultation responses, going back to members in July. Still on course for early 2018 pre submission (Reg19) Plan. Concerned about maintaining experienced officer capability.</p> <p><u>Castle Point</u> – Currently have 1 full-time person working on Local plan matters who leaves within a week. A report on a new Local Development Scheme will go to Cabinet for approval which will set out the timetable for sub-regional South Essex work, to inform work on a Local Plan in the following two years.</p> <p><u>Harlow</u> - Going to Cabinet – 22 June to secure support for the Local Development Scheme and Development Management policies. The Plan is only partially finished, but members are eager to see progress. The Reg 19 stage is expected</p>	

	<p>by the spring next year. The Harlow Area Action Plan is due to be published as a Reg 18 document in spring 2018. The available resources are being used to produce both the Local Plan and the AAP which is slowing down progress on the Local Plan.</p> <p><u>Chelmsford</u> – Greater London Authority responded to draft Local Plan, and it is expected the GLA will increasing respond the Local Plans produced in Essex.</p> <p>Just finished Regulation 18 consultation, which is going to September Committee with final draft before Christmas, and will is not expected to change the strategy or structure of Local Plan. Deadline of May 2018. There could be a delay because of the infrastructure actually being delivered from Ringway Jacobs. CCC want to show how it will be costed and funded.</p> <p><u>Basildon</u> – No longer have a Cabinet style system and now have a Committee structure for decision making. The Conservatives on the Council no longer had a majority administration. Very few officers have worked in a committee system hence officers are being trained on working in a Committee governed local authority system. In relation to the Local Plan there may well be a different approach to ensure what is acceptable to the new administration.</p> <p>The Greater London Authority responded to Basildon’s Local Plan last year. New timetable in September.</p> <p><u>The ECC and Southend Waste Local Plan</u> – This has now been approved by Cabinet, Southend Cabinet is consider shortly. It is expected that the Waste Local Plan will be adopted in July 2017.</p> <p>The new M11 junction 7a will go to the County Planning Committee on 23 June 2017.</p> <p><u>Colchester, Braintree and Tendring</u>– Consultation on the joint part 1 Local Plans and individual part 2 Plans commenced on 16 June to 28 July (11 August for Colchester who are consultation for 8 weeks). Looking to submit in the Autumn. It is possible it will be 3 inspectors appointed, currently looking at 1 inspector for the joint part 1 and possibly ending up with 4 inspectors. Further work is needed to clarify how this will work.</p> <p><u>Thurrock</u> – work is underway to produce a non-statutory sub-regional strategic planning framework. The timetable of which is to be determined. Technical work is also underway including updating the SHMA which has taken into account the 2014 population projections. This has resulted in the required number of homes changing for some south Essex districts.</p> <p>The revised Issues and Options document is due to be published this autumn.</p>	
10.	<p><b>Updates from EPOA policy and EPOA DM groups</b></p> <p>Castle Point advised, that the recent Jotmans Farm planning appeal decision, when the Council had only 0.4 year’s housing land supply, this is now subject to a Judicial Review.</p> <p>The Admin officer forum in May, held discussion about the issuing paper copies of decision notices. We might just be able to send it by email, or just notifying is enough.</p>	
11.	<p><b>Developing a Forward Plan of for EPOA meetings</b></p> <p>GT is happy to take points on the draft Forward Plan attached to the agenda. This will be updated following the meeting and any additional contributions are</p>	<p><b>All to feedback</b></p>

welcomed.

For September to include items on Strategic Planning, the Planning Protocol being prepared by the EPOA DM group, London Plan update , Essex Design Guide Update - and a protocol for distributing unmet housing needs being prepared by the EPOA Planning Policy Forum.

December – Planning protocol sign-off, Essex Design Guide sign-off.

March – EPOA planning and training review ARU, joint meeting with neighbouring chief planning officers group to share best practice

We also need recruitment and retention discussion in the forward plan, along with the Delivery Test.