

Minutes of Meeting held at Arden Academy on 11.05.2016

Present: Ian Fisher (Acting Chair), Tony Aykroyd, Rosemary Bousfield, Simon Bousfield, Roger Cook, Graham Cobby, Gill Griggs, Geoff Hayward, Bryan Hunt, Peter Hunt, Louisa Jakeman, Steve Lyle, William Majurey, Carol Moore, Norman Moore, Chris Kiddle Morris, Alec Richmond, David Sharpe, Ian Tait, Martin Trentham, Roger Thorpe, David Wallis, David Wright.

Apologies were received from a number of members including: Jane Aykroyd, Karen Allen, Bridget and John West, Martin Lambert, Mair Thomson, Sue Joyce.

Agenda Item 1 – Chair’s Update

Ian Fisher (acting Chairman) reported on behalf of Jane Aykroyd.

Visioning Open Events 20 and 24 April

Since we last met the highlight has, of course, been the Visioning sessions held on 20 and 24 April. We had a good turnout, with a total of over 180 attendees across the two events. It's clear from the feedback received that many people found the sessions both stimulating and thought provoking.

An especially big thank you to all those who followed up afterwards to provide their feedback and thoughts on future development of our Area, with many expressing their appreciation for the work the Forum is doing on behalf of residents. We are receiving more and more comments, and have now created a dedicated file to log them all. This will make it easier for us to track feedback, as well as to provide an 'evidence' trail when the Independent Examiner eventually comes to review our Neighbourhood Plan proposals.

Please bear with us as we are still catching up on all the e-mails received, due to the fact that as soon as the visioning events were over we needed to turn our attention to finalising the Residents' Survey. We will, however, get back to everyone as soon as we can. For the same reason, we have yet to issue the minutes of the last Forum meeting – but we will document them and add them to our website as quickly as possible once the survey is underway.

Today's agenda includes an update on the overall outcome from questions we asked about future development at the last Forum meeting, and also at the visioning events. The results probably won't come as a surprise to many of us. They are never-the-less important in starting the process of building robust and consistent 'evidence' as a foundation for our planning approach. We also have ideas on how to take the discussions and debate forward and would value your views on that.

The extensive publicity undertaken for the visioning events has once again helped raise the profile of the Forum across our villages - as borne out by some key statistics. Last month was the busiest ever on our website, with just under 3,000 'hits', and membership has grown significantly with new applications continuing to come in. In addition, the number of people 'liking' our Facebook page has risen from around 160 to nearly 300.

Residents Survey

We have now finalised plans for the residents' survey, and are just putting the finishing touches to this and the supporting publicity. The survey can be completed by anyone aged 16 or above. We've not forgotten our younger members, though. Our Leisure, Learning and Community Facilities Group has already started developing a (similar but simplified) survey for under 16s - a follow up to their youth visioning event that was so enthusiastically received back in February.

Focus on 20-45 Age Group

So all in all, lots of positive progress, although we are by no means complacent. We've yet to crack the conundrum of how to gain more views and involvement from those in the 20-45 age range. We are hoping that two local events coming up very soon will provide more opportunity to reach families directly: we are very grateful to the Knowle and Dorridge Lions for offering us a stand at the Knowle Fun Run this Sunday; and hope to have one also at the Dorridge Fun Run on 5 June.

In the autumn, we will be turning our attention to a survey of local businesses and their employees.

SMBC Liaison

Things have been very quiet recently in terms of Council liaison - partly due to the local council elections and partly because our main point of contact left the Council after Easter. As we learn more about our own community needs and priorities from the visioning and survey activities, our aim is to work as closely as possible with SMBC to feed into their developing thinking on future growth and housing development across the Borough. With the local elections now over, we are picking up with SMBC next week to progress a number of points - and most importantly the 'call of sites' information.

Focus Group Updates

This month there are no Focus Group updates, with most things having been covered by either the Visioning events or the survey activities.

And Finally

The last few months have been demanding, and a big stretch for our team of volunteers given the huge amount of activity undertaken - with some great results to show for it. We are now planning for a 'bit of a breather' once the survey concludes, although certainly hope to have some initial analysis from the survey to report to you before the summer holidays. We can then take time over the summer and early autumn to consider issues and options for our own Area, and start drafting policies. My thanks - and I am sure on behalf of those attending tonight, too - to all the team for their continued high level of support and commitment, often at personal sacrifice.

Agenda Item 2 – Residents Survey (Steve Lyle)

We have commissioned a team, led by Simon Purfield at Stratford upon Avon District Council, to independently execute the survey. They have a wealth of directly relevant expertise, having organised local surveys on behalf of a number of other neighbourhood forums and Parish Councils. They have advised us on the structure, method of formulating questions, method of delivery and what we should aim for in terms of the length of time to complete the survey.

Ultimately, the content and number of the questions is up to us. In their experience, it can take several iterations before the final version is agreed. We are currently on our second version, and will probably need one more iteration - but are confident we will have it ready for our planned launch on Monday 23rd May.

A number of forum members have kindly volunteered to dry-run the survey before we launch, giving us an opportunity to iron out any issues that those of us close to development of the survey may miss. We will contact these volunteers once we have completed the final proposed version.

We are really pleased that around 50 volunteers, including committee members, have offered to help distribute the survey. This works out at around 175 leaflets for each person to deliver. Dave Fraley is organising this by dividing up the street map of our area. He will try to ensure that each person has an area as close to their home as possible, while trying to minimise any overlaps or gaps.

With the survey being so central to Plan development, this will be our biggest publicity campaign - including erecting posters across all three villages once the Knowle Fun Run posters are down.

Questions asked by attendees:-

1. *Does the survey stress that everyone in the household can complete it?*
Yes, everyone 16 years and over.
2. *How many respondents do we need?*
The more the better, but we are advised that, for a statistically acceptable set of results, the number completed is actually quite low.
3. *How long will the survey be open?*
3 weeks
4. *What areas does it cover?*
There are varying numbers of questions on:-
 - About You (anonymous, non-identifiable information that we need to gather only to demonstrate that we have received a good cross representation of opinions by age, location etc)
 - Housing
 - Transport and Infrastructure
 - Road Traffic and Parking
 - Sustainable Transport Modes
 - Roads, Parking and Transport Choice in the Future
 - Learning, Leisure and Community Facilities
 - Historical and Environmental Buildings and Features
 - The Natural Landscape, the Built Environment and Design
 - Green Spaces
 - Youth Facilities
 - Employment (including change of use)
 - Infrastructure

5. *Will it capture demographics to avoid it being skewed in favour of a particular group?*
Yes. Which is why we need to gather the non-identifiable 'About You' information at the start, so that we can assess if a particular group is under represented. It is then possible - and good practice - to highlight the responses we do have for these categories and statistically balance the results to ensure that their views are accurately represented (ensuring always that this adjustment is transparent and noted).
6. *Have we tried putting leaflets in pubs to reach the younger residents?*
This is a possibility to be considered. Placing posters on the main routes in and out of the primary schools was suggested, since these would be seen predominantly by the younger age groups. We will, in any case, be asking schools to include the survey leaflet in bag drops.

Agenda Item 3 – Feedback and Outcomes of Visioning Events and Next stages (David Wallis)

We have transcribed the 1,000 or so post-it notes completed at the recent visioning events and categorised the results as below:-

What do we like about our Villages?

- Transport links - ease of getting to destinations by train or car (no mention of buses)
- Surrounding countryside, green belt, access to footpaths
- Local amenities - shops in Knowle, Sainsburys in Dorridge
- Parks and open spaces (within) our area
- Villages - have their own atmospheres, distinct from Solihull
- Schools
- Housing – styles; greenness of streets; quality

Things that need improving:-

- Parking - at Dorridge station; and at Knowle for shops and Bentley Heath
- Parking - where people park on streets
- Facilities and amenities – for youth activities; wider variety of shops (post office in Dorridge); too many charity shops (this could be a challenge for us when developing the plan)
- Housing developments that are in-fill.
- Road traffic congestion and pot holes (the latter is probably not for the plan)
- Public Transport - trains finishing early from Birmingham in the late evening. The bus service is not rated - people do not know when they are coming
- Housing - more affordable housing for the younger generation (or older generation to downsize)
- Better cycle lanes - safe cycle ways
- Not enough places at local schools
- Air quality, litter – airport

What is distinctive about our area?

- Surrounded by countryside and greenbelt
- Parks and spaces within
- Housing
- Shops – small and independent
- Village atmosphere
- Historic nature of villages (Knowle)
- Quality of schools
- Transport links to London and Birmingham
- Community spirit / size
- Separation from Solihull
- What we don't have:-
 - Noise
 - Office blocks
 - Industry
 - Crime

We have already used this feedback to help refine and improve our survey questions. Going forward, the Focus Groups will consider how we reflect this feedback into the plan.

Agenda Item 4 – Developer Day Proposal (Ian Fisher)

At the visioning events, and in other discussions, attendees responded positively to the suggestion that we hold a 'Developer day'. The Steering Committee is therefore debating the format and potential timing of this event. We will notify the membership as soon as we have confirmed details - ideally held at a weekend to provide the opportunity for as many as possible to attend.

We are liaising with SMBC on this (although this has been difficult in recent weeks due to the local elections and the fact that our primary contact has left). As soon as we have obtained the call for sites information from them, we will invite any developer who has submitted proposals to attend the open day to present their proposals and invite feedback.

If we can get the timing right, this then gives us an opportunity to submit residents' views to SMBC as input to their deliberations on the Local Plan and growth options. A question was raised as to whether this would be seen as 'interference'? From our dealings to date with SMBC, however, we believe that they will welcome this input and recognise the Neighbourhood Forum as a conduit of residents' view – provided, of course, that we have evidence to support any statements.

Gill Griggs outlined details of the five 'call for sites' submissions that we know of already, namely:-

- Bentley Heath: between Browns Lane and Smiths Lane. About 250 houses, plus new school (or school site?) and about 60 houses on existing school site
- Knowle FC and Thackers Nursery. 250 - 300 houses on the nursery, plus 60/70 on the pitch, with new club facilities by the canal

- Kenilworth Rd site (Golden End Farm). About 250 houses
- Land at Blue Lake Rd. About 65 houses
- Arden Triangle. Up to 1000 houses, with new secondary and primary schools on land extending along Warwick Rd and up Grove Rd, and on existing Arden Academy site.

Questions were raised about the consultation on Earlswood Rd. This is a public consultation ahead of a planning application - which means these developers appear to be looking to obtain a consent before the green belt review and other sites are assessed.

Agenda Item 5 - Membership Update (Ian Fisher)

The increased publicity surrounding the visioning events has led to a healthy increase in numbers, with 63 new applications having been received since the last meeting.

The breakdown is now:-

- Knowle 186
- Dorridge 115
- Bentley Heath 26
- Other subscribers 19

Agenda Item 6 - Treasurers Update (David Wallis)

Since the last forum meeting, we have held the Visioning events, which resulted in expenditure of c. £600 on posters and maps, publicity, stationary, refreshments etc.

As mentioned at the last Forum, we made a grant application totalling £5,454 to cover all activities through to October 2016 (the major item being the survey). I'm pleased to say that our application has been successful, and we have received the grant money. This means that we now have a remaining balance of around £6,000.

As part of the grant process, we also applied for free technical assistance to support us in the area of Housing Needs Assessment. We have had initial discussions with a consultant appointed from AECOM and agreed that we should start this activity once we have further information from SMBC's Local Plan Review - probably in a few months.

Agenda Item 7 - Minutes From The Last Meeting

Ian Fisher passed on apologies that, due to the huge workload last month for the Visioning events and the survey, the minutes have not yet been completed. They will be distributed and posted on the website as soon as possible.

Agenda Item 8 – AOB

Three items arising:-

1. Having a presence at the Knowle and Dorridge Fun Run gives us a further opportunity to spread the word, most importantly to a younger age group.

David Wallis is co-ordinating and sought volunteers. If anyone is willing to give an hour or two to support this, that would be hugely helpful. It's very informal - just being available for people to be able to have a general chat to about the Forum and Plan. Definitely no 'hard sell' and nothing to hand out so as to avoid litter.

We are also hoping to get permission for a similar presence at the upcoming Dorridge Fun Run (subsequent to the meeting some contact details were provided). Again, if anyone is willing to give an hour or two to support this, please do get in touch.

2. How to better reach 20-45 year old residents - covered earlier in the meeting.

3. AGM

The AGM will be held at the Forum Meeting scheduled for Wednesday 14th September (being the one year anniversary of our official Company registration).

Note that there are only two forum meetings (June and July) before then, as there will be no meeting in August.

There will be two AGMs: one for the Forum and one for the Company that is the legal body that stands behind the Forum and holds its funds.

The Company AGM will be held first, covering Director appointments and other company business such as the presentation of the annual financial report. This will be followed by the Forum AGM, including appointment of Steering Committee members (Company Directors are automatically on the Steering Committee).

Any registered member is part of both the Forum and the Company, so can stand as a Director or as a Steering Committee Member should they wish. Anyone who wishes to do so should inform Jane Aykroyd (Chair), or any Director, as soon as possible and preferably at the June forum meeting.

Agenda Item 9 - Next Meeting Date

There was some discussion about the proposed date of the next meeting. In previous correspondence we have had this as June 23rd - but this is the date of the EU referendum.

Subsequent to the meeting it has been agreed that our

Next meeting will be on Wednesday 22nd June.

In addition, on that date, we will hold an

Introductory session for new members, starting at 6.15pm, Arden Academy.