

MINUTES OF FIRST MEETING OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING PARTY 28TH JULY 2020 6PM

Present : Cllr B Perry (Chairman) (Cookham Parish Council)
Cllr Martin Coker (Cookham Parish Council)
Cllr Mark Howard (Cookham Parish Council)
Cllr Ian Wernham (Cookham Parish Council)
Dick Scarff (Cookham Society)
Lars Ahlgren (WildCookham)
Tim Veale (Save Cookham)
Dr Shez Courtenay-Smith
(Stanley Spencer Gallery but in personal capacity as Trustee with her
knowledge of the artist's work along with work on VDS)
Jon Herbert (Troy Planning + Design)

Welcome form Chairman

Chairman thanked everyone for agreeing to contribute to the Working Party. Stated that it was one of the most important things Cookham Parish Council has done for a long time and for Cookham in general. The VDS was an excellent stepping-stone towards this and acknowledged all the hard work that had gone into this.

Apologies for Absence

Cllr Chris Doyle

Introductions

Cllr Bill Perry introduced Jon Herbert, Director of Troy Planning + Design. Jon will be the lead contact for the work on the Neighbourhood Plan. Jon had already submitted the initial review document having carried out assessment of information and tour of Cookham.

Jon Herbert gave further background of Troy and their experience of other Neighbourhood Plans and planning issues. Agreed VDS was an excellent basis.

Explanation of basis for Working Party / Briefing from Troy / Next steps

The Parish Council should lead on this NP but that it is very important that we consult with everyone. The four most prominent and broadly representative Community bodies have been invited to join the Working Party on a permanent basis. The expanded list of consultees on the introductory document should not be exhaustive and other suggestions are encouraged. We also need to consult with residents that do not belong to groups. Important to convey a general understanding to everybody what we are trying to do, why and how they can participate. The Working Party should not be tied too closely to the Parish Council.

Cllr Mark Howard spoke to say he was keen to make contact with groups as early as possible as they will then be able to introduce the subject out to the people involved with the group. However, not everyone is a member of a group so he suggested that we may need some form of mass communication eg leaflet or newsletter to introduce subject and to be clear on what feedback we are asking for to limit the scope of responses.

Jon Herbert responded to agree that we need to raise the profile, awareness and scope of a neighbourhood plan so that only relevant issues are explored. Troy can provide wording to promote the scope and power of the NP to shape the future of Cookham. Important message to be made of difference between what this Working Party are trying to do and the RBWM Local Plan – the issue of future growth and development in their plan means that residents may be wary of it. We need to explain that what we are doing is trying to work towards the very best future possible for Cookham. The first correspondence needs to be carefully timed – an early questionnaire may invite too many responses to be helpful. Troy have prepared the first draft

paper of ideas for potential focus and invite feedback over next week or so. This can be developed with some more analysis of the area to understand issues in more detail and will then form the basis of focus of plan.

Cllr Mark Howard gave an example of collecting opinions on a local traffic issue. Two house-to-house rounds delivering a survey done 6 months apart resulted in much less data than use of social media. A Facebook group was able to motivate many more people to get involved. Cllr Howard suggested that presenting the scope of the NP in its entirety may be overwhelming so suggested a better approach may be breaking down the plan into sections such as traffic, transport, leisure etc. Smaller groups who may have more knowledge and expertise in those specific areas may then be encouraged to become involved.

Jon Herbert agreed that especially during the current Covid situation the use of social media is very important but it must be remembered that not everyone is active on this. A communication plan needs to be drawn up.

Cllr Mark Howard asked if there are funds to make contact with individual voters. Troy would encourage that when any contact is made or feed back received, details are maintained (subject to GDPR) to build a broad contact list moving on through the development of the NP. Cllr Bill Perry confirmed that there is probably no funding in the monies received from locality beyond what is stipulated in the T&Cs. If we want to take up Cllr Howard's suggestion we may be able to look to the Cookham Parish Council budget.

The WP unanimously agreed that Troy will present their initial list of ideas and to which comments are invited from the WP. It was also agreed that the WP will reach out to the suggested list of consultees and perhaps set up meeting etc as a start to encouraging wider participation. Cllr Bill Perry will draft a task list for each member of the WP.

Position of Bisham Parish Council

Cllr M Brar had asked if Bisham can join up with Cookham on a joint NP. It was felt that Bisham's needs and issues do not fit well with those of Cookham. It was unanimously agreed that the WP would politely decline the request to join the Cookham NP. Cllr Ian Wernham to write to them.

Position of RBWM

Cookham Parish Council have been in communication with the Head of Planning at RBWM and a meeting has been suggested. Adrian Waite indicated that his team were too busy until August with the LP but could just himself meet in the interim with Cllr Bill Perry and the Clerk. However, no date has been forthcoming as yet.

Jon Herbert agreed it was important to build relationships with RBWM as although the WP were the plan makers, RBWM were the implementers. There should be an early meeting re policies and to discuss what their package of helps consists of as this varies between areas. It was suggested that Troy act as the intermediaries with RBWM.

Jon Herbert explained that the plan is screened against the Strategic Environment Assessment so we need to check RBWM will do this. The Borough selects the examiner although we can nominate or comment on expressions of interest in this. RWMB receive a budget from the government to do this work. Troy can suggest recommendations for examiners. It was pointed out that RBWM are a long way off completing their BLP and that there is potential for a conflict of objectives.

Jon Herbert agreed to the idea that Troy be the intermediaries. Cllr Bill Perry to forward contact information.

It was agreed that the plan should concentrate on a small list of focused aspects/policies rather than too many and these can be identified early. This will help with the general understanding and involvement of the residents. The plan can be modified at later stages and indeed the

inspectorate would want to see a commitment to update the plan on a regular basis, between 2 and 10 years.

Currently the VDS is supplementary to the Local Plan so when this is finalised it leaves the VDS with no place. Therefore Jon advised that the VDS is integrated into NP by embedding key points into policy.

The emerging LP ran into problems at the examination process. It is not known how long it will be getting resolved or if it will be successful. If it is ultimately withdrawn the NP can help to fill the 'vacuum' of policies thus protecting Cookham.

Troy will send the vision of objectives - about 4/5 to go out to start the debate/conversations. Dick Scarf suggested the WP look at the list from Troy and identify the important planning policy related items. Jon pointed out that the job of the NP was to infill the areas of the BLP that Cookham do not agree on or that it does not cover. If the BLP is silent on or has less detail than needed, the NP can question and create policies or add Cookham specific policies.

Changes can be made to the NP once in place and these can be categorised (on a sliding scale) as either :

Material changes – e.g. allocating a new area of land for development – this would be subject to examination and another referendum

Non-Material changes – these may not be subject to examination, or perhaps examination would be required but not referendum

It was agreed that it would be beneficial to have a simple 'golden thread' running through the plan by using the Stanley Spencer views . Jon had consulted Historic England who agreed it would add artistic and cultural merit to the plan and would help to define a unique character to the area. Cllr Coker also suggested using links with Kenneth Grahame, author of Wind and the Willows.

When the plan goes to consultation it includes local land-owners and developers to add their ideas. CPC would consult for 14 weeks and then RBWM would further consult for 6 weeks. All comments are looked at by the examiners who ensure conformity to National Planning before it is passed into statutory planning policy. The NP will be a binding document, part of the BLP. However, people still have the right to appeal if refused planning permission.

Concern was raised over the ability of land owners to erect agricultural buildings nearby residential properties, potentially blocking views etc. Jon explained that the NP can include commentary on national policies but not change it. It was agreed that we need to make sure that the NP does not promise anything that National Policy can then override.

Lars Algren spoke about including ecological areas but did point out that even building are habitats for some species of wildlife/insects. Cllr Martin Coker said we need to balance biodiversity with flood risk management.

Once the initial ideas are circulated from Troy each person should respond directly to Cllr Bill Perry who will collate and summarise the responses before passing to Troy.

Report re Locality / Funding

The Locality grant of £10,000 has been received and includes the Covid bonus of £1000. We can apply for a further £8,000 for the design module – this is triggered by certain elements being in the plan include such things as the integrated VDS and specific input on the three allocated development sites in the proposed BLP.

Troy have applied for the design package and the forms used to write policies have been received free of charge. The application for the £8000 need to be submitted after the initial grant of £10,000 has been spent.

Date of Next meeting

The next meeting has been set as 6pm (?? not discussed) on 29th September 2020 to be held remotely.

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