

Attleborough Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Minutes of the above steering group meeting held on
Tuesday 17th March 2015 at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall.

1. INTRODUCTION

The meeting commenced at 6:30 p.m. with the chairman, Cllr. Middleton, advising that a great deal had happened since the last meeting but the most visible update was the release of the Attleborough Matters magazine and the members congratulated Ms. Watson-Brown and Mr. Kilby on their efforts. Cllr. Middleton explained that Cllr. Tyrer had been working full-time on the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) thanks to the generous contribution by Mr. Cracknell. That funding had now come to an end but at its March meeting, the Town Council had agreed a sum of £6000 to keep the support going for a further period of time. Cllr. Middleton added that the Council had also agreed to provide admin support with one of their administrators working additional hours, liaising with Cllr. Tyrer, with the primary functions of providing secretarial support and looking into future funding streams.

1.1. Present

Adrian Joel - Councillor for Breckland Council, Buckenham Ward.

Cliff Amos – Attleborough Heritage Group.

Colin Kilby – Company Director, Breckland Lodge Hotel.

Derek Smalley - Councillor for Old Buckenham Parish.

Edward Tyrer - Councillor for Attleborough Town Council, Queens Ward.

Lucy McLean - Practice Manager of Attleborough Surgeries.

Peter Thatcher – Chairman, Connaught Hall Committee

Richard Middleton - Chair & Councillor for Attleborough Town Council, Queens Ward.

Steve Hall - Representative of Attleborough Community Team.

Stuart Burns – Norfolk Traffic Management

Terry Cracknell - Representative from Business Forum.

Valerie Watson-Brown – Communication & Media Consultant

Vera Dale – Various including Patient Participation & Education

Tony Watling – Councillor for Besthorpe Parish Council.

Ms. McLean and Mrs. Dale were delayed at another meeting.

1.2. Absent

Phillip Leslie - Director of Eastern Attachments Limited

2. APOLOGIES

Keith Martin - Councillor for Breckland Council, Burgh/Haverscroft Ward.

Mary Ridgway – Attleborough Heritage Group.

Neil McShane - Head Teacher of Attleborough Academy Norfolk.

Phil Mileham - Breckland Council Deputy Planning Manager.

Roger Bond - Councillor for Attleborough Town Council, Burgh/Haverscroft Ward.

Sarah Foulger - Director of Banham Poultry Limited.

Dr Tom Fry - Doctor and Partner at Attleborough Surgeries.

Tony Bradstreet - Clerk to Besthorpe Parish Council.

Tony Perkins - Councillor for Attleborough Town Council, Queens Ward.

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 17th February 2015 were agreed by the members in attendance with no matters arising. Cllr. Middleton apologised for the delay in sending out the minutes and that as a result, some members had already made plans and were not available for this evening's meeting.

4. DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cllr. Middleton explained that Cllr. Tyrer had produced an outline which included options and objectives for the NP, broken down into sections and all members had received this. Cllr. Tyrer advised that the members had seen the draft structure of the plan at a previous meeting and while this would not change a great deal, it would evolve as more evidence and information became available. Cllr. Tyrer added that policies would follow but he first needed input from the working groups by the end of the following week on whether the plan covered all the specific objectives and options for each sector.

Over the previous few weeks, members of the group had had meetings with Breckland Council (BC) in an attempt to clarify what period the NP should cover, what growth figures should be used and the evidence base. Cllr. Tyrer explained that, currently the plan will be based on the 4000 homes referred to in the Core Strategy together with the evidence that had supported that document. However, Cllr. Tyrer added that BC has undertaken a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in conjunction with other LA's in Norfolk, which could see housing figures revised. The conclusions of the SHMA had been delayed but the outcome was expected within 2 months. If the group waited for the outcome of the SHMA before moving forward, it could cause an overall 12 month delay in the NP. Mr. Hall informed the group that he had spoken with Iain Withington at BC regarding the SHMA figures and was told that their next public consultation on the Breckland Local Plan was still intended for autumn. It was agreed that the group would move forward based on the information currently available but would be mindful that options should be as flexible as possible and that the plan would be reviewed as more information came through.

Cllr. Tyrer suggested that the group release 1 or 2 options at a time via the website and Attleborough Matters magazine over the next few months, asking for community feedback and then come up with a draft plan in late summer. However, he would like to first sit down with communication and media working group to discuss a strategy. Some items were not yet available for consultation, such as the health report which

would be available at the end of April, but there was plenty to discuss in the meantime, such as sports and leisure etc.

Cllr. Middleton asked for any more comments on the document and stressed the importance of the working groups feeding back to Cllr. Tyrer with their thoughts and ideas on the objectives and options by the end of the week in order not to delay progress. Mr. Cracknell suggested that group leaders be contacted asking them to reply by a certain date with a report or an indication of the earliest time that this would be available and Cllr. Middleton replied that this would be done. In the meantime, Cllr. Tyrer confirmed that he would be continuing to review and collate evidence.

- ❖ **ACTION POINT:** All working groups to feedback on specific objectives and options ASAP. [**Note:** an email was sent on 18 March to WG leads asking for responses to Cllr. Tyrer by 27 March.]

5. UPDATES

5.1. Employment

Mr. Kilby advised that there was little to update at this time with Cllr. Tyrer adding that there wasn't much change from the Core Strategy in that they needed to identify what employment land was needed and where. The group was still waiting for an OS mapping licence for illustration purposes. [**Note:** the Town Council now has a licence.]

Mr. Kilby reminded the group that Ms. Foulger had asked at the last meeting what else was needed from the employment working group and Cllr Middleton asked whether they had received any responses to the employment and expansion questions which had been sent out. Ms. Watson-Brown confirmed that they had so far only received a few replies so Cllr. Middleton asked that this be raised again at the next business meeting. [Mrs. Dale entered the meeting at 6:53 p.m.]

Mr. Kilby advised that the business forum was progressing well and had recently talked about the expansion at Wyatt's industrial area at Snetterton with 90 acres of industrial land around the new power station, with the excess energy from the power station being diverted back to Diss.

Mr. Kilby advised that the retailers' meeting had also been successful and that they were trying to set up a town festival. Cllr. Middleton asked whether attendee numbers were increasing and whether a further meeting was planned. Mr. Kilby replied that there were new representatives at the second meeting and Ms. Watson-Brown said that a representative from Harleston was coming to talk about their Town Team, which worked on improving their high street, to see if Attleborough could introduce something similar and they were just waiting on his availability. Cllr. Middleton asked that they chase this and arrange it ASAP. [**Note:** the next Retailer Meeting will be held on 30 April.]

Ms. Watson-Brown explained that they had got students from the school involved in the plan and they would work with other students on researching ideas and suggestions for the next meeting and Mr. Kilby confirmed that the pupils were confident and spoke well.

In addition, there had been a lot of talk at the retailers' meeting about the position of the market, parking and introducing weight restrictions at certain times of day. Cllr. Tyrer was investigating the suggestion of moving the market on to the High Street pavement or Queen's Square. With regard to parking, it was noted by a stall holder on the market that some people park long-term at Queen's Square to either lift-share or drop their children off at school, leaving their cars there so that they could guarantee a parking space when they needed to collect their children later. Although it had been thought of differently in the past, 'space blocking' was becoming more of an issue and the retailers at the meeting felt that introducing a charge for parking over 2 hours would now be beneficial. District Cllr. Joel reminded the group that this lack of spaces was also an issue for shoppers from surrounding villages when trying to find a space. However, he added that the car-parks belonged to BC and when this had been suggested before, the district council was categorical that it would not introduce parking charges and he felt this was unlikely to change after the May elections. Cllr. Middleton agreed but expressed the view that not all towns in Breckland had to have the same parking policies and the group must consult with the town on this growing problem. If it was something that the town wanted, it could be added to the NP. The group discussed alternatives to charging and locations for additional parking and possibly a transport hub. Cllr. Tyrer referred the group to the transport plan in the documentation, asking for feedback on a car-parking strategy.

- ❖ **ACTION POINT:** Mr. Kilby & Ms. Watson-Brown to chase local business for feedback on employment/expansion questions.
- ❖ **ACTION POINT:** Group members to give feedback to Cllr. Tyrer on car-parking strategy.

5.2. Sport & Leisure

Cllr. Middleton advised that the sports and leisure report had been received and the group now had to decide how best to share this information both with the local sports clubs and the wider public. Mr. Kilby and Ms. Watson-Brown would like to include the report in the next edition of the Attleborough Matters magazine. The group agreed that, like all NP options and ideas, it was very important that the report was presented in a balanced way during consultation to avoid prejudged or blinkered reactions. While it was understood that some suggestions in the report would seem controversial, this was necessary in order to generate discussions and ideas. It was proposed by Mr. Cracknell and seconded by Cllr. Tyrer that the sports and leisure working group be asked to release Ian Barclay's report by Wednesday 15th April and follow that up with a meeting with the local sports groups and then the general public.

[Ms. McLean arrived at 7:12 p.m.]

Mr. Hall advised that, based on population figures from 2011 which BC are using in their plan and on the basis of physical sports and leisure buildings in the district, BC are subsidising each resident of Thetford and Dereham by £47 while it was £11 for each Attleborough resident and he would send through this information to Mr. Kilby.

- ❖ **ACTION POINT:** Notify sports and leisure working group of requested release date. [Note: the meeting of sports groups will be on 29 April and the public meeting will be on 19 May.]
- ❖ **ACTION POINT:** Mr. Hall to send through sports subsidy figures to Mr. Kilby.

5.3. LEP (New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership)

Cllr. Middleton moved on to the LEP update as Cllr. Tyrer needed to leave the meeting early. Cllr. Tyrer explained that there was not much more to share but that there was still huge enthusiasm from the LEP building growth sector to use Attleborough as a case study. Cllr. Middleton asked Cllr. Tyrer to let the group know if there was anything they could do to aid the progress of this. [Cllr. Tyrer left the meeting at 7:27 p.m.]

- ❖ **ACTION POINT:** Cllr. Tyrer to inform the group if their input was needed to progress Attleborough as a LEP case study.

5.4. Health & Social Care

The group is aware that Mr. Hare and Ms. Manser had been instructed to compile a health and social care report. Mr. Cracknell had spoken to Ms. Manser the previous week but Ms. McLean advised that she not heard from the consultants to date. All were aware of the need to press on with this sector so Mr. Cracknell asked Ms. McLean to notify him if she had not received contact within the next 7 days.

District Cllr. Joel raised the idea of moving the doctor's surgeries to the Chapel Road school building but the group did not have any information in order to discuss this further at this time. Ms. McLean explained that she could not comment further as she had no knowledge of the site or whether it would satisfy compliance issues.

- ❖ **ACTION POINT:** Ms. McLean to notify Mr. Cracknell if no contact with consultants by 25th March.

5.5. Communications & Media

Ms. Watson-Brown advised that, as well as the publication of the first issue of 'Attleborough Matters', their working group had a communications update report which they would send for inclusion in the minutes. Ms. Watson -Brown explained that there were ongoing issues with the website which had caused delays for the communications group but this would hopefully be resolved on Thursday 19th March. However, the NP social media campaign was progressing well with active accounts for Facebook and Twitter and a presence intended for Streetlife, a community website.

There had been excellent input from the younger generation with 1 article from a pupil already in Attleborough Matters and another piece written on the health & social care topic. The business forum was working on encouraging the retail business forum in developing town centre activities. More leaflets advertising registration for the NP were being printed for local shops and businesses and Cllr. Perkins was noted as being successful in getting residents to complete these. The communications group had attended a Craft Day event, had made arrangements to attend the Heritage Group's spring fair and would be going to speak to students regarding the plan.

The focus for the following month would be the next edition of Attleborough Matters and content would be a key factor as registrations were not increasing as quickly as they had hoped. The group's media contacts wanted fresh aspects to report on so Ms. Watson-Brown said that they would like to move on to publicising information from the sports and leisure report and thereby get local sports groups to also push for registrations. Cllr. Middleton asked for any feedback on Ms. Watson-Brown's update and Mr. Cracknell replied that, when the magazine was delivered, there were some 500 hits on the website that evening alone so there was definitely interest. Mr. Kilby agreed that there had been good feedback from the magazine.

5.6. Education

Cllr. Middleton advised that he and Cllr Tyrer were going to County Hall on Wednesday 18th March to meet with officers to discuss, among other things, progress on determining a site for the new primary school. Mrs. Dale advised that, at a recent meeting with the school heads, completion of the school was still expected for September 2017 and the preferred location seemed to be on London Road.

Some members of the group were still investigating the possibility of moving the Academy at some point in future. Mr. Cracknell advised that while expensive (at least, £30million) it would bring about significant traffic improvements and open up land for retail in the centre of Attleborough. He acknowledged that this was a contentious proposal and was likely to be opposed by many but there was often traffic chaos in the town centre which would only get worse as the town grew. Mr. Hall added that they were putting ideas on the table now to look at any and all possible solutions. In terms of parking and transport, Mr. Hall felt that the NP should aspire to achieve major change rather than just 'making good', adding that big ideas, such as moving the Academy, may not be possible but that the group should get clear answers to these questions now before the Academy implemented its plans for sports facilities which would make any subsequent move unlikely.

District Cllr. Joel asked where it was proposed to site any such new high school and Mr. Hall answered that a new purpose-built Academy with great sports facilities on land to the south could be an option, adding that, north or south, there would always be an issue with crossing the railway line but that the suggested move would keep traffic out of the centre. In addition, the Education Department was already looking at primary school sites south of the railway line which developers would be asked to contribute towards so extending one of these to include land for an Academy was a

possibility. As to who builds and pays for the high school, Mr. Hall suggested that the existing site had a significant commercial retail value. Mrs. Dale said there had been talk of merging Old Buckenham and Attleborough High Schools, and moving them to Bunns Bank area in a previous town vision but she believed that the resulting school would be too large. Mr. Burns felt that if the schools did not move out of the town centre, the increasing volume of traffic passing by would mean a serious accident was likely and there would be very little that the town could do about the growing traffic problems. Mr. Kilby felt that a possible negative aspect was that any improvements for sports and leisure would be put on hold until the schools moved but Mr. Hall suggested that those leisure facilities could continue to be built but on a site large enough to also house a school in the future. Mrs. Dale said that, at a recent school heads meeting, Mr. McShane had advised that pupil numbers were expected to rise from 912 to 1400 and Mr. Hall clarified that these figures were again based on 4000 new homes. Cllr. Middleton said that he would mention the proposal again at the meeting with County officers. **[Note:** productive meeting with Children's Services on 18th March. They are still to decide on the site for the new Primary and would prefer London Rd if possible. Initial reaction to the proposal to move the Academy was negative but they understood that the problem of traffic may necessitate a re-think in time. They are keen to work with the group as the NP develops.]

5.7. Developer Group

Cllr. Middleton informed the group that the proposed development on Norwich Road had been turned down by BC that week. District Cllr. Joel said that he understood that the planning officer had recommended approval but that the application was refused by the committee because of the drainage issues. He added that the Environment Agency had said that there were ways of dealing with the water problems and the local river authority was supportive. District Cllr. Joel thought that the developer, Gladedale, would appeal and they had the opportunity to put in another application within 12 months. If the flooding issue could be resolved, it was difficult to see how the development could be refused. Given the plans inclusion of recreational land and education buildings, Cllr. Middleton stressed the importance of staying in communication with the developer in the meantime, to ensure that the town would get the most benefit from any successful application.

Cllr. Middleton advised that there was an upcoming meeting scheduled with Ptarmigan and the group would attempt to liaise with the developer about the NP policies in terms of housing. **[Note:** a positive meeting took place on 28th March at which site allocations and future liaison of policy were discussed. The developer was supportive of the direction the NP was taking and agreed there was scope to try and reach shared ideals for housing design and sustainability.]

Cllr. Middleton advised that he had spoken with Isobel Lockwood of Bidwells who were involved with the plans for the former Grampian factory. At a recent town council planning meeting, the clerk had been asked to write to Bidwells to request that they undertake a public exhibition of their plans rather than rely on online presentations. However, given the current condition of the site, its development was not felt to be

particularly contentious. [**Note:** Ms. Lockwood was at the meeting with the Ptarmigan representative on 28th March and agreed to work with the group as the plans for the Grampian site developed.]

Cllr. Middleton said that they were still working on appointing a chairperson for the developer liaison group due to the departure of the Bidwells representative who was intended for the role.

5.8. Transport

Cllr. Middleton reported that the recent external liaison group (ELG) meeting with Breckland and Norfolk County Council representatives was intended to look primarily at transport but had actually focused more on the Greater Attleborough Development Partnership (GADP). However, Mr. Hall updated the group on the transport discussions which took place towards the end of that meeting where Richard Doleman of Norfolk County Council had explained that the county council had obtained £4.6 million for transport projects in Attleborough. Mr. Doleman said that they had no projects in mind themselves but wanted ideas to come from the steering group and community. At this point, Mr. Hall stated that obviously there were some ideas at County Hall, such as the suggested traffic lights at Connaught Plain to try to help with increased traffic from the new Taylor Wimpey development. The group were aware that they now had to reply to Mr. Doleman quickly with their input on the town's traffic priorities or the county council would move forward regardless. There had been a suggestion that the monies be used to bring forward the link road project between Buckenham Road and London Road but the group would prefer to prioritise traffic issues in the town centre because they felt it was unlikely that the funds for these projects would be available at a later date. Mr. Hall added that the group already had some ideas of necessities for the town centre, such as car-parking but it was difficult to expand on these if it was unclear where they could be sited. Mr. Amos asked whether Cllr. Tyrer had already worked on some improvements ideas for Queens Square, Surrogate Street or Connaught Road, adding that there should be an overview with any ideas linking in with future plans. Cllr. Middleton replied that the transport working group, which currently comprised of Mr. Hall, Mr. Burns and Cllr. Tyrer, were working towards the next ELG on the 22nd April and invited other group members to become involved. Mr. Hall said that there was no easy solution but that they were looking at making smaller changes now with an eye on the bigger picture to avoid wasted time and funds on projects that would be undone in the near future. Mr. Kilby advised that the available funds had been mentioned at the recent retailer meeting but they would remind the retailers that their thoughts would be appreciated.

- ❖ **ACTION POINT:** Mr. Kilby to ask retailers for town centre traffic improvement ideas.
- ❖ **ACTION POINT:** All group members invited to participate in working groups.

5.9. Greater Attleborough Development Partnership

Cllr. Middleton went on to discuss the outcome of the ELG meeting in relation to the GADP. At that meeting, it was agreed that Richard Doleman would be the group's

contact point at Norfolk County Council and would be attending the upcoming education meeting. Cllr. Middleton said that it was made clear at the meeting that the partnership would develop upwards from the steering group and this was as a result of the sterling efforts by the committee members who had ensured the group had made significant and obvious progress since December 2014.

Cllr. Middleton raised the topic of BC having arranged funding for a NP co-ordinator; a one year post to ensure that the plans are coordinated and also hopefully assist in identifying funding resources. District Cllr. Joel advised that this was something he had pushed for, using Broadland Council's successful co-ordinator as an example and he reminded the group that Breckland is holding a NP seminar for parish and town councils on 27th March.

6. FUNDING

Cllr. Middleton advised that one of the Town Council administrators, Sandra Dewsbury, had been investigating funding opportunities over the last couple of days, coming up with a couple of options so far which Cllr. Tyrer would follow through on. One of these was the £7,000 government grant discussed at the ELG. District Cllr. Joel added that this grant would increase to £8,000 in April. Cllr. Middleton explained that BC had said that they would provide 50% match funding which could mean a significant boost to funds.

Cllr. Middleton wanted to reiterate the group's thanks to Mr. Cracknell and the business group for their support for the 'Attleborough Matters' magazine and to Mr. Cracknell for his funding of Cllr. Tyrer's dedicated employment on facilitating the plan which was much appreciated. As a result of this valued support, all had noticed how much further the group had progressed over the previous month.

7. NEXT STEPS

Cllr. Middleton explained that the 'next steps', where available, had been covered during the item discussions. In brief, the Objectives and Visions would be clarified within the next 10 days, information sharing on the sports and leisure report would be decided on shortly, the website problems would hopefully be resolved later that week and there would be some ideas coming forward on the transport sector.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1. Communication

Mr. Cracknell asked about communication improvements and the members agreed that they felt better informed.

8.2. Copy for 'Attleborough Matters' Magazine

Mr. Kilby and Ms. Watson-Brown asked the group to provide information in good time for the next edition of the magazine to allow them to complete the necessary editorial process as, despite deadlines and reminders for the previous edition, it had been a struggle to get information until the last minute.

❖ **ACTION POINT:** All members to send articles for magazine in a timely manner.

8.3. Capita Contact

Mr. Hall told the members that Martin Pendlebury Breckland Council's Director of Planning from Capita had been at the recent Attleborough Town Assembly event and had shown interest in engaging with the steering group. Mr. Hall suggested that Cllrs. Middleton and Tyrer make contact and Ms. Watson-Brown added that Mr. Pendlebury had already attended a breakfast business forum. Mr. Cracknell suggested that Mr. Pendlebury be added to the contacts database.

❖ **ACTION POINT:** Cllrs. Tyrer & Middleton to make contact with Mr. Pendlebury.

8.4. Leisure Group Info

Mr. Kilby asked members for details of all known leisure groups.

❖ **ACTION POINT:** Ms. Watson-Brown & Mr. Kilby to send their list of known sports clubs to the Sports & Leisure working group together with Mr. Thatcher and Mr. Amos who would reply with any additional groups.

8.5. "Attleborough; Past, Present & Future" Event

Mr. Thatcher reminded the members of the Heritage Group's spring event, "Attleborough; Past, Present & Future" to be held at Connaught Hall on Saturday 11th April 2015 at 7:30 p.m. and asked who would be attending from the steering group and if they needed any equipment or help.

❖ **ACTION POINT:** Mr. Kilby & Mr. Cracknell would be attending and would get in touch with the Heritage Group. Other members are invited to attend in support.

8.6. Doctor's Surgeries & 'Attleborough Matters' magazine

Mr. Cracknell asked whether the Doctors surgeries would be prepared to help distribute the Attleborough Matters magazine. Ms. Watson-Brown advised that copies had already been supplied. Ms. McLean replied that she had received a copy through the post.

9. NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 5th May at 6:30 p.m. at Attleborough Town Hall.

Chairman Cllr. Middleton brought the meeting to a close at 8:21 p.m., thanking everyone for their time.

(Notetaker: Sarah Seaman)