

Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council NDP Steering Group
Monday 28th November – 6.45pm, Vestry Hall Chambers

Minutes

In attendance: Jeremy Boxall, David Cook, Liz Daley, Matt Hartley, Annie Hatcher, Lee Hatcher, Tim Kemp (co-vice chair), John Smith (co-vice chair), Tally Wade (secretary), Nancy Warne (chair)

Parish Council representative (Policies and Resources Committee): Brian Swan

Parishioners: Beryl Bancroft, Mike Bezant and Joy Temple

NW introduced the meeting and announced Emma Wood had resigned from the steering group, TW had agreed to be secretary and would be taking the minutes at this meeting but Lori had agreed to clerk the meetings from January. Nancy welcomed Jeremy Boxall to the group as a second representative for Sissinghurst. Jeremy was a parish councillor for eight years and has significant experience in green infrastructure and the country side being a current member of the Kent Countryside Access Forum looking after the interests of land managers and farmers.

NW reported she and JS had been to TWBC to meet with Kelvin Hinton (Head of Planning Policy), David Scully (Landscape and Biodiversity Officer) and Mark Stephenson (Principal Conservation Architect), and had a very encouraging meeting. She concluded that the message from TWBC was that there was a significant opportunity for the CSPC NDP to be developed in parallel with the TWBC Local Plan and that the TWBC would like to work collaboratively with the NDP Steering Group to achieve this. NW will amend notes taken at this meeting and circulate.

Consultant 1 – Angela Koch / Imagine Places

NW welcomed the first consultant to present. AK answered questions regarding successful ways to engage the community, how to ensure trust is built into the process, a rough idea of how she would structure an engagement event and about the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). She pointed out that if we have an NDP in place we are entitled to 25% of all CIL, to be spent on community requirements of the residents' choosing (which can be agreed & stated in the NDP). She stressed that although this is an important consideration it should not be the only reason for undertaking an NDP.

BS and JT asked if AK would 'set us up' to deliver a successful NDP, and if we could buy her services in phases. AK said she could help us through peer-to-peer learning, training events and noted the importance of going through any old consultation material.

TK asked when she would be available and that we wanted to achieve an NDP in the next 18mths – 2 years. AK said this shouldn't be a problem and that her German nature may help, although we should be aware that the inspection stage may be out of our hand in terms of how long it takes.

TW and TK asked her about the phrase on her website stating that she could help deliver NDPs with 'legal teeth' and whether she could help us create an NDP that couldn't be trumped by a lack of a five year land supply, or at least make developers follow the design policies within an NDP. AK said that although we may be faced with development despite what our NDP stated, developers would have to follow our design policies for new buildings and suggested a health check pre submission of the final NDP which would cost £4k for 5 days work with an independent inspector.

NW thanked AK for her presentation.

Consultant 2 - Alison Eardley, an associate of the Troy Navigus Partnership

NW welcomed AE who introduced herself. The group also introduced themselves.

TW asked about the way NDPs work when a Parish doesn't have a five year land supply of land. AE said although an NDP gives a Parish a little more protection, developers can and will contest and NDP in court so it is important to base it on sound evidence base, community engagement and site visits.

NW and JS made the point that following their meeting at with representatives at TWBC their seemed to have been a culture shift at Borough level and that now is a great time to start an NDP as it can run in parallel with the Local Plan the Borough is developing. AE said it was a great opportunity to input the hard evidence we gather at a Local Plan level such as infrastructure, footpaths, local green space etc. and that we can help TWBC fill in the 'jigsaw'. AE also said it was important to develop a good relationship with the BC as they are the ones who defend an NDP should it come under scrutiny (she quoted an example from Hailsham).

NW thanked AE for her presentation.

Consultant 3 – Jim Boot

JB gave a power-point presentation to the meeting. He mentioned also a modelling service available to us called Planning for Real, which comprises a large model of the Parish and can be very useful for helping the community visualise the spaces within the area. He said this would cost around £15k.

JB mentioned an interesting resource on developing NDPs at www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk and that a Rural Place Profile on the demographics of the Parish could be purchased for £120 at Action with Communities Rural Kent.

TK asked if we could define the limit of the settlement of Cranbrook. JB said we would need to check what TWBCs attitude to this would be.

NW thanked JB for his presentation.

General discussion

NW said she had talked to Richard Eastham of Feria Urbanism, who consulted on the Hawkhurst NDP. Apparently the Hawkhurst PC highly rated Feria. Nancy recounted her conversation with RE and how he started the engagement process by engaging champions of the community and to then get them to spread the word through their networks.

BS questioned the expenses that Feria might charge as they are based in Bournemouth. *TW to find out from Hawkhurst what the expenses were.*

The group then discussed each consultant and JT raised the point that we should also bare in mind the quality of the consultant's preparation for the meeting.

MH suggested that the NDP consider limiting the NDP to where new housing might be. NW said she thought the NDP should have a wider focus. JS said housing should definitely be a major part of the plan but agreed it should not be the only focus.

NW said Sally Marsh of the High Weald AONB Unit had given a talk that she had attended and might be persuaded to give it again to the group in the New Year. It was on looking at the sites that have been put forward and using historic landscape characterisation maps of ancient woodland, fluvials (rivers, streams, ponds etc.), field and heath, route ways, settlement patterns and geology to more fully understand their suitability for new housing.

TK suggested we take a vote on the four consultants in the running (AK, AE, JB and RE), and that each of the group have two votes each (apart from BS who was there as a representative of the PC Policy and Resources committee). This resulted in a shortlist of two consultants, each with eight votes – Angel Koch (Imagine Place) and Richard Easton (Feria Urbanism).

NW said that in order to spend the money from the grant of £9k available for the NDP process we must use a consultant that costs no more than £500 / day. NW to ask AK if she would consider bringing her daily rate down from £575.

There was also a discussion on how much involvement the group would want from a consultant – whether they are there to guide or ‘hold our hand’ and walk us through the process.

There was some confusion in the quotes received from the consultants and how comparisons could be drawn between them. TK suggested asking AK to resubmit her proposal based on the first six months of an initial engagement (steps 1-6 of 16 of the documented NDP process). NW to ask for new quote.

NW thanked everyone for their time and input.

ACTION POINT SUMMARY:

- NW to amend notes taken at the meeting she and JS attended at TWBC and circulate.
 - NW to investigate further about the contents of the TWBC Local Plan, the timelines for each stage and how the CSPC NDP can ‘plugin’ to it.
 - TW to find out from Hawkhurst what the expenses were from Feria Urbanism.
 - NW to ask AK if she would consider bringing her daily rate down from £575 to £500.
 - NW to ask AK to resubmit her proposal based on the first 6 months of the NDP process (steps 1-6 of 16 of the documented NDP process) and to get full terms and conditions and sample contracts from each consultant.
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Date of the next meeting: Wednesday 7th December, 7.30pm. Location TBC.