

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SOUTH ESSEX AREA FORUM HELD AT 10.00 AM ON WEDNESDAY 7 JUNE 2010 AT BENFLEET METHODIST CHURCH**

**Membership**

County Councillors:

* R C Howard (Chairman)	D Abrahall
J Dornan	D W Morris
Mrs T Sargent	* R A Pearson
S C Castle	Mrs I Pummell
Mrs T Chapman	* Mrs J M Reeves
* W J C Dick	* C G Riley
* Mrs E M Hart	J M Schofield
A M Hedley	* K Twitchen
* S Hillier	Mrs M J Webster
	* B Wood

\* present

**Also Present**

Cllr Joe Pike – Essex County Council

(in order of signing the attendance book – and as there described).

Adrian Roper – representing Rebecca Harris MP, Tony Wright – Southend & Essex Link, G Whatney – PAM, Alan Acott, Brian Dallas and Tony Brockwell – Brockwell & Sons, Chris Noakes – Essex Fire & Rescue Service, Derrick Rayson – DPC Group, Heather Glyn – Rochford P.C., Jim Brunton, Alf Partridge – Castle Point Borough Council, Dawn Wale – Castle Point Association of Voluntary Services, Cllr Terry Cutmore – Rochford District Council, John Page, Trudie Bragg – CPBC, Jackie Govier – Cllr Castle Point, John Buchanan – EALC, Jayne Kirk – Cllr Ray Howard, Yvonne Magee and Debs Gillham – Premier Inn, Mila Racheva – Premier Inn, Cllr Tony Ball – Basildon DC, CI Phil Trowell – Essex Police, Robert Gray – CAUS, Matthew Stanton – Yellow Advertiser, Max Orbach – Echo.

**Officers Attending in Support**

Sallyanne Thallon	Area Co-ordinator South Essex
Vivien Door	Committee Services Manager
Matthew Waldie	Committee Officer
Alison Anderson	Assistant Director for Partnership Delivery
Andy Hilsdon	District Manager - Area Highways South
Samantha Ball	Committee Assistant
Natalie Szpigelman	Highways Liaison Officer

**22. Welcome and Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed Members, Officers and members of the public to the meeting and in particular Chief Inspector Paul Trowell, new Divisional Commander, Essex Police.

### **23. Apologies and Substitution Notices**

The Committee Officer reported the receipt of apologies from Councillors Tracey Chapman, Stephen Castle, John Jowers, David Abrahall and Tony Hedley; Paul Warren, Rochford District Council; Jackie Brown, Rochford & District Association for Voluntary Service; David Moses, Essex County Council, Joe Liddiard, Castle Point BC, Rebecca Harris MP, Lin Kettley, Southend & Rochford Community Command and Viv Barnes, NHS SE Essex.

### **24. Declarations of Interest**

The following declared an interest for Minute 28, London Gateway Project:  
Councillor Tony Ball, Leader of Basildon District Council, and Councillor Terry Cutmore, Leader of Rochford District Council.

### **25. Minutes**

The minutes of the Forum meeting of 17 March were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

### **26. Matters Arising**

The Chairman informed the Forum that it provided a unique platform for the general public, giving direct access to local County Councillors and ECC officers actually involved in ongoing developments in the County. In response to a query on how these should better be publicised, the Chairman confirmed that the contact list had recently been expanded to include parish and town councils throughout the area.

The Chairman informed the Forum that Alison Anderson, who worked as a policy analyst in the Council's Policy & International Unit, was conducting a review of all four area forums, to see how these can best serve the people of Essex. A report would be forthcoming in due course. Councillor Pike was also in attendance.

In response to a question on Local Highways Panels, Cllr Ball informed the meeting that he had written to County Councillor Norman Hume, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transportation, offering to set up a group for Basildon and surrounding area; and he was open to the idea of combining with other groups. No response was yet forthcoming from Cllr Hume.

### **27. Public Questions**

The Forum agreed that a statement by George Whatley, of People Against Methane, would be attached to the minutes of the meeting.

## **28. London Gateway project**

The Chairman welcomed Charles Meaby, General Manager, and Xavier Woodward, Communications Manager, DP World London Gateway, and invited Charles Meaby to address the meeting.

A full copy of his presentation is attached to these minutes, but the salient points follow:

Plans have been made to redevelop the old Shell Haven site since 1998, although work has only begun in earnest over the past two years. The intention is to create a port and logistics park enabling the latest container ships (6<sup>th</sup> Generation), each capable of holding up to 14,000 containers, to berth and offload, permitting shorter and easier access to delivery points in the South East, Midlands and beyond. When fully operational, it should reduce annual road freight traffic by many millions of miles. It will also benefit from the latest computer technology and automated crane systems to maximise efficiency.

The site itself will cover an area of over two square miles. Some of this will include reclaimed land, created using material resulting from the dredging of the deep water channels that will be required to accommodate the larger container vessels. Dredging has already begun.

In terms of employment, the project should create 12,000 new jobs on site and over 35,000 new jobs overall. There will also be a direct benefit on a number of other companies, many of them local.

The Chairman thanked Charles Meaby for the informative presentation and invited questions from members.

The Forum raised concern particularly over the impact of road congestion, as the roads in this part of the county were already busy, especially at rush hour – not only the trunk roads, such as the A13 and A127, but also the local thoroughfares. Charles Meaby acknowledged this as a very valid point, which had been debated at public enquiry. Thames Gateway had consequently committed £200 million to road improvements. He made two specific points:

- i) the additional traffic will not appear all at once, but will increase gradually;
- ii) a traffic management system will be in use. This will avoid sending vehicles out at peak times, as they will be able to hold vehicles on site. This will help avoid some of the congestion problems experienced by some other ports, like Felixstowe and Dover.

In response to a question on whether consideration should be given to moving freight by sea, transferring goods from larger ships to smaller ones, Charles Meaby confirmed that some goods were already shipped in this fashion, albeit on a small scale. He cited Sheerness as a port operating in this way. He pointed out, however, that the relative cheapness of road transport and a subsidised railway network had mitigated against extensive use of this in the past. However, he did believe that greater movement of goods by sea would develop in time, especially with rising fuel prices.

Flooding was cited as another concern, with the dredging. Again, Charles Meaby made two points:

- i) the site will be one foot higher than the current ground level; London would flood before this site;
- ii) overall, the redistribution of soil should not have any effect on the height of water in the area.

The presence of large boats would be likely to impact upon other river users and those on the banks of the river, in several ways. The following issues were raised:

- the number of large craft using the river will increase substantially. In response, Charles Meaby accepted there would be an increase, but he pointed out that bigger ships meant fewer ships
- the size of these vessels could lead to practical problems – they would be hard to steer and, being 400m long, would effectively block the waterway as they turned; and they were likely to cause substantial bow waves. In response, Charles Meaby acknowledged that these vessels were unusually long and had deep draughts, which had consequences. But the pilots would have special training and tugs would also be used. Regarding the bow waves, these had already been modelled and should not create problems
- One member raised the issue of control over those piloting these vessels: boats do not seem to keep to the speed limits at present; what will be done to ensure that these bigger vessels do? In response, Charles Meaby pointed out that speed restrictions were regulated by the Port of London Authority and pilots in the river were also employed by the PLA; so this issue was strictly speaking beyond the aegis of London Gateway. However, he agreed to make relevant enquiries and report back on it
- Another issue raised by a member was that of silting: Were London Gateway aware of any changes to the silt level at Canvey sea wall, for instance? Charles Meaby pointed out that silt levels did naturally fluctuate significantly and, although he was unaware if that particular spot had been surveyed, he confirmed that the silt levels were under continuous real-time monitoring at a number of locations. Dredging had begun in March and no

significant changes had been observed as yet. This monitoring would continue over the next four years.

- One member voiced concern over noise pollution; as a Canvey resident, he believed noise levels had already increased, through piling, and he was particularly concerned over the effect of noise at night, given 24-hour working. Again, Charles Meaby acknowledged that noise levels would increase, but this noise should be sporadic, rather than constant. This element had also been included in the original study. He added that the automated system created less noise.

In view of the difficult current economic climate, Charles Meaby was asked about London Gateway's contingency plans. He confirmed that all investment was wholly private and was on a sound financial footing. Although they were not committed to opening as yet, they were committed to the dredging and environmental work (eg the resiting of the mud flats, to conserve existing bird habitats). He added that it was never possible to eliminate all risks in any venture, but he believed they had covered everything they could. They had worked alongside both Police and the Fire Services with regard to road infrastructure, planning, etc and would continue to do so.

With regard to the workforce, Charles Meaby confirmed that there were about 200 working onsite at present and that this should rise to 400 in the autumn, when building work began. The next three to four years would see an incremental rise in numbers.

The Chairman thanked Charles Meaby for his interesting presentation and enlightening responses to questions raised.

## **29. Strategic Highways Schemes**

Andy Hilsdon confirmed that there were no new developments to report. Members were pleased at the announcement about the Saddlers Farm development. The Chairman hoped to have a detailed presentation on this at the September meeting.

In response to a question on the state of road repair work, in the wake of the winter weather damage, Andy Hilsdon informed the meeting that Essex had received £2.1 million assistance from the Department of Transport, which had to be spent by October. He suggested that if anyone was aware of specific roads in need of repair, they should inform the Council.

Some comments were made about the trials of turning off lights on certain roads at night, with concerns being expressed about security aspects. The Chairman, as deputy chairman of the Safer Stronger Communities Policy & Scrutiny Committee, confirmed that such matters had been subject to lengthy scrutiny. It was also pointed out that such issues had to be resolved between the County Council and district/parish councils.

### 30. Health Scrutiny

Members considered the paper outlining the latest developments.

#### a) Cancer

Sallyanne Thallon noted the emphasis that NHS South East Essex had put on this subject. Nicky Hart, from NHS SE Essex, confirmed that they had staff around the area (including Canvey Island) specifically employed to educate and help people with matters relating to improving their lifestyle.

In response to a question, Sallyanne confirmed that it was no longer possible to give input to the Panel that had produced the latest report; however, if people still had concerns, these could still be taken to the Scrutiny Board.

#### b) Support for Carers

Sallyanne noted that, as yet, although not many PCTs had responded about what measures they will take in response to the scrutiny report, several submissions were expected in due course.

#### c) Scrutiny of the South East Essex Strategic Plan 2009/14

Sallyanne noted that the group was gaining members; their first meeting should be held in June or July.

#### d) Access to GP Surgeries

Sallyanne noted that this scrutiny was being carried out with West Area Forum and the South Area would be represented on the Panel. There should be an update at the next South Area Forum meeting, in September.

### 31. Area Forum budget

Members received a report informing them of the £50,000 budget and of the way in which these funds might be used. It was noted that funds might be available to any small project in the county, as long as it met the criteria set out in the report., namely:

- It would achieve tangible improvements to people's lives within local communities;
- Matched funding was desirable but was not essential;
- Applicants would need to demonstrate community support.

This would be advertised widely through the Forum. Sallyanne Thallon could be contacted by anyone interested.

**The closing date for completed applications was noted: 18 October 2010.**

### 32. Life Raft Trust

The Chairman drew attention to the work of the Life Raft Trust, a County Council initiative that can provide advice and financial assistance to cultural and tourist attractions across the county who are experiencing financial difficulties because of the recession. Leaflets were made available. Contact number: 01245 244685. Website: [www.essex.gov.uk/liferafttrust](http://www.essex.gov.uk/liferafttrust).

**33. Issues particularly relating to the Police and/or Fire Service**

None were recorded.

**34. Date of next meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on **Wednesday 1 September 2010 at 2.00 pm**, venue to be advised.

Future meeting dates were noted to be:

Monday 15 November 2010

Friday 14 January 2011

Tuesday 15 March 2011

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 11.50am

Chairman