

Minutes of Neighbourhood Plan Working Group Meeting – Tuesday 22nd January 2019 held at Ixworth Village Hall

Present – Debra Reay (Chair), Tessa Stonehouse (Vice Chair), Richard Courtneil, Penny Dinwiddy, Trina Godfrey, Adrian Harmer, Nick Laughton (PC), Stephen Mann (VH), Sophia Wilson (PC Ix Thorpe)

In Attendance – Sunila Osborne (Community Action Suffolk), Julie Salisbury (West Suffolk Housing Dept), Steve Wilson (NP Clerk)

1. Introductions/Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from: Ally Balaam, Ben Birrell, Graeme Norris, John Rowe

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11 December 2018 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. Appointment of New NP Clerk

Unfortunately Alf Percival had had to step down as NP Clerk in December 2018 due to the pressure of his other commitments. The Chair thanked Alf on behalf of the Group for all his hard work, especially in the tricky early days of the NPWG. Steve Wilson had been interviewed for the post and had been available to take on the role with effect from 1 January 2019. There had been some technical issues with email but the new address of npwg@ixworth.net seemed to be holding up well. From this meeting onwards there would be an action list issued as soon as possible after the meeting followed by minutes as soon as they were complete.

4. Matters Arising

Site Allocation. The Chair had circulated to the PC members of the NPWG a briefing document prepared by the consultant. The document recommended that the PC allocate sites as part of the NP process, a key benefit was in guaranteeing that financial gains from development came back to the village for local use. It was agreed that the PC would be recommended to adopt site allocation.

Action: Chair

Health Campaign. The health campaign referred to by Cllr Spicer at the December meeting had generated interest locally. Cllr Spicer had agreed to update the NPWG on the progress of the campaign.

5. Chair's Report

The Chair divided her report across a variety of agenda items.

6. Questionnaire Report

There had been responses to the questionnaire from only 137 households and predominantly from older residents. This was very disappointing and not likely to truly represent the feelings of residents as a whole. A report of the questionnaire results had been generated and would be included as an enclosure to the next village newsletter. The main concerns expressed seemed to regard traffic and medical provision; there had been some interest expressed in education and wildlife matters and the Village Hall had been well supported.

The next phase of consultation would consist of public meetings and workshops organised by the consultant, Navigus. These would be held at the Village Hall at various times, to suit a range of lifestyles, and include light refreshments. It was essential to attract a broader range of people to these events and that would require hard work by all members of the NPWG. The timescale for these meetings was likely to be late March/early April 2019.

It was important that the next phase receive as much publicity as possible and as soon as possible, various methods were discussed:

- Items in the Ixworth Newsletter/Magazine within the constraints of publishing dates.
- Posters.
- Flyers posted through letterboxes and handed out at school gates and community group meetings. This would only be possible once the meeting dates were known.
- Facebook traffic.
- Individual presentations by NPWG members at community group meetings. A list of groups was studied to establish which were suitable for this kind of engagement.
- Individual contact by NPWG members with friends and family, co-workers, those met at the school gate or while dog-walking etc.

The following actions arose from this discussion:

Chair: to update FOIL on process

Trina: to attend Baby & Toddler Group, Over-60s and Royal British Legion meetings at earliest opportunity

Penny: to seek a short speaking slot at the next Women's Institute meeting

NP Clerk: to circulate a 'script' to NPWG members; approach Garden & Bowls Club; approach Head of Free School regarding pupil engagement; circulate Great Barton's email on engagement

7. Housing Needs Survey

Sunila Osborne and Julie Salisbury attended the meeting to give advice on the benefits of a Housing Needs Survey (HNS) and the procedure involved.

The need for a HNS as part of the NP process had been previously considered but there had been conflicting information regarding ongoing background political changes. Several villages across Suffolk had used a HNS to great effect and although it only represented a snapshot of the housing situation, if conducted properly, it could expose the true need for a balance of housing types and tenures to fit local conditions.

Sunila explained the following about a HNS:

- It is conducted by Community Action Suffolk (CAS)
- It involves a questionnaire agreed by CAS and the NPWG which is hand-delivered locally, one per household
- The survey addresses all types of housing, not just affordable
- The questionnaire establishes: the type and tenure of the dwelling; if occupants have housing needs; if occupants have family connections who want but are unable to get housing locally
- The aim is to expose needs eg. bungalows for those wishing to downsize, affordable homes for low-paid workers
- The survey is confidential and typically achieves a 30-40% response rate so maximum publicity ahead of the launch is essential, CAS recommends 3 months publicity
- Survey can be done online or hard copy posted back
- The full result of the survey is considered commercially sensitive and is only published in exceptional circumstances
- The entire process could take up to 6 months and might typically cost approximately £5200 plus VAT

Capel St Mary's HNS had been published online and so was available as a reference, Sunila could also provide a specimen survey form as a PDF. The NP Clerk would circulate the link and PDF.

Action: NP Clerk

Julie explained that the current Housing Register could give some indication of housing need in the affordable sector and that numbers registered in Ixworth did indicate some degree of need locally. The HNS would take the Register into account. This information could be broken down by village and made available.

Action: NP Clerk

Julie also spoke on Rural Exception Sites (RES) which could be established in villages, on land not normally available for development, but only with the support of a HNS. Properties within the RES would be available only to those with local connections with this arrangement existing in perpetuity. Potential residents would have to be registered with Homelink and Julie encouraged those in housing need to register. If a RES was to be established it should be based on a HNS not more than 4 years old although many housing associations would update their HNS at the time of the development.

The NPWG agreed to recommend the commissioning of a HNS to the PC. The need for a steering group of the NPWG to work with CAS on the issue was noted, as was the need for maximum engagement by NPWG members in the advance publicity for the HNS if it were to go ahead.

Action: Chair

8. Communications

Website. The PC had created space on its website to host NP material, relocation would start soon and help would be sought from Sarah Chandler on making its appearance more appealing. There was a consensus now that the Village Hall website should be expanded to take on the role of village website while the PC website would restrict itself to PC matters of which the NP was one. The two other village websites could then be closed down to simplify matters. There was to be a meeting in the week commencing 28 January to implement this policy.

Action: Chair, Vice Chair

Social Media. A Facebook group had been created for the NP and Penny had undertaken to use it to best effect and build up numbers. All messages regarding the Facebook group were to be copied to Penny.

Action: Penny

9. Parish Council Update

A PC update was not necessary as the last meeting had addressed only planning matters.

10. Budget Matters

The budget for NPWG work, excluding the Clerk's wages, currently stood at £14,173. Taking into account money already committed for printing, £2200 of that total would have to be used before the end of March 2019 or it would be lost. Proposed work by the consultant and the potential HNS was likely to account for that.

11. Any Other Business

Schedule of Meetings for 2019. The Clerk had created a schedule for 2019 based on the normal 6-weekly cycle. This was approved apart from the meeting falling on 24 December which was brought forward to 17 December.

Action: NP Clerk

Rights of Way. At the December 2018 meeting Cllr Spicer had expressed her concern that Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe were badly served for access to the countryside and rights of way. Local walkers had contacted the NP Clerk with concerns over the loss of old walking routes and the state of maintenance of current ones. Cllr Spicer had since contacted the NPWG to say that it was County policy to seek an increase in rights of way as part of the planning and development process. It would be useful to include rights of way as an item in the final NP report. The NP Clerk would contact the Rights of Way Officer to seek guidance on a range of related matters.

Action: NP Clerk

Next NPWG meeting Tuesday 5 March 2019, 7.30pm, Ixworth Village Hall (Bar Area)

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Signed, NP Chair – Debra Reay

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Date