

**Proposed Neighbourhood Plan (NP)
for
Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath**

Minutes of Meeting Held at Knowle Village Hall on 16.04.2015

Present: Jane Aykroyd (Interim Chair); Karen Allen; Geoff Evans; Ian Fisher; Dave Fraley; Liz Hedley; Bryan Hunt; Louisa Jakeman; David Jenkin; Steve Lyle; Martin Murphy; Richard Newton; David Pinwell (Colebridge Trust); David Wallis

Apologies: Gill Giggs; Robert Keenan

Martin Lambert (DDRA) – part meeting (handing over)

Angela Bird, Knowle Society - start of the meeting only (handing over)

1. Knowle Society and the DDRA cannot drive the Neighbourhood Planning (NP) process, and are dropping out at this stage. They can help us as a backstop - and will continue to be an important stakeholder.
2. Not all residents who have registered an interest attended the March meeting; some of March's attendees are not here today (with a number sending their apologies). It would seem that not everyone has received all of the e-mails and attachments previously issued - Jane has reviewed a number of completed questionnaires, but has not had a response from all of us.
3. As Jane had prepared the questionnaire, agenda and also the summary Group Profile analysis that forms an important part of this meeting, she offered to act as chair on an interim basis, until the Group is formally established.
4. **Agenda Item 1 - Welcome and Aims of Meeting:**
This meeting essentially starts the process of transitioning from the awareness and resident engagement activities, led by the Knowle Society and DDRA, to a more formal Forum organisation under new leadership appointed by Members. The primary purpose, therefore, is to take the first steps in agreeing a short term action plan to get the Forum established.
5. **Agenda Item 2 - Short Introductions:**
We all briefly introduced ourselves. From this, it is clear that there is a high level of commonality and shared desire to support, and do the best for, our community in both the short and longer term – and also a degree of shared concern to ensure that our time and commitment delivers real outcomes. For now, everyone is ready to 'suck it as see' what we can do together to make the most of this opportunity to have a say in shaping our community.
6. **Agenda item 3 - Recap of Key Points from March 16th Meeting:**
The meeting in March highlighted an initial set of priority actions that a Neighbourhood Forum needs to address:-
 1. Agree why we are doing an NP, and what specifically we want this to cover. We need to have a very clear view of key topics, issues or opportunities that are most important to us as a community, within the context of the overall Solihull Local Plan.
 2. Agree what kind of NP we wish to produce – from the four possible different types that were described by the consultants at the March meeting.

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3. Formally constitute a Forum and appoint key office holders. This will need us to agree a legal structure/constitution and governance principles, eg. what kind of organisation structure should we adopt; should we incorporate as a Limited Company? This is very important, as we will not be formally recognised as a body by the Council (and others) until this is done.
4. Address financial (eg. bank account, insurance) and funding (eg. grant application to Locality) matters.

7. Agenda Item 4 - Overview Group Profile:

Everyone confirmed that they were happy to share the information provided on their questionnaire responses. Jane provided a spreadsheet giving an overview Group profile. It summarises the information received to date from completed NP questionnaires. Jane has received 10 responses, plus some related e-mails – a total of 13 responses from the 26 people on Angela's e-mail distribution.

Jane summarised the information. Of the 10 responses so far, 6 are from Knowle, 3 from Dorridge (1 not stated). Respondee have resided in the area for between 15 and 40 years, with 26.6 years being the average. It is already very clear that we are very fortunate in having a wide range of relevant qualifications and skills within the Group, including: project management, planning, legal, council liaison, construction, accountant, environmental, IT, strategic planning, report writing and research.

The Group asked Jane to re-issue the form to individuals who had not yet responded, as this provides some very useful information to help us get organised.

ACTION: Jane to re-issue the NP questionnaire to those on March's distribution list who have yet to respond and request return in time to update the Group profile spreadsheet in advance of the next meeting.

8. The responses also identify where some of us have contacts with different groups within the community, with suggestions as to which key individuals and groups we should seek to engage in the process of developing a NP. March's update indicated that engagement from the business community to date has been disappointing; this group is, however, a key stakeholder and should not be ignored. The 'Probate' company (Knowle High Street) was noted as being particularly active in leading engagement of local businesses in the NP, and would appear to be the only business that has been proactive in responding to the information previously sent out by the Knowle Society / DDRA.

DECISION: We unanimously agreed that our aim must be to engage as widely as possible within different parts of the community so as to be seen as truly representative. This is seen as an important principle in establishing the credibility of the Forum. For example, we do not currently have representation from the Bentley Heath community.

ACTION: Jane to make contact with Probate to find out more about their involvement in, and plans for, business involvement in the NP and provide an update at next meeting.

All to try and identify someone from Bentley Heath (and/or other key groups in the community) who would be willing to contribute to the Forum.

9. In the course of discussion, Martin very kindly offered support to the Neighbourhood Forum on behalf of Arden School. This could take a number of forms, including eg. use of a room with presentation facilities as a venue for meetings; photocopying; hot-desking. Also, potentially, administrative support to meetings (eg. minutes), some funding and web site development support. This offer was very welcome and gratefully accepted by the Group.

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DECISION: It was agreed that the next few meetings will be held at Arden School, subject to final confirmation of venue from Martin.

ACTION: **Martin** to confirm meeting venue at Arden School. Also follow up with his contacts at Arup to understand any previous experience they have of supporting Neighbourhood Planning and update the next meeting.

Jane and Martin to meet up to discuss support from Arden School and update the next meeting.

10. **Agenda Item 6 - How Should We Organise Ourselves?**

Solihull MBC, although very supportive in discussions to date, will not recognise us until we have an agreed leadership/structure and are formally constituted. Referring to his e-mail sent prior to the meeting, David Pinwell highlighted three key questions we need to address as a first priority in establishing our Group.

1. Legal. David repeated his recommendation that we incorporate. This reduces personal risk to the Directors. It is not expensive to form a Limited Company (David quoted £20). While there are reporting requirements for Limited Companies to Companies House, these are not onerous. Annual accounts would need to be prepared, although audit would not be required – independent examination only would be enough.

DECISION: It was unanimously agreed that we should incorporate as a Company Limited by Guarantee.

2. Financial. We need a bank account to be able to request and spend money; also insurance. An important early step is to secure funding from Locality.
3. Group Constitution/Structure. Any Forum must have a minimum of 21 Members and must not go below this (not all need to be present at every meeting). However, not all Members need to be Directors – and there was general agreement on this. The Group felt it would be helpful, if possible, to hear from other groups who have gone, or are going, through the NP process.

DECISION: For legal purposes, a structure of between 5 (min) and 9 (max) Directors was agreed in principle, with a more extended Steering Group where appropriate covering Forum decisions. In principle, Members must be actively engaged in some, not necessarily all, Forum meetings and/or activities.

ACTIONS:

- Based on these decisions, **David Pinwell** to complete a draft “boilerplate” document of Incorporation for the Forum and issue this for review in advance of the next meeting.
- **David Pinwell** to find out if there is a similar group with experience of NP who would be willing to come and talk to us of their experience.
- Based on information from the questionnaire responses (including any additional ones submitted prior to the next meeting), **Jane** to draw up a strawman Governance structure for discussion at the next meeting. Note, this will serve just as a starting point to help us focus and speed discussions – it is not intended to be definitive.

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Note on Geographic Coverage: It was confirmed that the area to be covered by our NP has to be as per the map previously supplied, ie covering Wards not already in a Parish. (Solihull MBC will not support another area.)

11. Agenda Item 7: How Should We Engage Our Community?

See 6. Above.

12. Agenda Item 8: Priority Actions and Who Will Own

The Solihull MBC Local Plan provides the overarching framework within which we will need to shape and refine the specific details for our communities. As a first step, therefore, we need to understand what the Solihull plan says specifically in relation to our area. To help us, it would be very beneficial to ask a representative of the Council to attend a meeting and expand on details of the Local Plan most relevant to us.

Before this update from the Council, however, the Group was keen to hold an internal session to debate and clarify our aims, objectives and priorities without outside influence. The questionnaire responses already identify a number of local topics/issues; we also need to make sure that we do not overlook others raised by residents in previous communications with the Knowle Society & DDRA.

Actions:

1. **Before our next meeting, All** to review the relevant sections ('Rural Areas') of the Solihull MBC Local Plan ('Final' version, available on their website). This is an important activity to inform our discussions.
2. **Communication, in all its forms, will be key to successful Member and community engagement. David Wallace to liaise with Karen Allen** to create one, consolidated Member contact list and forward to Jane asap. **Jane** to follow up to ensure that all people who have expressed an interest in NP have been contacted and have received all relevant information. **Ian Fisher** to consider possible options for using IT to support effective communications (eg. web, social media, document access such as Google Share). It was noted that the Knowle Society has a web site.
3. **Bryan Hunt** to contact Mr Barlow of Solihull MBC Planning Dept (the officer allocated to facilitate NP in Solihull Borough) to request attendance from a member of the planning team to expand on the Local Plan (and context of the Localism Act) as it relates specifically to our communities. Ideally, this should be at the meeting after next (14 May).
4. **Jane** to confirm Agenda for next meeting, with the lead item being 'Why are We Here'? **David Wallace** agreed to lead this brainstorming session and, as input to this, will distil information from all the paperwork provided by Knowle Society/DDRA to ensure that we have visibility of all topics/issues identified right from the point of initial community engagement.

13. Agenda Item 9 - Agree Focus and Agenda for Next Meeting:

As a priority, the next meeting will also follow up on Legal and Governance matters (per 8. above), including review of the draft Incorporation document prepared by David Pinwell. There is a strong desire to keep the momentum up following today's meeting, particularly while we cover all the ground necessary to get the Forum up and running.

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Decision: We will meet fortnightly for the next 3 weeks, the aim being that by the end of this we will have formally established the framework for the Forum to operate. The proposed dates are therefore (may need to review the last one, which is in a bank holiday week):

Next meetings:	Thursday 30th April;	Arden School, Knowle;	7pm-9pm
	Thursday 14th May;	Arden School, Knowle:	7pm-9pm
	Thursday 28th May;	Arden School, Knowle:	7pm-9pm