

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE MID ESSEX AREA FORUM HELD AT  
CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH, CHELMSFORD ON 5 MARCH 2009**

**Membership**

\* *Present*

**Essex County Council (20)**

J W Pike (Chairman)	* N Hume
* J Aldridge	* M C M Lager
* R L Bass	* D J Louis
* E Bishop	* M Mackrory
* R G Boyce (Vice-Chairman)	P J Martin
N Edey	B Mead
D M Finch	* Mrs M Miller
* K Francis	* T C Smith-Hughes
I A D Gale	R Walters
Rt Hon Lord Hanningfield DL	L R Watson

**Partner Organisations**

**Braintree District Council (2)**

Cllr G Butland	- Leader
Sara Moutard	- Head of Policy

**Chelmsford Borough Council (2)**

Councillor Whitehead	- Leader
Katherine Eglington	- Strategic Property & Research Officer - LSP Lead Officer (Chief Executive's Nominee)

**Maldon District Council (2)**

* Mrs A N Warr	- Leader's Nominee
Steven Watson	- Chief Executive

**Local Councils (3)**

* Tony Hayward	- E.A.L.C (Braintree)
Cllr Cole	- E.A.L.C (Chelmsford)
* Mrs R M Pink	- E.A.L.C (Maldon)

**Hospitals & Primary Care Trust (2)**

Sheila Bremner	- Mid Essex Primary Care Trust
Ruth May	- Mid Essex Hospitals Services NHS Trust

**Essex Police (2)**

Chief Superintendent	- Central Division, Essex Police
Graeme Bull	

**Essex Fire Service (1)**

* John Moulson	- Chelmsford Community Command.
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**Councils for Voluntary Service (3)**

Judy Cuddeford	- Braintree CVS
Lorraine Jarvis	- Chelmsford CVS
Paul Murphy	- Maldon and District CVS

**Also Present**

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

Samir Pandya – ECC Highways, Linda French Sauls Bridge Residents Association, Tony Shrimpton – Maldon Town Council, Cllr Stephen Savage –

Maldon Town Council, Keith Deal, Christine Shaw – Gt Baddow Parish Council, Trevor Miller – Chelmsford Borough Council, Roger North – CART, Alan Reeves – Sauls Bridge Residents Association, Phil Davies Althorne Parish Council, Harry Clacy – Danbury Parish Council, Andrew Luce – Food on Friday/Torch Trust, Julie Martyn – ECC Highways, Mike Shaw – Chelmsford Borough Council, Peter Chappell – ECC, Stuart Jennings – Maldon District Council, Peter Backlige – ECS, M. Otter, John Harrison – Heybridge Parish Council, R Pipe, Juliet Strathern, Pria Patel.

**Officers Attending in Support**

Kate Fox	- Committee Assistant
Antoinette Mortley	- Committee Officer
John Symonds	- Mid Area Co-ordinator

**14. Welcome and Introduction of Members and Officers**

Vice Chairman Councillor R Boyce welcomed members and the public; Apologies were made for Councillor J Pike. Councillor Boyce presided over this Area Forum meeting in his absence.

**15. Apologies and Substitute Notices**

Apologies for absence had been received from County Councillors Joe Pike, Ian Gale, Nigel Edey, Peter Martin and Roger Walters. Apologies were also received for Lord Hanningfield.

Apologies were also received from the following:

Prof Lou Schnurr	- Heybridge Parish Council
Claire Morris	- NHS Mid Essex
Averil Price	- Chelmsford Borough Council (Substitute in attendance Mike Shaw)

**16. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interests were reported.

**17. Minutes**

The minutes of the Mid Essex Area Forum meeting held on 6 January 2009 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**18. Public Questions**

The public were invited to raise questions in line with the Forum's Terms of Reference; the following discussions were noted.

A resident of Maldon Road in Witham wished to discuss the proposed installation of traffic lights at a junction near his home, which he believed would cause congestion. The resident continued to add that a lack of signage and poor grip to the road surface as the main cause for concern at this location. Specifically the resident wanted to discuss cost of this installation and the devaluation to his and other properties in this rural area. Councillor Norman Hume Cabinet Member for Highways explained that the lights in question would operate on a part time basis

to ease peak congestion and improve safety. Councillor Hume continued to note that this is a long term investment which we are not obliged to consult on; Compensation is not considered in such cases and Members could not agree that improved safety and reduced congestion would be detrimental to property values in any area.

Councillor Davis of Althorne Parish Council took the opportunity to thank the Highways Department for their efforts in clearing the roads through the recent severe snow which swept the Country.

A Member of the public questioned the proposed removal of a weight restriction to the Sauls bridge on Maldon Road, Witham; and believed there was no need for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV's) to access this road and considered the narrow bridge would not allow two HGV's to pass each other. The dilapidated state of the bridge was raised as well as the effect an accident could have on the underlying river and local wildlife. Group signage to divert HGV's around Witham would help and he called for consultation and a feasibility study for these proposals.

Councillor Hume advised that consultation had been ongoing and was due to end on 13 March 2009; Councillor Hume continued to advise that no final decision would be made regarding the removal of the weight limit on Saul's Bridge pending an overall strategic review of traffic movement in the Witham area which would not be completed until later this year. Councillor Hume would consider comments received on removal of the weight restriction before making a decision.

Cllr Bass asked when proposing to remove a weight restriction that consideration is made to where these vehicles are coming from and going to. The Forum heard that this is being carried out with a strategic review of the movement of HGV's in and around the town.

The Forum continued on this subject and moved to question why the Highways Department are using MORI Poll and the cost of such an initiative. Councillor Hume highlighted the importance of gauging public opinion; however he will investigate the manner of questioning and provide a report for the next meeting. Councillor Louis informed the Forum that he was pleased to be having a strategic look at the issues in Witham and has confirmed that we will not rush into projects.

Councillor Harrison of Heybridge Parish Council sought to clarify the reasoning in offering bowel cancer screening for those aged 60 to 69 in Mid Essex but not for those aged 70 and over. Due to the fact that there was no representation from the Primary Care Trust (PCT) the Chairman has asked for this to be brought back to the next meeting.

## **19. Strategic Highways Issues in Mid Essex**

Councillor Norman Hume presented on the A12, A120 and B1019 roads the following discussions were recorded:

### **A12 Commission of Inquiry**

Due to the poor performance and traffic conditions on the A12, Essex County Council had established a Commission of Inquiry which has made 28 recommendations: Councillor Hume advised of the alliance formed with representatives from the business community, emergency services and other partners. Central Government has offered £60 million for improvements if this could be matched with funds from the Regional funding pot. The A12 is one of the worst performing roads in the county and the £120 million of secured funds ensures we are able to make improvements to the improved operation of this final route. The Forum were informed of plans to have the A12 considered as a road of National importance removing it from the Regional Funding Allocation

Councillor Savage of Maldon Town Council referred to A12 improvements and climate change noted in the Minerals Document and questioned the plans to improve feeder roads to the A12. Councillor Hume informed the Forum that they are working on the basis of priority. The Forum queried the extension of average speed controls and were advised that the road is managed by the Highways Agency who have plans to extend this scheme to a section of the road which will be funded from their own budget; site selection and speed need to be considered. Councillor Pipe of Langford Parish Council suggested lorries be restricted in their usage of this road; furthermore Councillor Pipe opposes the use of funds for the development of the A12 as monies could be better spent on other Essex roads. Councillor Hume clarified that the monies allocated to the A12 had come from the region and not Essex Highways; furthermore restriction to lorries is being considered.

Councillor Francis noted the improvements to safety and traffic flow but questioned if the capacity, often overstretched, is being considered and called for a programme of works to establish what has been proposed and when it will commence. Councillor Hume advised that a full Project Plan dealing with capacity and safety improvement would be brought forward to the A12 Alliance in due course. The Forum were also informed that once a programme had been agreed by the Highways Agency this would be made public.

Councillor Bass congratulated Councillor Hume on the work done regarding this additional funding for the A12 Councillor Bass added his support for the A12 to be removed from the regional funding allocation process.

### **A120 Braintree to A12 extension**

The Forum heard of the possibility of a dual carriageway extension from Braintree to the A12 however a preferred route has not been identified. The cost of this route would be approximately £500 million; there is currently an annual figure of £100 million available for all six Counties in the Eastern Region and therefore the A120 would be most unlikely to achieve the requested level of funding for this scheme in the near future. Councillor Hume will continue to lobby for funding and a preferred route in the belief that improvements will benefit the resilience of the A12 and other roads.

Councillor Lager highlighted the effects of congestion on businesses and the detriment this lack of progress places on Bradwell and other villages. The Forum also consider the Rivenhall waste disposal site and the improvements required to infrastructure.

**B1019 Maldon, Hatfield Peverel & Witham**

Further to meetings with the Parishes a business case cannot justify works from The Dengie to the A12 within the next 10 – 15 years; furthermore there is no prospect for major route improvements to the B1019 itself. Councillor Hume advised that accident reduction programmes are being considered. The Forum drew attention to the issues at Hatfield Peverel and highlighted the need for abypass improvement as well as upgrades to the B1019 enhancing access for eastern rural areas. Councillor Bass supported the need for improved access to rural areas highlighting the need to get a balance taking the A12 and safety into consideration.

**20. Highways Localism**

Councillor Hume updated the Forum on highways localism and the following points were recorded.

The Forum was informed of successful pilot schemes which took place last year in Castlepoint, Brentwood and Colchester and were advised of a further four schemes in 2009/10 including Braintree. The Forum heard Local Highways Panels have been formed with District Members to agree priorities for local roads and footpaths; budgets, project delivery and safety will remain in Essex County Council's jurisdiction. Councillor Hume continued to inform the Forum of the added benefit of Highways Rangers who will offer services in areas where schemes are up and running. The Forum were advised that Chairman of the highways panels would sit on County Strategic Panels so that there would be coordination between local and strategic works.

Discussions moved to Community Infrastructure Funds and Members queried the possible extension of terms allowing Councillors to represent areas without Parishes who would otherwise be unable to secure this funding. Councillor Hume would review this matter.

**21. Mid Essex Highways Projects**

Julie Martyn, Area Highways Manager for Mid Essex briefed the Forum on Mid Essex Highways issues and noted the following key points.

- Mid Area Highways has implemented over £9 million worth of highway projects in the 2008/09 financial year, with a further £8 million of revenue funds being dedicated to patching pot holes, grass cutting, weed spraying, drain cleansing, fencing, white lines, signs, road safety and other items managed by Highways.
- Every year we spend approximately £1.5 million on surface dressing and this year have covered 61 miles of road and 13 miles or 21km of footpaths.
- We have improved 80 miles or 129 km of carriageway which will now require less revenue to maintain.
- This year we will provide 72 new or improved bus stops

In reference to a question brought forward from the last Forum relating to how projects become part of a programme for construction, Ms Martyn explained ideas from a variety of sources however suggestions from members of the public

are redirected to their Parish Council who gauge public opinion before proposals are taken further. Mid Area Highways are inspected regularly with repairs being carried out on a priority need basis in line with a risk assessment.

Ms Martyn welcomed questions from the Forum and the following discussions were recorded.

The Forum suggested simple measures to avoid congestion and queried the allocation of maintenance funds. Ms Martyn informed the Forum of annual inspections for A and bi-annual inspections for B roads, the findings of which from traffic light systems to which funds are allocated depending on the levels of red, amber or green in each district. Discussions moved to issues specific to Maldon namely signage for the town centre and works to Down Road. The Forum was advised that signs were ready and that works need to be completed this financial year. Works to Down Road are scheduled to commence during 2009/10 financial year; in light of this information a request was made for these works to coincide with works scheduled by utilities in order to avoid further disruption.

Discussions moved to footpath resurfacing and the need for consultation with Parish Councils giving opportunity for those with local knowledge to influence where funds should be directed. Ms Martyn explained that works will continue to be carried out on the basis of need. The Forum discussed drainage issues in Halstead and were informed of Surface Water Alleviation Schemes (SWAS) to eliminate rain water collecting on road surfaces and were also advised of works with other agencies such as Defra in dealing with Badgers.

## **22. Items for Report**

The Forum received the report AFM/04/09 citing the web address for Department of Health who are currently consulting on the use of 084 numbers.

## **23. Future Programme of Works**

The Forum approved report AFM/05/09.

## **24. Dates for Future Meetings**

The next Mid Area Forum will be held on 23 July 2009.

## **25. Urgent Business**

With no urgent business to discuss the Chairman thanked those present and closed the meeting.

Meeting Closed at 16:00pm

Chairman

