

Attleborough Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Minutes of the above steering group meeting held on
Tuesday 16th September 2014 at 6:30 p.m.

1. INTRODUCTION

The meeting commenced at 6:32 p.m. with the chairman, Cllr. Middleton, welcoming existing members and the new attendees:-

- Alison Cunningham and Jane Blackwell of Norfolk County Council who would talk about the County Council's education strategy and how it affects Attleborough
- Vera Dale, former town councillor and mayor, who would provide input on pre-school education and was also Chair of the Attleborough Surgeries Patient Participation Group.
- Stuart Burns who had experience in traffic management and had moved to Attleborough last year.

1.1. Present

Adrian Joel - Councillor for Breckland Council, Buckenham Ward.

Cliff Amos – Attleborough Heritage Group

Colin Kilby - Manager of Breckland Lodge Hotel.

Derek Smalley - Councillor for Old Buckenham Parish.

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

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

Mary Ridgeway – Attleborough Heritage Group

Neil McShane - Head Teacher of Attleborough Academy Norfolk.

Peter Thatcher – Chairman, Connaught Hall Committee

Phillip Leslie - Director of Eastern Attachments Limited

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

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

Stuart Burns – Norfolk Traffic Management

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

Vera Dale – Various including Patient Participation & pre-school education

Alison Cunningham – Norfolk CC Children's Services

Jane Blackwell – Norfolk CC Children's Services

1.2. Absent

Jayne Owen - Councillor for Attleborough Town Council, Queens Ward.

2. APOLOGIES

Lucy McLean - Practice Manager of Attleborough Surgeries.

Phil Mileham - Breckland Council Deputy Planning Manager.

Sarah Foulger - Director of Banham Poultry Limited.

Steve Hall - Representative of Attleborough Community Team.

Terry Cracknell - Representative from Business Forum.

Dr Tom Fry - Doctor and partner at Attleborough Surgeries.

Tony Bradstreet - Clerk to Besthorpe Parish Council.

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The committee members agreed to start at item 4 of the agenda, the Education Strategy, to allow the representatives from Norfolk Children's Services to make their presentation. On returning to item 3, Cllr. Middleton advised that the minutes had a number of action points which would be covered during the meeting and asked for comments. In relation to item 3.2.1., Mr. Amos advised that their group already had the various Abellio and Network Rail contacts but would continue to apply pressure where possible and they had been in touch with Mr. Freeman's office to ask for support in this. The minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 24th July 2014 were agreed by the members in attendance.

4. EDUCATION STRATEGY FOR ATTLEBOROUGH

Alison Cunningham explained that Jane Blackwell and she worked in the planning, organisation and improvement of education services in Norfolk. Ms. Cunningham's role is to examine how schools are organised and if necessary providing structural solutions for improvement. Ms. Blackwell's role involved the forecasting of educational requirements from data such as birth registrations, housing and current school availability.

Since May 2012, there had been various meetings with head teachers, governors and the TEN Group regarding how the education department should deal with significant growth of Attleborough. Together with Chris Hey, Head of Place Planning and Organisation at Norfolk County Council, they had produced an investment plan for Norfolk County schools, looking at the areas which will need considerable investment to deal with growth. They estimated that in the next 10-15 years, they would commission up to 20 new primary schools across county with 2 of those earmarked for Attleborough.

The County Council was now further down the line and was trying to tie together how best to use available funds to provide "a good school for every Norfolk learner". The Council's strategy is that if they build a new school, they would build a new primary school, rather than a separate infant and junior school. They try to commission a school which has at least 2 forms of entry; 420 pupils for a primary school.

At the moment there was no need for a new secondary school but it may be considered as a long term proposition if there was further growth in the area. They intended to reorganise schools in Attleborough to create 2 primaries; 1 on the current junior school site and 1 on a new site, south of town. The infant school would be moved from its current site to a new location and expanded; this would mean it would not be classified as a new school which would make things easier.

At their meeting in July, Children's Services were looking at moving the infant school in 2017. This would require a new building on a new site and a considerable amount of work to be carried out at the junior school to make it a primary school with the right facilities for reception and key stage one.

Ms. Blackwell went on to explain that they were considering two sites for the relocated primary school. The first at the Taylor Wimpey development on London Road which would require both the site to be purchased by the Council and a change of use application from retail/business and the second, an area of farmland owned by the Council on Hargham Road. Both sites would be big enough but each had issues. Ms. Cunningham added that Norfolk Property Services had been commissioned to carry out feasibility studies on the junior school and a brief had been sent out to the school earlier in the week. They hoped the resulting study would be with them fairly quickly advising what needed to be done to bring the junior school up to the necessary standard. The funding to effect the change had been agreed and allocated by the Council and so once the site had been chosen, they would be moving swiftly.

District Cllr. Joel asked whether, once it moves to Old Buckenham, the Chapel Road School site had been considered. Ms. Blackwell advised that the site was too small and District Cllr. Martin reminded the committee that only the school site was owned by the County Council, with the playing field owned by Breckland Council.

Cllr. Middleton asked who would make the final decision on the site, Norfolk Children's Services or Norfolk Property Services, and Ms. Blackwell advised that it would be Children's Services. Cllr. Middleton advised that, if its change of use could be agreed with Breckland, the steering group preferred the Taylor Wimpey site.

Cllr. Middleton explained that previously there had been plans for 3 schools, one in the east, west and south which had been part of Breckland's Core Strategy. Cllr. Tyrer told the committee that the majority of housing was thought to be going south of the railway line and Ms. Cunningham would take all this information back to their department and Chris Hey. Ms. Cunningham wasn't sure how the CPG (Capital Priorities Group) worked but would find out whether there was an opportunity for the steering group to speak with those who decided on the site or perhaps send a letter of recommendation.

Cllr. Tyrer reminded the attendees that there were projections that Attleborough would have a further 4000 houses across 15-20 years and asked whether the plans for 2 primary schools would cover the full expansion or the immediate 10 years. Ms. Cunningham said that they knew how many children had been born in the catchment area roughly so would know how many children they would be catering for in 2017 but were less certain numbers beyond then. The aim was to create a school on the new site as a 2 form entry but with the infrastructure to become a 3 form entry which was a model used in Queen's Hill, Wymondham. Cllr. Tyrer advised that there wouldn't be a sudden influx as the rate of new building in the area had reached maximum capacity due to a lack of skills and materials. District Cllr. Martin confirmed that the Taylor Wimpey site of 375 houses was to be developed over the next 9 years. District Cllr. Martin added that the projected houses were coming off the

suggested 4000 but that they would get to the point where they would say “no more”. District Cllr Joel agreed that, with the Taylor Wimpey and other developments, 1200 was a realistic figure for planned new housing. Mr. Burns reminded the committee that once the Elvedon bypass was complete at the end of the year and travel time to Cambridge and London reduced, there could be an influx of commuters. Ms. Cunningham advised that the developers were aware of these factors and that Children’s Services hoped to be ready with spare capacity. The steering group had been advised by Taylor Wimpey that, while they had spoken informally with Norfolk Property Services about locating the school on the site, they were not clear about the plans for the school. Cllr. Middleton would like Children’s Services involved in discussions with developers to talk about timescales for delivery and funding.

Cllr. Middleton asked if the allocated money must be spent by 2017. Ms. Cunningham advised that it had been a long process which had many stages but a decision was expected soon.

District Cllr. Martin asked whether the junior school would involve a remodel or an extension. Ms. Cunningham replied that it wouldn’t need to be expanded a great deal as pupil numbers would not be much different but it would need to be remodelled to provide 2 proper reception classrooms with free access, smaller toilets and all things necessary for younger age children. The brief is clear on what is required and NPS would work with the school over the next term to iron this out.

Cllr. Bond asked for clarification that the infant school would move out of the existing site and into a new site which Ms. Cunningham confirmed.

Mrs. Dale asked about nursery provision as there were 4 nurseries in area which would be affected by whatever was built and there were no nurseries in the Attleborough schools at present. Ms. Cunningham explained that they it was likely that they would have pre-school provision on site but that did not mean that the school would run it. It could be privately run but in the early years, the strategic commission team was responsible for this.

Cllr. Perkins reminded the group that the area had already seen a closure notice for Eccles School and asked whether there would be any similar effects to the other villages around. Ms. Cunningham replied that it was difficult to foresee as there was a necklace effect of small schools around any town. Quite a lot of children from the Attleborough catchment went to other schools such as Old Buckenham but Ms. Cunningham explained that sometimes it did work the other way with pulling pupils in from the outer villages. Children’s Services were trying to look at opportunities, where there were small schools and growth allows, to move the school, as with Attleborough Infant, rather than commission a new one.

With no further questions from the group, Cllr. Middleton thanked Ms. Cunningham and Ms. Blackwell and said that the group would be in touch.

[Ms. Cunningham and Ms. Blackwell left the meeting and the committee returned to item 3 on the agenda which related to the minutes of the previous meeting.]

5. UPDATES

5.1. Employment

Mr. Leslie explained that they had recently had the business forum breakfast where Cllr. Perkins had made a presentation. As a result, the group had been invited to mark the completion of the A11 dualling with an event. The business forum was willing to help organise the event which could coincide with starting mobile presentations to the wider public. Mr. Leslie advised that the forum were supportive of the group and they had since had several businesses willing to help get information out to the wider community, which they would now need to organise. Cllr. Perkins felt that the A11 event would be a good opportunity to show what the group were doing, in the longer term, not just the short term. Cllr. Middleton advised that Thetford were having an A11 festival but District Cllr. Martin was unsure if Breckland Council were going to mark the occasion.

5.2. Sport & Leisure

Cllr. Bond advised that the consultant had been appointed and they had a meeting where they had gathered information and contact details of those with sports interests. The consultant had been shown facilities at the academy by Mr. McShane. Cllr. Bond had not had any feedback from the consultant from his tour of facilities in the town but was expecting the study to be complete in 10 – 12 weeks; he would circulate information as it arrived. Cllr. Perkins expanded on the tour, explaining that the consultant had not given much away apart from a few raised eyebrows but it seemed clear that he had the necessary experience in the field so overall they were quietly confident in his abilities. Cllr. Perkins congratulated Cllr. Bond on the selection, saying that they were excited to see what came back in the report. Mr. Kilby confirmed that they had got the impression that a town the size of Attleborough should have significantly better facilities than currently available at the Football Club's Station Road site but that the Gaymers site was more up to standard. The tour of sports facilities ended with the boxing club which was the prize finish, given their excellent facilities and it was hoped that the rest of the sports could be brought up to that standard. They had then gone to visit Connaught Hall where Mr. Thatcher explained that he had showed the consultant around the Hall and he agreed that he seemed well informed.

Cllr. Middleton asked Mr. McShane whether there was any more news from the TEN Group on development plans which there was not. Cllr. Middleton advised the group that tying the main sports facilities to the school seemed the best course of action but that there was also a need for facilities around the town. The group must now find how best this would work.

5.3. Health & Social Care

Cllr. Middleton advised that there were no updates in this area at this time.

5.4. Communication/Media

Mr. Kilby said that they had asked Valerie Watson-Brown from the Lively Crew, who organised the business forum meetings, to produce a marketing proposition to help

the group as she had the skills, contacts and know-how with a team already in place. If the group wished, she would be happy to put forward a presentation of what she could do to help.

Mr. Leslie explained that they had a way of using Facebook via the Town Council website to obtain email addresses which would save a lot of work and Mr. Kilby agreed that, as the group came up with items they wanted to publicise, an email hit was probably the best and most economical method to advertise.

Cllr. Tyrer asked about the Academy pupils becoming involved as the “Attleborough Times” was already running and it would be a good exercise for students to use that as a medium as well. Cllr. Middleton referred to Liz Wrigley’s report which suggested tying in all websites, including the school intranet. Mr. McShane agreed that the academy could be involved in that way. Mr. Kilby said that now there was a new Town Clerk, there would be more information going out and that Cllr Perkins had asked businesses at the forum to go onto the site to input their details.

5.5. Town Website

Mr. Leslie had prepared some slides to show the work carried out on the town council website, www.attleboroughtc.org.uk. Going through the presentation, Mr. Leslie showed the interactivity of the site and it’s connectivity with social networking, especially relating to the Neighbourhood Plan where people could add comments. While still awaiting more information from the school, health etc., a great deal of work had been carried out on the back-end design of the site so that it would be easy to find, run and update going forwards. The site was mobile compatible and Mr. Leslie asked the committee members to review the site and come forward with suggestions and ideas as they want the site to be as user-friendly as possible.

Cllr. Middleton asked the community groups to provide links for adding to the website. Mr. Thatcher agreed that the Connaught Hall could have significant input. Mr. Leslie added that they wanted the site to be a hub for the community, with a ‘What’s on’ calendar for the town and details of local businesses and attractions.

Ms. Ridgeway asked who was in charge of the website and whether anyone could add information. Mr. Leslie replied that the new Town Clerk had had the necessary training with technical support from the web designer and Mr. Leslie. Ms. Ridgeway asked whether there was a comments section and Mr. Leslie replied there was not, at this time.

Mr. McShane recommended adding Twitter to the site as soon as possible. Mr. Leslie explained that the site had been developed with this in mind and it would just require a small adjustment in the settings to change the scrolling newsfeed into a Twitter feed but as requested, they were starting off just with Facebook for now. Cllr. Middleton advised that the Town Council would probably want to limit the Twitter feed to send out information rather than commentary. Cllr. Perkins offered the example of Swaffham Town Council which does a significant amount of promotion via Twitter.

District Cllr. Joel asked about business advertisements on the site. Mr. Leslie advised that there was a business directory which had been left free of charge but that could be revenue source later, if ratified by the Council.

Cllr. Smalley asked about alternatives for people who didn't have internet access. Mr. Leslie replied that there would be a week-long mobile presentation in various locations which would be advertised in advance. In each location, there would be plans, slides and posters and a demonstrator there to talk with visitors. Information would also be distributed by the media e.g. Mercury, Dispatch etc. and there would be flyers distributed from schools and businesses which would include a post address if people preferred to make comment to the clerk by mail.

Mr. Leslie asked for comments and suggestions for additions urgently as they would like the site to go live ASAP and to prepare the mobile presentation slides. District Cllr. Martin reminded the group that Breckland Council 'Recycling Revolution' roadshow was coming to Sainsburys on 1st October. Mr. Leslie felt it was important to make sure that their launch didn't clash with other events. As to a launch date, the dualling of the A11 event was to be held at the beginning of November which gave them an achievable six weeks to complete their presentation and this would then be taken from place to place including the Christmas carnival. Cllr. Middleton thanked the team for their work.

5.6. Developer Group

Cllr. Tyrer explained that they had had numerous discussions on how best to get developers together. As individuals they were happy to come to the Town council, although probably guarded, but to get them into a group was more difficult. The group had been in discussions with Paul Clarke from Bidwells, who also represents Ptarmigan, to see whether he would like to chair a developer sub group together to discuss their aspirations and have open discussions about what we would like to see. They were hoping to soon have a meeting with Mr. Clarke. Ptarmigan were supportive and this would be a big step forward in starting negotiations. Cllr. Middleton felt that this would help the group try to co-ordinate contributions and also ascertain timescales.

At this point, Cllr. Tyrer referred to the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), which he said was the main vehicle that the government sees as now developing growth within the UK. The New Anglia LEP covers Norfolk and Suffolk and has set up a group called 'Building Growth' a small group of individuals, businesses and consultants who are looking at how to proceed over the coming years. It was early days but Cllr. Tyrer suggested to the group that the LEP could be asked to use Attleborough as a case study. Attleborough was on the A11 with businesses that wanted to expand and it needed facilities, education and skills. These are all areas that the LEP are looking for and perhaps they would like to use Attleborough as a case study which could focus the whole of the LEP, its considerable power, funding, expertise, publicity and influence, to develop a plan. While unsure whether being first adopters would be a good or bad thing, Cllr. Bond agreed that this was a strategic consultation and if there was a model that worked, there was more opportunity of getting funding from central government. Cllr. Perkins cautioned that, as a case study, Attleborough would be a goldfish in a bowl. Cllr. Tyrer felt that this may give incentive to move forward, bring in additional funds and could help bring Breckland Council on board. Cllr. Middleton agreed that there may be opportunities and that Attleborough had many very successful and leading companies, some of whom were in green economies which Cllr. Tyrer advised was

part of the LEP remit. Cllr. Middleton explained that it was early days but they should keep the committee informed.

5.7. Transport

Cllr. Middleton updated the group that the transport reports were on the Breckland Council website but October would be the earliest time that Breckland would make a decision on the link road. Cllr. Tyrer advised that they were still attempting to clarify with the County Council on the availability of the LEP's 4.6 million funds. They should be developing the infrastructure, in particular the cycle networks but there was no further news on that. Cllr. Bond asked if there were any dates in mind and Cllr. Middleton replied that the cabinet was scheduled to discuss the link road at the end of October.

Mr. Amos said that he had reviewed the proposals for the station road area, explaining that Ms. Wrigley's report had assumed that the plan included a bus station but that the plan they had put together was just for the railway station with the requirement for occasional use by buses when something went wrong with the rail system. However, they had looked a little further afield and had some extra ideas for more parking, handing out some additional plans to the committee, showing how it could work and how it had changed since 1971. They had various ideas which included moving the football club to another area which opened up land to put in a new Connaught Hall, leaving the whole existing Connaught Hall area for a health village. Mr. Kilby asked if it was too early to put a PDF of these ideas on to the website. Cllr. Perkins said that there was some provision for buses on the Banham Poultry site. Mr. Leslie added that George Freeman M.P. was keen to bring everything together in a 'hub' and Mr. Amos envisaged small local buses circulating around the villages to connect to the town hub but stated that these were all still rough ideas. Cllr. Middleton replied that these were the sorts of things that the group wanted to see and was the purpose of the interactive map. Mr. Leslie said that once the group felt comfortable with these ideas being shared they could be added to the website with Cllr. Tyrer asking that it was made clear that these were just ideas and suggestions at this stage. Cllr. Middleton said that once the Health and Social Care and Sports and Leisure reports were in, they could formulate 2 or 3 of the ideas to go out to the public for more consultation

6. REVIEW OF LIZ WRIGLEY REPORT

Cllr. Middleton went through the report with the group which included some small easy wins which may be overtaken by events but, for example, if parking on the one way system was removed, how would people get to the Library? The library would be happy to move from Connaught Road as long as there was somewhere suitable to move to, such as alongside sports or community facilities. All they would need was a room for books, coffee shop and toilets and it could be attached to the Connaught Hall, community centre or sports hall but this would need to be looked at further. Cllr. Middleton explained that they knew the size of library that the town needed as they had spoken with the Head of Libraries but getting a new building would be hard because no-one is going to pay for 300 square metres which is what Attleborough needs. Funds for the library go to the County Council but doesn't get spent on Attleborough library because the existing building can't be expanded. There are covenants on the land but the library representatives do not think these are too onerous and they don't think there would be too many difficulties in moving. Ms. Wrigley came up with the idea of reusing the land for sheltered housing as it backs

on to Holly Court but Norfolk Property Services would want to realise as much profit as possible from the land so this would need to be considered.

Cllr. Middleton continued that, bearing in mind that Ms. Wrigley was only there for a relatively short time, the report had some good ideas of what the group need to do. There was a decision to be faced, in how the plan would relate to the district plan. The land owners needed to be fully engaged, which they were trying to do through developer group. The group needed alternatives and to define the boundaries and timetable which they would talk about shortly. Cllr. Middleton explained that Mr. Cracknell had sponsored Ms. Wrigley and in order not to waste time with too many questions or emails, these should be directed via Mr. Cracknell. The committee felt that they should wait until they have at least the sports and leisure report and a programme/timetable before taking things further.

7. PROGRESS WITH BRECKLAND LOCAL PLAN

District Cllr. Martin explained that things were ongoing but that the public impression is that there is no infrastructure or schools being planned etc. but there is a lot going on. Cllr. Middleton said he had spoken to Mr. Mileham and they have a timetable for pushing issues and options, which would be October-time, with a consultation coming in the New Year. Mr. Mileham had advised that, while he wasn't trying to dictate progress, the group should look at its timetable to make sure there was no conflict. Breckland was looking to complete the local plan in 2017. District Cllr. Joel added that when there was more information on issues and options, Breckland Council would then go in to site specifics. District Cllr. Martin confirmed that the plan covered the whole of Breckland areas and there was a real discussion at Breckland about why a lot of the villages couldn't each take a number of the houses and they were pushing that, e.g. a dozen here or there. District Cllr. Joel suggested they went to the Parish Councils to ask them how they saw their village in 20 years' time and for them to come back with ideas, asking the Parish what they actually wanted. Cllr. Tyrer felt that the group needed to get their plan into the draft local plan, as if the group fed its plan into the site specifics, the local plan had to pick that up and it couldn't be overridden.

8. MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

Cllr. Middleton had spoken to Mr. Mileham about the Memorandum of Agreement as a few members had reviewed it and weren't overly happy. The point Mr. Mileham made was that the local plan would lay down policies and probably lay down quantum of housing. The group would like a say in location of where it goes as it fits in with plan. The group was concerned that it didn't appear to have any say in employment, housing location and to some extent the quantum. While they probably didn't have any say in the link road or some other areas of transport, the group would have input in terms of town centre traffic but the first bullet point of the agreement, which included employment, was as instrumental in forming the Neighbourhood plan as it was the local plan. Mr. Mileham was currently on holiday but was pretty relaxed about the document so the agreement would be reworded and Mr. Mileham understood the group's concern. Cllr. Middleton asked if the committee was happy to leave this with Cllrs. Tyrer, Bond, Perkins and himself who would hopefully have something they could agree at the next meeting. The issues affect both plans but the group wanted more shared ownership. While it understood that

Breckland had to put the plan together, Breckland would understand that the steering group want some say in it.

9. NEXT STEPS

Cllr. Middleton went through the continued work of the group. The communication and media team would examine Valerie Watson Brown's proposals. The steering group hadn't yet heard back from the consultants which would be November now. The employment group would work with the LEP. Cllr. Tyrer said that the big issues they had to face was coming up with a programme over the next couple of weeks and draft a timetable. Cllr. Bond felt that once they could assimilate the various sections of health and sport into an urban design model to show people, there could be meaningful discussion. Cllr Middleton reminded the committee that there would be an election the following year which could affect the 6 District and Town Councillor members of the committee and would also mean that there could be political changes. Therefore the steering group should aim for an initial consultation with the community for the spring of next year. Mr. Kilby asked if anyone in the committee knew of anyone who wanted to be involved in the media and communication side. District Cllr. Joel suggest that although they couldn't vote at the cabinet meeting regarding the link road, they could speak and could give feedback but District Cllr. Martin felt that they would need to make sure all District councillors covering Attleborough attended the cabinet meeting when the date was set. Cllr. Middleton replied that they would discuss this further at the next meeting and would ask Mr. Mileham about finalised dates.

District Cllr. Joel asked where the money was coming from for consultants and whether they had enough. Cllr. Middleton replied that they were using the planning vanguard fund and there would be enough to pay for the 2 reports they have commissioned but no more. Hopefully the new town clerk would be able to start to find new funds. Mr. Leslie and Cllr. Tyrer felt that companies would be prepared to contribute once they could see something happening and the group had something to show.

10. NEXT MEETING

It was decided that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 14th October at 6:30 p.m. at Attleborough Town Hall.

Cllr. Middleton brought the meeting to a close at time 8:20p.m. and thanked everyone for their time.

(Notetaker: Sarah Seaman)