

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE WEST ESSEX AREA FORUM HELD AT
THE ADULT COMMUNITY COLLEGE, ONGAR, ON 16 November 2010**

Membership

*** Present**

Essex County Council

| | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| * E Webster (Chairman) | * J Knapman |
| * B Aspinell | * G McEwen |
| S Barker | * V Metcalfe |
| R Chambers | G Mitchinson |
| L Dangerfield | Dr A Naylor |
| * M Garnett | * C Pond |
| R Gooding | J Roberts |
| A Jackson | * S Walsh |
| * E Johnson | * J Whitehouse |
| D Kendall | |

Brentwood Borough Council (2)

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Louise McKinlay | - Leader |
| Joanna Killian | - Chief Executive |

**Epping Forest District Council
(2)**

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| * Diana Collins | - Leader |
| Derek MacNab | - Acting Chief Executive |
| David Eyles | - |
| Jim Nolan | - |

Harlow District Council (2)

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Andrew Johnson | - Leader |
| Malcolm Morley | - Chief Executive |

Uttlesford District Council (2)

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Jim Ketteridge | - Leader |
| John Mitchell | - Chief Executive |

Local Councils (3)

| | |
|------------------|---|
| * Peter Baggott | - E.A.L.C (Brentwood) |
| Sheila Jackman | - E.A.L.C Vice-Chairman |
| * David Aldridge | - Great Dunmow Town Council |
| * Cllr Y Maguire | - Kelvedon Hatch Parish Council |
| Joan Bowerman | - Matching Parish Council |
| * Colin Enderby | - Doddinghurst Parish Council |
| * Sheila Jackman | - Ongar Town Council and Vice-Chairman for EALC |
| * Kim Durant | - Epping Forest District Council |
| * Cllr P Hammond | - Theydon Bois Parish Council |
| * Cllr A Purkiss | - Theydon Bois Parish Council |

**Hospitals & Primary Care Trusts
(4)**

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Catherine O'Connell | - NHS West Essex |
| Darren Leech | - Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust, Harlow |

Police (2)

Chief Superintendent Simon Williams - West Division, Essex Police

Chief Inspector Alyson Wilson Uttlesford District

Fire (1)

Station Commander John Sherrington - Harlow, Essex Fire & Rescue Service

Councils for Voluntary Service**(4)**

Jackie Sully - Rainbow Services, Harlow

Jacqui Foile - Voluntary Action Epping Forest

Eric Hicks - CVS Uttlesford

John Fry - Brentwood CVS

LINKs**(2)**

J Carr - LINKs

J Harkus - LINKs

G Swain - LINKs

Also Present

(from the attendance book – and as there described)

Yim Kong, Assistant Director for Highways, ECC, Christopher Swain, Pete Baton, Clare Hardy, Epping Forest Guardian

Officers Attending in Support

- * Samantha Ball - Committee Assistant
- * Vivien Door - Committee Officer
- * Yvette Wetton - Area Coordinator

52. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed Members of the Forum and members of the public to this Highways and Transportation Services meeting.

53. Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Barker, ECC; David Linnell, Loughton Residents Association; Chief Superintendent Simon Williams, West Division, Essex Police; Cllr David Kendall, Leader of the Opposition, Brentwood Borough Council; Derek MacNab, Acting Chief Executive, Epping Forest District Council; Aimi Middlehurst, Parish Clerk, Ingatestone & Fryerning Parish Council; Jacqui Foile, Voluntary Action Epping Forest; Darren Leech, Executive Director of Delivery, Princess Alexandra Hospital; John Mitchell, Chief Executive Uttlesford District Council; Cllr Ketteridge, Uttlesford District Council; Jackie Sully, Executive Director, Rainbow Services Harlow; Enid Walsh, Clerk to Loughton Town Council; David Matthews, Debden Parish Council, Cllr Mitchinson, ECC.

54. Declaration of Interest

Councillor Pond declared a prejudicial interest against Minute 57, 2010/2011 West Area Forum Budget Recommendations, as he was the Chairman of the Loughton Lopping Endowment Fund organisation which had made an application for funding. Councillor Pond left the room whilst this item was discussed.

55. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the West Essex Area Forum held on 14 September 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments.

Minute 46, Emergency Services

- i) Fire Authority, fifth paragraph should read 27,000 Litres and not 27 Litres.
- ii) Police Authority, third paragraph should read: There was more robbery linked to the Central Underground stations like Epping Forest and Loughton. Knife Arches were deployed at train and bus stations linked to the Central line, the public were then invited to walk through them.

56. Highways and Transportation Services

i) Proposed links between the Thames Crossing and M11

Councillor N Hume, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation informed the Forum that the proposed links between the Thames Crossing and M11 was a draft plan by Kent County Council. Kent had not consulted with Essex County Council on these proposals. Kent had now apologised to Councillor P Martin, Leader, Essex County Council and the Right Hon Eric Pickles MP. Essex would not be supporting these proposals as they were too costly and unrealistic and would provide damage to the environment.

ii) Highways Strategic Transformation Programme and the Highways Improvement Programme

The Forum received an oral presentation from Councillor Hume and Transportation and Yim Kong, Head of Localism and Customer Services on the Highways Strategic Transformation Programme and the Highways Improvement Programme.

The Service receives 75% of its funding from Central Government, the remaining 25% from the Council Tax. Essex County Council was working to reduce the cost of services whilst increasing efficiency whilst providing the core services.

Road Safety

Road safety was the priority. Essex had been working in partnership with the Police and Fire Authorities to reduce the killed or seriously injured numbers on the roads over the last three to four years and consequently was ahead of other Local Authorities.

Maintenance of Network

The UK had suffered two difficult winters. Essex had more than adequate salt stocks and managed to provide salt to other Local Authorities. The network

had suffered severe damage with many pot holes and damage to vehicles.
The network cannot withstand severe winters.

Congestion

Improvements have been made to reduce the network by providing community transport and park and ride buses. There was now a reduction in vehicle movement and congestion was no longer as bad as it had been five to 10 years ago. Major improvements to roads had taken place at Sadlers Farm, A414 duelling and a new junction on the A12. Essex gained £150 million grants from the Government for this work. Public transport works well in urban areas but was not always good in rural areas. Essex continued to invest in the rural areas.

**Changes to the Service
Communication**

There were improvements to the Communications in the service; the service receives 1 million communications every year by telephone or by email. The website had been improved to provide more information and to enable the public to log incidents, for example, pot holes. The Contact Centre has a dedicated team of advisers who have been trained with the skills and resources to deal with the every day calls, whilst more complicated problems were passed to the Technical Advisers. Technical advice was provided on maintenance, street lighting and safety. The Technical Advisers were based in Harlow, Colchester and Basildon. Localism was provided by the Local Highways Panels which the Technical Advisers support.

Restructure

There was a move away from the four Area Offices and Managers to structuring the service around its functions. When the structure was finalised it would be sent out to Districts and Boroughs and Parish Councils. The service had been reduced by 100 posts, 25 of these were vacancies whilst the 75 were voluntary redundancies. Further reductions to the service would be more difficult.

Contactors

Essex would have a new integrated contact with one supplier across the county, the supplier may be comprised of one contractor or a consortium, this should provide savings of £5 million across the county whilst ensuring the agreed outcomes with the contractor, for example, continuing to reduce the Killed or seriously Injured on the roads and provide a good network condition. Payment would be provided on the agreed outcomes being met. Essex would move to a single provider by April 2012.

During the discussions the following points were made:

- The single contractor would have an agreement to deal with significant defects for both pot holes and street lighting within an appropriate time limit whilst minor defects would have a longer time frame;
- There was no policy to salt the access roads to every school but individual schools would be reviewed as to the effect salting access roads would have on the school. Some schools were located on main roadways and would receive salt due to their location. Hospitals and Fire Stations, for example, were in the policy. Councillor Hume would produce a press release on 23 November 2010. Members were

concerned that there was no change in the policy of salting the access roads to schools after Councillor Castle, Cabinet Member for Education & the 2012 Games, had commented earlier in the year in a TV interview that he was concerned that schools were closed during snow;

- No extra salt bins would be provided, but there were a significant number in use, if Parish Councils wanted more salt this could be accommodated but Essex could not supply more salt bins. Training could also be provided for Parish or Town Council staff;
- Some Members of the Forum was unhappy that the Highway Officers had been relocated from the Brentwood office. The Forum was informed that this had been part of the efficiency and effectiveness for the service that these officers were now only provided in three locations across Essex;
- Members raised concerns regarding the single contractor. The Forum was informed that the Highways and Transportation Service had taken advice and had been informed that a single contractor was best practice. There had been huge interest from top companies with some companies combining to make a consortium to provide all the services required in this single contract;
- Changing speed limits took a long time due to the number of tasks and consultations involved and could take from between three months to one year before the speed limit could be changed;
- The maintenance contractor now sprays faults in the road way in batches, which works in urban areas but was more difficult in rural areas as the faults were spread over a larger area. Serious potholes should be repaired within 24 hours whilst minor defects may be left some time;
- When reporting a fault on the website, the reporter should leave their email address, an automated email would then be sent out when the fault was due to be repaired. This automated email could also keep the reporter informed of progress. The Website would also inform the reporter whether their fault was a category one or two, eventually it would list the faults in areas so that the public could see if anyone had reported the fault;
- That Boroughs/Districts, Town and Parish Councils would be given a contact list of officers and a list of routine and non-routine fault categories. The reporter would then be able to select the appropriate place to report the fault. Yim Kong would provide this information;
- The Forum was concerned that Essex would only survey a selection of work and not each repair. The Forum was informed that the single Contractor would have to inspect every repair under their contract whilst the county could spot check repairs to check on the quality;
- Major projects like the parking at Epping Forest would be managed effectively during the restructure of the service with continuity of staff;
- A Member was asked to write to Councillor Hume with details of the proposed Medical Centre in Epping Forest in December 2011, as the bus route would need to be diverted to the new Health Centre to enable patients to attend;

- Councillor Hume would review the Local Community Infrastructure funding as it had been useful, £2 million funding had been given to this initiative over a two year period;
- Delimitation of the network was a national problem the Stone Mastic Asphalt (SMA) provides a thin Surface but was much better for the local communities as it was a quieter surface and provided the motorist with a better ride ability, whereas the Hot Road Asphalt was noisier for traffic but did not delaminate as quickly;
- A Member was concerned that road surfaces on roundabouts were not treated differently, as a roundabout in Dunmow required to be resurfaced every three months. Yim Kong would look into changing the policy;
- Members were concerned that there was still no bus shelter at Debden, the Parish Council was waiting for the Highways Services to install it.

ii) Part Street Lighting Policy

The Forum received a report AFW/23/10 from Councillor Hume to update the Forum on the Street Lighting policy.

The Pilot for the Part Street Lighting took place in Maldon and Uttlesford over the last two years. The Safer and Stronger Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Chaired by Councillor Pond, scrutinised the pilot and found that there was no increase in crime or injuries but that crime actually reduced. This policy would be rolled out after April 2011 when the new technology to control the lights was in place and would take two to three years to be rolled out across Essex. There was a significant financial saving and environmental saving for Part Street Lighting. Consultation for the locality would be sought before the Part Street Lighting was rolled out. There were exceptions for keeping lights on near clubs and pubs and town centres and any areas that the Police have identified as requiring lighting. For example, on New Years Eve the lights would stay on all night. The majority of residents were happy for the lighting to be switched off between midnight and 5 am.

During the discussions the following point was made:

- That railway stations and tube stations not in the town centre should be made an exception until after the last train had arrived and passengers have been given time to clear the station.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Hume and Yim Kong for their interesting and informative presentation but acknowledged that the Forum had shown considerable concern regarding the communication of fault reporting and the single contractor. The Chairman requested an update from Councillor Hume in early spring and again after April 2012.

57. 2010/2011 West Area Forum Budget Recommendations

The Forum received a report AWF/24/10 updating the Forum on progress in allocating funding available through the West Area Forum Budget and to request ratification of the Chairman's recommendations.

A total of 31 applications were received requesting the sum of £188,781 against £50,000 grant. It was an extremely difficult decision but the funds were split evenly between the four districts and mainly given to smaller community groups who may have difficulty accessing funding from other sources. All the applicants who were unsuccessful will be informed and will be offered information regarding voluntary services that may be able to grant them funding or in the case of larger funding the CIF budget.

The Forum **Agreed** the 2010/2011 West Area Forum Budget Recommendations.

58. Future Programme of Work

The Forum received and noted the Forward Work Plan AFW/25/10.

The following items have been added to the Forward Plan:

- The Government's Carbon Reduction Policy
- Local Transport Plan consultation would be added to the January meeting.
- The Community Care meeting would include information on assessments.

59. Public Questions

There were no public questions.

60. Dates of Future Meetings

The date of the next meeting was noted as Tuesday 11th January 2011, 10.00 am Harlow Council, The Water Gardens, Harlow, Essex CM20 1WG in Committee Rooms 2a and 2b.

61. Urgent Business

There being no further business, the Chairman expressed her thanks to members of the Forum and others for their attendance. The meeting closed at 11.55 pm.

Chairman