

EPPING FOREST LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING

Date: 26 February 2009

Time: 2.00 - 4.30 pm

MINUTES

Present:

Mrs D Collins	Epping Forest District Council (Chairman)
C O'Connell	Epping Forest Locality Director, West Essex Primary Care Trust (Vice Chair)
Q Buller	Representing Epping Forest College
A Cowie	Director of Health, West Essex Primary Care Trust
G Ellis	Representing Faith Communities
J Foile	Chief Officer, Voluntary Action Epping Forest
Mrs A Grigg	Epping Forest District Council
D Macnab	Deputy Chief Executive, Epping Forest District Council
C Skinner	Epping Forest CYPSP
B Surtees	Representing Parish and Town Councils
C Thompson	Representing Parish and Town Councils
Y Wetton	Essex County Council

Presenting Items:

John Gilbert	Epping Forest SCP (CDRP)
Alan Hall	Director of Housing, Epping Forest District Council
John Preston	Director of Planning and Economic Development, Epping Forest District Council

Supporting Officers:

John Houston	LSP Manager
Tom Carne	EFDC PR and Marketing
Colin Rowell	LSP Administrator
David Wright	LSP Administrator
Nicola Leach	EFDC PR and Marketing
Perryn Jasper	CYPSP Development Manager

Apologies:

M Bird	Essex Learning and Skills Council
Mrs A Haigh	Faith Forum
R Skinner	Essex Fire and Rescue Service
P Thomson	City of London Corporation
S Williams	Essex Police

1. WELCOME

The Chairman introduced and welcomed new Board member, Caroline Skinner, Chair of CYPSP, and new staff, John Houston the new LSP Manager, and David Wright, the new LSP Admin Officer. The Chairman also welcomed Quentin Buller from Epping Forest College who was deputising for Jeannie Wright the new acting Principal of the College, Perryn Jasper, CYPSP Development Manager, and Tom Carne and Nicola Leach, EDFC Communications Officers.

The Chairman thanked Caroline Skinner for taking on the role of CYPSP Chair, which was a very important part of the LSP, and she thanked the outgoing Chair Cllr Ann Haigh for her excellent work leading the CYPSP in recent years.

The Chairman took soundings on the idea of having a networking opportunity at the beginning of the quarterly Board meetings. The Board **agreed** that the pre-meeting lunch and networking opportunity was successful and should be continued for future meetings.

The Chairman confirmed to members that LSP Board meetings are open public meetings and requested that this fact should be publicized widely to enable people to attend. Members were asked whether they agreed to future meetings being webcast. Derek Macnab said that the webcasting of Cabinet meetings was successful with viewing figures between 3000 and 3500 per month. The webcasts are broadcast live and archived for future viewing. Future webcasting of LSP Board meetings was agreed.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies which had been received were read out by the Chairman

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (18/12/2009)/MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of previous Board Meeting (18 December 2008) were **agreed** with one amendment. The date for the interviews of the LSP Manager in Item 5 was changed from Jan 16 to Dec 16.

There were no matters arising.

John Houston outlined the process for more effective managing of matters arising, and tracking the implementation of Board decisions. A sample spreadsheet was distributed which would be used in future to ensure activity was completed in line with target dates. It would be updated after every Board meeting and progress reviewed at the next Board meeting. The use of the new spreadsheet was **agreed**.

4. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER CONSULTATION JOINT RESPONSE (20 MINS)

John Preston, Director of Planning, gave a short introduction setting out the context and key elements of the consultation programme which started in November and is now complete. The deadline for the LSP had been extended to allow the LSP Board the opportunity to respond following the cancellation of its special Board meeting. There had been over 3000 on-line responses and thousands from individuals and groups in one of the largest exercises undertaken by Epping Forest District Council. The results are currently being analysed and the agreed LSP response will be fed into this process. The consultation arose following a Government Direction. Of relevance was the Single Issue Review of the East of England Plan which proposed an additional 49 pitches on top of the 90 plus pitches currently in the district.

Representations have resulted in a recommended reduction to 39 sites which the Secretary of State will review. The government view of the Inspector's report is to be published and there will be a further opportunity to comment.

John Houston thanked everyone who had contributed to production of the draft response. He then gave an overview of the response which set out the LSPs understanding of the issues surrounding the consultation together with a commentary on social cohesion, impact on services and fear of crime. The LSP submission clearly acknowledged the disadvantages suffered in the past by members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities and committed the partners to working positively to ensure these needs were met in the future. The LSP also acknowledged problems with the number and location of the additional provision, and technical problems associated with the 'Traveller Count' which had led to a disproportionate increase in pitches being required from the Epping Forest area.

While there was consensus from the members with the general tone and content of the report some members were concerned with the emphasis in a number of areas and a number of revisions were suggested and agreed.

Paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 dealing with Crime and Fear of crime were replaced, following a vote, by an alternative proposed by John Gilbert Chairman of Safer Community Partnership who felt that the revised wording better represented the views of members of the SCP on perceptions of the link between encampments and offending.

Anne Grigg was happier with original wording which she thought better captured the community sentiment. She said there was undocumented evidence that supported the perception.

Di Collins agreed with Anne with regard to the fear of crime being very high but that the lack of statistical evidence made it difficult to draw concrete conclusions. John Gilbert stated that, while not dismissing these fears, with regard to fixed Gypsy Sites there was no evidence that crime was any worse but added that the report did not distinguish between illegal transitory pitches and fixed settled sites.

John Houston added that the lack of data was highlighted in the original wording but he pointed out that the Police had been very clear that there were no added issues when policing sites in their areas. A further amendment was proposed whereby the word 'However' at the start of John Gilbert's proposed paragraph 3.2 was removed.

Yvette Wetton objected to the last sentence in paragraph 5.3 and it was **agreed** that this should be deleted.

Brian Surtees proposed changing paragraph 8.3 to bring it into line with the revised section 3 by deleting the 3rd sentence, 'The Partnership feels it is unhelpful...' This was also **agreed**.

With the above agreed amendments the report as a whole was **agreed**.

Catherine O'Connell stated that the PCT had already responded in advance of the formulation of the LSP response and therefore did not wish to be included in the LSP response.

The Chairman read out the contents of a covering letter which would accompany the submission and then passed it around the members for review. It was **agreed** that the amended letter could be signed by the Chairman on behalf of the LSP members.

5. NEW WAYS OF WORKING UPDATE (20 MINS)

John Houston introduced a report looking at how the Board's decisions from the previous meeting on its structures could best be put into effect. The changes will enable the LSP to move to the next level, and put into effect structures that can focus on outcomes and improved delivery. The report recommended the setting up of two new fixed theme groups, around Healthier Communities and Sustainable Communities, and a number of task and finish groups focusing on key areas of work such as redrafting the community strategy, the credit crunch and improving communications. The Board was asked to approve the new structures and ways of working as set out in the report and suggest Board members to lead or support the new groups.

The Board was asked to nominate Chairs for the new Fixed Theme Groups. It was suggested that Anne Grigg become Chairman of Sustainable Communities Theme Group. This was **agreed**. It was also **agreed** that the PCT should Chair the Healthier Communities Theme Group. It was **agreed** that Alison Cowie become interim Chair while waiting for the appointment of a deputy Director at the PCT who could lead this work stream

The report recommended that Theme Group Chairs should now become full members of the LSP Board and this was **agreed**.

The report recommended retaining the existing Fixed Theme Groups, the CYPSP and CDRP (under the Chairmanship of Caroline Skinner and John Gilbert, respectively) and this was **agreed**.

The Board wished that the Steering Group could be established as quickly as possible to put all the changes agreed into effect. The next meeting of the Steering Group was proposed for the week commencing 23rd March. Officers were asked to move ahead with establishing all the agreed new groups quickly.

The Report set out a list of 5 potential Task and Finish Teams to take forward some of the priority work the Board had previously identified while the Sustainable Community Strategy was being redrafted. The Board Agreed three Teams should be established immediately, with the other two suggested Task and Finish Teams following when these are completed.

The Chairman suggested that the 'Communications' Task and Finish team should be a very short project for a small team looking at 'how we publicise ourselves better'. This was **agreed**. It was **agreed by the Board following discussion** that the two most important Task and Finish teams to get up and running are 'Sustainable Community Strategy' and 'Meeting the Challenges of the Credit Crunch' .

It was **agreed** that these three Task and Finish Teams be established, with the LSP Manager Chairing the Communications Group, The Deputy Chief Executive of EFDC Leading the group redrafting the Sustainable Community Strategy with further work necessary to identify a Chairman for the Task and Finish team dealing with the Credit Crunch.

Yvette Wetton suggested that CYPSP should also look at 'Improving Educational Attainment' as part of their brief. This was **agreed** by Caroline Skinner.

The Board discussed its membership from the perspective of ensuring that the right people from the right organisations were represented at the right level on the Board.

There appeared to be little engagement from the Business community in the work of the Board itself and this was an area that needed to be strengthened significantly with the support of the Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Business. Catherine O'Connell suggested approaching individual large employers to try and recruit a 'big hitter'. Gay Ellis thought that the turnover in senior positions in the larger businesses meant that a medium-sized business might be more fruitful and suggested Higgins.

Jacqui Foile said that the current business representative had changed job and that given the LSP's new impetus might be interested in becoming involved again. She suggested John Houston should contact him. It was **agreed** that informal approaches be made to potential candidates by Board members and that this should be progressed by the Steering group which should have responsibility for reviewing Board membership on an ongoing basis.

The report suggested that the Board should work with external consultants to constantly review its effectiveness and look at learning from other partnerships to challenge and enhance its performance on an ongoing basis. The LSP manager had met with the East Of England Regional Authority (EERA) who can offer a free consultancy and review service called Aspire to Perform. The Comprehensive Area Assessment and how it would assess the LSP would be a key area for review. The Board **agreed** that a brief be produced by EERA setting out what it could offer for discussion and agreement by the Steering Group.

The report suggested that a small officer working group be established initially to project manage the schemes being funded by LAA Reward Grant. Eventually these schemes would report performance to the relevant Fixed Theme Group. This was **agreed**.

The report also set out a new framework for managing the Board's Finances and asked that the constitution be amended in line with the changes suggested in this report and for further implementation of the recommendation to be passed to the Steering Group. All these recommendations were **agreed**.

It was **agreed** that the Chairman should write to the Chairs of the previous Working Groups thanking them and those people who had supported them for the work they had done on behalf of the LSP and setting out the new structure. It was further suggested that it was important that members of these working groups represent a bank of expertise that should be utilised in the new Theme Groups or Task and Finish Teams as appropriate. It was agreed that this should be acknowledged when setting up the new groups/teams and action groups such as the Economic Prosperity group should be approached to take on new projects such as dealing with the credit crunch.

6. CONSULTATION ON PCT 5 YEAR PLAN (20 MINS)

Catherine O'Connell, gave the Board a presentation outlining the key components of the Primary Care Trust's new strategic plan. Priorities for preventing early deaths in Epping Forest District were outlined. Issues of major concern included reducing smoking, combating heart disease and tackling childhood obesity which can lead to health problems in later life. Among other concerns for the area's children was a lower than hoped for take up of the MMR vaccine. Instances of measles are increasing.

Local hospitals have made huge improvements in patient safety. MRSA infections in local hospitals are now lower than in most other areas.

Life expectancy of the population is improving. Work is focusing on narrowing the gap between those groups at the lower end of the life expectancy range and the top.

Catherine O'Connell was also proud of the PCT record in providing NHS dentists to any local resident who now needs one. Residents can be referred to their nearest available local dentist through just one phone call.

It was **agreed** following discussion that there were 4 areas that help from the LSP should concentrate on. These were Obesity, Smoking, Health Inequalities and Teenage Pregnancy. The Chairman thanked Catherine for her very informative presentation.

7. EFDC'S DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY 2009-2012 (20 MINS)

Alan Hall, Director of Housing at EFDC gave a presentation to the Board on the launch of the consultation on the Draft Housing Strategy, and the key strategic issues underpinning it. The presentation highlighted the fact that, according to the draft Strategic Housing market assessment more than 7,000 households are "not in suitable housing", while 1,300 families are assessed as in 'housing need'. Over 4,000 families are listed on the Housing Register. Property prices in the District (in 2008) were 11 times average earnings. Up to 2021 there is projected district-wide shortfall of 5,700 affordable homes. Building new affordable homes is closely associated with private sector development. The current slow-down in the commercial new-build market is therefore affecting the number of new-build affordable homes developed. Young people are moving out of the district due to high property prices and the population profile is of an increasingly ageing population.

Forty-five actions are listed in the draft plan to address housing issues. Among these actions are facilitating the provision of 200 new affordable homes by 2010. Ongoing work with local residents continues to prevent people becoming homeless. The Council will work with a Housing Association to provide a Mortgage Rescue Scheme. All council homes are on course to achieve the 'Decent Homes' standard by 2010.

A number of points were raised in the discussion which followed the presentation. These included:

- The prevention of homelessness figures was commended.
- A question was asked about the timescale for the Young Parent Housing Scheme in Ongar. Detailed planning permission has been granted but the development has been delayed due to the economic climate.
- It was noted that Epping Forest has much higher property prices than Harlow but not much greater income, resulting in a much higher property price:income ratio. This had probably helped contribute to an overall net emigration from the District.
- It was also commented by one member that there was a need to develop good quality retirement homes to allow for downsizing. This could allow larger (family) homes back onto the market.

8. ESSEX COMPACT (10 MINS)

The LSP Manager introduced a report setting out the terms of the new compact produced by the Essex Partnership and designed to support better partnership working across the county. The New Compact complemented arrangements that exist at a local and national level to provide a clearer platform to support work between statutory and voluntary sectors. The report requested that the LSP Board endorse and sign up to the new Essex Compact

Following discussion the Board **agreed** to sign up to the provisions of the New Compact, but to refrain from nominating a Compact Champion at this time.

9. UPDATE ON RESEARCH FROM BMG (10 MINS)

The LSP Manager presented a report providing an update on the initial results of the public attitude survey, sponsored by the Board, and undertaken by BMG. Some key figures contained in the report highlighted the issues local people are most concerned about in their lives (which included crime and health services), and the things they think need to be improved most (which included road and pavement repairs and activities for teenagers). The report demonstrated very high levels of satisfaction among people with their area as a place to live (86%) and their homes (91%). The Board noted the report and asked for a more detailed presentation on the findings be brought to the next meeting when all the analysis had been completed.

10. CYPSP UPDATE (10 MINS)

Caroline Skinner, the new Chairman of CYPSP, updated the Board on the Theme Groups activity over the last quarter. It was reported that the CYPSP was undertaking a thorough review of commissioning and looking at ways to improve communication.

The LSP Chairman thanked the outgoing Chairman of CYPSP, Cllr Ann Haigh for all the hard work and support she had given to the Theme Group in her time as Chairman.

11. CDRP UPDATE (10 MINS)

John Gilbert the Chairman of CDRP updated the Board on activity over the last quarter. It was reported that crime activity is down – Epping is 300 crimes under profile for the year and 40 under for the month. There is, however, concern about the level of vehicle theft, robbery and domestic violence. The face to face public session had unfortunately been postponed. However, the Reality Roadshow pilot ran at St. John's school, and Crucial Crew will continue later this year. The Limes Farm special action group had now closed after delivering a very effective programme.

During discussion, Board members questioned whether any action was being taken to tackle farm robberies. It was noted that the police are currently working on this issue.

12. LAA REWARD GRANT (10 MINS)

The LSP Manager presented a report setting out the latest position on the allocation of Local Area Agreement Reward Grant, and outstanding funding issues. The LSP had been successful in securing £453,000 in reward grant funding to support local schemes that the Board had previously endorsed. There was however a budget shortfall of £44,059. Two options were suggested as a means of managing this shortfall, a straight percentage 'top slice' of all schemes, or the largest three schemes consuming the shortfall. Discussion had already taken place with the manager of the

three largest schemes who had **agreed** to accept the budget shortfall in full, thus protecting the viability of a number of the smaller schemes. The Chairman thanked them for their support and flexibility, and asked that the projects move forward as quickly as possible. An Officer Working Group had already been agreed elsewhere on the agenda to manage the introduction of the schemes and coordinate activity and performance reporting.

13. FUTURE STRATEGIC DISCUSSIONS (5 MINS)

Board members were asked to suggest topics for future presentations or discussions to maintain a focus on key strategic issues affecting the locality.

The Chairman of the CDRP suggested that Building Resilience to Violent Extremism (NI 35) could be such a topic. The LSP is required to monitor this indicator and should be completing a self assessment report on the subject by 31 March 2009. It was suggested we use MOSAIC software to get a more detailed picture of the religious makeup of the local community. This is currently underway in the CYPSP group. **Action 20**

It was also suggested that Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) could be a subject for the next meeting, together with the presentation suggested from BMG. It was agreed that Ian Davidson from the Audit Commission who will be involved with undertaking the Comprehensive Area Assessment be invited to tour the area with members of the Board.

The Board **agreed** to feed any further suggestions for Strategic Discussions through to the LSP manager.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Board members were informed that the LSP Chairman and Manager will be attending the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5th March 2009.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 9th June 2009 at 1:30 pm lunch and networking opportunity for 2.00pm start in Conference Room 2, EFDC Offices.

CHAIRMAN