

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee held on 31 January 2017 at 7.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall

Present: Cllrs B Austin (Chairman), D Bretherton (Deputy Chairman), N Dixon (Deputy Mayor), D Dodds, M Dyer, H Fickling and M Stiles

Officers

G Hunt, Town Clerk

G Markland, Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer

A Oughton, Committee Services Officer

B Reid, Market Town Co-ordinator

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Emery (Unwell), Lambert (Holiday) and Midwinter (Holiday). Cllr Cowell absent without apology.

2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Public Participation & Public Questions

There were no applications to address the Council.

There were no questions put to the Council.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 RSA Thame Group / Green Living Plan

Mr Charles Boundy of the RSA Thame Group gave a presentation on the work the RSA are carrying out to produce the Green Living Plan (GLP). Mr Boundy explained the reasons why Thame should have a GLP, the issues and the aims of the Plan and that once again Thame was leading the way in producing the first GLP.

The Plan would be split into three parts; the introduction and approach, the detailed analysis and focus areas and thirdly a delivery strategy / plan. The detailed analysis would include five colour coded sections; Green – Open Spaces & Routes, Blue – Water, Flooding & Drainage, Red – Energy (capture, use and management), Purple – Air & Environment and Brown – Waste.

The Group was talking to a wide range of people and organisations and had learnt a lot. The local community would be encouraged to get involved by reading the Plan, contributing to the discussion, joining a specific group and helping with research.

The benefits the GLP would give to Thame and the Town Council were a clear and agreed set of principles, a basis to assess sustainability and information and choices for all in the town. By forward planning money could be saved and the Plan would enable Thame to regain the initiative.

The next steps would be the presentation of the first draft of the GLP to the Town Council and following any amendments the draft would then go out for public consultation. It was planned to publish the Green Living Plan in the autumn.

Finally, the Town Council could help the RSA by giving its full support to the aims of the GLP, considering green living principles in current work, encouraging and facilitating community involvement and recognise, acknowledge and support the work of the RSA Thame Group.

Members raised concerns around air quality and in particular diesel fumes from buses waiting to drop off and pick up pupils from Lord Williams's School. There was a consensus at the meeting that the work currently carried out by the GLP group should be integrated and extended into relevant sections of the Transport Plan wherever practicable.

Cllr Austin thanked Charles Boundy for his presentation and the work the RSA group had done and continued to do in the production of the Green Living Plan, and it was agreed that the joint approach proposal would be encouraged.

6 Working Groups

a) NPCC Co-Ordination Working Group

s106 concerns: The Town Clerk reported that an updated s106 report had been received from SODC and after reading through, on the whole it appeared to be accurate. A separate meeting had taken place with Cllr Bretherton, Chair of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan Working Group and an agenda of 13 items drawn up to discuss with SODC. The Town Clerk had emailed the officer at SODC and was awaiting a suggested date and time to meet.

b) The Infrastructure Delivery Plan Working Group

As well as the s106 progress reported above, Cllr Bretherton had started to colour code the Infrastructure Delivery Plan to highlight the progress of projects on the list in advance of its formal review at the next meeting. One item had been added to the list, the village green / meeting place at Moreton.

c) The Green Living Plan Working Group

As well as the progress reported by Charles Boundy above, Cllr Fickling reported that a meeting had taken place with Haddenham Parish Council with regard to the proposed cycle path between Thame and Haddenham. Separately there was no further clarity with regard to the preferred routes. Sustrans had commissioned a feasibility study but had yet to publish the findings. There is a clear need for Oxfordshire County Council and Buckinghamshire County Council to progress as they hold the key to funding.

The Government had recently announced the Access Fund, £64m worth of funding nationally for projects that encouraged people to walk and cycle to work.

d) The Town Centre Working Group

Members noted the report.

A question was raised with regard to parking enforcement. It was agreed that this would be put to Thames Valley Police when they attend the Full Council meeting on 14 February 2017.

e) Transport Plan Working Group

Cllr Austin had prepared a framework project plan which was now ready for discussion at the next meeting of the working group, to be arranged by the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer.

f) Community Facilities Working Group

Members noted the report.

Cllr Dixon reported that a meeting had taken place with representatives of the Cattle Market Action Group and the Leap Design Group. Leap had provided a summary of the work they were already doing on community needs analysis and it was agreed that the way forward would be to ask Leap for a costed proposal to build on the current database and create a stand-alone outline Design Brief.

The Leap proposal had since been received and was attached to the report for Members consideration.

RESOLVED that:

i) Leap Design Group be engaged, as defined in the proposal, at a total cost of £5,550 plus normal expenses. The costs to be covered by s106 funds already received by SODC for Community Facilities.

g) Burial Space Working Group

No further communication had been received from Taylor Wimpey with regard to the proposed burial space on Site C. A full report on the plans to convert Priest End Allotments to Burial Space had been presented to the Community, Leisure and Recreation Committee meeting on 24 January 2017.

7 Market Town Co-Ordinator Action Plan

The Market Town Co-Ordinator presented the Action Plan 2017-18 which had been submitted to, and approved by the Town Centre Working Group at their meeting on 16 January 2017. The Action Plan was a working document which would continually evolve and included built in phases for the next Plan. Once approved the Plan would be submitted to SODC for their approval.

RESOLVED that:

i) The Market Town Co-Ordinator Action Plan 2017-18 be approved.

8 Affordable Housing

Cllr Austin reported that confirmation had been received from SODC that 20% (6 dwellings) of the affordable housing allocation on the Taylor Wimpey and Angus House sites had gone to people with a local connection to Thame. Posters promoting Shared Ownership and encouraging people to register with SODC had been displayed around the town.

Discussion took place on ways in which the predicted £850k of s106 contributions towards affordable housing in Thame could be spent. It was noted that there was a widening gap between social housing and shared ownership. Two bedroom properties, a natural size dwelling for couples starting out in life, were being built for social housing leaving the larger more profitable dwellings for sale in the private sector. There was a need for the Town Council to consider how to lend support to bridge the gap.

One possibility could be the formation of a Community Land Trust which could provide starter homes. It would be set up and run for the benefit of the community. The homes would be genuinely affordable, being discounted from the market though any onward sales value would be restricted to wage inflation.

Via a trust, s106 funding could be used to purchase land and / or form partnerships with developers or housing associations. Another alternative might be to provide land with planning permission for people to self-build, perhaps five to six dwellings. Park homes also provided a relatively low cost option for starter homes.

If the Town Council wanted to provide more affordable homes for local people it needed to think creatively. One clear message had come from the public meeting held at St Mary's Church last August that residents were concerned that their children could not afford to live in the town.

It was agreed that Cllr Austin would investigate the possibility of a Community Land Trust, together with other options and report back to Council at a future meeting.

9 Employment Land Provision in Thame

Cllr Dyer reported that the provision of employment land in Thame had been discussed at the last meeting of the Thame Business Forum and it was on the agenda for further discussion at the meeting on 7 February 2017.

The Howland Road Industrial site had been sold to a local developer at a cost which reflected the value of the land for residential development rather than commercial. The Town Council had written to the new owners expressing a hope that the landlords would be responsible custodians of the business park and drew their attention to the Neighbourhood Plan and its policies on the retention of employment land. The Town Council had received a reply from the owners and a meeting would be arranged to discuss future plans for the site.

A large industrial unit on Dormer Road had recently been occupied by a furniture manufacturer who had relocated to Thame from Bicester. Large units such as this were a rarity in the town, there were also deficiencies in office accommodation and small industrial units.

SODC had commissioned a Business and Enterprise study. A request had been made for the raw data for Thame to be made available but as yet nothing had been received. It was expected that the findings would be published once the study had been presented to Cabinet. The provision of future employment land was as important as that of residential to ensure that Thame did not become a dormitory commuter town.

Members were agreed that it was important the Town Council took a stand against the continuous erosion of existing employment / retail land as a result of successful residential planning applications, and permitted development rights.

10 Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring and Delivery Report

Members noted that the Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring and Delivery Report had been published on 9 January 2017 and commented on the production of an excellent document.

The meeting concluded at 9.05pm

Signed
Chairman, 14 March 2017