

SHEPTON MALLET NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

STEERING GROUP MEETING

Thursday, 9th May, 2013

MINUTES

Present: Matt Day, Stuart Brown, Anna Blackburn, Peter Hillman, Kevin Newton, Greta Marsh

Apologies: John Parham, Jeannette Marsh

1. Minutes from the last meeting (14th March) were approved.
2. Matters Arising : As there were a few new members, Matt advised the meeting of the purpose of the Steering Group, which is to advise and steer the process towards a successful outcome.

Jeannette had stood down as Portfolio holder for SMTC for the Neighbourhood Plan, and John is the new Portfolio holder.

The last meeting had been cancelled, but some of the members had been for a Training Day with the C.P.R.E.

Two events had been planned – 18th May and 8th June (Collett Day). Matt showed the meeting his plans for the 18th May event, which include a list of the issues identified at previous consultations, a feedback form (participants can take these away and complete later if necessary) and Plans of the town centre and wider town to aid discussion. Concerns were raised and discussed relating to the importance of avoiding the impression of issues having already been identified rather than an open consultation on identifying and prioritising current issues

Peter Hillman asked a question on the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan regards the allocated site for housing in the Local Plan, as he'd had conflicting replies from Officers and Planning Committee Members. Anna explained the situation – the NPlan could suggest allocating particular sites to accommodate development which Mendip DC will be doing through the Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations Document, but to suggest an alternative site to the greenfield site through the NPlan would not be judged to be in conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan so would not be allowed.

Discussion took place on whether the process needed 'to take a step back' – to focus on engaging with the community on the issues that matter to them. Stuart explained that it would be two years wasted work, with costs to MDC incurred at inquiry and referendum, if the vast majority of the town were not behind the Plan.

Stuart suggested using the Prison as an issue to get people engaged, and that shoppers at Tesco's could be asked a few simple questions about their issues regards the town.

Kevin was concerned that people just won't engage with this kind of process, following Shepton 21's efforts and mistrust of the Town Council. He suggested coming up with a controversial idea, like installing a gondola or tram from Tesco's to the town centre and onto Kilver Court.

Peter felt that we should also be engaging with those residents that don't use the town centre, and go elsewhere for work, shopping and leisure.

Kevin suggested, and it was agreed by those present except for Matt, that we needed a "figure-head", someone who was respected locally, could outline a 'vision' and came with no agenda. This would add credibility to leadership of the process. Chris Kelly's name was mentioned. Matt would continue as Project Manager. Matt did point out that other names were suggested for the Steering Group initially but rejected by Town Councillors as they felt they brought 'baggage' from previous efforts. He agreed that more non-Town Councillors on the Steering Group would be a positive step to build trust.

He also felt that the Project Team shouldn't be the people who help him analyse the issues identified at the events. It had been suggested at an earlier meeting that Peter be asked to be involved in helping to analyse the issues but he declined as this could be seen as a conflict of interest.

Suggestions were put forward to get Whitstone School involved in the Neighbourhood Plan and also to help in obtaining feedback from residents. Matt explained he had spoken with the Schools Liaison Officer and any work with them would have to form part of the curriculum. He felt that engaging with the school was a lower priority than delivering the engagement events.

Anna then asked for an update on the feedback that Jeff Curtis was getting when speaking about the Plan at various town groups. Matt explained that Jeff was receiving some negativity and misunderstandings from some groups, but generally people were interested.

3. The next meeting will be on **Monday, 17th June at 4.00pm**, Town Council offices (note change to agreed date during meeting, due to a clash).

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