

Eccleshall Parish Neighbourhood Plan Group

April 11th, 2013 – Eccleshall Community Centre 2pm.

Present were:-

David Pimble	Barry Apps	John Allen	John Baldry
Jean Peters	Peter Bertram	Peter Thompson	Brian Mason
John Leather	Bob Osbourne	Christine Heelis	
Hannah Barter (Urban Vision)			

Apologies:- were received from Gordon Dale, Paul Snape, Cheryl Hyland, Sue Sanders and Chris Marshall.

Susie Clowes had withdrawn from the group.

David welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Hannah from Urban Vision who had come along to share methods and techniques for organising consultations and community events.

Hannah stated that in order to be relevant, realistic and to address local issues effectively Neighbourhood Plans needed to be based on robust information and analysis of the local area – the evidence base. This could include census details, evidence underpinning the Local Plan, transport studies and public transport data, conservation areas and listed buildings, housing condition surveys, audit of community facilities, open space, schools capacity, existing parish plans and the Town Design Statement.

The evidence base would lead to better informed outcomes, realistic and deliverable plans and policies. Community engagement was necessary and important and essential to develop consensus and create community support. Failure to engage communities properly at an early stage could cause conflict when the Plan reached the referendum stage.

The Process - Stafford Borough Council had sent letters to all the households in the Parish seeking representations about the proposal to designate the whole of the Parish as the Neighbourhood Area. Hannah indicated that the Borough could be requested to provide a copy of any feedback received. It was noted that Naomi Perry would shortly be leaving Stafford Borough and that a Neighbourhood Planning Officer was to be appointed.

A pre-submission consultation was a legal requirement and included publicising the plan to bring it to the attention of those living, working or running businesses in the area, neighbouring parishes and consulting bodies. Once any amendments had been made the Plan would then be submitted to the Local Authority with responsibility for publicising the Plan and arranging for an independent examination and referendum.

Community Engagement:-

- Profile and awareness raising – through the Parish Council newsletter, website, local media, encouraging feedback.
- Local Partnerships – Identification of key partners and stakeholders.
- Capacity Building – Education and training may be required to ensure that those participating in community engagement events were well informed about the Plan and the issues.
- Specialist advice – may be required – Grant support would be available to apply for from May 1st, 2013.
- Be creative – Community Engagement should be stimulating and enjoyable. Hannah suggested a 'Pie and Pint' night or attendance at local events, when questionnaires could be taken along. Events should be accessible and informal.
- Manage expectations:- balance ambitions with realism and practical and legal limitations.
- Target – the elderly or the young and hard to reach groups.
- Common mistakes – avoid consulting too late, talking to people at a public meeting, expecting people to read a thick document in a public place, producing options before consulting and one-off tick box exercises.

Writing the Plan:-

- Vision and Aims:- The Plan can set out the community's overall vision for the area and should include overall aims for development and growth. These aims can relate to a wide range of planning and regeneration matters - social, economic, and environmental. The vision and aims of the plan can then be translated into detailed policies, guidance and proposals.
- Site allocations – The Neighbourhood Plan may identify key sites for specific development, such as housing, retail, employment or mixed use. Urban design could be considered to provide pedestrian routes and safe environments and requirements for specific design for parking or external storage.
- Community proposals – The Plan could include regeneration or enhancement proposals relating to the use and development of land. It could improve policies around improving key public spaces, allocating sites for new community facilities or improved infrastructure.
- Policies – check against the National Planning Policy Framework and strategic policies in the Local Plan for general conformity.

Good Practice

- Involve and consult partners and the community throughout the process
- Use the vision and aims to generate policy and proposals
- Liaise with the Local Planning Authority
- Ensure the plan content is based on the evidence base and outcomes of involvement and community engagement
- Ensure the Plan does not breach European and national law and conforms general with strategic local planning policies
- Use clear, simple unambiguous language.
- The Plan should contribute to the achievement of sustainable development but the assessment requirements would need to respond to the scale, status and scope of the plan. In some cases environmental assessments could be required, the Local Planning Authority should be able to advise and assist.

ACTIONS

- Hannah referred to the 'Quick Guide to Neighbourhood Plans' and 'Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide' published by Locality. Hannah indicated that she was available for another half day and was happy to attend a future meeting to offer further assistance.
- Hannah would send a copy of a questionnaire used by another group, which could be amended and tailored for use in Eccleshall Parish.
- David reported that he and Christine had attended a meeting of a support group established by Stafford Parish Councils Association Area Committee. The objective of the group was to provide mutual support for those producing Neighbourhood Plans and devise a method statement or template.
- A report was to be presented at The Annual Parish Meeting on April 24th, 2013 which would be attended by representatives of many local groups who could report back to their members and distribute questionnaires.
- Christine read a statement of Vision and Aims prepared by Peter Thompson and it was agreed to make a few minor amendments and circulate to all members.
- Bob indicated that he would circulate a letter to residents in the Croxton area to outline the process for the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and the opportunities for consultation and involvement. A copy would be sent to Christine for retention as part of the consultation statement and circulation to group members.
- It was agreed to compile a database of local key groups and a list of local events which members could attend with a display and questionnaires. Farmers Market, Open Gardens, Well dressing etc.
- It was proposed to arrange another meeting of the group shortly after the Parish Meeting.