

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX COUNTYWIDE TRAVELLER UNIT COMMITTEE HELD AT ESSEX FIRE AND RESCUE HEADQUARTERS, RIVENHALL AT 10:00 AM ON 23 JANUARY 2014

Members of the Committee present:

Cllr Susan Barker	Uttlesford District Council
Cllr Frank Delderfield	Maldon District Council
Cllr Angie Gaywood	Thurrock Unitary Authority
Cllr Jo McPherson (sub)	Rochford District Council
Cllr Paul Honeywood	Tendring District Council
Cllr John Jowers (Chairman)	Essex County Council
Cllr Richard Moore	Basildon Borough Council
Chief Fire Officer David Johnson	
Chief Inspector Glen Pavelin	

Substitutes and other Members present:

Cllr Jo McPherson -	Rochford District Council
Cllr Gary Waller -	Epping Forest District Council

Also present was:

Stephen	Andrews - ECC
Colin	Batchelor - BDC
Inspector Ian	Carter
Andy	Gribben - ECC
Stephen	Hankin - Essex Legal Services
Simon	Humby - BBC
Anna	Lambert - ECC
Kim	Mayo – Essex Legal Services
David	Poole - ECC
Shaun	Scrutton - RDC

1. Apologies and Substitution Notices

Apologies were received from Councillor Keith Hudson, Rochford District Council, Councillor Martin Hunt of Colchester Borough Council and Anthony Hedley, Essex Fire and Rescue Service.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2013 were approved as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising

It was agreed that Stephen Andrews, Manager of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit, would keep Councillor A Gaywood informed of ongoing progress relating to the updating of the Norfolk and Suffolk Horse Policy.

5. Identification of Items Involving Public Speaking

There were none identified.

6 Business Update

The committee received an update and presentation from Stephen Andrews, Manager of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit that outlined current business. Including;

- Health and Education - that there were fewer campaigns running currently but that there had been 149 visits and calls with families regarding health and education.
- Fire and Safety – continuing progress in this area. It was hoped that soon it would be possible to report that one third of all residencies had been visited.

At the request of Councillor A Gaywood it was agreed that a list of all sites would be provided to members.

- Unauthorised Encampments - There had been 21 unauthorised encampments reported since the last meeting of the committee – this was described by District.

It was noted that there was other activity relating to unauthorised encampments in Districts that were not members of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit.

- Managed Sites - Members agreed that the feedback they were receiving from officers, Members and the public was very positive and this was echoed by the Chairman who wished it noted that the management of the sites by the ECTU was remarkable.

Mr Andrews stated that he would arrange for any member or officer who wished to visit a managed site if they so wished.

- Animal Control – there was work on-going on the development of a Horse Policy. Officers were also being trained to microchip dogs.

Cllr McPherson asked if there had been any consideration of freeze-marking horses and Mr Andrews agreed that this had not been considered but he would look into it.

Councillor A Gaywood requested that he also consider the merits of introducing 'horse passports'.

There is developing work on the production of a newsletter (that will be copied to members of the partnership) but primarily aimed at the Essex-based traveller community. This will deal with local news but also be informative and carry advertising.

There was then some discussion by members of the committee about encouraging other Districts to join the ECTU. Councillor Waller remarked that Epping Forest were seriously considering joining the partnership as the benefits could be clearly seen.

Anna Lambert Head of Delivery Transitions, ECC, noted that discussions with existing members of the Partnership on renewal of the Joint Committee Agreement from October 2015 would need to commence in order to fit in with budget setting timescales for 2015/16. This would also include further discussions with potential new partners to provide them with opportunity to join.

Councillor S Barker noted that the contributions made by the Districts was far outweighed by the benefits of membership. A figure of circa £7,000 would not fund a team but it did fund the excellent work of the ECTU and the joint committee

The Chairman considered that the committee was an example of collaborative partnership producing excellent results and he was, personally, very proud of the achievements.

Finally, the Chairman wished to pay tribute to the work of the Police and in particular the considerable positive contribution made previously by Sergeant Tanya Steele, of Essex Police who had now moved on to other duties.

7 Financial Report and External Audit Sign-Off

The committee received the latest Financial Report from David Poole, Senior Financial Analyst, ECC, and were asked to approve sign off of the External Audit for 2012/13.

It was noted by the committee that, due to a number of circumstances, the deadline for the sign-off of the Audit Reports had been missed. This would not be permitted to happen again as dates of future meetings of the committee would be arranged to coincide with critical financial dates.

In response to questions from members, the committee was informed that there would be a financial appraisal and then a decision made to either carry forward

any surpluses, identify projects for spend or to repay surpluses to the Districts of the partnership.

Resolved:

1. Approval of accounts and decision to publish
2. Agree content of and right to 'Inspect the Annual Return'
3. Agreement of location(s) of right to 'Inspect the Annual Return' to be displayed, fees payable and contact for requesting
4. Agreement that a proposed approach for identified surplus be presented at the next Joint Committee.

It was determined in relation to resolution 3 that there shall be no fee payable and that the documents shall be provided to the clerk of the meeting and published on the ECC website together with the minutes of this meeting and distributed to the members of the committee.

8 Joint Committee Review

The committee received a written report from Anna Lambert, Head of Delivery Transitions, ECC, on a review of the Joint Committee arrangements.

It was noted that she and Steve Andrews (Head of ECTU) had met with:

- Rochford District Council
- Thurrock Council
- Essex Police
- Essex Fire and Rescue Service
- Public Health (now based in Essex County Council)
- Colchester Borough Council (telephone conversation) and
- Maldon District Council

The remaining Members of the Joint Committee have declined the offer for the moment.

The interim conclusion following the meetings that have taken place are that all Partners are very satisfied with the service and see that it is an important step towards consistency in matters relating to Gypsies and Travellers across Essex.

Discussion with partners has also highlighted that the ECTU will need to engage with Partners and potential partners to secure funding beyond October 2015 over the next six months to that end, as budget setting will commence in Autumn 2014. Officers would come back to the committee with a proposed approach on renewal of the agreement to the next meeting in June having discussed with Operations Board to then action in the Autumn

9 Unauthorised Encampments

The members of the committee discussed the process for dealing with unauthorised encampments. Stephen Hankin and Kim Mayo, both from Essex Legal Services answered questions and clarified details regarding the legal processes, definitions and difficulties regarding the management and removal of unauthorised encampments.

Actions requested by members:

- That at some future meeting of the committee there be an opportunity to meet with a highways legal officer who can provide a similar perspective on the issues around unauthorised encampments.
- The Chairman also suggested that having had a clear explanation at this meeting - members could be provided, perhaps confined to a single side of A4, a quick guide to the processes required.
- It was also agreed that all District websites should provide an online link to the ECTU pages at Essex County Council.

10 Date of Next Meeting

To be advised – beginning of June

Chairman