

Minutes of Meeting Held at Arden Academy on 02.12.2015

Present: Jane Aykroyd (JA, Chair), Tony Aykroyd, Chris Baker, Don Blake, James Dowding, Geoffrey Evans, Ian Fisher, Dave Fraley, Fiona Gardiner, David Gentle, Mike Ginison, Celia Ginison, Gill Griggs, Lis Hedley, Bryan Hunt, Louisa Jakeman, Graham Jones, Ian Kay, Bill Lally, Martin Lambert, Steve Lyle, Tony McLelland, Martin Murphy, David Sykes, Dave Pinwell, Roger Thorpe, Martin Trentham.

Apologies: Due to the significant increase in membership, members were requested not to send apologies this month - we are investigating tools to facilitate this process going forward.

Special Guest Speaker: Mike Blomer, Hampton-In-Arden ('Hampton') Parish Council

1. Agenda Item 1 - Chair's Update

A very warm welcome to all new members who have joined following our recent publicity campaign - especially those attending their first Forum meeting today.

We are also very pleased and fortunate to have Mike Blomer as our Guest Speaker to share Hampton's experience of developing a Neighbourhood Plan.

November was another month of great progress and some notable achievements:

- The highlight was, of course, the success of our Forum awareness campaign and launch event. The very good news is that all the hard work and commitment put in by many members over an extended period has resulted in:
 - membership more than doubling, to nearly 200 on our database (with c. 50 forms completed at the Launch event and c. 43 on line over the campaign period). Both paper and on-line applications are still coming in;
 - monthly web site hits in November more than doubling to 2,343 (from 986 in Nov), giving a total of 5,558 to date.

We were privileged to have Cllr Diana Holl-Allen to open the Launch event, with Cllr Jeff Potts also in attendance (Cllr Alan Rebeiro regrettably was unable to join us due to illness). Both Councillors complimented us on the quality, professionalism and organisation of the Launch, and what we have achieved to date.

So we can safely say that our first campaign went well! Now all we have to do is keep up the momentum...

- There has been progress, too, on the social media front. We have created a Business Facebook page - kdbhforum - that is in the process of being validated by the powers that be at Facebook as we speak. Once validated, we will link this through to our website (*now done*). From a quick check of attendees, no-one in the room uses Facebook regularly.

A special plea: therefore, to members reading these minutes who are comfortable using Facebook. Could you please contact JA, either via our facebook page or via info@kdbh-np.org, if you would be willing to help us test out this new facility and start 'spreading the word' to a different audience through this medium.

- In terms of developing wider awareness of our KDBH Forum, JA recently participated as speaker (along with Mike Blomer) at a Solihull Partnership Forum meeting specially dedicated to Neighbourhood Planning. The meeting included strong representation from local Parish Councils, along with members of local community groups. It was both interesting and eye-opening to understand the similarities, as well as the significant differences, between us as a Forum and Parish Councils. For example:
 - the amount of effort we, as a new Forum, have needed to put in up front to get ourselves formally constituted and through the necessarily robust process to be recognised as a statutory body (which Parish Council's don't need to do);
 - Parish Councils typically have some form of existing plan to build upon. We will be starting from scratch;
 - our Area, with a population of c. 22,000 adults, is large compared with many/most Parish Councils (eg. Hampton has 803 dwellings and a population of c. 1800).
- SMBC has now confirmed that we will be receiving £3,000 from Ward development funds, with thanks to Cllr Jeff Potts for his support in expediting this. We expect this funding to cover planned activities to the end of this financial year, with Forum set up and launch costs to date totalling c. £1,750. These costs largely relate to the (re-usable) publicity and marketing material and equipment needed for our launch campaign. In early 2016, we will need to prepare a detailed budget for the 2016/17 financial year to support our grant application to central government.
- The Steering Group met on 1 December to define a more detailed plan of activities for Dec 2015 - April 2016. More of which in Agenda Item 3.

In summary, we should be justifiably proud of what we have achieved this year - something echoed by Diana Holl-Allen in her note to JA following the Launch meeting. We scarcely have time to draw breath, however, with some important developments just notified by SMBC that need our urgent attention relating to their review of the Local Plan and new housing development. This will be picked up as part of Agenda Item 4.

2. **Agenda Item 2 – Developing Hampton-In-Arden's Plan:- Learnings (Mike Blomer)**

As we move into plan development, it is important that we draw, wherever appropriate, on the learnings and experiences of others who are further down the path than us. Mike Blomer has kindly offered to share his thoughts on the approach Hampton took to developing their Neighbourhood Plan, drawing out key points of relevance to us (a full transcript of Mike's notes are attached to these minutes) :

- Hampton was SMBC's first Neighbourhood Plan: the Parish Council began discussions in late 2011.
- Since a Parish Council is already an 'accountable body', application to SMBC to develop a Neighbourhood Plan was relatively straightforward. Confirmation of the Area boundary did, however, take some time (Nov 2012 – Jun 2013) relating to Catherine-de-Barnes, a small part of which falls within the Parish.

- A significant number of major developments, both within the Area and on its boundaries, created a real sense of purpose and urgency to help focus community engagement. What creates this for us?
- Another important factor was frustration that so-called 'non-material' changes were approved at SMBC officer level *after* planning permission had been granted - resulting in a more 'industrial' final development that was felt to be out of keeping.
- As a start point, Hampton were able to build upon an existing Parish Plan (2010) and Village Design Statement (2003), both of which had been endorsed by SMBC.
- Hampton specifically chose not to develop any potential sites 'on principle'.
- Hampton chose to carry out paper-based, rather than on line, surveys. SMBC provided a high level of support in helping to define survey topics and questions. For the Household survey, names and addresses were drawn from the Electoral Register; for the business survey, SMBC provided a list of business rate payers. Surveys were posted, with pre-paid envelopes included for their return. The response rate - 40% of households and 25% of businesses - was considered good. A spreadsheet was used to analyse responses, with clear patterns emerging.
- A copy of Hampton's draft pre-submission Plan was sent to 64 organisations and individuals in August 2015; it was also available on line, and on SMBC's website. The Plan was publicised prior to issue, and then heavily advertised once issued. Only 17 responses were received. Hampton expect to submit their finalised plan to SMBC in January 2016.
- Compiling the detailed supporting documentation to accompany final Plan submission is onerous, with the Basic Conditions and Consultation Statements being sizeable pieces of work in their own right.
- At all stages, we must fully record: who we have involved, what their response has been, how we have addressed any queries or issues raised, and the rationale for decisions taken, eg. if any matters raised are rejected.
- When formulating and writing the plan, we need to keep in mind that it will ultimately be examined by a planner. We need to consider what skills are available through our membership to write the Plan. Hampton obtained estimated costs from consultants to carry out this work ranging between £20K and £30K!
- We will need to periodically report Plan progress to DCLG (central government), and ensure we keep our SMBC liaison planning officer informed.
- For us, managing scale in an Area of 22,000 adults will be a big challenge.
- Mention of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) provoked some discussion. The CIL is a charge on new buildings in England and Wales, designed to ensure certain types of new development contribute to the infrastructure needed to support that development. Although this is not yet in place for SMBC, the Council are looking into it. How this may or may not apply to a Neighbourhood Forum (as opposed to a Parish Council) is something that we need to understand/explore further.

JA thanked Mike for his insights, which will be extremely useful in helping us construct effective future activity plans.

3. **Agenda Item 3 – Stage 2: Approach, Key Milestones, Immediate Priorities Jan-Apr 2016**

Following the Steering Group meeting yesterday, Bryan Hunt is updating our detail activity plan for Dec 2015 - April 2016. This includes a number of parallel workstreams covering: data analysis; development of a household and business survey; and continued strong focus on community engagement, targeting a second major community event soon after Easter 2016.

During Jan/Feb 2016, we also need to prepare a detailed plan and budget for the 2016/17 financial year to support submission of our grant application to central government in March 2016.

Steve Lyle has researched a number of companies who could potentially help us in developing surveys. Given our much larger population, a mixture of paper and online surveys is likely to be most appropriate. We still have a lot of work to do to finalise this aspect, however.

With his background in research, David Gentle talked through some key points we need to bear in mind as we set about building an objective evidence base - see document attached to these minutes. This gave rise to discussion on how we achieve an appropriate balance between ideal or 'pure' research methods v. appropriate use of data and feedback gathered along the way to maintain a high level of community engagement – no doubt something we will come back to.

3. **Agenda Item 4 – Focus Group Highlights**

All Groups have summarised feedback from members of the community who posted notes into their 'suggestion box' at the launch event. Not all of this relates to aspects within the remit of the Forum. Nevertheless, all Groups found the opportunity for face to face discussion invaluable in developing a better understanding of community issues and concerns.

a) Housing:- Steve Lyle highlighted the Peter Brett Associates Housing Study (August 2015) and the related SMBC 'Consultation on Local Plan Review' published on 30 November 2015. This latter includes seven options that SMBC is considering for future housing development, some of which have significant implications for our Area. It also includes a 'call for sites' - ie. requesting landowners to offer up potential sites for future housing development. The SMBC Consultation requires our urgent attention if we are to inform members and seek their views as input to a formal response from the KDBH Forum by the closing date of 22 January 2016.

We will therefore dedicate our next meeting, on 13 January, to this matter and carry out additional publicity to increase awareness and encourage as many members as possible to attend. This will include adding a headline banner to the home page of our website, with links to all relevant documentation.

***Editors note:** A summary of key points arising from the Peter Brett Associates Study and the SMBC Local Plan Review is attached to these minutes (with more detailed information available on our web site).*

b) Learning and Community Facilities:- The Group has now identified individual members to lead specific topics, eg. learning, health and welfare; sport, leisure and recreation; arts culture and libraries; business employment and shopping. A Young People's Seminar, aimed at actively involving both primary and secondary school children in discussing future plans, is being scheduled for late Jan / early Feb 2016.

Future meetings will take place at 11:30am on the first Thursday of the month.

c) Transport and Infrastructure:- The next meeting is scheduled for 9 December 2016. Note that a great deal of feedback from the launch day related to issues outside the direct remit of the Forum, although will feed into longer term planning considerations.

4. Agenda Item 5 – Membership Update

We now have 187 people registered on our membership database (up from 78 last month).

5. Agenda Item 6 – Treasurer’s Update

DW sends his apologies due to ill-health. Updates covered under Agenda Item 1.

6. Agenda Item 7 – Minutes and Actions from previous meeting

Update on outstanding actions:

- **Martin Murphy/Learning & Community Facilities Group** to contact the Neighbourhood Policing Team to gain their thoughts on the Youth perspective. **CARRIED FORWARD**
- **BH** to confirm who meets the cost of the Independent Examiner. **Update:** SMBC have confirmed that they are responsible for these costs.
- **DECISION** at Forum meeting 4/11: In principal, it was agreed that funding should be made available to award prizes for a photo competition (estimated to cost <£100).
Update: after consultation with the Knowle Camera club it was decided not to pursue this - experience suggests that the response is likely to be very limited.

7. Agenda Item 8 – AOB

Proposed Devolution: West Midlands Combined Authority - Dave Pinwell briefed the Forum on latest developments, below:

Subject to ratification by the Councils involved, the Treasury has reached an agreement with the local authorities of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton for the creation of a West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

They will be joined by the District Councils of Cannock Chase, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Redditch, Tamworth and Telford and Wrekin as ‘non constituent members’.

The purpose of the new authority is not the removal and centralisation of powers from our local authorities to a new regional body. Solihull Council will retain all of its existing decision taking powers. Whilst the councils may agree to join together on some matters for reasons of mutual benefit, convenience and economies of scale, individual councils would retain opt out capabilities.

The main functions of the WMCA will be delegated from Government rather than removed from the lower level.

The agreement, which is published on the www.gov.uk website, indicates that the main focus is on economic growth and the transport infrastructure and skills development which will facilitate the attraction of new business and enterprise. It includes the following:

- Responsibility for a transport budget, for franchised bus services and for a new Key Route Network of roads.
- Control of £36.5 million a year funding for 30 years, to be invested in driving economic growth, business and innovation.
- Control of funding for adult skills and education.
- A programme of public service reform, inclusive of a programme to ‘improve the life chances of troubled individuals’ and improved approaches to addressing mental health.
- Planning powers to drive housing delivery and improvements in housing stock.

A critical factor is who will be the new Mayor (2017).

8. Agenda Item 9 – Confirm Date and Focus of Next Meeting

The next Forum meeting is on **Wednesday 13 January, at Arden Academy, starting at 7pm**. The agenda for this extraordinary meeting will be dedicated to Housing, focusing in particular on seeking member views on the SMBC’s Local Plan Review consultation.

COULD ALL MEMBERS PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ATTEND JANUARY’S MEETING SO THAT WE CAN EXPLAIN WHAT THE FUTURE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS SOLIHULL COUNCIL IS CONSIDERING MEAN FOR OUR AREA AND HEAR YOUR VIEWS.