

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX COUNTYWIDE TRAVELLER UNIT COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD AT 10:00AM ON 29 OCTOBER 2015

Members of the Committee present:

Cllr Susan Barker	Uttlesford District Council
Cllr Richard Bassett	Epping Forest District Council
Cllr Tina Bourne	Colchester Borough Council
Cllr Anne Brown	Essex County Council
Cllr Roger Hirst	Essex County Council
Cllr Jane Potheary	Thurrock Council

Substitutes and other Members present:

Paul Downes	Essex Police
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Also present was:

Steve Andrews – Essex County Council
Sarah Broadley – Essex County Council
G Bennett – Thurrock Council
Emeka Forbes – Essex County Council
Jane Gardner – Essex County Council
Ian Myers – Essex County Council
Ros Parker – Essex County Council

1. Apologies and Substitution Notices

Apologies were received from Cllr P Honeywood, Cllr J Lumley, Cllr R Moore, Cllr G Isaacs, and Assistant Chief Fire Officer Paul Hill.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hirst and Councillor Barker declared an interest as County Council Members.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

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 financial update for the six months to 25 September 2015
- To note recommendations for the budget for 2016/17 and 2017/18
- To note recommendations for the membership fees for 2016/17 and 2017/18
- To note the response of the External Auditor regarding the Annual Submission for 2014/15

Members discussed the proposed membership fees for 2016/17 noting, in particular, the reasons behind the reduction to the ECC and Public Health contributions.

It was **AGREED** the recommendations be accepted subject to a review of individual contributions should additional Councils wish to join the Joint Committee.

6. Action Plan / Operations Report / High Level Risks

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

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

- Unauthorised encampments
 - Generally above target and pleased with large percentage of negotiated departures
- Fire Safety
 - Slight under achievement to date on home fire safety visits but this is challenging work.
 - Smoke alarms and fire safety visits progressing well against targets
- Education
 - Overall very successful in supporting young people into education.
- Health
 - All targets met or exceeded.
- Adult Social Care
 - No targets set with Adult Social team requesting any issues be forwarded to them for action. It was noted this was a qualitative measure.
- Policing
 - Although no set targets the Chairman welcomed the police input into a future strategy.

Members noted the high level risk assessment and were informed it was to be refreshed taking into account the new strategy. Stephen Andrews commented in particular on the areas of high risk with Members raising, in particular, the following comments:

- Private landowners – it was noted that development of a draft proposal is underway which will be considered at a future committee. Stephen Andrews to review what information is available on the ECC website.
- The impact of the revised definition of Travellers in planning law - Members were informed there are still many questions to be resolved and, in future, could lead to an increase in road side encampments.
- The positive impact between the work of the Unit and GCSE's outcomes
- Accessing antenatal – Members were informed issues are addressed if the unit is made aware of a pregnancy.
- Communications – Members were informed a more concerted effort will be made going forward and included in a future strategy which was supported by Essex Police

The Chairman made reference to the newsletter and placed on record the thanks of Members of the Committee for the work of the unit to help the lives of the Travelling community. He added that future educational targets need to be stretched to further support travellers to be both law abiding and successful.

7. ECTU Strategy and Future Priorities

The Committee received a presentation from Ros Parker and Emeka Forbes.

Members were informed of a review of existing targets, achievements over the past three years and what priorities need to be included in the future strategy.

A strategy day was held with partners to identify top priorities which now require Member comments to enable a draft strategy to be developed for early 2016. This will lead on to the development of a 3 year business plan for the unit.

Following the presentation, which focussed on the overall picture in Essex, it was noted that two working groups were to be planned to help gain input and feedback from partners to contribute to the strategy.

Members raised the following comments and questions:

- The strategy must include targets
- The strategy needs to better communicate to other partners the work of the unit
- How we are liaising and communicating with the traveller communities to seek their views on priorities. It was noted a representative of the traveller community does not attend this committee which may be beneficial
- A consistent Essex wide approach may not be appropriate
- No unlawful encampments need to be separated from the provision of transit sites.
- It is important that the views of Members are fed into the development of the strategy.

8. Renewal / Membership Status

The Chairman reminded Members that at the last meeting it was agreed to renew for a 3.5 year period to match the financial year end. However, this had not been possible due to changes with some of the partners and named individuals.

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A new agreement document has been created which requires in principle agreement from Members with delegated responsibility to officers from each of the partners authorities to agree the legal matters.

The Chairman recommended stronger Member involvement in the strategy and suggested a unit marketing presentation be developed for delivery to authorities who are not members Joint Committee. Individually Members also agreed to liaise with non- member authorities as follows:

Councillor Bourne – Braintree
Councillor Bassett – Harlow
Councillor Barker – Chelmsford
Councillor Hirst - Brentwood

Members noted and **agreed** the recommendations.

9. Any Other Business

Members placed on record their thanks for the excellent service provided by Unit.

10. Date of Future Meeting(s)

The dates of meetings for 2016 are to be agreed and notified to Members when available.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12.00pm

Chairman