

Minutes of Meeting Held at Arden Academy on 11.02.2016

Present: Jane Aykroyd (JA, Chair), Tony Aykroyd, Chris Baker, Adrie Cooper, Ian Fisher, Dave Fraley, Jenny Godsall, Roger Halford, Lis Hedley, Bryan Hunt, Louisa Jakeman, Pat Kirkby, Bill Lally, Martin Lambert, Steve Lyle, Tony McLelland, Dave Pinwell, Jeff Potts, Dave Ratcliffe, Graham Ryott, Ian Tait, Roger Thorpe, Andy Todd, Martin Trentham, David Wallis

Apologies: Martin Murphy

1. Agenda Item 1 - Chair's Update

January has been extraordinarily busy. Our plan for Jan-Apr 2016 was always going to be challenging; then came SMBC's unexpected consultation on new housing development. The team has shown huge commitment to squeeze everything in, often at the expense of personal plans. On the plus side, the added focus the consultation brings certainly helps raise the Forum's profile and increases the need and urgency for action. A huge thank you to everyone involved.

We did have to admit defeat on one thing, however: it proved impossible to update our website from abroad (on holiday). So apologies for the delay in uploading the final version of our housing consultation response to SMBC, which was done earlier this week.

Again, lots of positive statistics to report:

- 2,665 web site hits in January – another monthly record (2,343 when last reported in Nov)
- Our business Facebook page, launched in January, is starting to reach a growing number of people – around 50-100 per post. This form of communication will grow in importance as we start planning events, seeking interactive feedback etc
- Membership continues to grow – up 20% since Christmas, with a big boost from January's Extraordinary meeting
- We were very much heartened by the positive support we received from members in preparing our response to the SMBC Consultation. We had 44+ comments, either at the Forum meeting or following issue of our draft paper, for which a big thank you.

Headline developments over the past month:

- **Extraordinary meeting 13 Jan.**
The Housing team truly went the 'extra mile' to get this completed to a high standard, despite tight deadlines. This included re-opening the 'final' submission to SMBC so as to duly reflect comments from ten member e-mails received after the cut-off time. The response took account of both feedback on the night and views previously expressed, eg. at our Launch meeting in November.
- **Focus Groups 'Data Day', 20 January 2016**
This early stage of Plan development we are in is all about gathering data about our Area – both quantitative (numbers) and qualitative (people's views). Getting this stage right is vital because it provides the foundation for future policy development. The validity and credibility of our final Plan will be hugely dependent upon us being able to EVIDENCE - to our community and to an external Independent Examiner - that:

- a) the policies developed are built on HARD FACTS; AND
- b) we have done all we can to seek out, document, analyse and reflect the views of a representative cross section of our community.

Managing our 'evidence' base is therefore a major strand of activity for us.

The 'Data Day' was an opportunity for the three Focus Groups to come together and agree the most relevant sources of data to establish FACTS about our Area (eg. census; housing stock; planning applications; settlement studies; school capacity etc).

Here we must thank our lead contact at SMBC for joining us and providing SMBC contacts specialising in particular areas – eg. the 'Solihull Observatory' (worth a look on line, if you interested in data about our area). So, lots to follow up on, including challenges like separating out Dorridge data from overall Ward statistics that include Hockley Heath.

- **Young People's Event "A Vision for the Future", 1 February.**

'Inclusivity' is one of the Forum's guiding principles - ensuring that we fairly represent the views of all groups in the community. This was a case in point. Though our young people cannot actually vote on the Neighbourhood Plan, they certainly have views about what they want to see in the future!

Held in the Civic Suite, this was a very successful event involving a total of c. 100 school children drawn from all the primary/secondary schools in our Area - more details in the Agenda item. Lots of interesting and, no doubt, challenging outcomes for us to mull over when we have the full report at our next meeting.

- **Building Awareness Through Community Groups.**

We continue the process of contacting each of the 50 or so local groups (social, sporting etc) to raise awareness of the Forum and what it's about. We will be speaking at both the Knowle Society and DDRA resident association AGM's being held in March and April 2016, as one of our most important routes of communication into the wider community.

- **Governance:**

In January, Ian Kay resigned as Membership Secretary and Director - although he remains an active member of the Forum. Ian was instrumental in setting up our membership database, and a key point of contact into the Knowle community. Many thanks to him for his important contribution.

Ian Fisher has kindly offered to take up the reigns in both roles, with a smooth over the past month. We will duly be reporting the change of Director to Company's House.

(Action: Lis Hedley to amend KDBH Director details at Companies House to reflect the change from Ian Kay to Ian Fisher)

- **Looking forward**

To allow more time for community engagement at Forum meetings, we are progressing detail matters relating to running the Forum at separate Steering Committees each month. Any key recommendations or decisions will, however, continue to be put to members at monthly Forum meetings to ensure transparency.

Our forward focus over a packed next 6-8 weeks is on:

- undertaking a resident's survey (more later in the Agenda)
- planning for the next major Community Open Event after Easter
- creating visual representations of data using maps of the Area – eg. showing where land has been offered up for development
- preparation and submission of our Grant Application covering costs for the next 6 months – in the absence of which nothing much will happen!

- **One Final Request, please**

We're looking for anyone willing to act as 'guinea pig' to help test out our residents' survey before we finalise and launch it across the Area. Given the cost and effort involved in this activity, it is something we will only be able to do once - so making sure in advance that it works well seems like a good idea!

2. **Agenda Item 2 – Update from Extraordinary Housing Meeting 13 January 2016**

Steve Lyle (Housing Group Lead) reported that this event had gone extremely well. We were particularly pleased by the 44+ comments received - a big thank you for your support on that. The final response was submitted to SMBC by the deadline of 22nd January 2016.

SMBC is making some details available to us relating to developer / landowner proposals submitted as part of their 'call for sites' – we expect to know more by the end of March. Two or three developers have also been in contact with us directly, to provide an early 'heads up' – we will provide an update at our next meeting.

More generally, the Forum is now automatically receiving notification of all planning applications relating to our Area. Jeff Potts confirmed that a slightly amended application for the Middlefield Site has received approval from the SMBC Planning Committee (this site is part of the 2012 Local Plan, with development already agreed prior to the Forum's existence).

3. **Agenda Item 3 – Outcomes from Young People's Event, Monday 1 February 2016**

(Update from JA, with apologies from Martin Murphy who is unable to join us today)

This high profile event, held over 4 ½ hours, was very well received by all those participating – including the Mayor, local Councillors, teachers and Forum members, as well the 100 or so young people. We very much appreciate the strong support we received.



Topics covered were chosen by our youngsters as being what's most important to them - having been provided beforehand with some background on the Forum, what's happening in our Area, and growth pressures in the wider Solihull region. All culminating in some moving final statements from each of the seven groups, who summed up in their own words: 'In our vision, KDBH is an area where...'. Their ideas and aspirations were put onto 'bricks', that together created a 'vision wall'.

We are now documenting the full output from the session, for some interesting discussion at our next Forum meeting. Our young people have certainly set a high standard for us 'oldies' to follow!

4. Agenda Item 4 – Plan for Survey and Next Community Event

Survey: Undertaking a household/residents' survey, as well as a business survey, is one of the most important activities undertaken in the early stages of developing any Neighbourhood Plan. It's fundamental to ensuring that everyone is contacted about the Forum and has a direct opportunity to express their views individually; and the results provide one of the key foundation stones to future policy development. It's not, however, a light undertaking in our Area of more than 19,000 people (an Area more typically being between 2,500 and 5,000 people).

Given the survey's importance, we have decided to seek specialist, external support to lead its design, creation and analysis. This approach has the added assurance of providing independence and transparency. (It will, in fact, be the first time we have sought skills outside the Forum team).

We have already undertaken market research to identify two potential service providers who could best meet our needs. At the same time, we have contacted other groups who have already been through the process so as to learn from previous experience. We are now finalising a formal briefing document that clearly sets out our requirements, based on which the two shortlisted companies can provide comparative quotes.

Given the limited funding available, we will manage costs carefully - focusing the provider on where we get most value and, where necessary, undertaking some of the basic 'leg work' ourselves. The selected provider's costs will included in our grant application (see below).

Next Open Community Event:- This will mark the start 'proper' of us building our Neighbourhood Plan. It will be a very interactive session, when we start debating as a community what is important to the future of our Area (ie. our 'vision', a bit like the Youth Event). We are preparing material that will be available in advance bringing together feedback received to date with related key data about our Area, which should 'get the conversation going'!

We have provisionally booked two sessions of 2-3 hours in late April (evening of Wednesday 20th and afternoon of Sunday 24 April) – to be confirmed once we have finalised details and plans for the survey.

5. Agenda Item 4 – Focus Group Highlights.

a) Housing:-

In addition to the points noted above, we are progressing work on data gathering and mapping. We are pleased to welcome two new members to our Group.

b) Learning and Community Facilities:-

Updates covered in previous items.

c) Transport and Infrastructure:-

Current focus is preparing for the survey. We are very pleased to welcome four new members to our Group.

6. Agenda Item 5 – Membership Update

We are pleased to report that we now have a total of 223 members (up from 187 in December). The breakdown is: 127 members from Knowle; 78 from Dorridge and 18 from Bentley Heath. We have another 15 or so recorded on the database whose details need to be confirmed.

7. Agenda Item 6 – Treasurer’s Update

We have received a total of £3,000 funding in the last 12 months, provided from Ward development funds to get the Forum ‘up and running’.

Total actual spend to date is £1,700. We have been highly self-sufficient in terms of resources (as we are all unpaid volunteers), with most of these costs relating to publicity, printing of marketing material (posters etc) and basic equipment needed for the Launch event in November.

As a Neighbourhood Forum (not a Parish Council) with a large Area, we qualify for central funding of up to a total of £14k from ‘Locality’. This amount must cover the whole process of developing the Neighbourhood Plan over the next 2 years or so. We need to apply for funding in 6-monthly chunks, and will make our first submission in the next 3-4 weeks to take effect from April 2016.

Preparing the grant submission requires a significant amount of work, alongside all our other activities, including detailed information about our plan and supported by quotes for significant areas of expenditure (eg. the survey and cost of running Open Events).

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

Detail of actions associated with day to day running of the Forum are now recorded in Steering Committee minutes. Any key decisions or actions that require ratification by the membership will continue to be recorded in these minutes.

There were no comments on the notes from the last meeting.

9. Agenda Item 8 – AOB

Given the number of new joiners recently, there was a request for another new member session.

Action: JA to arrange and notify the membership.

Bryan Hunt asked that anyone involved, or with contacts, in local organisations to please get in touch to help with increasing awareness of the Forum to as many groups as possible.

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

The next Open Forum meeting will be on **Wednesday 9th March**, 7-9.30pm, at Arden School.