

ATTLEBOROUGH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the above steering group meeting held at
Attleborough Town Hall, Queens Square, Attleborough, Norfolk
on Tuesday 18th February at 6:30 p.m.

1. INTRODUCTION

The meeting commenced at 6:32 p.m. and the Chair, Cllr. Middleton, thanked members for attending, acknowledging that it had been a while since the last meeting and explaining that the main purpose was to reset the work streams in order to progress matters. The aim was to get some proposals to take to the Town Council, to discuss funding and to look at alternative funding options.

1.1. Present

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

Phil Mileham - Breckland District Council Planning Policy Team Leader.

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

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

Derek Smalley - Councillor for Old Buckenham Parish.

Adrian Joel - Councillor for Breckland District Council, Buckenham Ward.

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

Terry Cracknell - Representative from Chamber of Trade.

Colin Kilby - Manager of Breckland Lodge Hotel.

Alistair Martin - Doctor and partner at Attleborough Surgeries.

Tony Bradstreet - Clerk to Besthorpe Parish Council.

1.2. Absent

Phillip Leslie - Director of Eastern Attachments Limited.

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

2. APOLOGIES

Sarah Foulger - Director of Banham Poultry Limited

Lucy McLean - Practice Manager of Attleborough Surgeries.

Neil McShane - Head Teacher of Attleborough High School.

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

Steve Hall - Representative of Attleborough Community Team.

3. UPDATES

Cllr. Middleton went around the room to get an update from the groups in attendance.

3.1. Infrastructure

Cllr. Middleton explained that there was no further progress on infrastructure but that he had had a meeting with Mr McShane the previous week and there had also been some discussion with Attleborough Surgeries which would be covered later in the meeting. Mr. McShane is currently heavily involved in transferring the school from state to academy but he is still on board with trying to utilise the neighbourhood plan to develop the school. The TEN Group (Transforming Education in Norfolk) is also interested in being involved. On 17/02/14 Norfolk County Council were due to begin a rewrite of their strategy for schools in Attleborough; a consultation which was due to finish in April. Chris Hey of the County Council was involved and the infrastructure group will get in touch with him after half-term to find out more how many schools are suggested and where.

In terms of the sports hall and facilities, the group had been in touch with Gladedale Estates who were currently offering only the fields behind the school so more negotiation would be required. Mr. McShane was supportive of a proposal to see that area developed into a sports hall facility. There would need to be further discussion with the TEN Group regarding funding and Mr. McShane had passed on the name of the Ten Group Facilities Director, Stuart Molineaux, who Cllr. Bond also knew. Cllr. Tyrer has a meeting scheduled on 27/02/14 with Dick Palmer, TEN Group Chairman.

3.2. Health & Social Care

Cllr. Middleton deferred to Dr. Alistair Martin who explained that there had been no major change. Rather than look elsewhere, the doctors felt that the Station Rd site was the preferred area at the present time, if they were able to negotiate with NHS England regarding the next door health clinic. Having spent a great deal of money over the last couple of years updating the Station Road site and investing in improvements, they would like to build on that rather than abandon it. Dr. Martin was interested to hear about the contact with Gladedale as they had looked at working with them previously but nothing had come of it.

Mr. Cracknell asked whether the doctors were more interested in the primary care aspect rather than the social care side and Dr. Martin replied that it would be great to dovetail the two as that is the way things are progressing politically. More joined up social and health care services would be very interesting but Dr. Martin wasn't clear on how that could be achieved. The group needed to look at linking the health and social care sides which may bring the potential of more funding. Cllr. Middleton said that they would revisit this but for now should carry on with the update, moving on to employment.

3.3. Employment

Cllr. Perkins advised the group that they had had good meetings between themselves prior to Christmas but since then things had slowed down. Phillip Leslie of their group wasn't at the meeting but Cllr. Perkins explained that the general

consensus was that a lot of the employment potential rested on the need for the link road from the old A11 to Old Buckenham. Where and when this link road would be supplied would provide an anchor for business and development opportunities. Victory Park was an ongoing topic and there were businesses willing to expand along that side of town but the group must capitalise on this now or it will be a missed opportunity.

3.4. LABV Project

Cllr. Middleton then raised the topic of the LABV project (Local Asset Backed Vehicle) in which Breckland had itemised all its assets and was looking at going into partnership with the private sector to develop those assets; industrial parks, car parks (in all market towns) and open spaces. The latter had raised particular concerns at the LABV meeting. As part of the process, Breckland Council had put forward all assets but that didn't mean that they were all going to be developed. In Attleborough, Breckland were considering Haverscoft Industrial Estate and Victory Park, Edenside and Queens Square car-parks and the field next to Chapel Road School. Cllr. Perkins said that there had been a big article in the EDP that day and he was concerned that the article gave the impression that if Breckland were to sell off green spaces that they owned in towns, they would replace these with other land outside of town which he felt was going round in circles. Cllr. Middleton advised that the LABV project was not being decided on until September. District Cllr. Joel said that there was a lot of interest from businesses but possibly initially looking at putting money into larger areas such as Thetford. District Cllr. Joel reminded the group that Queens Square car-park will soon be resurfaced and Mr. Cracknell agreed that this would be a waste of money if the area was to be developed. Cllr. Middleton felt that if there was to be development in the centre of town, the group should get on board as soon as possible with a private partner and Mr. Cracknell added that there were also other opportunities in Victory Park.

Phil Mileham of Breckland District Council explained that the LABV project will be subject to further discussion and would have to come through the normal planning process, that there would be a mix of sites and not all would be progressed to development. Cllr. Middleton said that there was a long way to go but it could be an opportunity to get developers on board now to get what the town wants.

3.5. District Council & Sports Education Facilities

District Cllr. Martin explained that District Cllr. Jenny North and he were going to a meeting the following day where the Attleborough and Swaffham academies, together with their facilities, would be discussed. He hoped that the meeting would reveal how far any plans had progressed.

3.6. Transport & Water

Cllr. Middleton asked Mr. Mileham about transport reports who replied that transport was to go before the local planning group of Breckland District Council in October. Mr Mileham advised that there were no updates on the water cycle infrastructure.

3.7. Communication

At this point, Mr. Cracknell highlighted the need for good 2 way communication with Breckland Council. He felt that all councils should be working together now as, over the last 10 years, there had been many discussions on the same topics that were being raised now by the steering group and he wanted to see progress. He stressed the importance of Breckland Council's responsibility to look after the town and parishes, to work together and keep the residents informed.

District Cllr. Joel suggested inviting the leader of the council, District Cllr. Michael Wassel to the next meeting as the local plan and neighbourhood plan should run in parallel together and asked if a copy of the transport plan from Breckland had been sent to the committee.

4. PROPOSALS FOR TAKING FORWARD INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Cllr. Middleton had shared a document with proposals for work streams which would now be discussed further.

4.1. Project Structure

Cllr. Middleton explained that the group had become aware that the working group structure was not working as hoped and that it needed to be smaller scale with more specific areas:-

- Health & Social Care
- Transport & Infrastructure
- Education
- Sports & Community Facilities.

These are the 4 areas which the group feel are small and focused enough to be able to discover what is needed. The group needs to think about what it wants to produce and how to consult with the public to get their views. Housing and urban design is important but at this early stage, the group should begin with the areas concerning health and social care, education and sports and community facilities. The transport section goes on in the background at Breckland Council but the group will need to keep in touch with that. Cllrs. Middleton, Bond and Tyrer had been discussion on how best to achieve this and felt that it would be reasonable to spend a small sum on a consultation on each topic to provide the group with planning ideas and concepts to be put out to the public. A group who work on health and social care had expressed interest and there was expertise within the county that had taken a Waveney sports centre from council-run to charitable trust. Such consultation would not be hugely expensive and would give the group a push. The working groups previously set up within the group could identify the issues but did not have the expertise to come up with solution proposals.

5. FUNDING & PROCUREMENT

5.1. Sources

District Cllr. Joel asked where the money to pay these consultants would come from. Cllr. Middleton replied that there was Neighbourhood Plan Vanguard funding available and that the group may be able to get private money from companies etc. to help pay for it. The group were not yet sure what grants are available but the health and social care advisors that they had spoken with might help identify potential sources of funding. In addition, bringing in developers may also be source. Cllr. Middleton expressed the importance that the group find the funds and asked for comments.

Mr. Mileham asked whether the new slimmed down topics would trigger a change in the neighbourhood plan vision, reducing the range of things being looked at. He explained that, back in October, there was a balance between what the local plan will cover and what the neighbourhood plan would cover and there needed to be a memorandum of understanding so work wasn't duplicated; what the neighbourhood plan didn't pick up, would be in the local plan. Cllr. Middleton agreed that it was not the intention of the group to work separately from the local plan but that the neighbourhood plan hoped to get things underway with good ideas and legitimate investigations which Breckland would then take on board and assist further with funding. Mr. Mileham replied that there was a reasonable amount of money still available from the neighbourhood plan vanguards but he suspected that this would not cover all expenditure and that the group would need, for example, to find funding for printing publications or specialist evidence or technical work which he wanted the group to bear in mind. Cllr. Middleton confirmed that the group was very much aware of funding issues but that a lot of the work had already been done by Breckland Council for the core strategy and ASHAAP (Attleborough and Snetterton Heath Area Action Plan). Cllr. Middleton felt that the matter had been studied enough and that it was now time to bring the information together and get out to talk to people on the ground and find out what could be done. Mr. Mileham agreed that it was too early to say and that funding would generate options but wanted to remind the group that even if Breckland Council had done some work for the local plan, the neighbourhood plan may need to cover itself with similar reports, the strategic environment plan for one. District Cllr. Joel advised that there was a £7,000 grant available from the government for neighbourhood plan work and that Cringleford had recently completed their plan. Mr. Cracknell advised that he already had a copy of that plan which was readily available and he would pass on details of.

Cllr. Middleton advised that they would complete a technical review to ensure compliance and that this would be raised in later meetings with Breckland Council. The group wanted to make sure everything sent out to the consultants was correct and Breckland would be involved in making sure of that. To start with, the group need to get some realistic options for people to talk about, initially concentrating on the health and social care sector where they would engage with various elements such as social services, housing providers, primary/secondary care providers and sections of the community to see what is felt is required and what interest there is out there to actually provide those services. Cllr. Middleton asked for an update from the funding group. Cllr. Perkins said that he and Mr. Kilby would look at raising funds and contributions from local businesses etc.

Cllr. Middleton advised that there were sufficient funds in the neighbourhood plan vanguard fund to get 2 or 3 studies. Cllr. Bond asked if it was too early to get developers, who were interested, together to discuss funding. Cllr. Middleton confirmed that it was not too early as 2 or 3 had already expressed a desire to talk and since they would provide the majority of the money, it would make sense to have them involved at the outset.

Mr. Cracknell said that the group did need to have a blueprint first, such as Mr. McShane had suggested for the sports hall, adding that in his fund-raising experience if people could see the idea, they might donate. Cllr. Middleton agreed that people were tired of ideas running out of steam and this was why it was important to get the health and social care issue off the ground first of all. The group would talk to Gladedale, the TEN Group and other interested parties but if they could concentrate on one issue at a time, there should be progress. District Cllr. Joel agreed that health and social care affected everyone and District Cllr. Martin stressed the importance of giving people a vision, such as the existing link road and Banham Poultry development. Cllr. Middleton advised that the health and social care project should also look at the Banham Poultry site and this should be discussed more with Ms. Foulger of Banham Poultry. Cllr. Middleton advised that the local MP, George Freeman, was supporting improvements to the Attleborough railway station and crossing and would help to get Network Rail and Abellio Greater Anglia to the table, both of whom were notoriously difficult to contact and had not yet responded. Mr. Mileham confirmed that Breckland District Council had similar difficulties. Mr. Cracknell suggested that Network Rail help pay for a rail crossing and Cllr. Middleton agreed that if Network Rail wants to get rid of level crossings, they would need to suggest alternatives and provide some of the necessary funding, so must become involved.

Cllr. Perkins raised the topic of the vacant County Council-owned land where the South Norfolk Tattoo had been held in previous years, on Station Road and on the opposite side to Banham Poultry. Cllr. Middleton felt that providing a viable sports complex outside of school would be difficult. Cllr. Perkins explained that his group had been investigating further and felt that the town was seriously lacking in general sports facilities; there was no rugby club, no golf club and no cricket team. The town had the best boxing club in Norfolk together with the football teams but other teams were seriously lacking and the town should push to get that going as his group felt that top class facilities would encourage teams and players. Mr. Cracknell suggested getting Sport England involved and Cllr. Middleton agreed that the group needed to get someone with expertise to move things forward. Mr. Kilby asked if moving the station itself was still an option that was being considered and Cllr. Middleton replied that this would be up to Network Rail to confirm and fund.

5.2. Propriety

Cllr. Middleton advised that the council had expertise in dealing with public money and the propriety aspect.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1. Developers & Housing Associations

Cllr. Middleton felt that the group should definitely be talking to developers now as it didn't want a piece meal contributions. Mr. Cracknell expressed concern about the possible funding pot available from the developers for the required infrastructure/services and Cllr. Middleton confirmed that the group needed to know what the developer contributions would and wouldn't cover. In addition, Housing Associations had money that they needed to invest.

7. PROJECT PLAN & TIMESCALE

Cllr. Middleton reiterated that the group needed to start off with the health and social care project and talk to Breckland about what's in the local plan and what's in the neighbourhood plan. The group must capitalise on what their MP had said on 14/02/2014 and talk to Ms. Foulger and the Heritage Group. Dr. Martin asked about timescale and Cllr. Middleton advised that this should be moved on as soon as possible. The group must make efforts to use material in the various studies that had been carried out, updating ideas and pulling out those options that could be moved forward. Dr. Martin confirmed that some work had been done already. Sifting through the vast amount of studies on Attleborough was daunting and that was half the problem. Not being experts in the field, the group needed someone to cut through the paperwork and come up with a few proposals. Mr. Cracknell asked who Breckland Council would use in this area and whether there were external consultants of this sort. Mr. Mileham replied that reviewing the existing evidence was the job of the Planning Officer but it depended on the type of evidence as some needed the consideration of particular specialists. However, when it came to bringing it all together, it was the policy team at Breckland Council, with help from external consultants if necessary. Mr. Mileham said that whatever approach the group sets out, they had to make sure it was deliverable as only then will it move from idea, to policy and ultimately adoption.

District Cllr. Joel asked whether Attleborough Town Council had anything in the precept budget for the neighbourhood plan. Cllr. Middleton replied that there was a little but not much. They still had the vanguard money which was now a bit less than £15,000 and they'd put £5,000 in. Mr. Cracknell reminded the group that there would be an adjustment for Attleborough from Breckland Council and as it was 'windfall', asked whether that could be used towards the neighbourhood plan. District Cllr. Joel confirmed that the amount would be around the same as last year with Cllr. Perkins suggesting it would be approximately £23,000. Cllr. Middleton confirmed that they would have to get council agreement.

District Cllr. Joel asked whether the group had an expert in drawing up the plans for infrastructure. Cllr. Middleton replied that there wasn't one within the council but that they had had quotes of around £500 per day. The group thought that it would need 4 small scale consultations on the studies and there would be no point doing something on transport if Breckland District Council has Saville's completing the link road investigations. The group needed consultants who were specialised in

neighbourhood plans and they had someone in mind but that this must go through the tender process. However, as the year progressed and more and more neighbourhood plans were developed across the country, there would be more and more people with the necessary qualifications.

Cllr. Perkins told the group that they were under close scrutiny from other towns in the district, keen to see what Attleborough were doing. Cllr. Middleton said that Attleborough did not want to fall behind and must get going; he would go to the Council and see if there was money available and the funding group would try other sources. Cllr. Middleton asked if anyone else had any ideas for funding sources and expressed the hope that local businesses would see that the neighbourhood plan would be in their interest.

Cllr. Smalley raised the point that Chapel Road School may move to Old Buckenham and would that still be involved in the report as a result. Cllr. Middleton advised that the Chapel Road School would be considered in the County Council education strategy that would be discussed between now and April. Cllr. Middleton asked Dr. Martin whether there were any health and social care issues associated with Chapel Road School and Dr. Martin confirmed it was not a significant issue.

Cllr. Middleton advised that before inviting the MP and Leader of Breckland to the Steering Group, they needed to have something substantial to discuss. District Cllr. Joel advised that if there was any news at Breckland Council, he and his colleagues would update the group. Cllr. Middleton advised that he would update Breckland Council on steering group progress as required. Mr. Mileham and District Cllr. Martin confirmed that a neighbourhood plan update was a standing item on the Breckland agenda now. District Cllr. Martin added that Martin Banbury had given a recent update asking for proposals. An area around the old Wayland Hospital was mentioned where there was a derelict bungalow which sat in approximately 7 acres of land.

Cllr. Bond had spoken with Hugo Kirby of Ptarmigan Land recently who had expressed an interest in contributing and asked the group whether it was the right time to ask for funding assistance. It was agreed that it was.

Mr. Kirby said that it was positive to see things moving forward. Mr. Cracknell said that it was helpful to hear views and that it would be good to make sure they were not doing unnecessary work or all knocking on the same doors. Finally, Dr. Martin thanked the group for choosing health and social care as the first project as the lack of progress over the years had been frustrating and Attleborough Surgeries were excited at the opportunity.

8. Next Meeting

After some further discussion, it was decided that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 25th March at 6:30 p.m. but that if it was decided that there was nothing to share, that meeting would be rescheduled.

Cllr. Middleton brought the meeting to a close at approximately 7:50 p.m. and thanked everyone for their time.

(Note-taker: Sarah Seaman)