
Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit Joint Committee, held in Committee Room 2 County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex on Monday, 28 November 2016

Present:

Cllr Susan Barker (Chairman)	Uttlesford District Council
Cllr Simon Walsh	Essex County Council
Cllr K Twitchen	Essex County Council
Cllr M Durham	Maldon District Council
Cllr K Blake	Brentwood Borough Council
Cllr S MacPherson	Thurrock Borough Council
Paul Downes	Essex Police
Dave Bill	Essex County Fire & Rescue Service

Also present:

Steve Andrews - Essex County Council
Sarah Broadley - Essex County Council
Colin Batchelor - Braintree District Council
Ian Myers - Essex County Council

1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Susan Barker who welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Councillor Tina Bourne, Councillor June Lumley and Councillor Wendy Schmitt.

2 Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Members agreed that improved attendance at future meetings is to be encouraged

3 Declarations of Interest

The Chairman reported she is Member of both Essex County Council and Uttlesford District Council. It was also requested that Members declare an interest as and when appropriate.

4 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 seven months to 31 October 2016
- Note recommendations for the budget for 2017/18 and 2018/19
- Note recommendations for the membership fees for 2017/18 and 2018/19
- Note the response of the External Auditor regarding the Annual Submission for 2015/16

Financial Update - current position

Members noted the following:

- The 2016/17 budget was based anticipating a deficit of £12,445. (This is due to a new budget line included for Legal Fees)
- 40% of income has been received from Essex County Council .Invoices to all members will be raised in November.
- 2 new partners have joined the unit – Brentwood Borough Council and Braintree District council, there fees have been built into the forecast
- Employee costs are overspending mainly due to the increase in National Insurance Contributions and increase in 2nd year apprentice costs
- Legal Fees are up to £36,000 but fortunately the problem families have moved out of the Essex area so we are hopeful that Legal Fees should reduce substantially.
- The unit is able to drawdown £25,000 from the East of England. When the ECTU was created, grant funding was made available for set up costs. We are able to claim the £25,000 for the database. This helps mitigate the rise in legal fees.
- The unit can potentially use the remainder of the East of England grant available to set up a live, main home page on the website. (Remaining grant is circa £30,000)
- The opening reserve balance as at 1st April was £66,798. If the forecast surplus position is achieved the reserve will increase to £70,221.
- The 2017/18 proposed budget includes an assumed annual inflation on employee costs of 1% and an increase of £6,000 due to 2nd year apprentice costs.
- The Supplies & Services budget includes £25,000 for legal fees and £5,000 for DK9 Costs to serve notices, summons etc. The unit has changed substantially over the last 5 years and in the first few years of operation, never had to go to Court. That is no longer the case now and the unit is struggling to resource the increasing demand and feel that building in additional contractor costs is a more economical way of dealing with the increased demand (as opposed to recruiting new staff). £5,000 is a conservative estimate and will be monitored throughout the year.
- It is proposed to increase the LA, ECC Highways and ECC Property & Facilities membership fees by 10% in 2017/18, as these are the areas that are contributing the most towards the increased demand.

Membership Fees

Members reviewed the breakdown of current fees and, following discussion, agreed to Option1: an increase of **5%** per member District bringing the contribution to £6,786 (an increase of £323 per member)

Response of External Auditor for 2015/16 Annual Submission

Members made no comment on the report.

5 ECTU Membership Status

The committee received a verbal update from Stephen Andrews on the latest membership of the ECTU.

It was noted that Epping District Council has decided not to join the partnership. Both Harlow District Council and Southend Borough Council have no interest in joining.

6 High Level Risk Assessment

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

7 Operations Performance Update - key issues

The committee received an update from Stephen Andrews.

The report gave details on recent unauthorised encampments in the Chelmsford/Basildon and Thurrock areas of the county and, in particular, the setting up of a PCC led task and finish group that will be considering:

- Managing illegal encampments
- Legislative changes
- Transit site provision
- Communications

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

- Unauthorised encampments
- Encampments by District
- Encampments by landowner
- Fire Safety
- Public Health
- Education

It was agreed that the sharing of central intelligence with District Officers would be extremely useful, possibly through the development of a website. Stephen Andrews agreed to consider the request.

Members also noted the Essex Police report noting in particular:

- the Communications plan including the development of a website
- the review of procedures relating to unauthorised encampments
- Fly tipping and support given to the Environment Agency
- On-going training for police officers
- Transit site proposals

Following discussion it was agreed that a report on the development of transit sites be brought to the next meeting of this committee.

8 Private Enforcement Proposal

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

Following discussion it was **agreed** that clear and comprehensive advice be made available on line only to. This would include guides on both Essex Police and ECTU procedures and processes.

Given the costs involved Members **agreed** that a service to private landowners who have an unauthorised encampment should not be offered.

9 Date of Next Meeting

Dates of meetings in 2017 to be agreed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12.25pm

Chairman