

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee held on 22 May 2018 at 7pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall

Present: Cllrs B Austin (Chairman), D Bretherton (Deputy Chairman), D Dodds, M Dyer, H Fickling, C Jones, A Midwinter (Town Mayor) and M Stiles

Officers

G Hunt, Town Clerk

G Markland, Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer

A Oughton, Committee Services Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Cowell (Business), Emery (Personal) and P Lambert (Business).

2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Public Participation & Public Questions

There were no applications to address the Committee.

There were no public questions put to the Committee.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 March 2018 and 8 May 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 Working Groups

To receive a verbal update from the chairmen of:

- a) NPCC Co-Ordination Working Group – nothing further to report.
- b) The Infrastructure Delivery Plan Working Group (IDPWG)

Cllr Bretherton reported that discussions had taken place and things were moving forward. The Town Clerk reported the IDPWG had met on 4 April 2018 and gone through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan / Capital Projects List, the latest s106 report, the CIL spending process and agreed items to go back to the SODC s106 Officer. Unfortunately the s106 Officer has since resigned. This was the sixth s106 Officer the Town Clerk had dealt with in the last three years. A temporary replacement Officer has since asked numerous questions related to s106 funds for the redevelopment of the Cricket Clubhouse, with most of the answers having already been given to the previous s106 officer. This was both time consuming and frustrating.

Separately, following on from the presentation at the last meeting, there had been various discussions between the swimming club and SODC on increased pool time and discussions with the Hockey Club who need more access to additional pitches due to the increase in members. The Town Clerk had met with Chinnor Rugby Club who are looking to use s106 funding allocated for refurbishment of the changing rooms to provide lighting for pitches to extend the time they can be used. A more detailed proposal is expected in due course.

It was agreed that the Town Clerk write to the Chief Executive at South Oxfordshire District Council to explain the many frustrations encountered by the Town Council. The officers

themselves are fine; it is the rate of turnover / inadequate handover time that has caused difficulty.

c) The Green Living Plan Working Group

The Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer (NPCO) reported things were moving ahead quickly with the draft Green Living Plan, which is now even more focused and purposeful. The NPCO will circulate a copy to Councillors to undertake a fact checking exercise before the document is taken to Full Council on 19 June 2018. At the meeting Council will be asked to agree the draft Green Living Plan is fit to go forward to Public Consultation in the joint names of Thame Town Council & the RSA. A review of the content will follow the public consultation.

d) The Town Centre Working Group

The Market Town Co-ordinator's report was noted. Cllr Fickling reported the results of the customer survey were relevant not just to those looking at the Town Centre but across the whole of the town. It also highlighted that consideration needed to be given as to how to improve publicity of what the town had to offer as many people did not know.

At the recent Historic High Street seminar Cllr Fickling had attended it was clear what a valuable piece of work the customer survey had been. Cllr Fickling encouraged everyone to read the document (which would be re-circulated) using the facts within it to inform further action.

e) Transport Plan Working Group

The Town Clerk reported that the Town Council continued to receive a wide variety of suggestions for transport related improvements. The Town Clerk and the Community Services Manager had attended the Lea Park Residents Association AGM at which discussions on possible new roundabouts on the bypass, a 20mph speed limit on Lea Park, Einig Lorries and improvements to cycleways and footpaths had taken place. There is an ever growing list that in normal circumstances the Highways Authority would consider and progress as appropriate. There is a limit to what the Town Council can do in the meantime.

f) Community Facilities Working Group

The Town Clerk reported he was still waiting for SODC to agree a date to meet to discuss next steps with regard to the Cattle Market site. He had sent an initial request to meet in December, again in February and had received an 'out of office' reply to his latest email sent two weeks ago.

The volunteer had not had time to analyse the data used by LEAP. The analysis was needed to ensure that the next steps are based on sound evidence. The Town Clerk called for alternative volunteers to undertake the work. Cllr Austin volunteered.

Cllr Stiles reported that members of CMAG, Kelvin Sampson and Paddy Harris had visited other community facilities in Chesham and Radlett and gathered a lot of information.

The NPCO reported that a response to the District's Draft Sports and Leisure Strategy had been submitted. The response touched upon the methodology but mainly was updating information in the strategy about Thame. The NPCO had received an email from SODC requesting to meet with the Town Council to discuss the requirements for Thame.

g) Burial Space Working Group

The Town Clerk reported he had received an email from an Officer at SODC who had asked whether the Town Council wished to continue with the provision of additional burial space as

he had heard it was no longer needed. The Town Clerk explained there was a definite need and provided all the detail. It is expected that SODC will not be minded to take on any responsibility for new burial space and that they may want to pass the responsibility to the Town Council. This could be a significant cost. The Town Clerk further reported that he had just received a response from the Officer he was dealing with on the topic to say he had now moved onto another role.

6 Thame Neighbourhood Plan Revision

Members noted that background work continues on establishing the best route forward re Neighbourhood Plan revision, all in a period of continued uncertainty. Initiatives include the workshop at the Annual Town Meeting, information sharing with John Howell MP, and sessions with others in a similar boat (Henley & Harpsden / Woodcote / Sonning Common / Buckingham) along with meetings with various Land Agents / Owners / Developers.

At the meeting with Henley & Harpsden, Woodcote and Sonning Common all present shared the Town Council's frustrations with the progress of the District's Local Plan and District Officers who had given conflicting information related to neighbourhood plans. There was relief the District Council could now demonstrate a 5.4 year land supply and the pressure this had taken off rushing into a review of neighbourhood plans. The group agreed to keep in touch and share information. Having met with Buckingham the next step would be to meet with representatives from Haddenham and parishes whose boundaries abut Thame.

The NPCO reported that the contributions to the workshop discussions at the Annual Town Meeting and afterwards were being collated and would be discussed the meeting of the Local Plan Consultation Team on 12 June 2018. The LPCT will also consider further communications needed, beyond those already made to attendees of the Annual Town Meeting who could not stay for the workshop.

7 South Oxfordshire District Local Plan

Cllr Dodds reported that at the District Council meeting to consider the submission of the Local Plan a large number of District Councillors thought the proposal had not been sufficiently thought through. Cabinet and Council therefore agreed, subject to agreement with the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to delay submission of the Local Plan to allow time to re-evaluate all the proposed sites.

Cllr Dodds went on to report that following a subsequent resolution a fourth option had been added to the review process, to re-evaluate 5 to 6 key sites and introduce a number of new sites not previously considered. If Government were not minded to agree a delay, SODC would revert to the fallback position of Option 3, to retain the Chalgrove site and introduce a reserve site. Cllr Dodds hoped that as the review of the Local Plan moved forward the new methodology for calculating housing need would be adopted.

8 National Planning Policy Framework

Members noted the response provided by the NPCO to the recent consultation on the draft revised National Planning Policy Framework and thanked the NPCO for his hard work in putting together the response.

9 Oxford – Cambridge Expressway

Cllr Bretherton and the NPCO had attended the meeting at Beckley Village Hall on 3 May 2018 and the NPCO had subsequently circulated his report to Councillors. Cllr Bretherton stated that Iain Stewart, MP had been appointed by Government as the Champion for the Oxfordshire-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Expressway and tasked with meeting key stakeholders, businesses, parishes and towns to gather opinion in order for the Government to form a response to the proposal.

The NPCO reported that of the 30-40 parish representatives at the meeting many had never been invited to respond to a consultation that had taken place a couple of years ago on the idea of a corridor. It would seem the initial consultation was sent to District Councils to pass onto their parishes and interested parties. However, not all District Councils had passed on the information.

Iain Stewart and John Howell favoured the northern corridor route, as opting for the southern route would lead to the road becoming another commuter route into London.

The Town Council's position remained one of "Wait and See" and to discuss further when the route of the preferred corridor was announced in the summer.

10 Affordable Housing / Community Land Trust

Cllr Austin reported that he, together with Cllrs Bretherton, Midwinter, the NPCO and the Committee Services Officer had met with Charlie Fisher from the Oxfordshire Community Land Trust on 30 April 2018 to undertake the CLT Stage 1 Scoping exercise.

Cllr Austin confirmed that following the meeting Charlie Fisher had sent a report to the National CLT Network recommending the Thame CLT was ready to move to Stage 2 of its formation. A response from the National CLT Network was expected shortly. Stage 2 will entitle the Thame CLT to make use of adviser's time in areas of visioning, decision making and legal advice in the form of workshops for the whole Steering Group which will take the CLT to the point of legal formation.

Following the departure of Gerry Brough, a letter had been sent in April to the new Head of Housing & Environment at SODC, Liz Hayden, requesting funds are released for a Housing Needs Analysis for Thame. A holding response had only just been received advising the request would be discussed and reviewed; new people in the department were finding their feet and there was a request to be patient.

The participants at the Henley meeting (item 6 above) all agreed the District's Housing Needs Analysis was seven years old and out of date and had also requested a new Housing Needs Analysis but had not received a response from SODC.

Cllr Austin further reported that at the Planning & Environment Committee meeting held earlier this evening two separate planning applications for garden developments had been discussed, both to enable relations to live in Thame where they had grown up but who otherwise could not afford to do so.

The rate of change in Officers at SODC and bureaucratic obstacles was very frustrating. Cllr Dodds stated there was a new CEO at SODC and the Council was going through an incredible period of change and restructuring.

11 Other items to Note

The Town Clerk reported there was a lot going on and a number of important items to note. He urged Members to read all the information shared and was happy to answer any questions.

The meeting concluded at 8.01pm

Signed
Chairman, 3 July 2018