

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX COUNTYWIDE TRAVELLER UNIT
COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD AT 10:00AM ON
14 JULY 2016**

Members of the Committee present:

Cllr Kay Twitchen	Essex County Council
Cllr Susan Barker	Uttlesford District Council
Cllr Paul Honeywood	Tendring District Council
Superintendent Steve Ditchburn	Essex Police
Dave Bill	Essex County Fire & Rescue Service

Also present was:

Steve Andrews – Essex County Council
Sarah Broadley – Essex County Council
Jim Nicolson – Thurrock Council
Colin Batchelor – Braintree District Council
Martin Howlett – Rochford District Council
Tony Howard – Essex County Fire & Rescue Service
Tim Clarke – Tendring District Council
Ian Myers – Essex County Council
Angela Slater – ECTU
Alec Baker – ECTU
Ewen Pearson - ECTU

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Councillor Twitchen opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Apologies were received from Councillor Anne Brown and Jane Gardner

2. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed that Cllr Twitchen be elected Chairman of the Committee and Councillor Susan Barker as Vice-Chairman.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman requested that Members declare an interest as and when appropriate.

5. Finance and Audit Report

The Committee received a financial report from Sarah Broadley, Finance Business Partner, ECC. The purpose of the report was:

- To note the Annual Return requirements have changed for the 2015/16 financial year.
- To receive the 2015/16 outturn position and proposed budget for the 2016/17 financial year.
- To note the ECC internal Audit costs that are expected to be charged.
- To note the estimated External Audit costs expected to arise.
- To confirm that, subject to no material issues being raised by the external auditor, the external audit report can be accepted and the management letter issued without the need to reconvene the full committee before the end of September 2016.

Members received a detailed presentation and **noted** the following:

- Employee costs have increased from 2014/15 to 2015/16 by 6% due to a new apprentice
- There has been a decrease in 'Supplies & Services' of 53% from 2014/15 to 2015/16 mainly due to one off IT spend for a new database incurred in 2014/15
- There is £48,427 of unbudgeted Legal Costs incurred in 2015/16 relating to unauthorised encampments (Included in 'Supplies & Services')
- Partnership Contributions have decreased by 10% from 2014/15 to 2015/16 due to a 10% reduction to all membership contributions
- The draw down from reserves in 2015/16 was £16,822, leaving a closing balance of £66,798
- A drawdown was required as expenditure was more than income received
- The previously reported expected 2015/16 reserve position at year end (reported at the October 2015 meeting) of £124,396 was not achieved mainly due to the unbudgeted Legal Fees charged to the ECTU budget
- It was agreed at the Joint Committee meeting in October 2015 that the Essex County Council Gypsy & Traveller contribution and Public Health contributions are reduced by 10% to reduce the overall ECC contribution to ECTU from 73% to 71%.
- The 3 year proposed budgets include an assumed annual inflation on expenditure of 2% and 1% for Employees
- £20,000 has been included in the budgets for legal fees. Work is currently in progress to mitigate the problem families previously in Harlow, but now targeting other partner areas, which cause the majority of legal fees, therefor £20,000 is deemed sufficient at this stage
- Braintree DC, Brentwood BC and Chelmsford CC are all considering joining the ECTU. This would generate approximately £19,389 new income pro rata. This has not been built into the proposed budgets
- If the above 3 Authorities join, the unit would need to review the current staffing levels to ensure service delivery over an increased geographic area

- Financial advice is to actively pursue recruiting new members/revenue streams and to review the membership subscription fees for 2017/18, with a view to reducing future drawdowns from reserves.

The Chairman recommended the proposed budget be accepted and also requested that membership subscriptions be reviewed at the next meeting.

It was **AGREED** the report be accepted.

6. ECTU Strategy and Action Plan

The committee received an update from Stephen Andrews, Manager of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit which focused on the Action Plan.

Members were updated and discussed the latest information and statistics relating to:

Unauthorised encampments

- S77's now completed within 7 working days
- The lobbying of parliament concerning the limitations of current powers is ongoing.
- Training for local Members and Officers to be provided

Fire Safety

- Detailed information sheets being produced for all sites
- Enhanced information sheets for high risk events to be produced
- Significant improvements being made ref access data for sites

Education

- The data was noted

Health

- The data was noted

Social Care

- No targets identified at present

Police

- Stephen Andrews and Supt Steve Ditchburn to discuss and agree performance measures.

Key Priorities

- On the recommendation of the Chairman, to better recognise the concerns of the settled community, Members **agreed** that key priority 4 '*Ensure a consistent and robust Essex-wide approach for the management of unauthorised encampments*' be moved to become key priority 2

7. ECTU Membership Status

The Committee received and **noted** the report from Stephen Andrews.

The Chairman stated her wish that other local authorities join the partnership in the coming months.

Stephen Andrews reported on early discussions with Braintree Council who have expressed an interest in the partnership. It was agreed an update be provided at a future meeting.

8. High Level Risk Assessment

The Committee received and **noted** the report from Stephen Andrews.

The Chairman agreed to contact all non-attendees prior to the next meeting of the Committee to encourage an improved attendance.

9. Operations Report including actions from Ops Board and Transit Site Update

The Committee received and **noted** the report from Stephen Andrews who commented in particular on:

Unauthorised encampments

- There are 14 at present moving around the county
- Similar issues reported by Suffolk and Norfolk
- The Chairman congratulated the team for their prompt site visits

Advice to private landowners

- It was noted private landowners have less constrained powers than local authorities hence the ability to remove encampments more promptly
- Members agreed that a discussion take place at the next meeting which should consider:
 - Signing up private landowners on an annual fee basis.
 - Offering a service on a pre encampment fee basis
 - Not offering a service

Fire Safety

- Data to be circulated to Members at a later date

Public Health

- The latest statistics were noted

Fly tipping

- Noted that rubbish collection is the responsibility of City/District/Borough Councils. Particular issues in Basildon at present.
- Two types – domestic and commercial
- The Chairman requested that local policies be shared and discussed at the next meeting

Members agreed to the request from Cllr Bassett, Epping Forest District Council, to attend future meetings of the Committee as an observer.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at 10.00am on Thursday 27 October 2016, County Hall, Chelmsford.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.35am

Chairman