

## **Neighbourhood Plan Project Management Group**

### **Notes of Meeting**

**Wednesday June 3rd 2015**

**Present:** Tom Jones, Tom Dufty (Chair) Richard Flack, Mike Burr

**1. Advance Apologies:** Amy Tyler-Jones, Tony Gedge, James Standing, Trevor Kirby, Paul Farrands, Craig Mayhew

**2. Declarations of interest:** None

**3. Correspondence received/pending:**

**4.** Tom reported that he had just learnt of the public hearing to be held by the Independent Inspector on June 19th on Mid Sussex District Council's Burgess Hill Town Plan. He had written to the Chairman of MSDC saying that the Project Group had written commenting on the plan a year ago (to which it had received no reply) and asking to be allowed to attend and make representations on the project group's behalf at the hearing. He was awaiting a reply.

**5.** Tom reported that, following agreement at the previous meeting, he had written to Andrew Lee, SDNPA's Director Strategy & Partnership asking for a meeting on the subject of traffic & transport. He was awaiting a reply.

**6.** A SIG meeting with Father David Wallis of the Beacon Parishes had finally been arranged for June 17th. Edwina, Tom D and Mike would be attending. Tom J and Richard said they might be available.

**Action: Tom J & Richard** to check diaries and let Tom D know

**7.** As agreed at the previous PMG meeting, meetings with representatives of the Philipson Trust and the Turner Dumbrell Foundation had been set up for the Community Infrastructure focus group members to explore potential sources of future funds.

**8. Locality Grant Funding**

Tom reported that Locality had confirmed a grant of £4,100 for the six month period from June 1st. Actual receipt of the grant was dependent on completion of a form setting out terms and conditions and 'diligence' required. He awaited the form.

**Action: Tom** to complete the form when received.

**9. St James Montefiore Cricket Club & Rugby Club Application**

The recent visit to the Cricket pavilion had demonstrated how impractical was the proposal for it to be used seasonally as a rugby club house. The Chairman of the rugby club had now confirmed that if the rugby pitches were approved the club would subsequently submit an application for a separate club house. 'What might come next' had been one of the primary concerns expressed by the project group and it had proved right to be concerned.

Tom recounted a phone conversation he had had with Rob Mills, Chairman of Westmeston Parish Council. Rob had expressed concern, on a point of principle, that the Project Group's written objection to the application might be taken by other parties to infer that it was acting on behalf of Westmeston Parish Council and that the latter was therefore supportive of the objection. The only body officially capable of speaking for Westmeston is the Parish Council not the NP Project Group. Rob said this applied to all planning applications not just the rugby club's. Tom had told him that the Project Group's policy was to comment/object to an application only if it compromised future delivery of a potential neighbourhood plan policy or when an application ran contrary to the overwhelming views and needs expressed by residents in their response to the 2014 Household Survey – often the two were synonymous. The Rugby club application ran counter to the clearly expressed desire of residents to have the rural identity of the plan area conserved and the so-called strategic green field gaps maintained. This application was to the west of Ditchling village centre but it would apply equally to any threat to the rural integrity of Westmeston. The PMG would not comment on 'ordinary' planning applications. He noted that the PMG comprised residents from all three parishes. In subsequent discussion it was agreed that the Chairmen of the three parishes would be specifically consulted in future before the PMG made any comment/objection to an application.

**Action: Tom** to ensure consultation with PC Chairmen

#### 10. Focus Groups - progress update (incl. Settlement Boundary review & Mid Sussex IDP Project)

Richard reported that his Conservation focus group wanted to conduct a survey of residents' opinions on what specific things must be conserved (e.g. green spaces; landscape views; sites of special ecological interest etc). These 'assets' underpin the special nature of the area and by inviting residents to identify what they consider important would add to the authenticity and legitimacy of the exercise and increase the likelihood of residents' buy-in to whatever the group ultimately proposes. It would also enable it to gauge the relative importance that residents give to these 'assets'. The Household Survey questions did not dig down sufficiently into detail. The group wasn't sure how it might be done but it could take the form for example of a weekend open workshop or a walk(s) around the plan area identifying sites. The group would require professional C&E help from Edwina if available.

In subsequent discussion the principle of consulting and engaging with residents when there are genuine options and ideas to put before them is considered by the PMG a very important part of the process. The only question was when in the process. It had already been agreed that if/when there are genuine policy options that meet both the strategic requirement of fitting with the local plans and with residents needs and views (as expressed in the Household Survey) that these should be submitted to a preliminary residents' consultation.

Concern was expressed that an upfront open ended consultation process without any parameters or narrowing down to what questions needed to be asked would leave the focus group with a subsequent mammoth appraisal and assessment exercise. It would add weeks to the time-scale for delivery of the group's work. Alternatively there is, potentially, a lot of 'conservation' specialist/technical knowledge available from within the community or from people closely

associated with it. Better to call on these people initially to make their assessments of what needs to be conserved and why and then present their findings to a public consultation process to 'fill in any gaps' or question their priorities. This could then be combined in a single consultation exercise involving other focus groups with similar needs for public input. It was agreed that this was the way to go.

**Action: Tom** to contact Delia Forester, Reg Lanaway, Chris Todd, Phil Cribb

**All** to suggest other possible specialists

Mike reported that he had a meeting planned to discuss the T & T project input to the Mid Sussex District IDP

**11.** In the light of the continuous talk of preserving strategic gaps, Richard was given permission to contact Amy to ask just how this principle can be upheld without a specific SDNPA policy to support such preservation.

**Action: Richard** to contact Amy