



<p align="center">Cheshire East LEADER Local Action Group Meeting Wyvern House, Winsford 21st December 2016</p>	<p align="center">Initials/Actions</p>
<p>Board Members Present: Cllr Rachel Bailey (Cheshire East Council, Chair) Steve Wilkinson (Farmer) John Heselwood (Cheshire Community Action) Mike Gorton (Farmer, NFU) Nicola Said (Marketing Cheshire) Philip Posnett (Houghton Hall) Robert Parton (Church Minshull Marina)</p>	<p>CRB SW JH MG NS PP RP</p>
<p>Officers/Advisors Present: Ellie Morris (Cheshire West & Chester Council) Mandy Sibthorpe (Cheshire West & Chester Council) Joanna Douglass (Cheshire West & Chester Council) Sean Bell (Cheshire West & Chester Council) (Minutes) Sheila Woolstencroft (Cheshire East Council) Rachel Bolton (Skills & Growth Company) Sharon Angus-Crawshaw (Cheshire East Council)</p>	<p>EM MS JD SB ShW RB SAC</p>
<p>1. Welcome & Apologies CRB was late to arrive; in the interests of time those present agreed that SW would chair the meeting until her arrival. SW welcomed the LAG; apologies were received from Andrew Jackson, Cllr Jamie Macrae, Janet Maughan, Paul Nolan, Tony Rimmer, Lucy Rogers, Jake Thompson and Stuart Yarwood.</p>	
<p>2. Conflicts of Interest None declared.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of Previous Meeting Following the previous meeting, a joint letter was sent to the Treasury from both LAG Chairs in support of LEADER and other rural priorities. There was no direct response, but the Chancellor's statement guaranteeing LEADER funding until the UK leaves the EU came shortly after.</p> <p>Three potential new LAG members had been approached, two of which had submitted their nomination forms in time for this meeting.</p> <p>EM added that she had met with Andy Tordoff, the new North Area Manager for the Rural Payments Agency, who noted that the RPA were planning significant engagement with LEADER groups.</p>	
<p>4. LEADER Update MS talked through current progress, indicating that despite one project rendering itself ineligible and another requesting a variation to the structure of its grant claims, the Cheshire East LEADER programme is still on-course to exceed its budget for this financial year.</p>	

It was noted by the LAG that the LEADER priority of Support for Rural Services was seeing relatively little interest; MS explained that this is mostly due to LEADER's requirement for projects to create jobs, JD added that the complex application process can also be daunting to smaller or volunteer-run organisations. MS added that she is working with the RPA on their newer, simplified application process for LEADER.

The subject of cross-LAG projects was discussed; the LEADER team have asked for guidance on this but nothing had been received from the RPA as yet.

NS asked if the LEADER team had seen many applicants who had previously tried to apply for funding through the Growth Programme. MS and JS explained that they had, and this demonstrates the value of LEADER as many applicants find the assistance offered by the LAG staff to be hugely beneficial – the RPA simply do not have the resources to offer the same levels of support with the Growth Programme.

5. Annual Delivery Plan

The possibility of reallocating funds between the various LEADER priorities had been discussed, but the LEADER team had not yet received guidance on this. It was agreed that as there were adequate funds available in all priorities, the need to reallocate funds was not urgent.

6. Revised Applicant Guidance

A new Applicant Handbook had been issued by the RPA to incorporate feedback received from applicants and LAG staff and address criticisms.

Some of the changes discussed were:

The extensive lists of items considered eligible or ineligible under Priority 1 (Increasing Farm Productivity) had been drastically reduced, as the previous list was deemed extensive but ineffective for most applicants. Any items that no longer appeared in the list in the revised handbook would be down the judgement of the LAG staff.

Items of expenditure valued between £10,000 and £50,000 now require three quotes or two quotes and a catalogue reference, and items costing over £50,000 now only need three quotes rather than going to competitive tender.

A table had been added detailing potential environmental impacts of projects; something that LAG staff had found applicants often struggled with.

7. LAG Membership

CRB joined the meeting and announced that she would be stepping down from the LAG due to the commitments of her new role as Leader of the Council. EM and SAC thanked her on behalf of the LAG for her contributions.

Two nominations had been received for new LAG members; Cllr Janet Clowes and Sam Alston. Cllr Clowes is a cabinet member and rural portfolio holder for Cheshire East Council.

The LAG confirmed that it was happy to accept both nominations.



8. Dates of Future Meetings

- 23rd March, 14:30
- 22nd June, 14:30
- 21st September, 14:30
- 21st December, 14:30

9. AOB

None raised.

I confirm these minutes are a true and accurate record,

Signature

Name (Please print)

Date