

### Minutes of Meeting Held at Arden Academy on 08.10.2015

**Present:** Jane Aykroyd (JA, Chair); Tony Abbott (TA); Karen Allen (KA); Tony Aykroyd (TAy); Samantha Bradley (SB); Ian Fisher (IF); Dave Fraley (DF); David Gentle (DG); Lis Hedley (LS); Bryan Hunt (BH); Ian Kay (IK); Martin Lambert (ML); Steve Lyle (SL); Richard Newton (RN); David Pinwell (DP); David Wallis (DW); Emily Walsh (EW); Colin Winstone (CW).

**Apologies:** Janice Anderson; Gill Griggs; Louisa Jakeman; Ward Councillors.

#### **1. Agenda Item 1 - Chair's Update**

The headline news is that we are now an officially designated Neighbourhood Forum! - our application was approved at the Council meeting on 1 October 2015.

In anticipation of this, activity has stepped up another notch over the last month. Directors', Steering Group and Focus Group meetings have all been held so as to prepare us to move forward as quickly as possible with Forum Launch and to secure funding. This has placed heavy demands on the leadership team, and JA thanked everyone involved for their high level of on-going commitment and strong teamwork. Key points are:

- a. **Our SMBC Area Application** - was also approved on 1 October 2015, although with one change re-aligning the Northwest Area boundary to run alongside the M42. As the 10-day 'cooling off' period following the decision is nearly over, we can assume that our Neighbourhood Area is now also finalised. As soon as we have formal confirmation, we will need to undertake the not insignificant task of updating all our website and publicity material to the new shape logo....
- b. **Dorridge Day** - was a great success, with a high level of interest and positive support from the steady stream of visitors to our stand. Twenty two new members signed up either at, or following, the event. JA thanked all those who had taken part, led by DW. It provided a useful 'test run', with learnings to feed into future Launch and community engagement activities.
- c. **The Steering Group** - met on 28 September 2015 to define the overall aims, approach and draft activity plan for the Forum Launch campaign running from 7-15 November 2015. The main purpose of this campaign is to maximise awareness of the Forum, and how people can get involved. Demonstrating that we have done all we can to reach everyone right from the outset will be an important part of our evidence base. DF is now overseeing the many activities and materials being produced both in the run-up period and over the 10 days of activities - more of which later in the Agenda...
- d. **The Directors** - met on 7 October 2015 to consider Company financial and banking requirements, and to agree the process and actions to apply for grant funding. Each Director also completed a 'Conflicts of Interest' form, identifying any associations they have with groups and/or financial or business interests that could be perceived to be in conflict with Forum/Plan objectives. I am pleased to report that there are currently no such conflicts. This will be periodically reviewed.

e. **A UK Central Presentation** - is being held on Monday 2 November at Arden Academy. JA provided a brief overview, with more details available on the poster that has been uploaded to our website. This is one of the most significant developments affecting future planning in and around Solihull, so the event will undoubtedly be very popular. Places are limited, and JA urged members to sign up quickly.

2. **Agenda Item 2 - Guest Speaker - Emily Walsh (EW), Transport Planning Officer, Solihull MBC:** BL introduced EW. The Transport and Infrastructure Group has invited EW to speak to the Forum to help increase our understanding of the type of topics and policies that Neighbourhood Plans can typically address from a transport perspective.

EW cited the 'Much Wenlock' and 'Exeter' Neighbourhood Plans as useful examples, as these clearly and tightly describe both their aspirations and their policies.

In general terms, EW's guidance was, from the outset, to clearly separate out day-to-day issues from longer term planning considerations - with the latter being the primary focus of a Neighbourhood Plan. This is because many short term issues fall outside the remit of a Neighbourhood Plan (ie. do not relate to land use or development). That's not to say, however, that we should simply disregard day-to-day issues: taken together (rather than individually), a group of related issues may well feed into wider, more strategic policy considerations.

SMBC, in liaison with the Knowle Society and the DDRA, are already aware of, and seeking to address, a number of short term issues. Nevertheless, if we forward a list of those the Forum is aware of to EW, she will happily ensure that this is passed to her colleagues in SMBC.

**ACTION: BL / Transport Focus Group** to provide a list of current transport issues to EW. (See also related Action for ML at the end of this section.)

EW suggested that a useful start point is to consider policies around 'streets', as this can incorporate many transport-related aspects, eg. access, movement, speeding, parking, safety of travel to school etc.

A key area that a Neighbourhood Plan can influence, linking into Solihull's Local Plan, is 'Section 106' decisions. These relate to how developer contributions to community facilities (as part of new development) should be prioritised. Transport policies associated with new development could include, for example:

- Mitigating the impact of significant new developments close to a busy road or school, eg. by creating a 20mph zone to slow down traffic.
- Where there is severe impact on longer routes, requiring funding to create more car parking. EW emphasised, however, that more car parking is not always the only, or the best, answer. Other things that could be considered are 'walking buses' to address school drop-off problems; improved cycle routes / facilities etc.
- Assessing the attractiveness or viability of new developments in terms of their walking distance, or ease of access, to schools, shops or other key community facilities.

- Policies relating to road safety - always a priority and generally easier to argue.

More holistic types of transport policies that the Forum may wish to consider could include:-

- Travel from home to school (note: inadequate bus facilities / bus stops for student travelling to Arden Academy was one of the issues raised from the 'Youth Perspective' at our September Forum).
- Encouraging a shift within the Area from cars to cycling and walking by making streets more easily walkable / cyclable.
- Looking at the balance between increased use of public transport and increased parking, eg. as part of policies around sustainable growth.
- Better integration across modes of public transport, eg. synchronising rail and bus timetables.
- Travel connections within the Forum area, and to other popular or major destinations such as the NEC, Airport etc. This may need us to consider the wider West Midlands transport plan.
- A key issue for our Area will undoubtedly be the major increase in use of Dorridge Station - where passenger numbers over the past 10 years have risen from c. 100,000 to c. £700,000 per annum. Both the free (Centro's policy) station car parking and the chargeable overflow car park by Dorridge church are already over capacity. This has a knock on effect to villagers who want to be able to park to use their local facilities. We could look at assessing ways to improve multi-modal access to the station (eg. reducing reliance on car travel and parking requirements). Next Spring a cycle hub is also opening in Dorridge Station.

Policies defined within an adopted Neighbourhood Plan become part of a Council's statutory Development Plan. This means that decisions on planning applications then have to be made in accordance with the adopted Neighbourhood Plan as well as the Development Plan, unless material indications indicate otherwise. EW stressed, however, that the Forum cannot actually commit to spending money on transport issues – this is Solihull Council's responsibility.

An important part of the Forum's role in creating the Plan is to bring together the many individual or small group interests to agree what the top investment priorities are for the community as a whole.

In terms of process, a key question to bear in mind in assessing priorities is 'What's the material harm?' When undertaking surveys, responses to open questions like 'What do you most like / dislike about current transport facilities' can provide useful narrative to the Plan and help develop a strong evidence base. The emerging findings from the current 'Solihull Connected' transport consultation (which a number of Forum members have already contributed to) will no doubt provide additional useful input to our analysis.

### Discussion Arising:

It is clear that one of the overarching policies for the Neighbourhood Plan as a whole could be something around: "Local facilities for local people". This could apply equally to transport, schools, healthcare, education etc.

DP pointed out that, from 2020, Solihull Council will gain more control over income raised from business rates, as the West Midlands gains greater autonomy from central Government to manage its own economic affairs. Even before then, the drive for more 'participatory budgeting' will see Councils consulting more closely with local communities on budget priorities. These changes create an opportunity for the Forum play a more influential role in prioritising investment to community needs.

ML stressed that the Forum needs to consider what developers should include from a transport and infrastructure perspective in any proposed new development applications.

**ACTION:- ML** agreed to liaise with Solihull MBC to re-confirm the transport issues they currently have logged for our area, and the latest status / progress on these. Having this up-to-date information will be very important for our forthcoming launch events. It will enable us to make clear in discussions that, as a Forum, we understand and are not dismissing short term issues, but that these are most appropriately progressed with SMBC through the residents associations.

We need to be clear, too, on what evidence base SMBC are currently using for decisions on transport issues - particularly in relation to car parking at Dorridge Station. It was also noted that Bentley Heath residents have, on a number of occasions, bought forward a strong case for a pedestrian crossing near the Co-Op / Post Office due to significant concerns on road safety. This has always been turned down, however, and the rationale for this rejection is not understood.

Note: EW is leaving SMBC in 4 weeks' time, but will notify us of who we should liaise with going forward. EW left the meeting at 8:15pm.

### 3. Agenda Item 3 – Forum Launch Publicity Campaign

DF presented a spreadsheet of activities covering the period leading up to the official launch of the Forum in Arden Academy school hall on 15 November 2015. Much needs to be done to create supporting material, such as press releases, posters, leaflets and display stands. We have been in contact with a wide range of local press, and already submitted copy for November monthlies.

The campaign proper kicks off on 7/11, when members of the Forum will be leafleting in the main shopping areas in Dorridge, Knowle and Bentley Heath. DF took the Forum through the timetable of activities and confirmed names of members who will be leading/supporting the various activities. The one big outstanding issue is that we currently only have one person (SB) to hand out leaflets in Bentley Heath on 7/11. This is not viable, so JA put out a plea for all members to check whether they can spare a couple of hours to support SB and ensure that the Bentley Heath community is not disadvantaged.

**URGENT ACTION: All members** PLEASE can you spare a couple of hours on 7/11 to support SB in handing out leaflets around Bentley Heath Post Office to publicise the Forum launch event? Please contact Dave Fraley, or any member of the Forum.....

#### 4. Agenda Item 4 – Focus Group Updates

Due to time constraints, Focus Group Leads were asked just to raise any key points on progress or issues arising. An important focus now for all groups is how we set about engaging with the community, either face to face or through surveys, as part of the initial work to establish definitely what the communities' needs for the future are and what they see as the key areas for planning policy and priorities.

**ACTION** : SL agreed to look at what professional support may be needed and available to develop and carry out any surveys required.

To date, much of the Focus Groups' activity has been putting the basics in place in terms of defining their role and terms of reference, understanding immediate priorities, and planning what needs to be done and when. Going forward, as we start more active community involvement and developing the Plan framework, minutes of Focus Group meetings will also be placed on the website for all to share.

#### 5. Agenda Item 5 – Membership Update

IK is consolidating the membership database with a view to ensuring that we have a completed Forum application form for all registered members. This is a very important part in creating a strong (and auditable) evidence base, particularly when it comes later to voting.

IK has therefore contacted all those who joined prior to the formal membership form being available (and who requested membership by e-mail) to ask them to please fill out an application on line or via the paper form – it only takes a couple of minutes.

We now have 76 people on the database, 52 of whom we have completed forms for.

#### 6. Agenda Item 6 – Treasurer's Update and Grant Funding Application

DW confirmed that funding of up to £14,000 was available from Government. The process of obtaining such funding is not straightforward, however. The on-line application form is very detailed, and we to know in advance pretty much exactly what we want to spend the money on. We can ask to receive the grant in 2-3 instalments - each grant of money has to be spent with 6 months and also within the relevant financial year. The Directors therefore plan to apply for this funding to start from April 2016.

Additional, Ward funding from Solihull MBC is also available up to £3,000. We can access this as soon as the Forum has a bank account set up, so this will be vital to support the immediate expenditures necessary for the publicity material and activities surrounding Forum Launch.

DW has obtained details of charitable bank accounts offered by Nat West and Lloyds (both with a presence in Knowle). However, it seems that neither bank is able to support a provision whereby expenditure must be authorised by at least two signatories, which the Directors want.

**ACTION** : - DW agreed to approach Barclays in Knowle to find out what facilities and requirements they have in relation to charitable accounts.

### 7. **Agenda Item 7 – Minutes and Actions from Last Meeting**

A couple of minor corrections to the minutes of the last meeting:

- Gill Griggs is shown as both attending and sending apologies – she was present at the last meeting.
- Relating to one of the outstanding actions: SMBC had, in fact, confirmed the Transport Liaison contact to BH on 12/8/15, so this action was complete.

#### **Update on outstanding actions:**

- **JA** to create a short powerpoint communications ‘video’ covering the NF / NP that any Member can then use. **CARRIED FORWARD (still in the depths of creating communications and publicity material for the Launch and Web updates).**
- **MM/Learning & Community Facilities Group** to contact the Neighbourhood Policing Team to gain their thoughts on the Youth perspective. **CARRIED FORWARD**

### 9. **Agenda Item 9 – AOB**

JA has received a request from Hannah Colson, SMBC Communities and Adult Social Care Directorate, to present to a special meeting of the Solihull Partnership on Wednesday 25/11 dedicated to the topic of Neighbourhood Planning. The Hampton Neighbourhood Plan Working Group will also be presenting.

JA has confirmed that either she, or someone from the Forum leadership team, will definitely be available to talk through our experiences to date.

**ACTION:** JA and BH / other Steering Group members to create a presentation for this event.

### 10. **Agenda Item 10 – Agree Date and Focus for Next Meeting**

The next Forum meeting will be on **Wednesday 4 November, at Arden Academy, starting at 7pm**. The agenda will include:

- BH will lead the main Agenda item, setting out his thoughts on the approach, plans and timescales for community engagement and developing an outline plan.
- A more detailed update from each Focus Group to ensure that we all have a shared understanding on their role, terms of reference, link to local plan etc in readiness to answer questions at Forum Launch activities.
- Next steps in terms of identifying the evidence bases and data required.
- Finalising any outstanding actions for the Forum Launch.

Dates of Forum meetings through to the end of 2015 are:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> December