

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TASK AND FINISH
PANEL
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 30 AUGUST 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, A Lee, Mrs J H Whitehouse and J M Whitehouse

Other members present:

Apologies for Absence: Mrs S Clapp and J Demetriou

Officers Present J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), C Overend (Policy & Research Officer) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

Also in attendance: D Butler (Epping Forest College)

7. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

None reported.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Mrs M Sartin declared a 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.

9. NOTES OF 24 JULY 2006 MEETING

In relation to the LSP network meeting to be held in November 2006 in Newmarket, it was clarified that this was likely to include a presentation on the consultation document on the future role of LSPs. Provisional notification had only been received at this stage. Further details would be reported to Members when made available.

10. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME

Noted.

11. DISCUSSION WITH EPPING FOREST LSP AND REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPER

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting David Butler, the Chairman of the Epping Forest LSP.

The Panel received apologies for absence from Aidan Thomas, the former Chairman of the local partnership and Marina Sherriff, the Community Strategy and Partnership Manager.

A letter from Mr Thomas in view of his unavailability addressed to the Panel highlighting the achievements of the LSP and expectations for the future was circulated for consideration.

During the discussion that followed, it was reported that:

(a) the Partnership was borne out of the LGA 2000 and groupings of Local Community Agencies. Both the Joint Chief Executive (Community) and David Butler had been involved in this process at this early stage during their long involvement in partnership working. The LSP was made up of action groups including the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership which cascaded downwards under the LSP Board.

(b) the Partnership had always been aware of its non statutory status and always worked to this. The Partnership did not have the ability to take powers away from the constituent agencies who had responsibility for service provision. The Partnership had business involvement and was looking to attract more contributions from such sources in the future.

(c) Harlow which was an Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Area had been requested to set up a Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership and received a significant amount of government funding in support of the initiative and had a performance framework. The District LSP had one paid employer – Marina Sherriff, who was funding through contributions through Voluntary Action Epping Forest. The constituent agencies all made regular contributions which paid for events and strategies. David Butler and the Epping Forest College in his capacity as Principal of the college carried out a large amount of research on behalf of the organisation.

The Panel thought that the Pack on the District LSP circulated was helpful.

(d) Mr Butler referred to his work with the Life Long Learner Action Group. This group predated the LSP and was drawn from providers and stakeholders of education and training. The District Partnership focused on training/retraining adults for employment.

(e) the Membership of the Partnerships working groups differed depending on their agenda. Participating groups volunteered their time.

(f) services for adult learners in the District was an issue of great concern. Given this, concern was expressed that the Workers Education Action Group and the 'U3A' had no representatives on the partnership. Mr Butler confirmed that these groups had been invited to join and undertook to send a further invitation to the groups.

(g) steps were being taken to better coordinate the work of Childrens Young Peoples Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) and the Life Long Learning Action Group to see how the CYPSP could be incorporated into the LSP agenda. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee was to consider a presentation from the CYPSP which would offer an opportunity to see how this could be pursued.

(h) having identified the need for a vocational Training Centre in Waltham Abbey, steps had been taken to successfully establish a centre in the area. This project could not have been achieved without partnership working and the support of the LSP which pulled together the various groups involved. Funding might be made available from Investors in Training for the project. The bid would be made during this academic year. Edexcel would create the application for no fee.

(i) reference was made to an article in the Local Government Chronicle issued on 22 June 2006 reporting the aims underpinning the new consultation document. The principles sought to increase the democratic accountability of LSPs by passing responsibility for LSPs to Local Authority Executives. It indicated that Council Leaders should chair LSPs Boards and Scrutiny should take on the role of scrutinising the Partnership. It also suggested that ward Members should be involved in the proposed Neighbourhood Panels and Town and Parish Councils play a role in clerking forums.

(j) LSPs could only invite representatives to participate. Those who contributed did so as they appreciated the value they could add to the process and recognised the benefits of getting together to reach an overarching view. It was important to ensure that in the event that the Council took a lead the constituent agencies continued to participate. This was likely as agencies recognised the benefits of partnership working and the value the Council added to the Partnership.

(k) a Member asked how groups were made aware of the partnership and the mechanism for getting people involved? It was stated that the LSP meetings were not well publicised despite being open to the public. It would be beneficial if notices were displayed to raise awareness. It was noted that that the Partnership was collectively responsible for promoting the body and its website had just started up and was linked to the EFDC website.

(l) concern was expressed over the possibility that the public might believe that private businesses were receiving privileged information as a result of their involvement in the partnership. Mr Butler clarified that such information was not discussed and they did not benefit in this way.

(m) Local Councils sat on the LSP Board. The expectation was that they would report to the Essex Association of Local Council's to ask to be represented on a working group. It would not be practically possible for all Local Councils to be represented due to the numbers involved.

(n) the Panel asked how much of the Partnerships work was determined by the Strategies? Mr Butler advised that his Life Long Learner Group focused on targeting hard to reach groups in education. Now that the Local Area Agreements were the main driving force each group had taken steps to look at their own agenda to make sure it supported the agreement. The Life Long Learner Group found that theirs did not and had taken steps to address this. The Group had spoken to the CYPSP Commissioner which should ensure that their work focused more on schools and the Group concentrated on helping adults into education.

(o) The Green and Unique Action Group had made a key contribution to the Housing needs and green debate underpinning the East of England Plan.

(p) In relation to the County LSP, there was some discussion about whether the County should have its own partnership. The County's strategy was made up of District Strategies and had never produced its own strategy. It was now being refocused and linked in with the work of the District LSPs through the Action Group Chairs. Aidan Thomas was involved in this process and had been influential.

(q) reference was made to the new Local Development Framework which the Council was currently developing and needed to be closely linked with the new Sustainable Community Strategy. It was expected that the Council would take the

lead role in formulating the framework and should consult on its own idea rather than seek ideas from the Community.

(r) Complaints were dealt with by the relevant constituent agency. Performance targets existed. At present the Partnership had signed up to the mandatory targets. Targets were controlled by the LSP and its constituent groups who offered their own targets which the partnership usually accepted and monitored. There was scope for scrutiny involvement in this which could be looked at.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted that the next meeting had been arranged for 27 September 2006 at 7.30 in CR1.

It was noted that the Chairman of the Partnership Groups would be invited to this next meeting.