

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX COUNTYWIDE TRAVELLER UNIT COMMITTEE HELD AT ESSEX FIRE AND RESCUE HEADQUARTERS, RIVENHALL AT 2:00 PM ON 29 MAY 2013

Prior to the meeting there were refreshments provided from 13:30 and an opportunity for members and officers to meet informally.

Councillor Anthony Hedley, Essex Fire Authority Chairman welcomed all those in attendance and this was echoed by Deputy Chief Fire Officer Adam Eckley.

Members of the Committee present:

Cllr Susan Barker	Uttlesford District Council
Cllr Anthony Hedley	Essex Fire Authority Chairman
Cllr Keith Hudson	Rochford District Council
Cllr Martin Hunt	Colchester Borough Council
Cllr John Jowers	Essex County Council
Cllr Richard Moore	Basildon District Council

Substitutes and other Members present:

Cllr Richard Bassett	- Epping Forest District Council
Cllr Jo McPherson	- Rochford District Council

Also present was:

Stephen	Andrews - ECC
Alec	Baker - ECC
Inspector Ian	Carter - EPA
Julie	Ellis - ECC
Mike	Gogarty - ECC
Ian	Haines - MDC
Paul	Hill – EFRS
Anna	Lambert - ECC
David	McCulloch - TDC
Gill	Nelson - ECC
Gwyn	Owen - ECC
Shaun	Scrutton - RDC
Belinda	Silkstone - CBC

and by special invitation also present was Mr Roy Leavitt, former officer (ret) of Essex County Council who had been instrumental in the formation of the ECTU and committee.

1. Apologies and Substitution Notices

Apologies were received from Cllr Frank Delderfield (MDC), Cllr Angie Gaywood (TDC), Chief Fire Officer David Johnson, Chief Inspector Jason Scrivener and Cllr Paul Honeywood (TDC).

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

3. Minutes

This being the inaugural meeting of the committee there were no previous minutes.

4. Identification of Items Involving Public Speaking

There were none identified.

5 Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Nominations to elect a Chairman of the committee were received. Councillor John Jowers was nominated by Councillor Keith Hudson, seconded by Councillor Jo McPherson and elected as Chairman.

6 Election of Vice-Chairman

Nominations to elect a Vice-Chairman of the committee were received. Councillor Keith Hudson was nominated by Councillor Susan Barker, seconded by Councillor Martin Hunt and elected as Vice-Chairman.

7 Chairman's opening remarks

The Chairman, Councillor John Jowers, thanked the membership for his nomination and election and formally welcomed those present to the inaugural meeting of the committee. He extended a special welcome to Mr Roy Leavitt who had recently retired from Essex County Council but who had been particularly instrumental in the formation of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit.

He paid tribute to the Local Authorities who were benefitting from the co-operation on this matter, explained the function of the committee, governance and voting arrangements.

He concluded by expressing the hope that the good will and excellent progress to date would continue and that in the future more Local Authorities would participate.

8 Background

The committee received a presentation from Gwyn Owen, ECC officer, concerning the background and strategic context.

The presentation considered:

- The scope of the work of the ECTU
- Education
- Health and Mortality Rates
- Fire – risks and savings
- ECTU structure
- Contributions from partners
- Benefits to partners of the co-operation through the ECTU
- The Northamptonshire model and performance.

There were no questions.

5 Performance

The committee received a presentation from Stephen Andrews, ECC officer, Manager of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit (ECTU) concerning current performance.

The presentation considered:

- Culture
- Accommodation
- LGC Awards 2013
- Health and Social Care
- GP Registrations
- Education
- Further Education
- Fire Safety
- Unauthorised Encampments

In response to questions the committee were advised that:

- Local Authorities are required by law to make appropriate provision for Travellers.
- In addition to the education provided for children there is also Further Education is being made available for older travellers.
- Mothers are being engaged in libraries where they are encouraged to bring their children
- There are considerable numbers of migrant workers in Essex and there are discussions with the larger employing companies to ensure they make provision. However, there is uncertainty at present as to who has the legal responsibility for these migrant workers. This is as yet untested in the courts.
- We are looking to Government for a change in the current site licensing. We want sites to be managed by workers with appropriate powers.
- The ECTU is an expert team and gains made 'on the ground' are demonstrable and have laid the foundations of progressive improvement in Essex in the management of sites and Travellers.

- There is a strong feeling across Government, Local Authorities and the Traveller Community that progress can be achieved if we are seen to 'play fair'.
- Consultants have been appointed to look at independently assessing the need for sites across Essex.
- It could be that there is a need for a waiting list for private pitches – much like the housing waiting list – as this might ease illegal encampments.

It was agreed that co-operation across all sectors would lead to less conflict, reduced costs and gains for the Traveller Community in education, welfare and health. Co-ordinated planning, assessment of needs and proper site management was considered essential.

It was requested that Performance Targets and achievements should be emailed to all Members.

6 Enforcement Arrangements

The committee received a presentation by Inspector Ian Carter on behalf of Chief Inspector Jason Scrivener considering current practice and operational challenges of enforcement.

In response to questions the committee was advised:

- The target was for a 5-day resolution to a Section 77 enforcement notice.
- Section 77 applies to all Local Authority land or publicly owned land. The police have emergency powers under Section 61 which can be applied to all but Highways land – which also details the criteria for eviction. Section 61 has provisions for 'aggravating factors'.
- Section 62 is appropriate to consider for temporary stopping places but there are none in Essex.
- Section 61 – establishing need and aggravating factors.

It was agreed that effective communication to partners, Local Authorities, managers of sites and the Police was key to success.

It was also noted and agreed that cross-border problems would be better managed if neighbouring counties had equivalent management and pan-authority strategies such as the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit. However, there is currently cross-border liaison and this has some benefits and success.

The ECTU undertook to keep all partners regularly updated on progress and matters of immediate concern. A communications strategy would be developed.

7 Budget

The committee received and approved the paper detailing the budgetary position of Unit

8 Action Plan

Consideration of the Action Plan of the ECTU was deferred.

9 Date of Next Meeting

To be advised

Chairman