

Minutes of a meeting of the East Cambridgeshire Strategic Partnership held in Committee Room 1, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Monday, 11th June 2012 at 2.00pm

P R E S E N T

Councillor Mike Rouse (Chairman) – East Cambridgeshire District Council
Kirsten Bennett – Cambs ACRE
Councillor David Brown – Cambridgeshire County Council
Claire Bruin – Cambridgeshire County Council
Andrew Bullivant – Environment Agency
Darren Dixon – East Cambridgeshire District Council
(Substitute for John Hill)
Philip Eden – City of Ely Council
Elisabeth Every – Business Sector Representative
Emma Keegan – Sanctuary Group
Roderick Mair - VCAEC
Val Thomas – Cambridgeshire NHS
Chief Inspector Russ Waterston – Cambridgeshire Constabulary
Councillor Hazel Williams, MBE – East Cambridgeshire District Council

I N A T T E N D A N C E

Julie Cornwell – East Cambridgeshire District Council
Janis Murfet – East Cambridgeshire District Council

A P O L O G I E S F O R A B S E N C E

Julie Coleman – Jobcentre Plus
Councillor Brian Hayes – CPALC
Avril Hayter-Smith – Volunteer Centre Partnership
John Hill – East Cambridgeshire District Council
Rick Hylton – Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service

13. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions were received from the public.

14. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that each person introduce themselves.

15. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Julie Coleman, Councillor Brian Hayes, Avril Hayter-Smith, John Hill and Rick Hylton.

It was noted that Darren Dixon would substitute for John Hill for the duration of this meeting.

16. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th June 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17. **THE FUTURE OF THE EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

The Board received a report from which Members were asked to consider the future of the East Cambridgeshire Strategic Partnership (ECSP) in the context of a revised policy context and newly formed partnership structures.

The Partnerships Officer, Julie Cornwell, introduced her report by reminding Members that at the last Board meeting in June 2011, a new structure for the ECSP was formally agreed. The Board would meet once a year to appraise the previous year's work and agree strategic direction, with a proviso of members being able to call extraordinary meetings when needed.

The Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) reward funding was withdrawn by Ministers on 3rd September 2010, leaving the ECSP with half of its original allocation. However, as a result of successfully lobbying by all partners, the County Council received the second £4.5 million instalment of the LPSA Reward Grant, and the ECSP was able to secure £120,000 to pay the arrears payments due to voluntary and community groups and some of the arrears due to projects run by statutory partners.

The Annual ECSP Board meeting had originally been scheduled for March 2012 but was subsequently cancelled due to a lack of agenda items and the uncertainty around the Government's intentions for Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).

It was noted that the Department for Communities & Local Government had since confirmed that the "Duty to Involve" was being repealed, and this would include a repeal of the requirement for local authorities to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy. The key policy driver for LSPs had therefore been scrapped. Likewise, LPSA funding had come to an end and no new funding streams or partner

resources had taken its place. The ECSP therefore had no pooled or central government resources for delivering added value projects to support the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Mrs Cornwell also advised the Board that the majority of the ECSP thematic sub-groups were no longer delivering added value projects. The groups had either been disbanded, not set up as intended, or replaced by alternative partnership arrangements. Appendix A of the report gave a detailed position statement for each of the sub-groups, and paragraphs 7.1 – 7.4 of the report detailed other partnerships structures which were now covering ECSP priorities.

With regard to the future of the ECSP, all those Board Members who had attended meetings in the past and were consulted for feedback, felt that the ECSP had already come to an end and no longer added value.

Mrs Cornwell said that there was a view that the ECSP was a “funnel for money” and without LPSA (or other) funding, there was no role for the ECSP moving forward. It was also recognised that without statutory powers the Partnership could, at best, only influence the mainstream agenda of partner agencies.

During the course of the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- Val Thomas believed that the Health & Wellbeing Partnership would prove to be effective. However, the ECSP had had an overarching strategic view and she wondered if there would be a need to fill this. She suggested that the Fenland model would be worth watching.
- Philip Eden said there was nothing in the emerging partnerships which focussed on the green agenda. Mrs Cornwell replied that the Local Nature Partnership for Greater Cambridgeshire should cover this, but Ms Bennett remarked that it concentrated more on biodiversity and landscape.
- Andrew Bullivant wished to know who would monitor and fill the gaps regarding issues brought forward by the thematic groups. He congratulated Mrs Cornwell on her concise paper.
- Russ Waterston said he had no problem with the ECSP disbanding if it had reached the end of its life, but he was concerned about how gaps would be filled. His major concern was that groups would start to go their own way. He believed there was a need for some sort of strategic partnership to monitor and review what was going on. In

response to a question from Councillor Williams, he said that the Community Safety Partnership could pick up some of the function.

- Councillor Williams said she had sat on the LSP Board since its inception and she had never felt that it quite fulfilled what Members had hoped for. On a personal basis she had never felt a sense of ownership or connection. She was worried that Parish Councils and voluntary organisations might get lost along the way, and she did not think that Neighbourhood Panels would address Parish Council issues.
- Lis Every raised the continuing problem of the lack of cohesion in the skills agenda. There was a huge gap regarding skills and development in this area and the Local Enterprise Partnership was worried, not least about the lack of discussion. This issue did not appear to sit anywhere in particular, and Mrs Every wondered who would pick it up in the future.
- It had been suggested that some sort of partnership should be formed along the lines of a Public Service Board, but Kirsten Bennett reminded Members that such a set up was for public service people only. The LSP had been an equal partnership of all organisations, and this was what was needed. Her two major concerns were how a new Body would connect with local people to give the community a voice, and where the rising green agenda would fit into the scheme of things.
- Emma Keegan agreed with Councillor Williams' comments and asked what happened elsewhere locally. Mrs Cornwell informed her that South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council had disbanded their combined LSP, but would still have an annual conference for to support the voluntary and community sector. However, Huntingdonshire District Council was continuing with its LSP, but would not be refreshing its Sustainable Community Strategy.
- Councillor Brown expressed concern that the ECSP might be duplicating what was going on elsewhere. He believed that there was clearly an appetite for partnership working, but he was not sure that this Partnership worked.
- At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Dixon gave his views. He said he had witnessed the evolution of the Partnership and it had started well because it had vision and direction. However, he was unsure as to whether any added value had been achieved. The items for decision by the Board were very few and far between; in fact it was the Sub-Groups who

had made many of the key decisions. In the round, he questioned the purpose of the LSP and believed the recommendation was correct, but there was still a need to fill in the gaps.

Having listened to Members' comments, the Chairman asked how a way forward was to be found because there was no funding and he had doubts about the value of an annual meeting. The Partnerships Officer cautioned that any points raised must be picked up immediately because there was no longer an LSP Support Officer to take them forward.

Russ Waterston felt that the first question should be whether or not the current format was still appropriate, and he did not believe it was. He said there was no point in continuing if the Board had no added value, and he believed that the LSP, in its current format, should be dissolved. His suggestion was to have something altogether more informal – networking, in a real, positive manner and in line with strategic matters.

Mrs Cornwell sought clarification that the “group” would not have any decision-making powers; Members would discuss issues and then each take the appropriate action. Chief Inspector Waterston replied that this would be the case, although each organisation would need to have the people and capacity to buy in and attend. It was further clarified that meetings would be held on an ad hoc basis, with the organisation calling the meeting taking the Chair and dealing with all the administrative arrangements. It was noted that there was no intention to have any formal minutes or action plans, and membership of the “group” would be restricted to ex-LSP Terms of Reference Members.

(The Chairman, Councillor Rouse, left the meeting at 3.10pm and the Vice Chairman, Councillor Williams, MBE, assumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting).

It was unanimously resolved:

- (1) That an informal meeting structure be arranged and chaired by an ex-LSP Terms of Reference Member, to consider and assist with issues impacting upon the District; and
- (2) That the East Cambridgeshire Strategic Partnership Board dissolve the ECSP with immediate effect.

The meeting concluded at 3.18pm.