



Essex Association of Local Councils

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

FINAL MINUTES

Executive Committee

Thursday 23rd May 2024, 10 am at 42B High Street, Great Dunmow, Essex, CM6 1AH

Committee Members present:

Cllr. Peter Davey	Brentwood	Cllr. Richard North	Brentwood
Cllr. Jim Devlin	Basildon	Cllr. Martin Lee	Braintree
Cllr. Brian Butcher	Colchester	Cllr. John Gili-Ross	Colchester
Cllr. Sheila Jackman	Epping Forest	Cllr. Frank Belgrove	Tendring
Cllr. Mike Eldred	Local Council Forum Rep.	Cllr. Abdul Hafiz	Maldon
Cllr. Mark Platt	Essex County Council		
Cllr. Alan Townsend	Uttlesford	Cllr. Stephanie Gill	Uttlesford

Agenda

1. Welcome from the Chair.
2. Declarations of interest.

Cllr. Stephanie Gill – Tutor at EALC

3. Apologies for Absence.

Cllr. Paul Lees – Braintree

Beverley Rumsey - Epping


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Cllr. Sue Martin – Rochford

Cllr. Angelina Marriott – Rochford

Apologies not received from Cllr. Hoad and Cllr. Arscott

4. Minutes

4.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2024

Proposed by: Cllr. Abdul Hafiz

Seconded by: Cllr. Mike Eldred

4.2 Actions report

Updates noted and amended to Action Plan.

6.1 Draft minutes of the Finance meeting have been shared with the Executive Committee.

6.4 The Finance Sub-Committee reviewed the Councillor training bursary and accessed the level of precept. This has been increased. Details will go out to the membership this week.

Cllr. Peter Davey updated Cllr. Mark Platt about the meeting with Cllr. Louise McKinlay which took place on 13th May.

Comments and feedback were made about our templates, stating they are difficult to adapt.

Evidence report

7.2 Update, there was an initiative to share a poster about 'What the EALC can do for you' with the District Association chairs and Clerks.

Information has been shared regarding Water Meter installations via the e-Bulletin (thanks to Mike).

The White Ribbon initiative has been pushed forward as an agenda item on the next Finance sub-committee meeting. The paper will be written and shared with the Executive Committee.

EALC Did not meet the criteria for a King's portrait, regardless of applying through several avenues.

ACTION: The CEO has been requested to write a letter to the Lord Lieutenant to explain the Association's disappointment in not being eligible for the King's portrait.

5. Personnel – The Personnel Sub-Committee update.

5.1 Update from CEO.


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GB has resigned as Grant Funding Administrator (maternity cover), having found a permanent full-time position. The CEO has assessed all the applicants we have received, and we had no other suitable candidates. We have gone out to recruit again and the application period closed on 10th May. Hope to recruit in time for the CIF to go live.

We have half a dozen applicants, and we will coordinate some dates for the interview w/c 3 June. The Chair raised concerns about making sure we fill this position. Cllr. Stephanie Gill raised the point of whether we have a policy in place to say we must wait until after the application has closed. The CEO mentioned we have a process in place to speak to these people initially first via phone call, the advert clearly stated an immediate start.

Food Bank Support Grant launched this week.

The appraisal process is underway, and the CEO's appraisal was held in April. Kristi Lewis (Office Administrator) is following an induction program. The CEO commented that Kristi is an asset to the Association and is currently minuting the Executive meeting online and thanked Kristi for her hard work.

EALC Tutors – The CEO commented that this update is for reference only following Employment Law and Tax process changes. Tutors would not be regarded as self-employed, and they would be seen by law as employees of the EALC. We seek to look at the best way forward and have consulted a HR Employment Expert. The CEO will share more information when able to and will update the Executive Committee accordingly.

.5.2 Quarterly report

This was part of an initiative agreed at the CEO's Appraisal. We wanted to put together a top-line overview that picks out individual workstreams and ensures we are sharing information at a top-line level where appropriate. This also shows what the EALC is working on and will link back to our Business Plan. All individual reports are linked in the Google Drive for further detail.

The Chair commented that this information should be communicated to the District level. The members need to understand what the EALC is doing, what we are working on and our future initiatives. The CRM platform will allow Clerks and other positions to access communication.

There is an issue with communication not being distributed to Council members from Clerks and we need to break the chain to ensure EALC communication reaches the Councillors who are members of the Association. Suzanne Walker, Chair of the SLCC Essex Branch has it on her Agenda to reiterate this information to Clerks, encouraging them to send this information down to their other Council members. This is a national problem not just in Essex. Cllr. Mark Platt agreed this was the right plan. Cllr. Mike Eldred will discuss this issue and the way we tackle this in our Business Plan.

Cllr. Frank Belgrove mentioned maybe we look at re-confirming 'Please distribute this email to all Councillors' on the Communications we send out.


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Cllr. Stephanie Gill highlighted the fact we are renowned for the training we deliver. A bespoke course was delivered at the request of a Monitoring Officer, and this is a wonderful opportunity to promote this.

The Chair commented last year we liaised with Monitoring Officers to deliver courses which created three new Councils. These three new Councils then came on board and affiliated with the EALC. This information needs to be added to the quarterly report under training.

Cllr. Mark Platt raised a query as to why there is a reason for an uplift in the number of Membership Enquiries. The CEO commented we now have a new database to track queries. If there are common themes in the queries raised, we can analyse the data and feedback into the training program.

Cllr. Stephanie Gill commented that some of the numbers could also be from the same Council.

The CEO raised the question to the Executive Committee members if this document can be shared with our Associations and or Parish/Town Councils.

Proposed by: Cllr. Mike Eldred

Seconded by: Cllr. Brian Butcher

ACTION: Cllr. Mark Platt is to attend the Councillor Refresher Training being held in the Tendring District on the 30th of May. Photos of these training events should be taken and shared with the membership as good news stories.

6 Finance Sub-Committee update.

6.1 Finance Sub-committee minutes from the meeting of 7th March 2024 (Noted)

6.2 Finance Sub-committee draft minutes from the meeting of 9th May 2024 (Noted)

6.3 Budget Report to April 2024

Cllr. Stephanie Gill advised that Great Bentley came forward and asked for a Councillor Refresher Course and we opened this up to the Tendring District. Pearl Willcox advised that out of the 27 Councils in the Tendring District, only 2 will be attending the training & therefore confirmed that she offered the training out to the neighbouring Councils in the District of Colchester. This course is different from the bespoke evening courses we normally run as this course is 3 hours long, rather than a 2-hour bespoke evening course.

Cllr. Stephanie Gill also advised that District & Borough Councils know that the Association's training is excellent.

Cllr. Frank Belgrove was asked for his response to the smaller uptake on this course.

ACTION: The Chair asked for Cllr. Frank Belgrove to liaise with Pearl Willcox on the possible reasons for attendance figures.

Pearl Willcox confirmed that the emails had been sent out directly to the Clerks & Chairs in the Tendring District on several occasions advertising the Councillor Refresher course taking place.

Cllr. Stephanie Gill asked that the Executive County Training Officer Pearl Willcox, should attend future training courses with her to promote & answer training questions.

Pearl Willcox advised the Committee she had received an increase from the Membership for bespoke short courses since the Elections in May.

Cllr. Jim Devlin raised the fact his Local Association Councillors have issues with the prices of training, and some only have a small budget, and that District Councils were also running training. Stephanie Robinson advised Cllr. Jim Devlin to bring to the attention of these Councillors that the EALC has raised the Councillor bursary eligibility criteria from income of £25K to £80K. Pearl Willcox confirmed that the increase in the bursary eligibility criteria would be sent out to the Membership on Friday 24th May.

The Chair has raised that Pearl Willcox and Cllr. Stephanie Gill has done excellent work with organic growth. Cllr. Mike Eldred explained we are reacting to what the Membership wants & the excellent training program that the Association provides & delivers.

The Executive Committee noted the Budget report and had no further questions or comments.

6.3 Year-end accounts to 31st March 2024, unaudited.

Stephanie Robinson mentioned last year there were a lot of elections and new Councillors – therefore we had a vast number of Councillor courses.

Pearl Willcox commented that last year we saw an influx of new Clerks. These Clerks will attend the New Clerk courses and the core subjects, following on with their CiLCA.

Stephanie Robinson mentioned we have £53,000 retained earnings. We need to be mindful that we are a non-profit organization. The membership would no doubt like to see this amount re-invested back into the membership.

Cllr. Stephanie Gill mentioned we need to be mindful that 2024/25 may be a fallow year.

The Reserves need to be reviewed, including the termination reserve to ensure levels of reserves are adequate and appropriate.

The Chair would like to thank Stephanie Robinson for all her work put into the Year End.

The Executive Committee accepted the unaudited Year-end accounts to 31st March 2024.

Proposed: Cllr. Abdul Hafiz

Seconded by: Cllr. Mike Eldred

All in favour.

6.4 Grant Overview March 2024

The Food Bank Fund launched on Monday 20th May, and will run until September 2024. There is a total fund available of £456,750 and applications for up to £5000 per organisation are being accepted and it is for Food provision only. There have been approximately 36 applications already.

Monitoring work for the CIF 2023 is ongoing and any unspent monies will be recovered.

CIF 2024 will launch shortly and deadlines for submission will be agreed with ECC to better fit with workflows within the EALC and also to avoid the deadline being in the summer holidays when it is hard for applicants to contact Essex County Councillors for their support.

ACTION: Cllr. Mark Platt to speak to Cllr. Louise McKinlay and query if there will be any Micro-Grants available in the near future and respond back to Stephanie Robinson.

6.5 Councillor Bursary

Cllr. Stephanie Gill explained this was originally based on a revenue of £25,000. This has been raised to a revenue of £80,000 as there has been poor up-take so far. It is hoped that raising the eligibility criteria may encourage more councils to use the bursary and attend training.

11:03 Comfort break

11:17 Reconvened

10.4 PFFC Update – The item was brought forward due to the timing.

Jane Gardner thanked the Committee for being invited to the meeting. There is a lot to be celebrated in terms of crime numbers coming down in some key areas regarding ASB, homicide, and burglary. Car theft is unfortunately on the increase, this is where we are trying to focus. Roger Hirst has met with Jaguar and Land Rover (key manufacturers) and having ongoing discussions help to prevent car theft.

Roger Hirst and his team have started to work on the preparation of a Police and Crime Plan and a Fire and Rescue Plan. PFFC will collaborate with partners to form these plans. We have developed key priorities as part of Roger Hirst's manifesto.

The Chair commented he would be doing his best to attend as many of the workshops made available, along with the CEO and Cllr. Mike Eldred. The Chair asked if we could please link in with the Councils as to when the PFFC are holding Roadshows in certain locations.

Cllr. John Gili-Ross advised there is a group email of when the police are visiting/holding Roadshows in local areas.

Cllr. Frank Belgrove raised the issue of recruiting 'Specials' within the community. Jane Gardner responded they are looking at the recruitment and retention process and a video will be released to promote what being a 'Special' is about.

Jane Gardner reconfirmed the PFFC is happy to come out and visit local councils.

Cllr. Mark Platt asked if Jane Gardener could explore 'Review the Community Safety Partnerships' and who they are working with. There seems to be a disconnect with District Councillors. Jane will take this forward at her next CSP meeting.

ACTION: Jane Gardner to confirm the CSP meetings and explore the partnerships and explain who the lead is

Jane Gardner left the meeting at 11:38

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

7.1 Business Plan Update

Cllr. John Gili-Ross provided an update on the Business Plan and explained there were a small number of changes made on the Executive Summary side concerning wording. The Working Group has been through the document and believes it is ready for issue.

Cllr. Brian Butcher commented that there is nothing as far as indication on the size of EALC with respect to its income and expenditure. Cllr. Brian Butcher questioned where the document was being distributed to. The Chair responded that the document will be circulated to those who EALC collaborates with.

The Chair asked where the Business plan evidence breakdown is. Cllr. John Gili-Ross commented that the Working Party has seen this evidence. Cllr. John Gili-Ross explained this was taken out and put in a separate document and could be included in the Business Plan. The Chair asked for the Executive Committee to have access to this evidence document to adopt the Business Plan.

Cllr. Jim Devlin mentioned the Business Plan should also be distributed to our members.

Cllr. Stephanie Gill asked for the vision statement to be placed at the front of the document. Training and Courses - some of the statements need to be addressed. Cllr. Stephanie Gill commented should we be looking forward to 2028, not just 12 months. Cllr. Stephanie Gill also questioned what the plans would be for EALC to stay in this building when the lease is up. There are also some limitations with regard to disabled access. We need to remove any reference to age as this may be deemed discriminating. Cllr. Stephanie Gill, maybe we also need to look at including the White Ribbon initiative.

Cllr. John Gili-Ross asked for any comments or changes to the Business Plan to be made to him in an email.

ACTION: Cllr. John Gili-Ross and the Working Group to prepare a new draft of the Business Plan and for it to be available at the next Executive meeting. The Business Plan is to be complimented with the evidence documents and uploaded to a Google Drive for all Executive members to access.

The Chair thanked Cllr. John Gili-Ross and Working Group for all these efforts.

7.2 Marketing Plan Update

Cllr. Mike Eldred has received positive feedback from all the organisations. We need to sell the EALC and tell them how good we are. Cllr. Mike Eldred mentioned we had Sophie Wolker on board and how refreshing that


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was. Cllr. Mike Eldred mentioned our tutors are our bestsellers. Cllr. Mike Eldred queried if the EALC needs to be on social media. We need to collaborate with our members and invite people to any 'Pop-Ups' we may decide to do. This Marketing Plan needs to be adaptable as we go forward.

The Chair thanked Cllr. Mike Eldred for his passion and work.

The Chair asked if everyone agreed with the short and long-term goals described in the Marketing Plan.

Cllr. Jim Devlin queried if social media needs to be a short-term goal.

8. District Associations Communications Initiative by the CEO and Representatives Feedback.

8.1 Basildon

Cllr. Jim Devlin commented he had no update to provide.

8.2 Braintree

Cllr. Martin Lee commented he had no update to provide.

8.3 Brentwood

Cllr. Richard North was unable to attend the last BVP meeting. At the local elections we had a re-shuffle – Kelvedon Hatch changed Councillors to a separate set. The Chair added that the Brentwood Association are looking at recruiting an Association Secretary as their one had left.

8.4 Chelmsford – Update from the CEO

The CEO would like to thank Cllr. John Gili-Ross for his help with the recent Chelmsford Association meeting. We will hold a further meeting once they have gone back to their separate councils.

8.5 Colchester

Cllr. Brian Butcher explained their AGM is next month

8.6 Epping Forest

Cllr. Sheila Jackman explained the Bell Hotel is practically empty now. Cllr. Sheila Jackman believed the Phoenix Hotel in North Weald was being used by immigrants but recently the area saw a recent stabbing.

8.7 Maldon

Cllr. Abdul Hafiz explained about the changes to car parks in Maldon. Cllr. Abdul Hafiz is going to lobby for this change. Cllr. Abdul Hafiz is going to try to arrange another Association meeting. Cllr. Abdul Hafiz mentioned there are currently 14 councils within his area. There is a split in the Association, Cllr. Abdul Hafiz covers the Colchester side of Maldon, and we are trying to find out who looks after Burnham side of Maldon.

ACTION: Cllr. Abdul Hafiz and the CEO to find out who is responsible for the Burnham side of Maldon. We need to investigate launching the Maldon Associations again and getting them up and running.

8.8 Rochford


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8.9 Southend - Leigh on Sea

No presence in this area at this meeting from Cllr. Bernard Arscott.

ACTION: The CEO to communicate with Cllr. Bernard Arscott. We need to ensure an EALC representative is on the agenda for the next Leigh-on-Sea meeting.

8.10 Tendring

Cllr. Frank Belgrove confirmed himself and the Secretary, Jen Spear, has also been elected as the EALC representative. We have the Leader, Cllr. Mark Stephenson from Tendring District Council attended the Association meetings.

We have issues in the area with regard to cables for the wind farm and littering and fly-tipping.

We are campaigning to see a 30mph limit in all villages.

ACTION: Cllr. Frank Belgrove to contact EALC concerning the new representative Jen Spear.

8.11 Uttlesford

Cllr. Alan Townsend explained that Uttlesford District Council (UDC) is contacting parishes directly. Cllr. Stephanie Gill explained UDC is offering a code of conduct training for free, this is not the same as the training we are offering. The CEO explained she is attending a meeting with Peter Holt on 7 June.

ACTION: The CEO to liaise with Cllr. Alan Townsend to see if he is also able to attend the meeting with Peter Holt.

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

9.1 Chair, Cllr Peter Davey: Feedback

The Chair had a recent meeting with Cllr. Louise McKinlay (ECC) with the CEO and Cllr. Mike Eldred. The objective was to give an update on the year-end position and raise funding levels. We also spoke about Wellbeing.

9.2 Vice Chair, Cllr John Gili-Ross: Feedback (to follow/update)

Cllr. John Gili-Ross explained the Personnel meeting generated a number of follow up meetings. Cllr. John Gili-Ross is also working with the CEO on the EALC Nomination process.

9.3 Vice Chair, Cllr Mike Eldred: Feedback

Cllr. Mike Eldred has been very active and Ongar Museum is worth a visit.

10. New Initiatives and other matters for discussion

10.1 Constitutional changes, track change version in advance of the AGM. There were no changes to be made.


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10.2 Standing orders, track change version – Item to be taken off Agenda.

The Chair explained the only change that needs to be made is the date. Once this has been adopted at the AGM the date will be amended.

Cllr. Stephanie Gill explained we do not have an explanation of what the definitions of Registerable and Non-Registrable interests are. Cllr. Stephanie Gill absconded for approving the document.

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

Cllr. Mike Eldred gave an overview of the what the plans are for this years AGM to include an awards ceremony to celebrate the work of the membership. The event will start later at 2pm with the key speakers, followed by the AGM and the awards ceremony in the evening. The timings have changed based on membership feedback.

10.4 Partner reports as received in person or in writing – Noted.

10.5 Annual nomination process, Executive member Profiles. Update by Chair/CEO – Noted.

10.6 Civility and Respect Initiative for EALC, update by Chair/CEO – Noted.

10.7 HM Portrait – Already discussed, CEO to send a letter.

10.8 The Great Collaboration – Noted.

Cllr. Shelia Jackman left meeting at 1.05 pm

Cllr. Abdul Hafiz left the meeting at 1.10 pm

11. Essex Matters

11.1 Essex County Council Report, Cllr Mark Platt, to be confirmed.

At the ECC's Annual Council meeting held on 13 May 2024, Cllr Jill Reeves was re-elected as the Chairman, and Cllr Ray Gooding was re-elected as the Vice-Chairman.

Cllr Beverley Egan was appointed as the Chair of the newly created Caring Communities Commission which has been set up to address the increasing pressures on social care services and explore community-led solutions.

This commission, which will be launched in the summer of this year, will focus on early intervention and prevention to avoid escalating needs and costs. Residents will be supported in new ways to enjoy better health and access to these services.

The Commission will cove:

- Identifying and amplifying assets with Essex communities to support vulnerable residents.
- Building capacity within communities for improved resilience



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- Better services and lower costs
- Looking at all forms of provisions to better support the changing needs of residents

Ten years ago, ECC set up an innovative social care commission under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Hughes-Hallett. It asked the big question of how we will care for residents in the future. It was concluded that we needed to take action and more control over our care.

In the last 10 years, the population of 70–74-year-olds in Essex has increased by 44%. There has also been an increase in children entering care by 40%. In addition, the impact of COVID-19 is still being felt by communities. Therefore, it is important to build on the existing work carried out by ECC, for example:

- The launch of the Technology Enabled Care (TEC) scheme has successfully enabled people to live independently, age well, and live at home or with family. Furthermore, care technology service is partnering with Microsoft to explore the use of AI to allow earlier diagnoses or early interventions.
- The introduction of Robot Pets to support people with learning disabilities and dementia. A pilot project was undertaken by the ECC's adult social care team in Mid Essex to test the therapeutic benefit of robot pets. The results showed that the companion 'pets' provided several benefits such as helping to reduce agitation and anxiety creating a sense of purpose and increasing engagement through playing and talking, particularly where caring for a living pet may be difficult. Furthermore, staff and families also witnessed the positive impact the pets are having on their owners.

The pilot links to the Council's wider care technology offer. Through this, the Council is working to increase the uptake of technology where it can have the greatest impact.



At the Annual Council Meeting, ECC approved a motion to call upon National Grid, Electricity Service Operators, and Ofgem to reconsider their proposal of an exclusive overhead line solution for Essex as presented in their Statutory Consultation. This Consultation is live and runs out on 18th June. ECC believes this unrealistic timescale is driving an unacceptable solution. 160km of steel pylons and sub-stations including an underground connector at Dedham Vale. Despite the objections of three counties (Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk), the answer remains the same and they are not going to shift in their approach.

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ECC's new Highway initiative has commenced– The initiative is part of an extra £12m of funding towards the highway budget for additional work, above the agreed program for 24/25. This is building upon the member-led pothole scheme from previous years and allows members to take action against highway defects like footway, signs, and vegetation in their divisions. This is also additional funding for enforcement engagement, Local Highways panel, and pre-winter surfacing works.

The Chair asked if the Local Highways panel structure is the same. Cllr Mark Platt confirmed that the structure is the same and it is down to the individual Chair of said panel as to how it is run.

11.2 ECC Initiatives update.

11.3 ECC/EALC Meeting updates.

12. Items for the next Agenda

The Business Plan is to be re-drafted

Standing Orders

13. Date of Next Meetings for 2024

11th July 2024 10 am

5th September 2024 10 am

21st November 2024 10 am

14. Meeting Closure 1.30 pm.


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