



Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan

Notes from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting: 26th September 2017 held at 7.45 pm

Attendees: Cllr Ms L Ellaway; C Chew; Cllr J Carroll; Cllr K Wattingham; Carol Butler; Christine Clavey; Martin Small; Cllr M Kennedy; Alan Winter; David Gibbons.

Also present: Cllr Mrs T McMahon; Georgina Chapman; Debbie Marsh.

Apologies were given on behalf of Cllr D Abbott who was unable to attend and Cllr Susan Goodchild (CBC).

Election of Chair; Vice-Chair; Secretary; Treasurer: Cllr Wattingham proposed Cllr Carroll as Chair, seconded by David Gibbons. Cllr Carroll took the Chair. Cllr Carroll explained to the group that whilst he was happy to be Chair for this particular meeting he felt that a non-Councillor would be a better choice as Chair moving forward. In order for this to happen the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Committee Functions would need to be amended and be submitted to Planning then Town Council for ratification. Cllr Carroll asked for nominations for the role of Vice-Chair. Cllr Wattingham proposed David Gibbons, seconded by Cllr Kennedy. David Gibbons was duly appointed as Vice-Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The Chair then asked for nominations for the positions of Secretary and Treasurer. Cllr Carroll proposed himself as Secretary should he be able to step down as Chair. This proposal was seconded by Christine Clavey. There were no nominations for the position of Treasurer.

Committee Functions: The Steering Group considered the Committee Functions and recommended that some minor amendments be made and submitted to the Planning Committee, in light of Cllr Carroll's suggestion and vacancies. The following amendments (shown in bold) were agreed, these amendments would be submitted to the Town Council's Planning Committee on the 2nd October 2017 and then to Town Council on the 9th October 2017, for ratification.

*4.1 The HRNPSG will be formed from current Town Councillors, CBC Councillors for the town and local members of the community. The Group will be comprised of **up to 12 members**, the composition of which to be 5 Town Councillors (appointed by the full Town Council), 1 CBC Councillor and 6 representatives from the local community.*

5.1 The HRNPSG will elect a Chairman ~~(to be a Town Councillor)~~, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer from its membership to remain in these positions until the project is complete.

*6.1 HRNPSG may establish working groups for dealing with specific issues, made up of **Members of the Steering Group and** volunteers from the community, to aid them in any NP related work.*

Code of Conduct: Members were provided with a copy of the Town Council's Code of Conduct which the Group were advised to consider, as they would also be bound by its contents when undertaking work on behalf of the group.

Declarations of Interest: Debbie Marsh advised the group that abiding by the Town Council's Code of Conduct also meant that members needed to declare interests. All members of the Steering Group must declare any personal interest that may be perceived as being relevant to the decisions or recommendations made by it. This may include membership of an organisation, ownership or interest of land or business or any other matter likely to be relevant to the work undertaken by the Steering Group. Copies of the Town Council's declaration of interest forms were provided to the group for information. It was agreed that any member of the group could make a declaration during a meeting at the point where they felt they needed to declare a particular interest. Martin Small declared that he would be attending meetings to provide planning advice but that he was not a member of the group and would not vote. He stated that he was bound by his own professional code of conduct.

Appointment of Task leaders for working groups: Martin Small explained to the group how perhaps some of the Task and Finish groups could be amalgamated but that this was just a suggestion and it was down to the group to make this decision. All agreed that having considered the topics there could be some crossovers, for example 'safety' could be considered as a sub-heading alongside all topics. The following topic headings were agreed with the following members of the group being involved with that particular topic:

- Housing – Cllr Carroll
- Town Centre – David Gibbons
- Business & Employment – Christine Clavey
- Open Space – Chris Chew
- Heritage – vacant
- Education – vacant

It was agreed that the following topics would be classed as sub-headings and would be considered alongside the main topics above:

- Facilities/Leisure
- Safety
- Transport & Accessibility
- Community Engagement suggestions
- Sustainability (new heading)

It was agreed to remove topic heading Associated Issues for now.

Communication: Various ideas were suggested as ways of engaging with local people:

- Specific Facebook page
- Notice boards
- Banners
- Town Crier
- Parish Magazine
- Posters (with blank date spaces)
- Local schools
- Youth Council
- Youth Groups
- Town Council website

Martin advised the group that a report needed to be submitted with the Plan which demonstrated how the group had engaged with those groups that were seen to be of ethnic minority or English as a second language. Cllr Carroll suggested contacting the boxing club as it was thought the organisers were Polish. David Gibbons suggested contacting the church that meets in the community centre.

Community Questionnaires: Martin suggested a common questionnaire be provided once the task and finish groups had fed back those issues that were important to them. David proposed his wife may be skilled and willing to support the production of questionnaires, Alan Winter felt this was something he could support the group with too.

Budget: Cllr Wattingham suggested that there might be some neighbourhood plan funding available and that he would send an email to Debbie, in the following week, with the information he had. The Town Council has set aside £20k for Neighbourhood Plan for the financial year 2017/2018 the balance stood at £17,899. It was agreed that the sum of £1,000 be taken from the Neighbourhood Plan budget, for publicity material, venue hire, printing costs, stationery and refreshments and that this request be submitted to Council for agreement.

Update on CBC Draft Local Plan: Martin Small had provided an update on this item at the earlier open meeting; *Martin then gave those present an update regarding Central Bedfordshire Councils Draft Local Plan. The consultation period had now ended. The Town Council had responded with their comments. Martin talked about certain parts of the local plan that the Group may wish to consider. There was mention of a higher density within the established area. Green belt issues around Houghton Regis Parish, the draft Local Plan had included Sewell as part of Dunstable's development. Martin informed the group of the possibility of a M1/A6 link road (National East West route) going through the parish, this could generate developer's interest.*

Referendum timeline: Martin advised the group that the Town Council had no fixed timeline. That perhaps the Autumn was a good time to gather information with the idea that a draft plan would be produced early 2018. Following this date it was suggested that a second round of consultations take place in order to receive comments. The Steering Group would then be able to present the plan to Town Council for adoption, via the Planning Committee, in order for the plan to then be submitted to CBC. Martin advised that there was a need to engage with CBC as soon as possible regarding the development of the plan.

Future meetings: It was proposed that the group meet on a monthly basis to start with but that this may be subject to change. Date of the next meeting to be held at the council offices on Monday 16th October 2017 at 7.30pm.

Contact: All present requested Debbie send round email addresses of members in order for the group to remain in touch.

Meeting closed at 9.15pm