

Essex Association of Local Councils
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LARGER
LOCAL COUNCIL FORUM
7th July 2016
10.00 am – 12.30 noon
 hosted by
Epping Town Council at Epping Hall, Epping CM16 5JU

Present:

Cllr Keith Miles	S.W.Ferrers TC	Jannetta Sosin	Gt Baddow PC
Cllr Vivien Chapman	Brightlingsea TC	Cllr David Wixley	Loughton TC
Kay White Clerk	Chigwell PC	Enid Walsh Clerk	Loughton TC
Cllr Peter Davey	Ingatstone & Fryerning PC/EALC	Cllr Patrick Horner	Witham TC
Abi Wood	Ingatstone & Fryerning	Aimi Middlehurst	Ongar TC Clerk
Mark Squire	Witham TC	Cllr Stuart Berlyn	Danbury PC
Cllr Jim Devlin	Billericay TC	Suzanne Walker	Gt Notley PC
Kevin O'Brien	Buckhurst Hill PC	Cllr Phil Milne	Dunmow TC
Cllr Alan Acott	Canvey Island TC	Cllr M Miller	Dunmow TC
Cllr Peter May	Canvey Island TC	Beverley Rumsey Clerk	Epping TC
Cllr P Greig	Canvey Island TC	Cllr Tony Church	Epping TC
Cllr J Blissett	Canvey Island TC	Cllr J. Alan Smith	Epping TC
Ellea Hunt Clerk	Canvey Island TC	Cllr Mike Wright	Epping TC
Cllr Richard Hyland	Galleywood PC	Cllr Philip Heady	Gt Notley PC
Helen Symmons Clk	Leigh on Sea TC	Cllr Keith Miles	Sth Woodham Ferrers
Cllr Colin Golding	Shalford PC	Karen Hawkes Clerk	Sth Woodham Ferrers
Cllr Gill Gibson	Rochford PC	Cllr Jerry Gibson	Rochford PC
Angie Balcombe	ECC	Joy Darby	EALC CEO
Pearl Willcox	EALC Training Officer	Linda Golding	EALC Assist. CEO

Also present Speakers:

Peter Adams – Epping Forest Venderer

Mark Carroll – Devolution Programme Director – Essex County Council

**Dipo Lafinhan – Essex County Council Flood Partnerships Funding
Co-ordinator Flood and Water Management**

In the Chair: Cllr Keith Miles

Opening Introductions by the Chairman

Cllr Miles welcomed everyone and said it was good to see such a number here this morning. The meeting was a slightly later date wise than usual due to the EU Elections taking place on the original planned date. This is the first time Epping Town Council has hosted one of these meetings. It is difficult for Linda to spread the meetings around the County equally to share out shorter or longer travelling distances, as whichever venue we use it obviously means some delegates are closer and some further away but we do really appreciate those who attend every meeting wherever the location is - and there are a number of you who do this.

I am pleased to report we have 22 Councils due to attend this morning with around 40 delegates and this keeps the attendance numbers well up to what is now becoming normal levels. A special welcome to delegates attending a LLCF meeting for the first time and we hope to see you again at future meetings.

Since the elections in May we have lost 3 regular delegates – Cllr John Buchanan & Cllr Marion Wilson from Billericay Town Council and Cllr David Stephenson from Galleywood Parish Council. Also Mike Murkin the Clerk at Halstead retires today and he readily gave us the use of the hall at Halstead for our meetings. We send best wishes to all of them and thanks for supporting us over the past months. Best wishes were also sent to the Town Clerk at Leigh-on-Sea Paul Beckerson who is still undergoing treatment but progressing well.

A warm welcome to our speakers this morning - Peter Adams an Epping Forest Venderer who is going to talk about the Forest and its history. Mark Carroll from Essex County Council on the subject of Devolution - which was the subject you requested hearing about at the last meeting and lastly Dipo Lafinhan again from Essex County Council's flood partnership funding. Many thanks to them for giving up their time to come along and join us today.

Apologies for absence

Margaret Saunders	Danbury PC	Cllr Sue Sullivan	Springfield PC
Cllr Daniel Spillman	Epping TC	Cllr James Browning	Ongar TC
Mryna Liles Clerk	Frinton & Walton TC	Cllr John Gili-Ross	Chairman EALC
Clerk and Cllrs	Heybridge PC	Kathryn Richmond Town Clerk	Waltham Abbey TC
Cllr Sheila Jackman	North Weald PC	Mike Letch Clerk	Hockley PC

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 25th February 2016 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

Welcome from Epping Town Council by the Town Clerk Beverley Rumsey

Beverley welcomed everyone to Epping Hall the home of Epping Town Council. She told the meeting Epping has a population of 11,500 residents, 50 local organisations, a weekly market, cemetery, 2 halls, allotments, Blue Plaque Scheme, Public Toilets and the Town Council is working on a Neighbourhood Plan. She became Clerk of the Town Council in 2015.

Presentation by Peter Adams – Epping Forest Venderer

Peter gave a very interesting and illustrated presentation about the history of Epping Forest. He told delegates how the forestland was obtained from old landowners, is now maintained, pointed out places of interest, spoke about the cattle that roam there, and the threats the forest now faces. His pictures showed the forest through the ages, species of trees, and some beautiful views of the forest in different seasons. He told delegates Epping Forest is a magnificent place for people and wildlife and is the largest open space in the London area and well worth visiting.

For more details you can visit the website www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk

The Chairman thanked Peter for his presentation. Peter then left the meeting.

EALC Update by Joy Darby

Joy told delegates that following the NALC AGM and the increase in their subscription fees that followed she has now been working with NALC on a working party to look at the way these are calculated in the future.

Kelly Holland who had joined the staff some months ago to work on the Local Council Award Scheme was taking a break but she would still be tutoring for us on an occasional basis. The LCA work would be continued by Amanda Brown who

currently looks after the Transparency Code, funding for which will be continuing for another year.

Joy continued to update delegates on the forthcoming EALC AGM which takes place on the 22nd September at Foakes Hall in Gt. Dunmow. She reminded Councils to send in their applications for Council of the Year and nominations for the Buckingham Palace Award.

Training Update by Pearl Willcox the Training Officer

Pearl told the meeting the courses were going really well, especially the cemetery ones which she had had to move from the offices in Great Dunmow to Foakes Hall to accommodate all those wanting to attend. Vine HR on lone working had proved popular and the VAT course being run in October should be full.

Update from the SLCC Secretary – Enid Walsh Town Clerk at Loughton

Enid told the meeting the most significant issue to bring to attention is the creation of a new trade union – The Association of Local Council Clerks. Up until now the SLCC, although a society, was actually a scheduled trade union. Legal Council had confirmed that councils could however, legally pay the membership fees of their clerks but this was still disputed by some Councils. It also meant that the CEO of the Society had to be elected by the majority of the membership and this made the appointment of a suitable candidate to this post difficult. The creation of a separate body will mean that in future the trade union activities are dealt with solely by the new Association. The Society will continue its development as a professional body providing the training and support that it has always given to Clerks.

Clerks will have to opt into the Association. Membership for 2016 will be free. Thereafter the annual fee will be £10 for SLCC members and £50 for non members. The additional costs of running the trade union will be met by a grant from the trading arm of the Society – a separate business. The new union will continue to provide employment support to Clerks including representation at grievance and disciplinary hearings but not employment tribunals. This move will also make it easier for the SLCC to work closely with NALC to ensure Councils are in a good position to take advantage of the opportunities provided by devolution and decentralisation.

Our next social event is a private tour of the nearby Copped Hall on Wednesday 3rd August, Copped Hall is a mid 18th century county house only 3 miles from Epping currently undergoing major restorations.

Date for your diary Thursday 3rd November in Great Dunmow the join networking event with the EALC. Topics will include VINE HR and Essex Fire and Rescue Service.

Forthcoming proposed trip to Copped Hall in Epping on the 3rd August at a cost of £11 per person.

The Chairman thanked Enid for her update

Presentation by Mark Carroll on Devolution

The Chairman welcomed Mark Carroll who took the floor and gave an interesting and well received presentation to delegates present in the limited time he had allocated on the Agenda but he was able to answer questions from the delegates wishing to raise points with him. Points to note:

- ❖ By 2025 Greater Essex will have the fastest growing economy outside London
- ❖ Have doubled the number of businesses exporting
- ❖ Sustainable house building rates that meet local need
- ❖ The UK's most technically skilled workforce
- ❖ 20% increase in higher apprenticeships
- ❖ Regeneration of Town Centres
- ❖ A virtual investment circle increasing local and national returns
- ❖ Government is clear that they expect any deal to include a directly elected Mayor
- ❖ A new combined authority will be established
- ❖ Principle of subsidiarity means an enhanced role for Growth Area Boards
- ❖ Openness to exploring double devolution, including to local councils.

Devolution Risks

- Government passes responsibilities but not finances
- Get a good deal but government changes the terms unilaterally
- Cant trust local partners
- Loss of sovereignty

Risk of not doing a deal

- Become second class citizens for remaining pots of money and power
- Not consulted or engaged in government changes
- Process has momentum and could be left behind locally
- Cant thrive because we don't have the size, growth or relationships.

Current situation

- ✓ At meeting of 26th May Leaders decided to write to the Secretary of State asking for clarification of the issue of Mayors
- ✓ Unanimous vote in favour of pursuing devolution
- ✓ 2 Unitary Councils not in favour of a Mayor
- ✓ In Essex County Council boundaries slight majority in favour of discussing devolution including with a Mayor
- ✓ Meeting with Government officials by end of July

How we can maximise the role of Essex Local Councils?

- In enhancing local democracy and participation
- In building community capacity and engagement
- In widening opportunity for neighbourhood level service delivery
- In strengthening local economic growth

- In taking advantage opportunities of Neighbourhood Plans and assets of community value.

Mark took a number of questions from the delegates and gave details replies.

A copy of his presentation is available from Linda Golding and will be sent out to Councils present.

The Chairman thanked Mark for his presentation. (Mark then left the meeting)

ECC Update by Angie Balcombe

Angie gave a very brief update and took the opportunity to remind delegates the deadline for the next round of the CIF fund Expressions of Interest will be end of July. Cllr David Finch will be attending the EALC AGM. He is fully supportive of Parish and Town Councils and you should “watch this space”.

The Chairman thanked Angie for the update.

Presentation by Dipo Lafinhan - Flood Partnerships Funding Co-ordinator at Essex County Council

Dipo explained what the fund is and who qualifies.

- ❖ £400,000 available annually over the next 4 years to contribute towards flood management works undertaken by organization with Essex County.
- ❖ Qualified organizations include Parish and Town Councils & Community Groups
- ❖ Qualifying criteria:-
 - Reducing local flood risk to Essex residents
 - Projects protecting a higher number of residents and with a higher rate of match funding would be prioritized over others
 - Project starting or planning application made within the current year
 - Project being deliverable by the year 2020
 - Follow the terms and conditions set out in the ECCC Legal Grant Agreement

Evidence required:

- ✓ Past flooding in the area or total number of properties at risk of flooding
- ✓ The cost of the scheme is commensurate to the benefits
- ✓ The project start date or planning applications for the scheme would occur within the current financial year
- ✓ The applicant has adequate resources for the delivery of the scheme including funding, expertise and legal authority
- ✓ Sufficient post-construction maintenance regime for the scheme
- ✓ The timeframe for the delivery of the scheme.

Year 2 Applications will close on 1st September 2016

For further information - floods@essex.gov.uk or call 03330139512
<http://www.essex.gov.uk/Environment%20Planning/Environment/local-environment/flooding/Grants/Pages/Partnership-programme-grant.aspx>

The Chairman thanked him for his presentation.

NALC Update by Cllr Peter Davey the EALC NALC representative

Peter told the meeting a lot has happened since his last update on the 25th February.

- National lobby day took place on the 12th April and a detailed report was included in the April/May EALC County Update when Joy and I saw the Right Honourable Mark Francois - Rayleigh and Will Quince the MP for Colchester
- NALC finance meeting was held on the 17/05/2016 and I was appointed to the Task and finish initiative to work with the CEO of NALC to review all options open to us with regards to the future of 109, Great Russell Street offices and we carried out an office inspection on the 27th May. We will now be liaising with selected real estate professionals to consider our options.
- Joy was appointed to the Affiliation Fees Task and Finish Group by the Chairman of the Finance Committee to represent the CALCs and the first meeting took place after the National Council Meeting on the 28th June
- It was agreed at Full Council that while this group was looking into the future structure of affiliation fees that an increase to 6.73p for 2017/18 and 6.86p in 2018/19 per electorate would be recommended to the AGM which is a 1.9% increase in both years. The NALC is also carrying out its own cost saving initiative whilst ensuring that it continues to offer the highest possible service to all its CALCs and Local Councils.
- Jonathan Owen the CEO of NALC reported that the NALC had launched Year 2 of the Transparency Fund in April. Eligible smaller councils with precepts of £25,000 or less can apply and since the launch of the Fund in September 2015 the fund has agreed 1,785 applications and provided £1.3 million of funding. The fund remains open for this financial year
- On the 20/05/2016 Jonathan Owen reported on NALC's progress with regards to the lobbying process with the Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill and on the 1st June NALC held the Devolution initiative through a Devolving and Delivering joint conference with the Local Government Association (LGA) which saw over 60 councillors and officers from local and principal councils as well as county associations come together to explore the opportunities devolution presents for principal and local councils to work more collaboratively. A new Task and Finish Group has been

set up which is developing new resources and guidance, with a dedicated page on the website.

- On the 24th of June NALC discussed Department for Communities and Local Government which is consulting on proposals to update the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (which applies to some of our larger councils) in particular to change the way that local authorities record details of their land and property assets, and publish information about their procurement, their contracts and the delivery of some of their services; the deadline is the 8th of July and our briefing is in the transparency section of the consultations area on the website
- The summer edition of LCR includes a feature on the independent review of the role and work of Local Councillors and NALC is working with the Councillor Commission to help them hear from our 80,000 parish and town councillors; you can get involved in a number of ways including providing written evidence, taking NALCs short survey or by your county association or council hosting a roundtable meeting – a number of parish roundtables have been held or will take place in coming weeks and the EALC is holding one on the 27th of July
- NALC has joined forces with the LGC to produce a special supplement. The purpose of the supplement is to shine a spotlight on the work of local (parish and town) councils and to highlight once again how they are a vital part of local government and communities.

Open Forum Time

No items for discussion

The next meeting of the Larger Local Councils

Next meeting will be hosted by Halstead Town Council on the 12th October 2016 when it is hoped the new Police and Crime Commissioner will be the main speaker.

Thank you to Epping Town Council for hosting the meeting.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 12.30

Signed..... **Date**