

# Minutes of Shepton Mallet Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting.

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> September at 5pm

Shepton Mallet Town Council Offices, 5 Park Road, Shepton Mallet

Present: Cllr John Parham (JP) chair, Cllr Neil Shearn (NS), Mike Perry (MP), Neil Watkins (NW), Jill Weston (JW), Robyn Horton (RH), Liz Bourne (LB) Towns Alive, Anna Blackburn (AB) MDC, Lesley Parham (LP) scribe.

1. **Welcome.** JP welcomed everybody and introduced the members of the Steering Group (SG) to Liz Bourne the Learning and Development Manager from Towns Alive, and Lesley Parham who is taking notes because Gretal Marsh is away on holiday.
2. **Apologies for absence.** Apologies received from Gretal Marsh and Cllr Nigel Pooley. (Belated apologies received from Karen Mercer).
3. **Minutes of previous meeting.** The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.
4. **Matters arising from the minutes.** There were no matters arising from the previous minutes that were not already on the agenda.
5. **Introduction to Liz Bourne potential plan co-ordinator.** Liz Bourne introduced herself and her organisation. Towns Alive formed in 2005, gave advice and guidance primarily to market towns, works closely with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on Neighbourhood Planning, organisation includes specialists in all aspects of community planning, neighbourhood planning (NP), design, public consultation and Planning. LB asked what the SG wanted from her. JP gave a brief resume of the NP process to date including the rationale for starting the NP process, the role of Shepton 21 and "At a Cross Roads", the formation of the SG, public consultation, development of priorities list, some of the challenges faced, Matt Day's role, the 6 month hiatus, the re-invigoration of the SG, the Navigus report, and some of the challenges still to be faced, he also updated with the help of AB the current Local Plan situation. RH added that the NP was already mentioned on numerous occasions in the Local Plan. JP said that the initial plan was to go for a referendum on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2015 but that target was now looking unlikely and in any event MDC would resist a referendum coinciding with a general election combined with District and Parish elections. LB stated that they worked closely with Navigus and used them for planning speciality advice; she was content with the Navigus assessment.  
LB stated that Towns Alive (TA) could take the NP forward, they could coordinate the plan, write the plan, carry out further consultation as required especially "hard to reach groups" (elderly, youth, immigrant community, business). LB said that it was important to demonstrate that everyone had the chance to contribute even if they chose not to. MP noted that every house had received a leaflet and booklet relating to the NP. The group discussed the NP facebook page, the "we love Shepton Mallet" facebook page and the webpage. LB wanted to know how many

contributions the NP had received so far? JP said circa 500. JW was concerned that awareness is still not high enough. LB said it was probably better to come up with a new name other than Shepton Mallet Neighbourhood Plan and a Logo that would capture the public's attention.

JW asked about the difference between Community Plans and NP's, LB replied that Community Plans are similar but not enforceable whereas NP's are a statutory planning consideration.

NW suggested that a competition was held among school children to design a logo. LB asked about a newsletter and regular newspaper press releases. NS talked about his visit to Whitstone School. LB said it was important to have Bi-weekly press reports to ensure the public had a regular drip feed of information.

Discussion was held on makeup of SG and introduction of "Focus Groups" for particular subjects.

MP gave update on the Google groups for the SG, the SG liaison members and the wider public group with 50+ members. JP stated that we need to have all the actions coordinated and reported which was why we were trying to recruit.

Discussion was then held regarding infrastructure development and the priorities that have emerged from the public consultation, development of a plan to deliver the town's priorities over the next 15 years.

Robyn Horton left the meeting at 6pm

LB explained the NP was primarily planning related but the infrastructure development was a key appendix to the plan.

MP raised the issue of developing a design brief/statement for inclusion in the plan. LB was not convinced that a Design Brief was required (expensive option), and thought all of the issues could be included in the NP. AB confirmed that the potential developer for the Town Extension is happy to have an enquiry by design for any new build. LB said that this was a refreshing attitude and gave the NP a big opportunity to contribute. Discussion then around what the NP was able to influence (design, density, layout, open space, play provision, surface water treatment etc).

LB talked of the importance of working with developers that may come along prior to the NP passing the referendum. The emerging NP has to be given weight by the Planning Authority and even though developers are not forced to comply with emerging NP's the TC should engage with them to try to get development in line with the emerging NP.

LB also talked of the necessity of the NP meeting a viability and sustainability test, items included in the NP that are not sustainable or viable would be challenged by developers. The NP must also meet EU environmental legislation and must not conflict with Human Rights Law. Towns Alive can advise on these matters.

LB talked of other NP's that have been through the referendum, she confirmed that none have failed; the lowest satisfaction recorded so far is 73% the highest 89%.

The NP needs 50% plus one vote to be carried.

JP asked LB that now she has a good idea where we are with the NP could she estimate how much completion of the plan is likely to cost. LB replied that Towns Alive charge £350 per day and her "ballpark" figure to complete the plan would be £10k. Because TA are working on the Midsomer Norton and Radstock NP there are

potential savings in travel expenses to be had by combining visits to both on the same day.

JW talked about the "State of the Parish" report or "Current position statement" and some of the data required to bring that to completion. LB and AB stated that most information is available from MDC, JW to coordinate with AB to draw together the data required.

A round table discussion took place about some of the challenges Shepton Mallet faces, historic buildings, the prison, the telephone exchange, the amulet/academy and the town centre, town centre regeneration, changing some retail properties to residential, lack of background data for town centre users (LB said Towns Alive specialise in town centre analysis and planning).

Discussion concluded by asking LB to provide a formal quotation asap, the SG to consider this quote before the next SG meeting.

6. **Results of recent public consultation.** The results of the two recent surveys were/have been distributed to all members of the SG. The results indicate that the priorities identified have overwhelming support from the 230 respondents to the on-line survey and the face to face survey carried out on Midsomerset show day. Highest was town centre regeneration at 94.5% lowest protection of Tadley Place at 60%. LB stated that these were good results and clearly indicated that the NP was on the right track.

Discussions on the comments ensued, members agreed that there was not one item that clearly demanded to be included, most of the comments were already covered one way or another in the NP priorities, however the SG felt it important to leave the door open for other priorities to emerge as the process develops. LB is to examine the comments and give her thoughts on any common threads that are apparent.

The SG thought it important that the results of the consultation should be published at the earliest opportunity.

7. **Amendments to the priorities list.** The SG did not think it necessary to amend the priorities list at the current time, but would leave it open to review should anything new emerge.
8. **Business engagement.** JP has had meetings with Ian Harvey (IH) (Framptons) and Roger Saul (RS) (Kilver Court). IH has agreed to invite the business community to a business lunch/seminar about the NP. RS has agreed to host the event, room provided FOC, will have to pay for tea, coffee, sandwiches (quote to be provided) JP to investigate getting a sponsor for the lunch. Date agreed for October 8<sup>th</sup> 12:30 til 14:00 at Kilver Court. Gabriel Munns (Consultation officer MDC) has agreed to work with the SG to develop the consultation survey. SG to be kept updated as it progresses, final decisions at the next SG meeting.
9. **Steering Group Membership.** Two members have had to withdraw from the SG, (Mark Robertson and Brian Blinman). JP has received two applications for inclusion in the SG, Irene Handley and Laura Miller. Irene Handley well known to the SG, Laura Miller works for CAB and in a good position to help with our hard to reach groups. The SG resolved to invite both to join the SG at the next meeting.
10. **AOB.** Discussions were held regarding data security and access, SMTC has control over data, drop box and hard copy, members felt it important that we can track changes as documents develop especially when several people are working on

individual parts of the plan. MP to investigate a practical solution for sharing and updating documents via the web. SG wants to avoid losing our data by someone hitting a delete key by mistake!

11. **Date of next meeting.** The next meeting will be on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> October at 5pm in the SMTC office