

‘Sustainable Essex Partnership’ Stakeholder Event

Tuesday 10th June

Waterfront Place, Chelmsford

NOTES

	<p>Welcome and introduction</p> <p>Cllr. Pamela Challis welcomed partners to the stakeholder event and outlined the establishment of a new partnership by the Essex Partnership Forum on 22nd April 2008. This high level partnership will complement other thematic groups and focus on the sustainable development and social inclusion agenda. The aim of this partnership is to ensure that growth in the country is tempered with an appreciation of environmental issues and recognition of the impact this will have on communities, key services and infrastructure.</p> <p>The purpose of the stakeholder event was to establish the key priorities for the new partnership, recommend a structure and to propose membership.</p>
<p><i>Part 1</i></p>	<p>Bringing Together Existing Partnerships</p> <p>Stronger Communities Partnership</p> <p>Duncan Wood (Head of Community Planning and Public Engagement, Essex CC) explained the background to the recently created Stronger Communities Partnership which has been set up to continue the important work carried out under Priorities 13 and 14 of LAA 1 relating to social inclusion, access to services and involvement in decision-making. This group will aim to build understanding between the voluntary and statutory sectors and help to improve quality of life in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. In linking into the Sustainable Essex Partnership, this group will look to ensure that places are sustainable for people as well as the environment and encourage the design and redesign of communities to ensure their accessibility.</p> <p>Environment Task Group</p> <p>Kevin Jones (Head of Environmental Strategy, ECC) set out the role of the Environment Task Group and how it had emerged as one of series of task groups set up by the now defunct EPEG and then combined with the Environment sub-group of the Essex Rural Partnership. It has led on the Essex Climate Change Action Plan and CRED project and has played an important role in encouraging networking and communication. A move towards a more rounded understanding of the environmental agenda has seen challenges emerge due to disparity of resourcing, problems with measuring success and a level of vulnerability to fashion and fad. A new, all-encompassing partnership was welcomed as long as specific issues still received the necessary level of focus, which would need to come from existing partnerships.</p> <p>Essex Rural Partnership</p> <p>Nick Shuttleworth (Director, Rural Community Council for Essex) described the Essex Rural Partnership, which brings together the main rural stakeholders to discuss economic, social and environmental issues affecting rural areas of Essex (of which 72% is rural). The partnership has a practical track record of achievement, for example in its response to Post Office closures and a recent piece of research reviewing rural services. The Essex Rural</p>

Partnership can add value to the Sustainable Essex Partnership by teaching other partners about rural issues and how they can best be dealt with across the county.

Essex Housing Officers Group

Paul Gayler (Chair of EHOG and Strategic Housing Manager at Maldon District Council) explained that EHOG is formed of senior housing officers from each District Council and Registered Social Landlords in Essex. The group is involved in consultation responses (both county and sub-regional), campaigning and commissioning of research. EHOG have recognised for some time the need to think at a more countywide strategic level as evidenced by their recent work on developing housing targets for the LAA and would like to see this progressed further through the Sustainable Essex Partnership.

Essex Planning Officers Association

Ian Vipond (Executive Director at Colchester Borough Council) set out the background to the Essex Planning Officers Association which is constituted of the Chief Planning Officers from Greater Essex. Among other things it focuses on spatial planning issues, shares best practice on developing Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) and considers planning issues relating to gypsy and traveller sites. It is keen to do more to understand what sustainable development means for us in Essex and will want to play a part in the wider issues of climate change, rural issues etc. by becoming involved in the new Sustainable Essex Partnership.

Waste Management Advisory Board

Cllr Michael Talbot (Tendring District Council) explained the role of the Waste Management Advisory Board in bringing together Portfolio holders for Waste from Essex County Council and all District and Borough Councils in Essex to discuss joint solutions to waste collection and disposal. The Waste Management Advisory Board had previously been proposed as acting as the thematic partnership for the indicators relating to waste and environment (under the 'Our World' section of the LAA), but felt that this was beyond their remit. It was therefore agreed that these targets would sit better with the Sustainable Essex Partnership, who could then use the WMAB as an advisory body on waste matters.

Transport

Alastair Southgate (Principal Transport Planner, Essex CC) presented the role that Highways and Transportation has played in the Local Area Agreement so far, recognising its much greater involvement in LAA 2. He particularly emphasised the large role that the private sector plays in delivering public transport and the need to recognise this when building partnership working arrangements. Alastair highlighted the ways in which transport linked to a number of different targets right across the LAA and hoped that it could play a key role in the delivery of it.

A 'Sustainable Essex Partnership'

Partners received a presentation from Dan Gascoyne, Head of Partnership Delivery and Quality of Life Essex County Council, on the 'Sustainable Essex Partnership'.

[Link: A Sustainable Essex Partnership Presentation](#)

Delegates noted from the presentation:

- The Essex Strategy
- Evidence gathering process of the LAA

- 10 priorities in the LAA
- Essex Partnership delivery structure
- Partnerships to contribute to the Sustainable Essex Partnership
- Next steps

Delivering Sustainability

Partners received a presentation from John Devall, Vice-Chair of Sustainability East

[Link: Delivering Sustainability Presentation](#)

The main points included:

- The role of Sustainability East and how it could support the work of this new partnership e.g. by acting as a critical friend.
- The regional sustainable development challenges facing Essex such as climate change, the sub-national review and the extent to which conditions vary across the county.
- Partnership working as the way to make a difference, challenge assumptions, use resources effectively and champion the needs of communities.
- The importance of an outcome-focus and strong accountability.

Part 2

Workshop Session

Delegates were split into 9 groups to discuss the following questions:

1. What should the partnership's aims be if it is to deliver added value?
2. Are there particular projects it should focus on initially?
3. Are you satisfied with the proposed structure suggested in the proposals paper? What, if any, changes to it would you recommend?

The outputs from these discussions are listed in the following document.

[Link: Workshop notes](#)

Plenary Discussion

The emerging responses from across the groups was summarised in the following slides and fed back to the event by Dan Gascoyne.

[Link: Workshop overview presentation](#)

Cllr. John Buchanan, Essex Association of Local Councils, asked the panel whether a limited number of experts to sit on Target Lead groups would lead to duplication of membership on many groups?

The panel explained that a group would not be set-up around each target in the LAA, rather task and finish groups would be established around individual cross-cutting projects, which would hopefully enable achievement against several targets at once.

Cllr. Jeremy Lucas, Essex County Council, suggested that task and finish groups

could invite specialists to relevant meetings so that they could contribute.

Cllr. Mike Harris, Chelmsford Borough Council, asked whether it would be possible to utilise the skills and contacts of elected members to help engage representatives from groups such as the voluntary sector with the new partnership?

The panel welcomed the contribution of all partners to ensure there was a balanced membership of the new partnership, based on skill-set rather than representation and that facilitates delivery.

Closing Comments

Cllr. Pamela Challis thanked partners for their hard work in developing this new and important partnership.

The first meeting of the Sustainable Essex Partnership is provisionally scheduled for Thursday 17th July. Invites will be sent out in due course.