

GREAT AYCLIFFE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



Notes of a meeting of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, held on Thursday 23 October 2014.

Present: Mr B Riley – Area Action Partnership
 Mr B Haldane – Town Centre Manager
 Mr S Howarth – Voluntary Sector Representative
 Cllr J Atkinson – Great Aycliffe Town Council
 Cllr J D Clare – Great Aycliffe Town Council
 Cllr M A Dalton – Great Aycliffe Town Council
 Cllr B Hall – Great Aycliffe Town Council
 Cllr M Dixon – Durham County Council
 Mr I Wiggett – Public Representative

Officers Mrs C A Walton – Corporate and Policy Officer
 Miss A Corner – Neighbourhood Plan Engagement Officer
 Miss A Donald – Town Clerk's PA
 Mr M Lowe – Durham County Council Planning Department

Item No	Discussion	Action
1.	Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence were received from Cllr C Wheeler, Cllr I Gray, Ms K Clark, Mrs J Hall and Mr M Rowcroft.	
2.	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.	
3.	Notes of the Previous Meeting The notes of the previous meeting had been circulated prior to the meeting and were accepted as a correct record.	
4.	Consultation and Questionnaire Feedback To date, 751 responses had been received from the questionnaire, with more expected before the deadline of 17 November. In addition, some 300 individual comments from other events and meetings attended by Angela Corner had also been recorded. This response rate was considered to be good. Thanks were recorded to Newton News for its assistance with disseminating and advertising the questionnaire. Responses had been received from all areas of the town. Work was underway to transfer data from the questionnaire to a spreadsheet for analysis, prior to the formation of thematic groups in the coming weeks.	
5.	Short Publicity Film A short publicity film was planned to update and inform residents of progress with the Neighbourhood Plan in an upbeat and positive manner. It was felt that a visual approach, which could potentially be shown in a number of venues such as the PCP and doctors' surgeries, would complement the consultation process and also form part of the evidence submitted to the independent examiner. The	AC/CW



	<p>Steering Group felt that a film produced on this premise would be useful and therefore officers should proceed.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Business Park Update Unfortunately Kerina Clark had been unable to attend the meeting and this item was therefore deferred until the next meeting.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Previous NP Experiences Chrissy explained to the group that she had asked Mark to share his experiences with his previous NP work, what had worked well and what hadn't, unfortunately Mark had been unable to attend the meeting and this item was therefore deferred until the next meeting.</p> <p>At this point the Chairman asked Michael Lowe, from Durham County Council Spatial Policy Team, gave a brief outline of his role as the main contact between the Neighbourhood Plan Officers and Durham County Council Planning Department. He explained that although the Plan is community-led, it is still obliged to comply with a number of government policies and regulations and DCC is responsible for the Plan's examination and referendum process.</p> <p>This led to a discussion taking place regarding the requirement for strict impartiality on the part of the Steering Group throughout the Neighbourhood Plan process but particularly during consultation with the public. It was emphasised that, while personal opinions are perfectly valid, care must be taken in any published or broadcast material from Steering Group Members that there is no apparent intent to steer or influence the public in any particular direction. If the examiner feels that there has been any such attempt then there could be serious problems – in one case, the examiner insisted on a public examination to ensure that the community had led the whole process. Any member of the Steering Group who wished to publicly promote a personal opinion was of course free to do so but should resign from the Steering Group to ensure its impartiality.</p> <p>In view of this, Syd Howarth sought the Steering Group's opinion on his situation as Editor of the local free newspaper and whether he should resign as a member of the Steering Group. The Steering Group appreciated that he was obliged to publish items and letters from the public which could promote specific opinions relating to the</p>	

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	<p>Neighbourhood Plan, but agreed that provided no editorial opinion was given, this should not pose a problem.</p> <p>Mr Howarth stated his intention of running a public campaign through the Newton News for a retail park, an issue he had been publicly promoting for many years. Angela pointed out that the questionnaire responses were already supporting the need for a retail park and that a public campaign could potentially jeopardise the entire consultation and would more than likely not be necessary.</p> <p>It was felt that, in this case, the above guidelines regarding impartiality should be considered before taking any action.</p> <p>It was agreed that we may need to review this situation again if it was felt, by the group, that it could be interpreted that impartiality was no longer being upheld or was likely to impact the NP independent examination or referendum.</p>	
8.	<p>Agree Meeting Dates for 2015 A list of suggested meeting dates for the coming year was circulated and agreed.</p>	ALL to Note
9.	<p>Date of Next Meeting The next meeting would be held on Thursday 20th November at 6pm, venue will likely be the Excel Centre but this is to be confirmed.</p>	Kerina, can you confirm the Business Park Venue