



Essex Association of Local Councils

42B High Street, Great Dunmow, Essex CM6 1AH Tel: 01371 879722 Website: www.ealc.gov.uk

Minutes

Executive Committee

Thursday 1st February 2024, 10 am at 42B High Street, Great Dunmow, Essex, CM6 1AH

Executive Committee Members Present:

Cllr Nicola Hoad	Basildon		Basildon
Cllr. Peter Davey	Brentwood	Cllr. Richard North	Brentwood
Cllr. Paul Lees	Braintree	Cllr. Martin Lee	Braintree
	Chelmsford		Chelmsford
Cllr. Brian Butcher	Colchester	Cllr. John Gili-Ross	Colchester
Cllr. Sheila Jackman	Epping Forest	Beverley Rumsey	Epping Forest
Cllr. Mike Eldred	Local Council Forum Rep.	Cllr. Abdul Hafiz	Maldon
Nathan Rowland	Essex County Council		Maldon
	Rochford		Rochford
	Castle Point		Southend
Cllr. Frank Belgrove	Tendring		Tendring
	Uttlesford		Uttlesford
Darren Horsman	PFCC		

1. Welcome from the Chair.

The Chair welcomed everyone present in the meeting room as well as members joining online. The meeting is

Quorate with eleven members present.

We do have two guest speakers arriving during the meeting and we will welcome them at the time of arrival. Nathan Rowland, Stakeholder Engagement Manager at Essex County Council will give an update on Devolution. Darren Horsman, Strategic Head of Policy and Public Engagement, Deputy Monitoring Officer for the Police, Fire and Crime

Commissioner for Essex from PFCC.

2. Declarations of interest.

None.

3. Apologies for Absence.

Cllr. JD

Cllr. SM

Cllr. AM

Cllr. SG

Cllr. LM

Cllr. MP

4. Minutes

4.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd November 2023.

Proposed by: Cllr. ML

Seconded by: Cllr. Brian Butcher

The vote was carried.

4.2 Actions report

Cllr. BB and Cllr. JGR are in conversation with the Chair at Fordham Parish Council in the hope they will re affiliate next year.

5. Personnel – The Personnel Sub-Committee update.

5.1 Update from CEO.

Following the launch of the advert for an Office Administrator, we received fifty-two applicants who have applied to the role. A robust system was implemented to access each applicant fairly and we are seeking to interview in the next couple of weeks.

5.2 Staff reports

The committee acknowledges the successful completion of the new website by our Communications and Office Coordinator. The next phase will involve implementing a CRM system to manage various business functions. The office has seen a lot of constructive and proactive work, which is highly appreciated and has required a significant amount of effort from the staff. The CEO's report includes an update on the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The Vice-Chair Cllr. ME provided a brief overview of the AGM's structure for 2024 and announced the launch of a "save the date" notification today. The event will extend into the evening to include an awards ceremony. A survey was conducted for members who attended the AGM, and another survey will be conducted for those who did not attend. Meetings with District ALCs (Association of Local Councils) will be held to determine the reasons for members not attending. This year marks the 80th anniversary, and some members raised questions about the AGM not being held on a Saturday. The

awards ceremony aims to attract more members and will include categories such as "Councillor of the Year," "Clerk of the Year," and "Chair of the Year." The timeframe for the event should prioritize quality over quantity and be concise. The availability of the Colchester stadium has been noted, but no financial commitment has been made yet. It is worth mentioning that our staff members are of excellent quality. The reports reflect the scope and quality of work.

6 Finance Sub-Committee update.

A brief report was read out by the FC on behalf of Cllr. SG, the Chair of Finance who was unable to attend the meeting.

6.1 Nomination to the Finance Sub-Committee.

There has been a proposal put forward for a representative from the Executive Committee to join the Finance-Sub-Committee. Cllr. JD has been put forward to be a member of the committee. The appointment was Proposed by: Cllr. ML and seconded by: Cllr. ME. All those present are in favor of Cllr. JD as an appointed member to finance sub-committee.

6.2 Finance Sub-committee Minutes from the meeting of 9th November 2023.

Noted.

Finance sub-committee draft minutes from 18th January. For noting.

6.3 Budget Report to December 2023.

The budget report shows a pessimistic view of the training income YTD+Forecast. However, the FC is hopeful that we shall reach the budget figure of £145,000 this year end to 31st March.
No other questions from members on the budget report.

6.4 Balance Sheet Report December 2023.

The balance sheet has been prepared for the benefit of members and this type of report will be presented in preparation for the year end accounts.

6.5 Affiliation Update.

The EALC is at 97% member affiliation as per the previous year although the affiliation income is greater due to the affiliation increase of 3% on the previous year along with the creation of new councils.

Six members have failed to affiliate this year. Mayland, Fordham, and Shotgate Parish Council all communicated that they did not wish to affiliate this year. It has not been possible to contact anyone from Great Wakering, Theydon Mount or Belchamp Walter, however they have not paid their invoice and have been removed from the accounts as they have not responded to the FC's attempts to communicate with them.

LOS TC has regained their membership status. On a national scale, County Associations have various levels of affiliated members with the EALC being amongst the highest levels of affiliation. The EALC aims to provide support and assistance to its members. Today, we will be sharing a marketing poster with members, which they can take back to their District ALCs and use as a poster to promote further information on what the EALC can do for them.

6.6 Grant Overview 2024.

The Microgrant funding has come to an end. It has been requested that surplus funds left over from other funding initiatives be transferred to the Micro Grants Fund, however as of yet no communication has been received from ECC confirming this will be done.

The food funds currently have half of their balance remaining, and there are plans to relaunch them exclusively for food banks.

There is a surplus of £137k in the CIF emergency fund, which is publicly available on the website for emergency initiatives. ECC are considering transferring at least £100k of this to another fund, but there are no further details at present.

Ride London is now live. EALC are only administering the small grants of £250, larger grants are available but these are being administered elsewhere.

At 10:50, Cllr NH Chair welcomed Cllr Nicola Hoad to the meeting, representing Basildon.

6.7 Reserves Policy.

Payroll cost is not included in the operating costs which are covered by the general reserves policy as there is an earmarked termination reserve which covers payroll cost. The policy is to maintain general reserves at 6 months of operating cost.

Concerns were raised regarding the lease agreement, which is set to expire on 25th September 2025, with a notice period of six months ending on 31st March 2025. This matter will be thoroughly examined by the business plan working group. It is important to note that various CALC's (County Associations of Local Councils) have different structures, and there is potential to either enhance the existing model or start anew. Eventually, the lease will need to be renegotiated, requiring an empowered group to handle the process. We extend our gratitude to our FC for their hard work and professionalism.

7. Business and Marketing Plan update from the task and finish groups.

7.1 Business Plan update.

Cllr JGR gave an update and overview. The plan itself is separate to the action group. This has been started by the CEO and is in an outline draft format. This will be presented back to the working group to add their thoughts to the report. A swot analysis was presented last year the report will go to the working group for further analysis.

7.2 Marketing Plan Update.

During the meeting, Councillor ME provided an overview of the marketing group's activities. It was emphasized that the Marketing Plan (MP) and the Business Plan (BP) have distinct differences, which should be incorporated into the Business Plan. A timeline has been established, and regular interactions with numerous members from the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) occur daily. Efforts will be made to engage non-members, including setting up a pop-up event in Basildon and the southern part of the county. Cllr. JD has generously offered the venue in Billericay for an event or roadshow to bring together stand holders and encourage their participation. If successful, this mini-AGM can be expanded to other areas. Effective communication is crucial in this endeavor. The EALC is often invited to various events, and having a stand to promote the organization is recommended. An educational event in Harlow on March 13th will be attended by the EALC. Councillor ME will prepare a report for the marketing team, and progress is expected to be swift. The staff members are gaining more experience in marketing and communication. Currently, only four hundred members have signed up for the EALC e-Bulletins, as some Clerks are not effectively disseminating information. This issue is also prevalent at the national level. Additionally, there are membership-related challenges with the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC). However, the EALC is moving forward positively and proactively, taking

a proactive stance. Successful marketing and promotion efforts can attract others to join. It is worth noting that some members of the SLCC perceive the EALC as a potential threat. (note sure this should be included)

11:15am Darren Horseman joined the meeting online.

There is a need for improved communication and discussion in Epping, particularly with the smaller councils. To address this, the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) organizes networking events for Clerks, which helps in maintaining control over the situation. Additionally, the EALC already utilizes online forums, which could be further expanded to enhance communication. It is worth noting that Clerks often face the challenge of having too many available events to attend, making it impossible to attend all of them.

11:21 – 11:30 am **Comfort Break**

Welcome to Nathan Rowland, Stakeholder Engagement Manager at Essex County Council from ECC will talk about devolution.

Welcome Darren Horsman, Strategic Head of Policy and Public Engagement, Deputy Monitoring Officer for the Police, Fire and Crime.

8. District Association Representatives Feedback.

8.1 Basildon

This is the first visit for Cllr. NH, who will be observing the meeting and will be able to give a more depth update on various projects at the at the next meeting. A meeting with Cllr. JD was well received, who introduced Cllr. NH about the EALC.

8.2 Braintree

There was a main meeting at BALC, the CEO from Braintree District was able to take part in active discussion with members, there were discussions about de-parishing areas in the district. The uptake on green waste is good due to the cost remaining low at £27 per year for the first year. The cost of green waste collection is expected to rise next year. It was noted that there are so many differences in waste collection between each district in the County. Due to the development in Weathersfield, legal fees occurred. It is thought to have cost in the region of 5million for the development of the prison in Weathersfield, leaving a 2.4million deficit. Questions were raised with the CEO of the district about the additional money spent, however, the questions raised were not answered. Planning applications were discussed, and the use of site. There is a public order on site and there are concerns around public health issues. The site at Weathersfield is not only affecting the area of Braintree, but also a wider issue. Monthly meetings held online have not been successful.

Please provide any further updates to EALC.

8.3 Brentwood

BBPCA's last meeting was held in November. At the meeting, the position of Cllr. PD and Cllr. RN were re-appointed and confirmed as the representatives put forward to the EALC Executive Committee. Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council is the host for the BBPCA meetings. There are initiatives to parish some un-parished areas of Brentwood. All parish areas currently in Brentwood will be represented by three borough councils.

Each District Association of Local Councils (District ALC's), must have an AGM with elections to re confirm the appointments to the EALC Executive Committee, once the appointments are confirmed as representative to the EALC, a copy of the minutes are provided to the EALC's CEO. It is noted that these annual meetings take place at different times throughout the year.

ECC will provide evidence of the elections at District level throughout the county.

8.4 Colchester

Unfortunately, the last meeting did not take place and will be rearranged to include a key speaker from RCCE. The chair of the Local Highways Panel (LHP) will be attending the March meeting. The CEO of Colchester District is looking at how Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money is implanted. Previously, CIL money did not work well for the area of Colchester, however, Section (S)106 has worked very well. There has been positive feedback regarding Green Waste collections. There is approx. 70k of unallocated grants applications. There was a recent call to sites consultation. Barclays banking has been difficult and Cllr. BB has had to take responsibility for the registered office and the treasure, to resolve the banking issues. Cllr. BB was interviewed on BBC Essex. The Executive County Training Officer is attending the March meeting to talk about training, the meeting will take place online.

8.5 Epping Forest

Cllr. SJ MBE, explained that Epping Forest has received a large number of complaints from residents due to the number of Asylum seekers residing at the Bell Hotel. The situation seems to be a repeat of the previous issues raised at Wethersfield. Epping Forest District Council has ongoing concerns with their contractors, as well as concerns over the standard of the council houses. There is a new Multi-Storey car park for the Town which has not received a good response from the residents. The car park floods and is seen to be dangerous with a lack of signage and directions. The Town Clerk explained there has been an influx of pavement licenses enabling chairs and tables to be placed on the pavements. The licenses are approved by the District Council in consultation with the Town Council, however, due to lack of time to allow the council to discuss and make comments, the District Council have approved the applications and licenses have been granted despite the Town Councils approval or comments.

There is a severe environmental health issue with the public toilets in the Town, it appears that the environmental agency department do not have any powers and are unable to help the parish council improve the situation and as such they have been boarded up.

Discussions around green waste took place.

8.6 Maldon

Update from Cllr. AH, giving many thanks to Chair of EALC, the CEO and CEO of NALC for attending a meeting this week. The meeting had such a positive impact on Cllrs, to the effect that Maldon TC are keen to attend more training. There are concerns in the planning department at Maldon District Council with listed buildings consent. The Maldon Association of Local Councils (M'ALC) is functioning well.

8.7 Rochford

Apologies received.

8.8 Tendring

Cllr. FB said it was a pleasure to talk about Tendring and gave an update to members on various subjects. Cllr. Mark Platt gave an update on Local Highways issues. The Association wants to see a reduction to the speed limit to 30 MPH in the villages. Fly tipping has seen an increase of 24% in the area. There will be additional enforcement officers. PW was mentioned as being extremely helpful with training online, in-house, and on Saturdays, there are many Clerks taking CiLCA, feedback was given on how the tutors are presenting training with PDF's and that the sessions need to be more engaging. Update given on wind farms; this has been a major upheaval in the Tendring area. Due to lack of maintenance of road signs, Essex Highways are being consulted, the signs have been in disrepair for 5 years. S106 goes to playing fields and this fund is sometimes under allocated. There is a successful scheme in Colchester on

Highways, there is a new lead on Essex Highways, Tom Cunningham, and there is thought no update will be given anytime soon.

The Chair summarized the positive comments raised and confirmed Cllr. Platt accepted the lead on the Devolution in Colchester. The Pylons initiative is affecting various areas across the country. There is a national initiative on the speeding project, with different options being considered. Speed surveys are paid for by Colchester City Council.

8.9 Uttlesford

Apologies received.

Chelmsford ALC is not currently represented on this committee and this needs to be moved forward, if anyone has any positive ideas to support the CEO on this initiative please do come forward.

9. Chair and Vice-Chair update / reports to the Executive.

9.1 Chair, Cllr Peter Davey: Feedback. Noted.

9.2 Vice Chair, Cllr John Gili-Ross: Feedback. Noted.

9.3 Vice Chair, Cllr Mike Eldred: Feedback. Noted.

10. New Initiatives and other matters for discussion

10.1 Update from CEO and Vice-Chair, Cllr Mike Eldred – 80th AGM 26th September 2024.

10.2 Partner reports as received in person or in written.

Darren Horseman, Strategic Head of Policy and Public Engagement, Deputy Monitoring Officer for the Police, Fire and Crime gave an update on behalf of the PFCC. Darren commented that it was interesting to hear the updates from members across each district, it is useful information as there is a lot of crossovers with the work of the PFCC. Over the last 5 years moving forward with the support of additional five hundred officers in Essex, Essex police is now the biggest force it has ever been. There is a reduction in crime over the period. All crime has gone down by 5.75%, the government has introduced new laws which have helped with the reduction of crime.

There is a positive reduction in crime, domestic abuse, drug driven crime, burglary, and car theft. There is a huge investment to stop organised crime, and the element of organised car theft, resulting in stolen cars being identified for resale across Europe. Rolls Royce and other high-end vehicles are being stolen. There have been arrests.

Lighting and CCTV projects have seen investments of three million from central government first locally funded scheme. One million will be invested in similar projects in the Brentwood area to deal with fly tipping and stolen cars. Further investment of three hundred thousand towards speed checks with specialist officers in the local policing team identify rural roads and increased visibility. These initiatives have been raised from local forums. Anti-Social Behavior (ASB) 'Hot Spots' have been identified to receive £1.1 million investment in this area, the tactic will be through visible police patrols and local patrols, with the project extended over the next 12 months. There has been recent local media coverage about police misconduct, reassurance was given to members that extra checking and vetting of officers is taking place. One officer has been flagged; however, this is not any cause for concern at all due to thorough scrutiny over police conduct nationally.

The Fire, Rescue and Risk Management plan is about identifying risks and managing them. Recruitment has been opened up for full time fire fighters. Cllr. JGR is the Chair of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel, who explained Roger Hirst, the Commissioner will be discussing the budgets this afternoon with Cllr. JGR, this will see statutory scrutiny,

proposing an increase to the police precept of 5.5%. This will help to deliver and maintain the number of officers that PFCC currently has. It is anticipated a total of 1500 officers are to be recruited over a two-year period, the training program takes two years. There are some smaller investments to include plans to invest in the 101-call service to ensure the service is functioning how it needs to be. Digital Forensics are continuing to drive this forward. There is a huge commitment from the residents in Essex to fund this through the taxpayer's precept.

Cllr. JGR explained how lucky Essex is to have Roger Hirst, as the Commissioner for PFCC who meet with the home office secretary and gave a presentation outlining the excellent performance.

Action: Cllr. JGR to send the link to the home office affairs briefing and provide notes attached to the minutes.

The Chair thanked both Darren for a comprehensive update and Cllr. JGR for attending.

Cllr. JGR left the meeting at 12:30pm

Cllr. ML raised questions around the additional three officers on road traffic speeding and concerns over the 101 system and sought reassurance that the system is being constantly reviewed with significant changes to improve performance, which has been carried out over the last 12 months, there is still further investment ongoing.

Cllr. FB explained there is a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) in Tendring and asked if there will be more community-based policing, with views that having more local policing is beneficial and having more officers is not going to fix issues, there needs to be more community engagement. Darren agreed, neighbourhood policing is the absolute strategy.

Cllr. AH, brought to discussion, issues with parking on pavements in Maldon. Darren confirmed that parking on pavement's is tricky as it's not an illegal obstruction, it's treated as a parking matter for the parking partnership or the local council. The PFCC work with schools to catch people speeding and work of a strategy with the school children and the person offering the driver a ticket or alternatively, engagement in conversation with the school children on how speeding effects them, this has proven to be more effective. Conversation to be taken offline.

11. Essex Matters

11.1 Essex County Council Report, update given by Nathan Rowland on Devolution. Letter provided to members on behalf of Cllr. Bentley.

11.2 ECC Initiatives update.

11.3 ECC/EALC Meeting updates.

11.4 Devolution.

Nathan Rowland, Stakeholder Engagement Manager at Essex County Council gave an update on Devolution. A letter from the leader of ECC was intended to be presented sooner and is now in the member's pack. There was a public consultation, and there is a second stage with a bill to be presented to parliament. There is simply not time within the Department of Leveling Up Housing and Communities (DLHUC) to take this forward before parliament ends. Local MPs are not as convinced about the bill being presented as others. This means there is currently a pause on the official process and there is a lot of work that needs to be done after the general election. There is scope around what can be done with local enterprise partnerships on a local level. PAN Essex Service is a more complicated system. Looking at how we can build on this in terms of resources and communities. The team are disappointed, that there is not anything further to discuss.

A question among members was raised around if this discussion is helpful at this time, and a waste in public funds due to an election fast approaching. Nathan confirmed the deal does not include an elected Mayor. There could be a new government in time, however, the pause in this project is not going to damage the work already undertaken. The Chair explained the presentation today was out of courtesy to ECC and the members as there has been a lot of work carried out to date. There does need to be a clear message to the membership, clarifying that the original timeframe has been exceeded due to some MP's not in full support of the deal at this stage. However, the Unitary Authorities are on board. The other complex factor is that the elections will happen imminently, and this could be challenging.

The Chair commented that generally the Country is facing devolution as well, but there are different models. It is thought that the unitary authorities were going to come together, and they will only devolve down to two tier sensible economic level

Action: NR to scribe a letter to the parishes on behalf of the leader.

General updates at the County Council, has seen the Director of Public Health, Lucy Whiteman resign, there are interim arrangements in place to cover her work.

A meeting on the 13th of February will see the budget assumptions over the next three years, the papers for the meeting will be published on Monday next week. There are two community and social supermarkets that will be rolled out in the coming weeks. This includes food shops on buses in the most rural areas of the County, further details will be shared at the proper time.

12. Items for the next Agenda

Essex Speed Management Strategy

13. Date of Next Meetings for 2024

21st March 2024 10 am

23rd May 2024 10 am

11th July 2024 10 am

5th September 2024 10 am

21st November 2024 10 am

14. Meeting Closed at 13:01pm