

Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the Steering Group for the Great Bealings, Little Bealings and Playford Parish Plan(s) held on 5 June 2007 at 7pm in the Admiral's Head

Steering Group members present:

Sarah Wilson (Chairman), Peter Carr, Chris Chestnutt, John Day, Ferial Evans, Tracy Hanson, Phil Holmes, Colin Hopkins, Tom Norfolk, Paul Norris, Robin Sadler, Anne Seward

Also present:

Sarah Cartwright (Clerk of Gt Bealings and Playford Parish Councils)
Carol Ramsden (Clerk of Little Bealings Parish Council)

**RESPONSIBILITY
FOR ACTIONS**

- 1 **APOLOGIES:** Jonathan Keer, Joan Metcalfe and Bob Tate
- 2 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 MAY:** Approved as drafted
- 3 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:**

Hopes and Fears/Brainstorming:
The Chairman sought clarification of the purpose of the plan and the expectations of Steering Group members. Points made were:

 - 1) parish planning is a government led initiative projected as an 'add on' rather than a diminution of the powers or role of parish councils
 - 2) it can be a means of raising funds and/or a defence of the local agenda against government intrusion, eg on development, traffic and affordable housing. There is doubt that such housing will be limited to meeting local needs, despite assurances.
 - 3) it is a means of expressing parish views on such matters as development and affordable housing - a cheap way for the government to consult.
 - 4) how information is gathered for the plan and for what purpose is important; the role and input of outside stakeholders (eg landowners, developers, businesses) needs to be considered carefully.
 - 5) the final plan(s) should be short and sharp in content
 - 6) it may raise unreasonable expectations; the Steering Group is there to manage the plan process, not to implement plan(s)
 - 7) the Steering Group must not be naïve to other agendas running and has a responsibility to ensure that the plan(s) are prepared fairly, reasonably and thoroughly
 - 8) the Steering Group can have a great deal of influence over the final content of the plan, dependent upon how consultation is carried out. Being entirely neutral will be very difficult; including a question on an issue identifies it as a relevant topic for consideration
 - 9) the decision to prepare the plan(s) has been a resident decision and the final plan(s) will reflect what residents want. It is a mechanism and can deliver beyond what the Parish Councils can achieve
 - 10) how many plans are produced will depend upon the wishes of the parishes. Establishing the wish list(s) will not be easy: not all three

parishes have the same needs, eg on planning and highways issues, which may mean different questions need to be asked in each village

- 11) even within a village there are different issues in respect of development in different areas. The way in which the plan(s) will be used by SCDC planners needs consideration and care needs to be taken not to confuse planning (policy) with development (site specific proposals)
- 12) what is good in the parishes should be identified and defended by the plan(s). The process should foster involvement and aim to improve the local quality of life by identifying improvements
- 13) consultation must be democratic and inclusive, eg the house bound and those not used to answering questionnaires must be included
- 14) the plan(s) can lead on specific issues not within SCC/SCDC remits - eg local communities are best placed to identify walking routes to school
- 15) the parish plan concept is grass roots democracy; local communities saying what their communities want. Essential if the Parish Councils are to represent local views.
- 16) SCDC must take notice of what is in the plan(s). It is therefore a tool in the armoury against, eg, development resulting from the expansion of Ipswich - Lt Bealings was especially vulnerable to this
- 17) the process helps the Parish Councils to understand the ambience of the parishes and lessens any 'faceless' image
- 18) while there was some initial cynicism about the benefits of parish planning, the Melton plan had 20 actions, only one of which is not being progressed and seven or eight have been completed. There are therefore positives in producing the plan(s): gives the parishes power. Even small changes can improve the quality of life

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE/AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

It was AGREED that:

- 1) CH will circulate the draft Terms of Reference prepared for Lt CH/Secretary Bealings via the Secretary
- 2) the parish co-ordinators will lead on preparing a final version which CH/JK/TH will be approved at the next meeting
- 3) 'Why we are here' will be added: to improve the quality of life for the parishes
- 4) declarations of interest by Steering Group members will be included and will be at Agenda item for all future Steering Group meetings
- 5) to address any requests to attend meetings and/or make representations direct to the Steering Group the Terms of Reference will include wording to the effect that:

"In view of the need to maintain a fair and transparent consultation with all stakeholders, individuals or groups will not be able to attend Steering Group meetings or address the Steering Group. To allow this could be seen to be giving an unfair advantage to some parties and interests and would therefore impact on the integrity and validity of the consultation process. All stakeholders will have the opportunity to state their

concerns fully within the formal consultation process. It may be that this will include an Open Forum session when all stakeholders will be invited to raise concerns and issues they consider relevant. The Steering Group's first concern must be to apply for funding, but consultation will follow as soon as is practical thereafter."

5 STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The Group carried out an exercise to identify stakeholders using Suffolk ACRE's model. A stakeholder is anyone affected by or who can affect the plan(s). The exercise also showed how it is possible to non-intrusively capture a demographic picture of the parishes with little effort.

It was AGREED that:

- 1) identifying the stakeholders may result in there being one joint list and three parish specific lists.
- 2) PH will collate data on stakeholders sent to him by email into one common list and three parish specific lists. ALL MEMBERS/PH
- 3) PH will circulate the lists by email to all members PH

6 CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

It was AGREED that:

- 1) identifying the stakeholders will enable a contact strategy to be developed. The Steering Group must aim to consult everyone and to demonstrate that it has given every stakeholder the opportunity to contribute.
- 2) how to engage with stakeholders requires further consideration. Residents are pre-dominant consultees, but those based outside the parish, eg commercial and public service providers, need to be included too
- 3) the means of approach will influence the results
- 4) as there is a need to first establish both who the stakeholders are and what information is to be collected, further consideration of consultation methodology would be deferred to the next meeting

7 BUDGET PREPARATION

Insurance

It was noted that existing Parish Council insurance policies, giving cover for such items as personal injury, legal liability and employee liability, did not provide any cover for Steering Group members or Steering Group actions. A separate policy via Suffolk ACRE cost £120.

It was AGREED that:

- 1) an appropriate policy will be needed to provide cover for all members, employees and volunteers in the future
- 2) it is not possible to take out such a policy until funding is agreed
- 3) All Steering Group members will take responsibility for their own liability in the meantime

It was also AGREED that:

- in view of the need to first identify stakeholders and consultation

methodology, further consideration of budget preparation would be deferred to the next meeting.

8 TIMETABLE

It was AGREED that:

- in view of the need to first deal with items 5, 6 and 7 above first, it was not possible to produce a timetable at present.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Distribution of Minutes

It was AGREED that:

- in view of the decision that meetings of the Steering Group will be closed, in addition to the minutes being put on Parish Council websites, approved minutes will be distributed by the parish co-ordinators (eg put on local noticeboards) TH/JK/CH

Suffolk ACRE Contact/Appointment of Secretary

AS reported that Suffolk ACRE requires one named contact for the application who will be available during the day. It was noted that:

- 1) as yet the Group had not appointed a paid Secretary (who could fulfil this role).
- 2) the Secretary post had been advertised via the volunteers, Benefice Newsletter and notice boards. There had been one enquiry to date.
- 3) a paid Secretary has not previously been included in a parish plan budget approved for funding by Suffolk ACRE. (Such Steering Group members' personal expenses as babysitters are not usually approved either, although if financial hardship otherwise precludes participation, this could be considered). The Secretarial task is usually undertaken by a Steering Group member. It is therefore up to the Steering Group to make a business case for the appointment; it may be that the extra administrative burden of producing plan(s) for three parishes simultaneously would be justification for this. However, Suffolk ACRE could ask for the item to be removed before approving funding.
- 4) The work being carried out by the Clerks of the Parish Councils was impinging on the time they were employed to undertake Council work. This was especially a problem for Gt Bealings and Playford, whose Clerk was unable to contribute further time to the Steering Group.

It was therefore AGREED that:

The appointment of a paid Secretary will be an Agenda item for the next meeting.

10 NEXT MEETING:

7pm on Tuesday 19 June in the Admirals' Head. The Chairman will be Robin Sadler. RS