

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EAST ESSEX AREA FORUM HELD AT  
THE VENTURE CENTRE LAWFORD ON 16 MARCH 2011**

**Membership**

**\*present**

**County Councillors:**

- |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| * A Brown Vice Chairman | * J Jowers            |
| K Bentley               | J Lucas               |
| * L Barton              | S Mayzes              |
| * R Callender           | L Mead                |
| S Candy                 | * M Skeels            |
| C Griffiths             | * M J Page (Chairman) |
| * Mrs M Fisher          | * D Robinson          |
| Mrs T Higgins           | * Ms A Turrell        |
|                         | Ms J Young            |

**Partner Organisations:-**

**Tendring District Council**

- |               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Neil Stock    | Leader          |
| John Hawkins  | Chief Executive |
| * G Guglielmi | Councillor      |
| * R Bucke     | Councillor      |
| * V Chapman   | Councillor      |
| * M Knappett  |                 |

**Colchester Borough Council**

- |                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Ian Vipond,    | Executive Director |
| Cllr Tim Young | Cabinet Member     |
| Ann Wain       | Executive Director |

**Essex Police**

- |                |                             |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Alison Newcomb | Superintendent Essex Police |
|----------------|-----------------------------|

**Essex Fire & Rescue**

**Essex County Council Officers:**

- \* Jane Gardner, Area Co-ordinator for East Essex
- \* Ian Myers, Committee Officer
- \* Samantha Ball, Committee Assistant

**Parish & Town Councils**

- |                 |                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| * B Sinclair    | Wivenhoe Town Council    |
| * L Belgrove    | Alresford Parish Council |
| * M Talbot      | St Osyth Parish Council  |
| * M Brown       | Frating Parish Council   |
| * J Chinnery    | Myland Parish Council    |
| * L Lay-Flurrie | Manningtree Town Council |
| * M Rayner      | Mistley Parish Council   |
| * C Abnett      | Fordham Parish Council   |
| * D Holland     | Tendring Parish Council  |
| * B Rolfe       | Lawford Parish Council   |

- \* D Winter Langham Parish Council
- \* A Large Frinton & Walton Town Council

## **Tendring E.A.L.C (Essex Association of Local Councils)**

### **Others Represented**

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

- \* T Whitmarsh Tendring CVS
- \* F Butler Member of the public
- \* S Alexander Tendring CVS
- \* B Ellis CVST
- \* T Ellis Essex Carers Support
- \* B Davies CIF
- \* E Bennett Pacific Marine

## **1. Welcome and Introductions, Members, Officers and Invited Representatives of Partner Organisations**

The Chairman welcomed those present and set out a summary of the business for the meeting.

He informed Members that this was to be the last meeting of the Area Forum due to budgetary and financial constraints. He thanked everyone for taking part and noted, in particular, the real successes of the MMR campaign and work with Parish Councils.

## **2. Apologies**

The Committee Officer reported apologies and substitution notices as follows:

<b>Apology</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Substitution</b>
J Lucas	Essex County Council	
J Young	Essex County Council	
S Mayzes	Essex County Council	
T Young	Colchester Borough Council	
N Stock	Tendring District Council	G Guglielmi

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

The Chairman requested that Members declare an interest in an item as appropriate.

## **4. Minutes**

The minutes from the previous meeting held on 2 November 2010 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

## 5. Public Questions

- Jane Chinnery informed the Forum of the change of name of her Council to Myland Community Council.
- Mr Frank Baker reported he had not received a full answer to his question raised at the last meeting concerning the cost of family court fees to the County Council and asked if the County Council would lobby the present Government to have them abolished.

Councillor Finch assured Mr Baker of a full response within a week of the meeting.

- Sharon Alexander, CVS Tendring, asked what would replace the Forum to ensure local access to grants.

Councillor Jowers responded that he would be talking about future arrangements under his localism update later in the meeting. However, he assured Members that the Community Initiatives Fund would be staying and that the voluntary sector funding had not been cut.

- Alan Marsh, Frinton and Walton Town Council, asked if there was any likelihood of traffic calming measures being introduced to Little Clacton Lane.

The Chairman reported that a meeting had taken place with the Area Highways Office and this would be followed up.

- Martin Rayner from Mistley Parish Council raised the issue of the installation of a vehicle activated speeding (VAS) sign to his village. He reminded Members that his Parish Council was prepared to pay for the sign but the proposed site did not meet revised ECC criteria. He added that local residents are still supporting the installation.

The Chairman reported that Cllr Norman Hume had agreed to re-visit the criteria. The Chairman agreed to follow up progress.

- Linda Belgrove, Alresford Parish Council, thanked the Forum for their financial support which had been received on two occasions.
- Michael Talbot, St Osyth Parish Council, reported that the system of grants introduced to assist owners restore historic buildings was being abused by developers.

Councillor Jowers responded that he was aware of this practice. He added that the County Council has an excellent Built Environment team that advises Cllr Lucas on such matters.

It was noted that a key role of English Heritage is to ensure historic buildings are cared for and are concerned less with local planning issues.

## **6. Essex County Council Transformation Programme**

The Forum received a presentation from Councillor David Finch on the transformation programme.

The vision of the Council is to deliver the best quality of life in Britain by 2012 and to achieve this there was needed:

- Improvements to core services – there is a commitment to improving services that are delivered well.
- Address budget pressures – there has been a significant in how things are done.
- Satisfy customers – answers to questions

External factors driving change are:

- The economy
- Customer expectations
- Demographics and other pressures

The Forum was informed that delivering the required changes were complex but it was still 'business as usual' and there would be no changes in service delivery.

Details of the transformation programme to date were outlined. Potential savings are being constantly refined and all business cases closely monitored.

Councillor Finch went on to outline how the customer experience is being transformed through:

- A redesigned website
- Introduction of a new service – Tell Us Only Once – avoiding having to inform multiple agencies

The Forum was informed on progress over the first year which includes:

- Essex Cares going live – services moved to a local authority trading company fully owned by ECC. Surpluses are re-invested into front line services.
- IT Services brought back in house.
- Right to Control pilot to give disabled people more control

- Visit Essex – income generation supporting tourism across the county.
- Improved customer contact
- Middle Management Review
- Highways Strategic Transformation – moving to a single contractor
- Significant savings in procurement.

Throughout the presentation members of the Forum asked questions related to the transformation programme and were informed that:

- Essex Carers may open up to other authorities in the future.
- Essex Libraries now runs the service in Slough
- Support for vulnerable people will remain protected.
- The alleged delay in the assessment of personal budgets will be investigated.
- The funding of transport costs to faith schools will continue for any child presently at school or who has been accepted
- E-payroll will impact on expenses but will have little difference to payroll.

Chief Superintendent also discussed with the Forum the need for Essex Police the make significant savings, £45m over the next four years, by:

- Undertaking a full review of buildings and estate.
- Sharing Services with ECC and Essex Fire Service: A full review would be undertaken at each location to ensure confidentiality can be maintained

The Chairman thanked Councillor Finch for attending the meeting and for delivering an excellent presentation.

## **7. Localism Bill**

Councillor Jowers updated the Forum on issues related to the Big Society and the Localism Bill. He informed the meeting that:

- This country is the most centralised politically.
- The coalition government has decided to allow things to be carried out locally.
- The Localism Bill is extremely complex with 238 clauses which will have an enormous impact on how we live.

Councillor Jowers gave some examples:

- Improvements to local broadband – pilot in Maldon
- Retail Enterprise Fund – match funding
- Community Asset Transfer – assets owned by the County Council such as woods and village halls should be owned by local communities.

- Local Councillors will have greater freedom to express their opinion on local issues
- There will be a duty to hold local referenda if 5% of the population request it.
- Local communities will have the right to bid for assets being sold with a discount.
- The Community Infrastructure Levy where Colchester has been chosen as a pilot. The levy is likely to be in the region of £19 – 20k per dwelling.
- Neighbourhood Planning will determine what local communities need.

Cllr Jowers concluded by informing the Forum that £1.44m had been allocated to the Big Society Fund this year with £2m for 2012 and as mentioned earlier in the meeting the Community Initiatives Fund would continue.

Members of the Forum discussed a numbers of issues concerning:

- The cost of communities funding a referendum.
- The future role of the Planning Inspector in local developments
- Compliance with the Local Development Framework and likely timetable
- The future of the Area Forum - at this stage Cllr Jowers was not able to be specific about a replacement to the Area Forum but envisaged local liaison groups being arranged.

There being no urgent business the Chairman closed the meeting at 4.15 pm.

Cllr Talbot gave a vote of thanks to the Chairman and Jane Gardner for the excellent leadership and support they have given the Forum over the years.

Chairman