

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee held on 4 February 2020 at 7:20pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall

Present: Cllrs B Austin, M Dyer (Deputy Chairman), L Emery, H Fickling, S Francis and C Jones (Chairman)

Officers

G Markland, Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer

L Fuller, Committee Services Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Cowell (Personal), Bretherton (Personal), Deacock (Personal), Midwinter (Council Business) and Tipping (Unwell).

2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Public Participation & Public Questions

There was no public participation.

There were no public questions put to the Committee.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

5 Working Groups

To **receive** a verbal update from the chairmen of:

a) NPCC Co-Ordination Working Group

There was nothing to report as the Working Group had not met since the last NPCC.

b) The Infrastructure Delivery Plan Working Group

The Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer (NPCO) reported that the use of S106 funding for the expansion of CCTV was being investigated. The Town Council had received back its forward-funding for the cricket club.

A meeting with S106 Officers and the Town Council had discussed sports and playing field funds (allocated and spent), progress on the public art wayfinding strategy and the possibility of funds being released for the Southern Road Community Facility.

c) The Green Living Plan Working Group

Cllr Fickling reported that she and the NPCO had met with members of the Green Living Plan and Thame Green Living groups to discuss progress on section three of the plan. The group remain on track to present this to Thame Town Council on 12 May 2020.

The NPCO added that the group were considering seed funding for a project officer to assist in the delivery of projects, which would become self-funding in the future.

d) The Town Centre Working Group

Cllr Emery reported that the TCWG were continuing work with analysis of the customer survey. The business survey had recently launched with input from Cllr Dyer regarding employment space and recycling. The Children's Cinema trial had been a success and will now run independently of the TCWG. The Taste of Thame website has launched with producers and stallholders engaging with the site.

It was noted that the Market Town Co-Ordinator's report would be circulated to Members shortly after the meeting.

e) Transport Plan Working Group

The NPCO reported that regarding the parking issues on the Bellway estate by users of the gym on Wenman Road, Bellway have confirmed they are now looking to have the roads adopted by Oxfordshire County Council as soon as possible. This would be frustrating for residents who would be restricted in what actions they can take as the roads would no longer be private. The NPCO has written to Bellway requesting a statement supporting local residents or a pause in the adoption of the roads to enable a forward-planned scheme to be drawn up with the County Council.

f) Community Facilities Working Group

The NPCO reported that the Town Clerk had met with Cattle Market Action Group in order to discuss their continued hopes and aspirations for the Cattle Market site. There is understanding that any community facility will have to be heavily used, or even pay for itself, to be viable. The Town Clerk has met with the Headteacher and Governor at Lord Williams's School to discuss their need to grow in anticipation of approaching "bulge" years at both the upper and lower schools. Community benefits were also discussed including continued use and improved facilities for community and sports groups.

g) Burial Space Working Group

There was nothing to report as the Working Group had not met since the last NPCC.

6 South Oxfordshire District Local Plan

The NPCO reported that all work on the Local Plan remains suspended whilst the Secretary of State (SoS) considers the options for the future of the plan. The SoS is considering whether he has powers to give direction under Section 21, 27 or 27a. The NPCO explained that under Section 21 the SoS would consider the plan unsatisfactory but allow it to continue through examination to then become adopted by and responsibility of the Government. There are limited powers under Section 27 as the plan has already been prepared and submitted for examination. Similarly, under Section 27a – where the County Council can be directed by the SoS to take over the plan – there are no powers to allow the County to intervene when the plan is at examination. Sue Cooper, Leader of SODC, and the SoS have requested a meeting with each other.

7 Thame Neighbourhood Plan Revision (TNP2)

The NPCO reported that progress had been minimal due to engagements in other projects and heavy workloads recently. The Town Clerk and the NPCO agreed that the NPCO would take some time out of the office to work on the TNP2 Consultancy report.

8 Oxfordshire Growth Board / Oxfordshire Plan 2050

The NPCO reported that the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 will shortly be holding a second round of consultation. There will be discussion papers on key matters raised during Part 1 of the consultation and they are inviting papers to be written to them. The Oxfordshire Neighbourhood Plan Alliance (ONPA) and Ox2050 are working together on cataloguing current policy. Ox2050 are now looking to offer a forward-thinking plan to take effect from 2030, which would be a plan for a future with greater public transport investment, electric / hydrogen infrastructure and sustainable communities.

A public meeting of the Oxfordshire Growth Board (OGB) was held on 28 January 2020 to explore the findings of the Growth Board review, which had 247 public responses and various workshops. The Director of the OGB also gave a report at that meeting. The OGB recognised the need to better communicate with partners, councillors and the public about what it is and the decisions it takes. Various other improvements were suggested such as creating a clear public statement of the purpose of the OGB, details for improving the effectiveness of the Scrutiny, introducing an Environment Working Group and open public engagement.

9 Affordable Housing / Community Land Trust (CLT)

Cllr Austin reported that the pre-planning document and associated reports and statements had been submitted to SODC yesterday for the construction of 30 affordable homes (20 two bedroom, and 10 three bedroom). The CLT group were hoping to hear shortly and the outcome of that would be important in directing the next steps.

The group will be arranging a meeting to fully brief Thame Town Council and the immediate neighbours would be consulted before further public comment.

Discussions with SODC's Affordable Housing Team had been very positive. It was noted that there may be some minor adjustments to the housing types but this would not affect the financial viability of the scheme. Solicitors have been appointed and are drawing together the options agreement following the submission of the Heads of Terms.

Following the development appraisal, it was identified that the scheme should have two phases: around half would be discounted market sale units and the other half would be affordable rented properties, which would be constructed in partnership with a registered provider. Discussions have been held with SOHA, Aster and Sovereign and the CLT group awaited written submissions from them.

Cllr Austin reported that the financing was going well. In terms of the homes by a registered provider, these would be the function of a leaseholder agreement with the registered provider to supply those houses. The other homes will be funded through ring-fenced S106 funding and a potential Town Council loan. Cllr Austin reported that his next step was to explore options to address the remainder of the funding.

A project manager, with experience in CLTs, had been appointed and will now begin work on the tender process for the architects. The results of the housing needs survey had been received and would be shared with Thame Town Council.

The Thame CLT group had given a presentation at the Oxfordshire CLT Celebration Event on 16 January 2020.

The group had received notification that the application for its second milestone funding, which was 25% of the Homes England grant, had been approved. The group were in the process of negotiating of a short-term loan with Thame Town Council. Due to a technicality in funding requirements, the group had not been successful in their application for a Nationwide grant.

Cllr Austin had previously reported that the renewal of the Community Housing Fund beyond the 31 March was in doubt, which would cause difficulty both locally and for CLT groups nationally. It is likely that the group will now not receive 10% of the funding they are entitled to. The group had hoped that the Government would extend the deadline by which groups must have met certain targets; a final view from the Government is expected next week. The group are working hard to get all their funding committed and approved by the end of March. Whilst they remain optimistic and hopeful, they accept that key decisions may have to be made. Cllr Austin reported that he had met John Howell MP in Thame and raised this issue with him. Mr Howell said he would look into this.

Cllr Austin thanked everyone in the CLT group, particularly the Town Council Officers who had gone above and beyond recently.

Cllr Jones thanked Cllr Austin and the team for their continued hard work.

10 Other Items to Note

The item for information was noted.

The meeting concluded at 7:55pm.

Signed
Chairman, 17 March 2020