

ATTLEBOROUGH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the above steering group meeting held at
Attleborough Town Hall, Queens Square, Attleborough, Norfolk
on Tuesday 25th March at 6:30 p.m.

1. INTRODUCTION

The meeting commenced at 6:33 p.m. and the Chair, Cllr. Middleton, thanked members for attending, explained that this meeting was to update each other on progress. There were 2 main points of the meeting which were to put some names to the leadership of the groups and to look at the timetable for consultation with the various landowners and developers etc. The minutes of the last meeting held on the 18th February 2014 were agreed by the group members in attendance.

1.1. Present

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

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

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

Colin Kilby - Manager of Breckland Lodge Hotel.

Derek Smalley - Councillor for Old Buckenham Parish.

Adrian Joel - Councillor for Breckland Council, Buckenham Ward.

Phillip Leslie - Director of Eastern Attachments Limited.

Sarah Foulger - Director of Banham Poultry Limited.

Terry Cracknell - Representative from Business Forum.

Tony Bradstreet - Clerk to Besthorpe Parish Council.

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

Alistair Martin - Doctor and partner at Attleborough Surgeries.

1.2. Absent

Phil Mileham - Breckland Council Planning Policy Team Leader.

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

2. APOLOGIES

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

Neil McShane - Head Teacher of Attleborough High School.

Steve Hall - Representative of Attleborough Community Team.

Lucy McLean - Practice Manager of Attleborough Surgeries.

3. UPDATES

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

3.1. Employment

Cllr. Perkins advised that their group had met again on 21st March to refresh their aims. There had been several points of discussion which had included funding sources. They had met with Kevin Ward, Growth Programme Manager of Breckland Council, at the Breakfast Forum meeting where he had spoken about some avenues of funding that might be available to the steering group. Cllr. Perkins had gone back for more information but Mr. Ward was out of the office until 26th March after which they would hopefully get some more information. The group still had the remains of the Neighbourhood Planning Vanguard fund available and they had discussed applying for some of that for secretarial and specialist work.

Cllr. Perkins advised that their group had also discussed some of the ongoing projects in the town and had been in touch with District Cllr. Martin to find out what, if anything, was coming through via Breckland Council that the steering group should be aware of, such as the Grampian site on Old Buckenham Road. District Cllr. Martin confirmed that the site had not yet come into the public domain and no planning applications had been received. The steering group members discussed possible housing developments in that area. Cllr. Perkins advised that his group had also talked about the rail crossing and Station Road development and enquired about funding for technical expertise. Mr. Cracknell advised that he had spoken to a Ms Wrigley who had done work in this area before.

Cllr. Middleton advised that, at the council meeting held on the 10th March, the group had received approval from the town council to use the Vanguard fund to set off projects. The monies would not be used to procure large scale studies as these had all been done before but to compile focused work on target areas as the group decided.

Mr. Leslie stressed the importance of getting as much information as possible from the planning departments to see what was planned already within the town and to ensure that any plans that the group put together were working alongside existing projects. Their group was getting more information from Breckland Council and had also been speaking with Attleborough Land whose development plans, if successful, could have a massive effect on the town. It was essential for everyone to work together and to share information as their group had great ideas but there was no point putting these down on paper and later finding out that other plans were already underway which would forestall the ideas.

Cllr. Middleton raised the question of expansion and investment in new employment. Mr. Leslie gave his own company as an example where, like other businesses in the area, it was looking to expand its premises and wanted to stay local but each time they made an approach, they were told that there was no land available except in Victory Park, that the land was not for sale or it had been sold elsewhere. They were also told that the land was under review as part of the asset management scheme, LABV and that it not be available until at least September. In addition, the price quoted, £2million, was excessive. Mr. Leslie expressed the importance of the group acting with the blessing of the town, not independently and that it conformed to the

overall vision. However, something must be done about the lack of expansion opportunities or companies would have no option but to move elsewhere. Cllr. Middleton agreed that Banham Poultry also needed opportunities to move and that such expansion plans were good news stories for the town. Cllr. Perkins agreed but felt that if the town could not help its existing companies, he wondered how it could attract new business. District Cllr. Joel asked if the businesses had considered Snetterton but Mr. Leslie explained that that particular area did not have adequate power supply and there would be additional costs to his company alone of around £1.2million. Mr. Cracknell advised that the overall cost would be around £10million to put the necessary power into Snetterton.

Cllr. Tyrer said the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is going to be one of the main bodies that the Steering Group needed to work with on the future shape of Attleborough and he would pass on contact details. Cllr. Middleton advised that he had spoken to George Freeman's office and his secretary said that she felt he would be very interested in following this up. Ms. Foulger advised that the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce had also given them a list of useful contacts. Mr. Leslie advised that the growth of other employers in the area was being hampered and Cllr. Middleton felt it important that all these individual companies speak with the LEP but also suggested that the town council itself make contact. Mr. Cracknell advised that the Business Forum had raised concerns about the ongoing difficulties in dealing with Breckland and the cohesion of the various departments and their aims. The group discussed the importance of working alongside the District Council, being transparent and sharing information but also moving forward, getting support from their MP and making contact with the LEP. Mr. Leslie said that he and Ms Foulger would make contact with the LEP.

District Cllr. Joel asked how the LEP and LABV would work together and there was discussion about what regions the schemes covered. Cllr. Middleton felt that the group needed to have something more concrete to discuss before inviting Michael Wassell, the leader of Breckland Council, to a Steering Group meeting but that this was something that should be done as soon as possible. District Cllr. Martin reminded the group that the vision was 4000 homes for Attleborough. He said that Breckland Council was supporting industry but there were issues when these matters came to planning with other businesses and residents objecting to possible developments.

- ❖ **ACTION:** Cllr Tyrer would pass details of the key personnel at the LEP
- ❖ **ACTION:** Mr. Leslie, Ms Foulger and Cllr Perkins would speak to the LEP.
- ❖ **ACTION:** Cllr. Middleton would contact George Freeman, M.P.

3.2. Infrastructure and Funding Updates on infrastructure and funding lead to discussion on workstreams and will be covered below.

4. ESTABLISH GROUPS TO TAKE FORWARD INFRASTRUCTURE WORK STREAMS

Cllr. Middleton explained that he had wanted to try to get teams together to move infrastructure matters forward. The group had planned to lead off with the health and social care project, as discussed at the last meeting but there had been some developments which meant that the way the project was taken forward may have to change slightly. However, the group were still keen to take the work forward as a priority. Cllr. Middleton explained that the health and social care project was one of 3 areas of infrastructure that the group would concentrate on. The others were:

- The Academy & Queens Square.
- The current Banham Poultry factory & railway area.

Each of the areas were important to the future of town and may be areas where the group could have major influence over plans going forward. Cllr. Smalley suggested adding sites on Old Buckenham Road to the Banham/railway area. Cllr. Middleton advised that the town council would need to take ownership of some of these items, which is why there were town councillors within the groups, although not necessarily in lead roles. He referred to Cllr. Perkins' role within the employment group and Cllr. Tyrer's involvement in transport and utilities

4.1. Health & Social Care

The group needed to nominate someone to take on the project, working with the doctors and the surgery on the primary health care needs and but also looking at the social health care needs. Some funding was available to help and there were local consultants who had offered to take the work on. The surgery had concerns about the scale of the project in taking on wider care, rather than just primary care. Dr. Martin explained that it could be straight-forward but it would be dependant on a lot of factors that the surgery had no control over. He explained that they had got good facilities in town, with the upgraded Station Road site and the surgery did not want to see that go to waste, preferring to expand that site, if possible, in order to combine the two surgery sites. Mr. Cracknell asked for clarification that the doctors were concentrating on the primary care interest. Dr. Martin replied that to combine the two would be wonderful but in the current climate it was difficult to make the necessary financial investment. Cllr. Middleton advised that he would be happy to initially chair the health and social care group in order to get the first project underway with the involvement of Dr. Martin and the surgery, Mr. Cracknell who knew the parties and Elizabeth Burrows who had a good understanding of some of knowledge of the social care aspects. Cllr. Middleton explained that he would then step back once the working group was established and they had someone to take over.

Mr. Cracknell asked whether the health and social care project would be held back by the overall Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr. Middleton replied that the project wouldn't be held back but that it still needed to go through consultation with the town.

Mr. Cracknell asked Dr. Martin whether there would be any conflict of interest as to who was appointed to do the report. Dr. Martin advised that there was no objection from the surgery but the project was far wider than just the doctors. Cllr. Middleton reiterated that the doctors were concerned at the scale of the project which would need to look at both primary health care and social care, including dealing with an aging population, mental health issues, future needs and availability of sites.

- ❖ **ACTION:** Cllr Middleton would lead the Health and Social Care Group, with Dr Martin, Mr Cracknell and Elizabeth Burrows and report back to the next meeting on progress.

4.2. Education and Sport & Leisure (inc. open spaces)

Cllr. Middleton advised that he had had a meeting on the 24th March with Gladedale and Mr McShane. Gladedale had submitted an outline planning applying to put in 350 houses on Norwich Road. There was some opposition by residents but Gladedale were prepared to work with the steering group. Cllr. Middleton explained that Cllr. Bond had agreed to take the lead on the project, working with Mr. McShane.

Ms. Foulger raised the suggestion of a separate sports club as a business outside of education, which could also provide other community facilities. Cllr. Tyrer agreed that the two were not mutually exclusive but that any proposal had to be deliverable and financially viable across all sectors. Cllr. Middleton felt that any plan that only included housing and had no tangible benefits for residents would not be well received by the public and there must be something significant to counter the pain of the additional housing, such as health, sports and leisure facilities. The group would then have to sort out the transport and infrastructure issues that go along with development. Cllr. Tyrer agreed that it was an interesting time with the government looking for quick wins and that there could be opportunities that needed to be investigated. He also believed the Council should weigh up the potential benefits in infrastructure and services that 4000 houses might bring with the concerns of many residents. Cllr. Smalley suggested getting an artist's impression of the things that the group was hoping to do, the health and sports and leisure aspects, which could be put in the Mercury newspaper. Ms. Foulger reiterated that the group did not yet know what plans were already in the pipeline with some areas possibly being considered for housing which the group may feel was more suitable for employment. Cllr. Middleton explained that the Neighbourhood Plan would be the vehicle for setting out areas for employment and housing.

Mr. Cracknell reminded the group that it needed to keep up with the progress of other bodies or it could be on the back-foot, trying to change decisions taken elsewhere. Cllr. Middleton replied that the group would keep in contact and up-to-date with Mr Mileham,

District Cllr. Martin advised that Breckland Council had been in discussions with the school regarding a sports hall for the new academy and there was potential there District Cllr. Joel queried whether a sports village for the high school and having all the facilities on one site was the right concept. Cllr. Middleton replied that this was what Cllr. Bond and his working group would review with Gladedale, the County Council, the TEN Group and other stakeholders. Cllr. Perkins asked about sports facilities outside of the school as people would want to use facilities when they were already in use by the school. This was already a problem the town needed to have extra facilities which Cllr. Perkins had championed with the town council. Mr. Kirby agreed and added that this would only become more of a problem when the town expanded. Mr. Cracknell asked if there was an area in mind and Mr. Leslie suggested the other side of Station Road, possibly the Maurice Gaymer Road area where they could have facilities for both sports and the community. Cllr. Perkins mentioned the change of leadership at Attleborough Town Football Club which could hold potential.

Cllr. Tyrer said that the group needed to look at the overall size of the planned development; the core strategy was 4000 houses which basically doubles the size of the town. What facilities are required to serve and sustain that strategy? They couldn't just rely on the school facilities and this should be one of the big things that the group looks at. Mr. Cracknell agreed and said that the group must not limit its vision because of cost. Cllr. Tyrer said that the group must try to plan forward 20 years plus and District Cllr. Joel said that there were planning meetings on the 4th April regarding the major development of Thetford, which would be interesting and provide some pointers.

- ❖ **ACTION:** Cllr: Middleton would speak further to Cllr. Bond regarding taking the sports and leisure group on.

5. CONSULTATION TIMETABLES

Mr. Leslie said that he felt the group needed to speak to the developers and landowners next. Cllr. Middleton believed that there were 4 main house developers:

- Attleborough Land the the largest of all with a large area of land to the south.
- Gladedale with land on Norwich Rd. They are already in discussions with the group and want to work within the NP
- Taylor Wimpey were developing on London Road and also have options on land in Mill Lane but there has not been much contact.
- Land south of the railway line along White House Lane – Bruce Giddy is acting as agent but it is not clear who the developer would be.

Mr. Cracknell suggested contacting the landowners direct. Mr. Leslie added that he was aware of another landowner working with developers, Orbit and Hopkins Homes, at the moment. Cllr. Middleton stressed the importance of being independent but

that it would be important to get information from the developers. The group discussed the best method of making initial contact with the developers and landowners. Mr. Cracknell asked whether the group should consider becoming a limited company for risk management purposes to protect the people involved. The group felt that at this stage the public perception of a limited company could be negative, in that it might be perceived to either have something to gain or something to hide. Mr. Leslie suggested that an initial closed meeting between developers and the group to discuss and negotiate possibilities would be entirely appropriate. Everything would be above board, there were no 'deals to be made' and there would be minutes of the meeting; the group just wanted good communication and to get information. He suggested that, as a matter of urgency, each group member send any suitable contact details they had, for developers, landowners or agents, through to Cllr. Middleton so that they could be contacted. Cllr. Middleton agreed that this should be done as soon as possible. Cllr. Perkins suggested that the town council should be involved and all agreed.

- ❖ **ACTION:** Each member to send contact details for developers, landowners & agents through to Cllr. Middleton ASAP.

The group discussed timing for involving other interested parties, some of whom had already been spoken to informally in general terms. It was decided that the group wanted to have more of a master plan and some planning concepts before formally involving other parties to discuss feasibility.

Cllr. Tyrer asked how much Breckland District Council would be prepared to assist in funding the development of concept options, rather than the town council paying for it. District Cllr. Joel advised they would need to speak to Mr. Mileham and Cllr. Middleton agreed. Mr. Cracknell suggested that the group may need someone who could independently help keep the group on the right track while it worked with the various parties.

Cllr. Middleton asked that if any of the groups produced plans, they should be shared with the other steering group members to ensure that everyone was working together. Cllr. Middleton also asked the work stream groups to take notes during their meetings and share these.

- ❖ **ACTION:** Work stream groups to share meeting notes and any plans.

6. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be at 6:30 p.m. on the 6th May with the location to be confirmed. Cllr. Middleton brought the meeting to a close at 7:53 p.m. and thanked everyone for their time.

(Note-taker: Sarah Seaman)