

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TASK AND FINISH
PANEL
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2006
IN CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 9.15 PM

Members Present: Mrs M Sartin (Chairman), Mrs P Smith (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A Cooper, Mrs J Lea and Mrs J H Whitehouse

Other members present:

Apologies for Absence: Mrs S Clapp, J Demetriou, A Lee and J M Whitehouse

Officers Present J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), A Hall (Head of Housing Services), J Preston (Head of Planning and Economic Development), C Overend (Policy & Research Officer) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

Also in attendance: Marina Sherriff (Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership), Francis Haste (Fit for Life) and Matt Roberts (Green and Unique)

13. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

None reported.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Mrs M Sartin declared a general personal interest by virtue of being one of the Council's Member representatives on the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership. She declared that her interest was not prejudicial and she would remain in the meeting.

15. NOTES OF 24 JULY 2006 MEETING

Noted.

16. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME

The Joint Chief Executive (Community) anticipated that none of the items should require funding bids. In relation to item 10 it was envisaged that the recommendations of the Panel once drafted would be reported to the LSP Board for consideration and comments. It was envisaged that the review would aim for completion in May 2007 to take effect in the new Council year.

Agreed that a review of the Local Area Agreement be timetabled into the programme.

17. DISCUSSION WITH CHAIRMEN OF ACTION GROUPS AND REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPER

The Joint Chief Executive (Community) reminded the Panel that at its last meeting, members requested a discussion with the Chairmen of the various LSP Action Groups to explain their role, membership, relationship with the main Board and

Steering Group and identify how District Members might become more involved in the process.

Accordingly, he welcomed to the meeting, the District Council's Head of Housing Services (Chairman of the Homes and Neighbourhoods Action Group), the Head of Planning and Economic Development, (Chairman of the Economic Prosperity Group), Francis Haste of the District PCT, (Chairman of Fit for Life), and Matt Roberts of the Corporation of London (Chairman of Green and Unique). He also welcomed Marina Sheriff the Community Strategy and Partnership Manager.

(a) Overview

Marina Sherriff reported some background to her role, the duties performed and current projects.

(i) she advised that she had held the role for over three years and was the first appointee to the position. Her contract lay with Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) therefore some of her duties was around working with this agency including attending team meetings, line management and staff working groups. She was supported by and worked closely with the LSP, Partnership Action Groups, the Children and Young Peoples Services Partnership (CYPSP) and the Crime and Reduction Partnership (CDRP);

(ii) she had supported special events held by the Epping Forest College and was involved in an event at Oakwood Hill, Loughton to be held this week. With the Green and Unique Action Group, she had assisted with the organisation of the Buckhurst Hill Fair and would be working on another seminar with the Action Group. She had also supported special one off projects such as a recent youth community conference and the six month health challenge supported by Sports Management Ltd.;

(iii) she sat on the LSP Steering Board, the Local Area Agreement Groups, provided updates on the East of England Plan, attended meetings of the LSP Chairmen and had been involved in arranging the Partnerships annual conference. She referred to the LSP away day and what it involved. Her role was also to provide external links for the LSP;

(vi) she worked to coordinate the current LSP Action Plan and ensure that the targets secured effective outcomes and were 'smart'. A review would be carried out to prioritise the aims to ensure they added real value to LSP work. She explained that the Community Strategy comprised two parts. One was a set of long term visions. The other was a 'living action plan'. There might be a need to make changes in response to the need for sustainability. There was an LSP website and steps would be taken to publicize events

The Head of Planning and Economic Development highlighted some of Marina's key achievements specifically in relation to promoting and raising awareness of the District LSP at a regional level.

It was recognised that Marinas post was funded by the partnership through contributions. It was suggested that consideration should be given to providing more support for the partnership from both the Council and the other constituent agencies.

In response to questions, Ms Sherriff referred to the government consultation paper seeking to pass responsibility for LSPs to Local Councils. She stated that the partnership greatly benefited from the perception that it was independent and

envisaged that this would continue into the future. It was also acknowledged that the Health Services and PCT had been strongly involved in partnership working. Aidan Thomas the Chief Executive of the Epping Forest PCT supported joint working had worked to ensure that his directorate was locally focused and not diluted by the newly enlarged West Essex PCT.

(b) Homes and Neighbourhoods

The Head of Housing Services, the Chairman of the Homes and Neighbourhoods Action Group reported on the history and work of the group. He advised that as Chairman he sat on the LSP steering group. An important aim of the forum was to identify and seek to address any overlap on services. The group comprised twelve members including the Housing Association, the Tenants and Leaseholders Association and the Essex County Council. Last years meetings were attended by EFDC Portfolio Holders. He referred to the type of issues considered by the group. Discussions had explored the East of England Plan and the alterations to the Housing Chapter of the Local Plan. The group also monitored progress with the delivery of affordable housing and the housing aims of the LAA. The group discussed their action plan setting out the actions required to meet the relevant objectives in the Community Strategy which were listed. The Action Groups Housing Association Partners had agreed to jointly fund the groups website. At the forthcoming conference, the Homes and Neighbourhoods table would be looking to identify issues for consideration when exploring future housing numbers and locations.

The Chairman of the Group acknowledged that, as a great deal of joint working was carried out in housing services outside the LSP, its members might not benefit as much as some of the other participant groups from the collective approach afforded by the partnership. On the other hand, the group did allow partners to understand each other issues and the user point of view. Furthermore, the group had changed thinking on issues like the alterations to the Housing Chapters of the Local Plan.

The Group had liaised with the Housing Association existing Tenants and the Tenants and Leaseholder Federation to input into and support homelessness initiatives.

It was clarified that central government would only consider bids that had been commented upon and agreed by the LSP.

(c) Fit for Life

Francis Haste, the Chairman of the Fit for Life Action Group reported on her work. She advised that she had chaired the forum since January this year. Its membership comprised Voluntary Action Epping Forest, Leisure Services, Mental Health Charities, schools representatives and groups representing others aspects of mental health. The main focus of the group was around the development and provision of local services, improving preventative services, promoting healthier lifestyles and integration for a seamless service. The group had five LAA targets. The group were currently undertaking projects around healthy living and with the VAEF had considered a number of funding bids for projects. The group had applied for funding to support a parenting support initiative in Waltham Abbey.

The group liaised with other organisations to stop any duplication of work. The Head of Planning and Economic Development advised that he had met with Francis to support this aim. He advised that within the LAA there was an expectation that planning policy would incorporate policies for health improvement. The partnership

had raised the credibility of this. Moreover the LSP local network had provided groups with new contacts which should facilitate the achievement of this aim.

In response, Francis undertook to identify the services available for disabled adults. Consideration was being given to formalising the relationship between Children's and Young Peoples Partnership (CYPSP) and the LSP. It was possible that they could become the eight strand of the partnership.

(d) Green and Unique

Matt Roberts of Green and Unique reported his views. He advised that he had only recently taken on the Chairmanship of the group. He expressed support for the past achievements of his group and successful outcome achieved by others. He reported that he had relayed such positive information back to the Corporation of London and recommended that priority be given to his group. In his view the issue was not so much about what was done but how it was achieved. In terms of activities, he advised that the group worked with agencies such as the Lee Valley Park, the Environment Agency, DEFRA, Natural England. Approaches had been made to farmer and County landowner groups who were currently not represented to invite their involvement.

The group was involved in the North East Green Arc for London and held quarterly meetings. It was recommended that the Director of this latter project be invited to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to give a presentation.

Matt reported that at the forthcoming LSP conference, the group he would be chairing would consider the problem of litter. He expressed a commitment to identifying the cause of problems and recognised that litter and the cleanness of streets affected the wellbeing of the community.

The Policy and Research Officer reported that the Panel might wish to consider whether Portfolio Holders should become more involved in the partnership and proposals for this.

(e) Economic Prosperity

The Head of Planning and Economic Development reported on the work of his group. He reported the membership of the group included Business Link for Essex, the Epping Forest Learning Partnership, the EFDC Town Centre Manager. There was a high turnover of attendees at meetings. The Partnership had enabled his planning services team to build up a regular network of contacts which they might not have been aware of otherwise. He reported the business conducted by the group meeting held on 16 May 2006.

In terms of the aims for enhancing Town Centres, it was reported that the Council's Town Centre manager, Shona Pollack was initially appointed to develop the Town Centres around the Loughton Sainsbury's store where she was based, Loughton High Road, Loughton Broadway and Buckhurst Hill. However, as her contract progressed, she had become involved with the other three town centres in the District and worked to the principle that her work must not adversely affect these centres. The contract however was coming to an end. Shona was involved in a range of community activities. It was clarified that she worked within Planning Services and amongst other things imputed into the process for updating the Council's planning policies.

A member suggested that the Town Centre Partnerships should involve a wider range of interests such as voluntary groups. The view was expressed that the communication arrangements between the Members on the partnership and other Members needed to be improved. The meeting noted recent activities to facilitate the provision of 2012 Olympic events and hospitality arrangement. It was suggested that emphasis should be placed on existing facilities rather than new ones and that there should be collaboration to identify the District's aspirations in this respect and that a more reactive approach should be taken.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairmen of the Action Groups be thanked for their presentations on the work of their groups.

18. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted that the next meeting had been arranged for 25 October 2006 at 7.30 in CR1.

It was noted that the next meeting of the LSP Board would be held on 28 October 2006 at 2.00pm at the Civic Offices, Epping.

It was noted that the next meeting would consider the Local Area Agreement

Marina Sheriff reported that she wished to attend all future meetings on the Panel and would be added to the agenda distribution list.