

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REPORT

Progress on the Neighbourhood Plan has continued not only with the formation of the working parties (WP) but with communications from CDC clarifying genuine concerns which have been expressed.

There was a meeting of the Steering Committee on the 6th March when working parties were formed to concentrate on the various topics to be included in a NP.

The topics are as follows:-

- Adaption of the VDS to the Neighbourhood Plan
- Sustainable Development
- Tourism
- Drainage
- Welfare and Social Wellbeing
- Businesses (large and small)

The working party members comprise not only members of the steering committee but residents who it was felt could contribute to the topics by virtue of their professional background as well as their experience of living in the village.

The objectives of the working parties are:-

- To identify the issues that exist at present and may arise in the future under the relevant topic heading
- Research and investigate possible solutions
- Draft policies to be discussed at future meetings of the Steering Committee and with residents at the consultation stages.
- After full consultation the final policies to be incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan.

Since the last Parish Council meeting, the Inspector's report on Slaugham's Neighbourhood Plan has been published. The Inspector did not pass Slaugham's draft NP but nevertheless made some interesting comments and recommendations. As a result, some members of the SC raised concerns as to the viability and likely success of a NP in a parish such as Itchenor which has no housing allocation as it is deemed to be unsuitable for housing, lacking facilities such as shops, public transport and other amenities. Therefore, can it meet the basic condition (in para 8(2), Schedule 4B) of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development?

In view of these concerns, it was agreed that a letter should be sent to Tom Bell, NP Liaison Officer at CDC, with a copy to Steve Carvell, Executive Director of Environment, asking for clarification and guidance regarding the above concerns.

In view of the genuine concerns and doubts raised it was decided that the next meeting of the steering committee should be cancelled until replies had been received from the CDC officers above mentioned clarifying the position so that all members of the steering committee knew where Itchenor stood.

It is appreciated that the meeting was cancelled at a late date and I apologise for the inconvenience that caused as I am aware that some members had made alternative arrangements to ensure that they were able to attend on the agreed date.

We have now received replies both from Tom Bell and Mike Allgrove, Planning Policy Manager at CDC, who was requested by Steve Cavell to respond.

The responses from both respondents are both positive and encouraging and that the absence of a housing allocation does not of itself preclude the drafting and likely success of a NP.

Matters have been put on hold whilst the responses were awaited. Now that they have been received, we can proceed with greater confidence and make arrangements for a meeting of the next steering committee.

I would mention that there has been a lot of discussion regarding Slaugham's NP. However, more recently Kirdford, a parish that falls both in the South Downs National Park and Chichester District Council, have had their NP passed by the inspector. It is important to focus on the positive, as well as learn from the negative, outcomes and to press ahead with our own NP.