

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EAST ESSEX AREA FORUM HELD AT  
THE VENTURE CENTRE LAWFORD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2010**

**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
Mike Badger	
* Cllr Nick Turner	
* Cllr Robert Bucke	

**Colchester Borough Council**

* Ian Vipond,	Executive Director
Cllr Tim Young	Cabinet Member

**Essex Police**

Jason Gwillim	Superintendent Essex Police
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**Essex Fire & Rescue**

**Essex County Council Officers:**

- \* Jane Gardner, Area Co-ordinator for East Essex
- \* Louise Albright, Committee Assistant
- \* Janet Mills, Committee Officer
- \* Philip Wilson Policy Analyst

**Parish & Town Councils**

- \* M. Frostick Gt. Bromley PC
- \* D. Winter Langham PC
- \* L. Christodoulides Frating PC
- \* J. Elliot Tiptree PC
- \* M. Brown Frating PC
- \* J Chinnery Myland PC
- \* L. Lay-Flurrie Manningtree TC
- \* Cllr K. King Manningtree TC
- \* J. K. May West Mersea TC
- \* D. Tucker West Mersea TC
- \* M. Townsend Bradfield PC

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

\* Dave Halsey

**Other Bodies Represented**

\* G. Firmingale

\* Richard Walker

\* Caroline Blackler

\* Dr. T. Rogers

\* F. Baker

\* G. Turner

Member of the public

Head of Community Services –  
Tendring District Council

Tendring CVS

Dovercourt Resident

Member of the public

Member of the public

**29. 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.

**30. Apologies**

The Committee Officer reported apologies and substitution notices as follows:

<b>Apology</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Substitution</b>
Councillor K. Bentley	Essex County Council	
Councillor A Turrell	Essex County Council	
Councillor N. Stock	Tendring District Council	
Councillor T. Young	Colchester Borough Council	
David Evans	Colchester CVS	
Chip Abnett	Fordham Parish Council	

**31. Declarations of Interest**

None recorded.

**32. Minutes**

The minutes from the previous meeting held on 22 June 2010 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**33. Variation in the Order of Business**

The Chairman proposed a variation in the order of business taking Item 5 Public Questions as the next item of business, followed by Item 7 Improving the Mental Health and Wellbeing of People in Our Communities followed by Item 6 Rural Issues and then Item 8, 9,10 and 11. The proposal was agreed by the Forum.

### **34. Public Questions**

The Chairman invited questions from the public on matters within the Terms of Reference of the Forum and not related to substantive agenda items. The following questions and responses were made:

- Dr. T. Rogers a resident of Dovercourt raised a question in relation to The Essex County Council web site.
- (i) Mr. Rogers advised the Forum that, not for the first time, relevant documents for the Forum meeting had not been available to the public on the Essex County Council Website. Dr. Rogers asked that action be taken to ensure that there was a robust system in place to ensure that documents intended for access by the public were always made available via the Internet.

With regard to the website Councillor J Lucas acknowledged the problem and advised the Forum that Essex County Council was currently constructing a new website which would give much better information and provide easier access for the public. The new website should be available in October.

- Mr. Mike Brown, Frating PC raised questions in relation to resolutions to questions raised at previous Forum meetings.
- (i) Mr. Brown questioned whether it would be possible for the Chairman to advise the Forum, of resolutions to questions, not dealt with at previous Forum Meetings.

Councillor M Page advised the Forum that resolutions to unanswered questions would be given at the beginning of the public question time in future.

### **35. Improving the Mental Health and Well-being of People in Our Communities**

The Forum received a presentation from Nicola Colston, Assistant Director of Commissioning for Mental Health, setting out the potential options for future services and the development of Lucas Ward at the Kingswood Centre in Colchester. Mr. K. Whelan was also in attendance to answer questions.

The forum was advised as follows:

As part of the consultation process NHS Mid Essex was seeking views from Members of the Forum regarding the best future use of Lucas Ward, an older adult mental health ward in Colchester. The purpose of the presentation was to give some background information and to set out some options for the future.

The Consultation process and timetable was outlined to the Forum as follows:

- Local area Forum meeting 14th September
- Stakeholders meeting 27th September
- Discussion period closes 8th October
- Directors of Commissioning 20th October
- Communicate the decision with all parties

The Forum was advised as follows:

The ward provided an in-patient service for patients suffering with complex mental health problems or suffering with severe dementia. The service covered patients from north Essex, including the areas of Colchester and Tendring. The ward provided a high standard of care and had an excellent reputation.

The Forum was advised that the ward was not easily able to admit new patients to the ward as some of the existing patients had remained upon the ward for a number of years and could now consider the ward a 'home for life'.

Whilst the ward provided a friendly homelike environment, patients could easily become institutionalised. With the advancements of mental health therapy and medicines, some long term patients could now be better and more appropriately placed in supported residential nursing care. Existing patients were now being reviewed to see if they could be placed in a community setting.

The Forum was advised that there were key principles which needed to be adopted when considering the future use of the ward. These principles were as follows:

- First meet severe and complex needs
- Have smooth transitions between services
- NHS is for medical care
- Homes for life in the community
- Do least harm
- Value for money

There were a number of proposed options for the future uses of the ward these included the following:

- Bring people with complex needs requiring the use of the Mental Health Act back in to the NHS
  - Decommission Lucas ward and use monies for other services
  - Decommission Lucas ward and use monies for dementia services
  - Any other ideas to meet need?
- Mr. Nick Turner raised a question regarding the proposed decommissioning of the ward.

- (i) Mr. Turner questioned the rationale of closing what was deemed to be a very successful ward and suggested that the ward should be maintained and enhanced as a unit for those with complex Mental Health needs.
- A local resident commented that the ward was the only one of its kind in the North East Essex area and as such agreed with Mr. Turner that it should be retained.
- Councillor John Jowers raised a question regarding the proposed restructuring of the NHS.
- (i) Councillor John Jowers advised the Forum that the Government had published a white paper which proposed significant changes the structure of the NHS. The paper proposed that Primary Care Trusts be abolished and that General Practitioners (GPs) commission services in the future. It was recognised that GPs had little appetite for specialist commissioning. Councillor Jowers questioned how this would affect the future of the North Essex Partnership Foundation Trust (NEPFT).

Nicola Colston advised the Forum that there were no plans at present to merge the existing three Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) covering the North Essex area. The NEPFT was working closely with the PCTs regarding the changes.

- Councillor Theresa Higgins advised the Forum that she supported the idea that where appropriate patients should be re-housed within the appropriate community setting as this would then free up spaces for new patients with complex mental health needs to be treated on the ward.
- Nick Turner raised a question regarding access to services and the Governments Dementia Strategy.
- (i) Nick Turner advised the Forum that he was aware that there were problems for those people with dementia accessing community services.

Nicola Colston advised the Forum that in line with the recommendations set out in the Governments Dementia Strategy, investments had been made to expand the Memory Assessment Service in Colchester.

- A Local Resident raised a question regarding community funding.
- (i) Questioned who would be funding the residential places for those moving from the Ward to residential care.
- A second Local Resident raised the question regarding the cost of re-homing patients in residential nursing care.

Nicola Colston advised the Forum that community funding would be made available for those patients moving into the community.

- (i) Nick Turner advised the Forum that there were problems for those people with dementia accessing community services.

Nicola Colston advised the Forum that investments had been made to expand the Memory Assessment Service in Colchester, in line with the recommendations set out in the Governments Dementia Strategy.

- A Local Resident commented that it should be the NEPFT that determines what happens to the services at the Trust. The resident considered it was the Trust that had the expertise and experience with regard to vulnerable members of the community. The Local Resident considered that the public could only give a view based upon anecdotal evidence.

Nicola Colston advised the Forum that the ward to stay open to provide a services for those with complex mental health needs, dementia and provide a service for patients under the Mental Health Act, was the Trust's preferred option.

The Chairman summed up the debate. Members attending agreed that the Forums' preferred option was that the ward remain open and continue to provide services for those with complex mental health needs, dementia and services for patients under the Mental Health Act. The Forum also agreed that where appropriate existing inpatients should be re-homed in an appropriate community setting.

The Chairman thanked the presenters and advised that he would inform the Essex County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee about the matter.

Councillor John Jowers, Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning advised the Forum that it had been muted at a recent ministerial visit, that the Maldon pilot was delivering the cheapest rural broadband scheme of its kind.

### **36. Rural Issues**

The Forum received a presentation from Philip Wilson Policy Analyst, setting out the priorities for East Essex and their implementation in the context of the findings of the Essex Rural Commission.

Philip Wilson explained information circulated at the meeting which illustrated a selection of milestones in the development of rural policy at national and local level over the past two years.

The Forum was advised as follows:

- Essex Rural Commission published its report in September 2009 with sixty recommendations over 12 subject areas. The commission's report had been assessed by Cabinet and the recommendations were now being implemented. Longer term ambitions had been incorporated into the Essex Rural Partnership's Rural Strategy "2020 Vision for Rural Essex" published in November 2009.

Areas that would be affected where as follows:

### **Business**

- End the ban on social housing tenants being able to run businesses from home.
- Abolition of Regional Development Agencies and support the implementation of Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- To encourage tourism.

### **Communities and Local Government**

- Promote the radical devolution of power and financial autonomy.
- Abolish regional housing targets.
- Localise housing as per the Conservatives Party's Open source planning green paper.
- A simple and consolidated national planning framework.
  - Promote share ownership schemes and help social tenants and others to own/part own their own home.
  - Home on the Farm affordable home schemes to be encouraged.
  - Create new trust that will make it simpler for communities to provide homes for local people.
  - Maintain the green belt and introduce a new form of Site of Special Scientific Interest for local communities to designate areas appropriate to them.

### **Consumer Protection**

- The Office of Fair Trading was to proactively enforce the Grocery Supply Code of Practice and curb abuses of power.
- Honesty in food labelling may affect the local food production industry.

### **Energy and Climate Change**

- Establish a full system of feed-in tariffs in electricity as well as the maintenance of banded ~Renewable Obligation Certificates.
- Introduce measures to promote a huge increase in energy from waste through anaerobic digestion.
- Deliver an offshore energy grid to support the development of a new generation of offshore wind power.

### **Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

- Introduce measures to protect wildlife and promote green spaces and wildlife corridors in order to halt the loss of habitats and restore biodiversity.
- National tree planting campaign.
- Share the responsibility with livestock keepers of preparing for, and responding to, outbreaks of disease.
- Take forward the marine and Coastal Access Act.
- Badger control in affected areas.

- Investigate measures to help fuel cost in rural areas, starting with pilot schemes.
- Create a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- Free vote on hunting.

### **Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)**

Philip Wilson advised the Forum that the LEPs would be key to the delivery of economic development at a sub-national level including responsibility for the Regional Growth Fund and the provision of local business support.

Local authorities and businesses had been invited to submit proposals to form Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

In September 2010 the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) called for evidence that Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) were being created.

Councillor John Jowers Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning advised the Forum that there was a need to develop Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), because of the abolition of the Regional Assembly. In response to the CRC, Essex County Council had submitted a proposal to join Kent to form a LEP. The proposal to join Kent rather than Suffolk had been based upon geographical similarities, (coastline facilities as a gateway to Europe) and business demographics. The Forum was advised that Essex was already involved with Thames and Haven Gateway enterprise partners.

It was proposed that decision making and funding streams should be devolved to local communities. District and Borough Councils would need to give careful consideration to how far funding should be devolved.

- Dr. T Rogers raised a question regarding the process.
  - (i) Dr. Rogers asked the Forum how and where the public could find out about these types of reports.

Councillor Jowers agreed there was a need to ensure the public was kept informed and suggested that the local area forums should become the portal to public participation.

Councillor Fisher advised the Forum that it had been agreed that Essex and Kent police forces would join together to deal with serious crimes.

With regard to Police Authorities Councillor Jowers Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning advised the Forum a number of concerns had been raised regarding the recent proposal that Police Authorities be abolished and



Police Commissioners be introduced. Essex County Council would shortly be formally responding to the proposals as part of the national consultation process.

- Councillor M Skeels raised a question regarding publication of the consultation process.
- (i) Councillor Skeels advised the Forum that there was a need to give wider publication of these types consultations.

Councillor J Jowers Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning advised the Forum that, work was currently being undertaken to look at better ways to communicate with public as part of a major restructuring of the Essex County Council's Communications Department.

### **What Is Happening In Essex**

Philip Wilson outlined how some of the recommendations made in the Essex Rural Commission (ERC) report were being implemented.

The Forum was advised as follows:

#### **Rural Broad Band**

The Digital Britain Report published in June 2009 set out the ambition that every household should have access to at least 2 mbps via a fixed line link. Since the June 2009 report, the connection requirements had been changed. It was now a requirement that the connection was of 100mbps rather than the 2mbps which had originally been suggested.

In line with the national ambition and in line with the recommendations made in the ERC report there were a number of IT related initiatives being undertaken in Essex.

1. There was currently a pilot project in Maldon area to connect as many people as possible to wireless broadband. The local supplier Buzzcom had connected 300 customers so far. The project had been very successful. It was intended that Tendring would be the next pilot area.
  2. The University of Essex had gained £2 million Euro funding to assist knowledge transfer programme.
  3. British Telecom had been lobbied to upgrade their equipment and services in rural areas. Most recently businesses in Tiptree had formally requested that BT upgrade its local exchange so as to provide a faster broad band in the area.
  4. Colchester Town Centre now had wireless communications.
- Mr. David Winter Langham PC raised a question regarding rural broad band.

- (i) Mr. Winter enquired as to the cost to customers for the broad band facility in the Maldon pilot project area.

Philip Wilson advised the Forum that there had been very keen interest from the public in the Maldon area. Currently customers from the Dengie peninsular were being charged £139 as a one off connection fee and £11.99 per month for wireless broad band.

Councillor John Jowers, Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning advised the Forum that it had been muted at a recent ministerial visit, that the Maldon pilot was delivering the cheapest rural broadband scheme of its kind.

### **Rural Community Initiatives and Affordable Housing**

In February 2010 the Conservative Party published a document entitled '*Open Source Planning*' which set out to localise planning decisions.

In August 2010 Rural Coalition released '*The Rural Challenge, Achieving Sustainable Rural Communities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*'. The agreement placed much emphasis on the importance of community led planning, more imaginative planning in the market towns and more affordable housing through a variety of tenures. It also stressed the need for a "Big Society" approach. Whilst most aspects of the agreement would have an impact on residents whether they were rural or urban, certain clauses were likely to have a greater impact on rural communities and the agricultural sector.

In May 2011 the Coalition Government published "*The Coalition: Our Programme for Government*". Recent announcements made by Ministers would have an impact on rural Essex. In particular the emphasis was on community led plans, the "Big Society" and the scrapping of regional housing targets. Much uncertainty remained, given that much of the necessary legislation needed to be enacted.

1. With regard to affordable housing 12 Parish Councils in Essex had undertaken surveys to identify the level of need for local affordable housing.
  2. With regard to community initiatives in rural areas a project was being undertaken in partnership with the Fox Public House in Layer del la Hay. The Public House was to provide services to the rural community by installing a cash machine and becoming a community drop off centre for parcels.
  3. In the Colchester town area the current scheme that allowed under 18 year olds free bus transport would continue until March 2011.
- Councillor D Robinson raised a question regarding the Coalition Agreement Paper.

- (ii) Councillor Robinson questioned the proposal of the creation of the new trusts and how these would make it simpler for communities to provide homes for local people.

Philip Wilson advised the Forum that the proposed Trusts would be called Community Land Trusts and would have a role in controlling tenancy rules and regulations.

- (i) Jane Chinnery, Myland PC raised a question regarding the need to protect the environment and the need for housing developments. The Forum was advised that, with regard to local planning the new Coalition Report asked for measured developments. There were currently proposals to build 2,200 new homes in Myland. The proposals suggested that some of the new homes be built upon existing green field countryside. It was considered that it would not be possible to fulfil proposed housing targets by Parish Councils identifying sites for 10 or 12 affordable houses in each village location.

Ian Vipond Executive Director Colchester Borough Council advised the Forum that to be able to meet the regional housing targets Colchester Borough Council had identified its preferred sites for development. Currently 90% of the planned housing developments in the Colchester area were on brown field sites. There were a range of issues that needed to be considered regarding large scale developments. The use of Greenfield sites could be explored based upon the needs of the local population. A good deal of work was still required to assess the impact of the proposals on local people. Colchester Borough Council was keen to let local people have a further opportunity to inform the process.

- John Elliot Tiptree PC raised a matter regarding the criteria used when deciding sites for developments. The Forum was advised that for the purposes of housing development Tiptree was classed as being an urban area, however for the purposes of developing affordable housing and community facilities, Tiptree was classed as being rural. Mr. Elliot advised the Forum that section 106 funds associated to building developments was not always sufficient to fund the necessary community facilities and new approach road links were required to support new business or housing developments in Tiptree. Mr. Elliot considered that the definition applied to Tiptree needed to be clarified and set in to one category or the other.

Councillor John Jowers Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning advised the Forum that the need for improvements to infrastructure was not always included in the Regional Spatial Strategy. With regard to the internal growth of the Colchester area some 30,000 additional units of housing was required. The national inspectorate would allow planning by appeal but this was not always the best solution to local planning issues. It would be better for District and Borough to make local planning decisions.

**36. East Essex Area Forum Work Plan 2010/2011**

The Forum received report EAF/03/10 the East Essex Area Forum work plan 2010/2011. The Chairman invited Members to make suggestions for future items to be added to the plan. The topic of The Provision of Youth Services in NEE was added to the future work plan.

The Chairman circulated the *'Liberating the NHS consultation'* paper at the meeting and outlined the topics that would be presented at the Forum Meeting in November.

The Chairman reminded those present that applications for funds from the Forum Budget must be submitted by 1 October 2010.

**37. Date of Next Meeting**

Members noted the next meeting was scheduled for 2.00 pm Tuesday 2 November 2010 the Venture Centre Lawford.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 4.00 pm.

Chairman