

West Essex Alliance
Minutes of the meeting held on 25th July 2012
Civic Centre, Harlow

Present

Bill Bryden	Harlow College
Cllr Chris Whitbread	Epping Forest District Council
Graham Clarke	Federation of Small Business
Michael Murray	Jobcentre Plus
Nick Barton	Stansted Airport Ltd
Peter Andrews	Federation of Small Business
Quentin Buller	Epping Forest College
Robert Ellice	Clarke Hillyer
Ronke Abbas	Jobcentre Plus
Will Parkes	Stansted Airport Ltd

Officers Present

Cath Shaw	Harlow Council
David Sellings	Harlow Council
Jane Greer	Harlow Council
John Houston	One Epping Forest / Epping Forest District Council
Malcolm Morley	Harlow Council
Roger Harborough	Uttlesford District Council

Also Present

Philip Wilson	Essex County Council
Cllr Roger Walters	Essex County Council

Apologies:

Brian Hull	Harlow & District Chamber of Commerce
Dave Bridges	Keepmoat
Cllr John Jowers	Essex County Council
John Mitchell	Uttlesford District Council
John Preston	Epping Forest District Council
John Price	Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce
Robert Charnock	Higgins Construction
Steve Flanagan	BUPA Home Healthcare
Steve Day	Glaxosmithkline

Cath Shaw (CS) provided a brief summary of changes to the group membership since the last Board. Additionally, changes to the group membership have impacted the Executive Group with only one existing member remaining.

It was agreed that nominations for the Executive Group be sought at the next meeting.

1. Minutes and Matters Arising

- a) The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2012 were agreed as a true and accurate record.
- b) CS reported that the Epping Forest and Harlow applications had been unsuccessful in the first round of Portas Pilot funding, however a second round has been announced with first round applications automatically eligible for consideration.
- c) Legacy of West Essex Future Jobs Fund – CS explained that the sub-group had been unsuccessful in securing funding from DWP for a West Essex welfare to work type programme. Michael Murray reported that feedback from DWP will be provided and that there is now limited funding and alternative funding sources should be researched.

2. Presentation: Essex County Council - Broadband

Philip Wilson (PW), Economic Development & Regeneration Strategy Officer and Cllr Roger Walters, Essex County Council gave a brief presentation on progress of the Superfast Essex Broadband Project.

The Local Broadband Plan will see at least 90% of premises across the county with access to superfast broadband and PW explained that Governments aim is to deliver the best broadband speeds in Europe by 2015. £6.5m has been allocated to Essex, with County Council allocating an additional £6.5m, with the awarding contractor match funding £13m.

PW reported European Commission approval is outstanding due to issues arising from the classification of State Aid arrangements, but once approval is granted the tender will be put out to BT and Fujitsu.

John Houston (JH) asked if there is a way to identify more accurately the existing speeds within areas and to understand what areas may be prioritised for upgrading.

PW explained that the data collection has proved difficult with different and inaccurate data originally being used by BT, however Essex have data at post code level.

It was agreed that PW would supply the broadband speed raw data to the three district councils and provide an update at the Alliances meeting early 2013.

3. Delivery

a) Business Support & One Shops Local

JH explained that the previously circulated Business Support discussion paper provides an update on the current issues in the provision of business support and that it is recommended that a task group be set up to look at the provision of business support across West Essex.

Additionally, JH raised whether the three districts should have a common package of business support that is offered as a minimum across West Essex.

JH also gave a brief update on Epping Forest One Shops Local scheme which has seen the creation of a website and campaign support independent traders throughout Epping Forest. The website offers traders the opportunity to have centralised web-presence, as well as providing discounts and offers to customers.

It was agreed that a task group be set up with representatives from the three district councils, Federation of Small Business and Jobcentre Plus and look at best practice and report to the next meeting.

b) Skills Update

Jane Greer reported that Harlow Council has recruited a Skills Partnership Officer, whose main remit will be to produce a Skills Plan for West Essex and the Enterprise Zone.

It was agreed that Skills is to be on the agenda at the next meeting with a presentation on the progress and development of the West Essex Skills Plan.

4. Campaigns

a) M11 Junction 7a Update

CS reported that unfortunately representatives from Essex County Council were unable to attend however a paper update has been provided and was circulated.

b) Inward Investment

JG provided a brief update and explained that officers within Harlow Council have undertaken UKTI accredited training on Foreign Direct Investment, DCLG have created a micro-website to promote Enterprise Zones (enterprisezones.communities.gov.uk), discussions are taking place with the London Anglia Growth Partnership with regards to sharing and handling inward

investment enquiries and a paper is being prepared by EDO's across West Essex to look at defining the inward investment offer.

5. **Enterprise Zone Update**

CS circulated an update on progress of the Enterprise Zone and provided an oral update on the Enterprise Zone offer and potential benefits.

CS asked the Board if they would support in lobbying Government (HM Treasury) to allow Harlow's enterprise zone to receive full business rates discounts in line with all other enterprise zones.

It was agreed that WEA will follow up a letter being sent to HM Treasury by SELEP in support of the business rates discount.

6. **Partner Updates**

a) London Stansted Airport

Nick Barton reported that the airport is currently campaigning to improve investment in the country's railways by improving journey times to 30 minutes.

Will Parkes explained that the Stansted in 30 campaign has been launched to lobby government into investing in rail links to improve transport links and connectivity to airports and ask the Alliance to endorse the campaign.

It was agreed that more information be circulated to members, exploring the economic impact and benefits to West Essex and ask members to either agree or disagree to endorse, to then be reported at the next meeting where a decision can be made.

b) Jobcentre Plus

Michael Murray reported that unemployment across West Essex is dropping and that Essex JCP is one of the better performers for off-flow claimants across the Home Counties.

In comparison, Southend-On-Sea has seen an increase in unemployment.

c) Federation of Small Business

Peter Andrews reported that Keith Brown, FSB Essex, Business Development Manager has moved on and Iain Wicks has taken over the role.

7. **Any Other Business**

CS suggested that if partners would like to provide more detailed updates to the Alliance, these could be sent to Harlow Council before the next meeting to circulate with the meeting papers.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 20th November 2012, 8am – 10am
Harlow Civic Centre