Minutes of a meeting of the East Cambridgeshire Strategic Partnership held in the Sanctuary Hereward offices, St Marys Street, Ely on Friday 17th September 2010 at 10.00am

PRESENT

Councillor Fred Brown (Chairman)  
East Cambridgeshire District Council
Andrew Bullivant - Environment Agency
Rod Craig - Cambridgeshire County Council
Eamonn Dillon – Sanctuary Group
Philip Eden - Sustainable Growth Partnership
Councillor Brian Hayes – CPALC
Avril Hayter-Smith - Volunteer Centre Partnership
Andy Hicks – JobCentre Plus
John Hill - East Cambridgeshire District Council
Liz Knox - East Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Partnership
Mick Lawrence - Fire and Rescue Service
Rob Needle – Cambridgeshire Constabulary
Adam Speed - Cambridgeshire County Council
Val Thomas - Cambridgeshire NHS
Ste Thornley – Community Safety Partnership
Councillor Hazel Williams - East Cambridgeshire District Council

IN ATTENDANCE

Adrian Scaites-Stokes - East Cambridgeshire District Council

75. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were received from the public.

76. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the meeting would consider the future of this Local Strategic Partnership.

77. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Kirsten Bennett, Julie Coleman, Darren Dixon, Elisabeth Every, Councillor David Harty, Roderick Mair, and Neil Nineham.

Andy Hicks, from JobCentre Plus, and Adam Speed, from Cambridgeshire County Council, attended this meeting.
THE FUTURE OF THE EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The Board received a report, which outlined recommendations to improve the performance of the Strategic Partnership.

Ste Thornley advised the Board that there had been a lot of changes to the local Government public service landscape following the election of the coalition Government. The Aspire 2 Perform process had been used to review Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) across the East of England, detailed in Appendix A. Cambridgeshire Together were re-examining the county structure within the context of the Local Area Agreement. The Government had propounded two big ideas – ‘localism’ and the ‘big society’. Localism would relate to how services were delivered at a local level. The big society idea was to ensure everyone takes responsibility for service delivery.

New local enterprise partnerships had been suggested, which would have a wide remit. Currently it was unclear which model for this had been approved. This would affect local strategic partnerships.

A number of options were available, but these would be affected by timescales. It was too early to commit to the future of the local strategic partnership and board.

There was still a requirement for the Board to meet in October, to consider the other strategic partnerships. There would be value in looking at these in detail. It was suggested that the Partnership meet in January when concrete information would be available to help decide the future of the Partnership. The three options could be considered then: (i) business as usual, or (ii) a streamlined partnerships, or (iii) dissolve the Partnership.

Councillor Brian Hayes was concerned about parish councils being overlooked, as they would have a role to play. They had some responsibility and accountability and the public needed to know where to go for help.

Councillor Fred Brown questioned what ‘localism’ actually meant. Rod Craig stated that ‘localism’ had not yet been defined by the Government. The impacts on service should be discussed with communities, following the Government’s spending review. The three big issues related to libraries, youth services and services for older and vulnerable people. The Board would have to combine in a much more cohesive way and this would have to be done together, as there would still be a role for a local partnership. It had to be accepted that, given the issues about funding the Board, that the Board would need to change.
John Hill cautioned the Board against making conclusions at this meeting. Matters had to be clarified on how ‘localism’ could be used to further help communities. It was a time for analysis and reflection. This Strategic Partnership had been successful, as it had been based in East Cambridgeshire, so he would be against a county-wide partnership. The Board could be expected to change and become more streamlined but no decision could yet be made, only when the full facts were available.

Rob Needle supported the idea that it was too soon to come to any conclusions. Too many issues were inter-dependent and some matters would need to be district-led. New economic pressures meant that the police Division would change, though timescales were unknown at this point. Andrew Bullivant followed this by advising the Board that the Environment Agency was also re-structuring and was concerned about how funding would be forthcoming.

Councillor Fred Brown reminded the Board that nothing was certain as regards the Regional Bid Fund. He queried why the Board should alter as it did not know what the ‘landscape’ would be like. Something fit-for-purpose would be needed so, until ‘localism’ was defined and how it would apply to the community, the Board should hold on and wait. Therefore no decision could be taken now but the situation could be further discussed at the two future meetings, in October and January.

Ste Thornley reminded the Board that the Government’s spending review would be after the October meeting, but the meeting would still be required – to approve the sustainability strategy.

Rod Craig explained that every statutory and voluntary organisation would not be waiting for the spending review before taking measures to address the situation. What those organisations were doing should be discussed as it would be a starting point in the discussion about the Board’s potential new shape. Rob Needle thought it would be useful if each organisation gave a five-minute update at the next meeting.

It was resolved:

That the Board should further meet in October, where each organisation would update the others on what it was doing in response to the current situation.

79. **LPSA PROJECTS – PERFORMANCE UPDATES**

The Board received a report, which set out the current position on the suspension of Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) funding.
Ste Thornley tabled a revised LPSA Spending Proposal table and reminded the Board that the purpose of the report was to report on the impact of developments and projects, and on conclusions about spending of residual funds. The table showed the state of the various projects. Some had been paid for in advance whilst others were in arrears. LPSA funding had been suspended by the new Government so £193K would be claimed, though information had come through stating only 50% of outstanding balances would be made. However, if the bid was successful the projects would be funded up until September.

The decision on the distribution of any remaining funds would depend on Cambridgeshire Together and the Public Service Board. If any money was left over a decision would have to be made on how its use would be prioritised. The easiest way would be to use the LPSA formula.

John Hill thought that prioritisation should be about accountability of public finances and the appropriate use of that money. Unlike other LSPs this Board had allocated its funding against projects, those where funding had been spent and those in arrears. The financial impact of the Government’s decision would be severe, so the first call on any remaining funding should be those projects in arrears. If there was any funding surplus, this should be distributed equally amongst the LSPs.

It was resolved:

1) That the contents of the report be noted.

2) That giving priority to paying projects in arrears and assisting the organisations that are directly employing staff to deliver the project to meet their contractual obligations, be approved.

The meeting concluded at 10.56am.