

ATTENDANCE AT READING UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF REAL ESTATE & PLANNING
HENLEY BUSINESS SCHOOL
Wednesday 6th June 2018

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING.

I represented Stewkley Parish Neighbourhood Planning by attending the above gathering .

The amongst the matters discussed I have extracted the following for your information:

This academic establish has recognised the need for a national focal point to support Lay people voluntarily engaged on the research and completion of local Neighbourhood Plans.

This was their first attempt at gathering information from those involved to establish how they can best support Steering Groups in the future. Whilst the procedure was introduced in 2011, to date, the take up is small and indeed some Regions of England have made little or no effort to date.

Thirty five invited representatives from Neighbourhood Planning groups attended this event. Geographically they covered Neighbourhoods from Devon in the west, Suffolk in the east, Staffordshire in the midlands, Brighton in south and London Boroughs. Locations included Unit Authorities, Boroughs, individual towns and villages. Representatives from 7 village parishes within AVDC area attended and this is likely because the take up in our District is particularly high compared with elsewhere.

The attendees covered the whole range of the subject from determine how they should start the process to adopted Plans now about to be reviewed. A period of three years in the preparation was most common.

We are fortunate because AVDC provide far greater support to those working on Plans than elsewhere. Indeed, some Local Authority Planning Departments resist any suggestion that a Neighbourhood Plan should be prepared. Indeed, one Neighbourhood Planning Team completed their Plan in February 18 and submitted it to the Local Authority for consultation (Section 16) There it remains to this day and has not been distributed for consultation. It was concluded more needs to be done centrally to encourage/direct Local Authorities to get on with the tasks. Parish Council Neighbourhood Planning Teams have no one to turn to when the Local Authority rejects the idea of these plans.

With the exception of the representative from Shaftesbury Town Council, all other attendees were volunteers. Shaftesbury has engaged a full time, paid Business Manager to facilitate the process. This is because two previous attempts to complete a Plan failed due to no agreement being reached within the Neighbourhood Planning Team.

Whilst the original Government grant was £10,500 per Plan this figure had recently been increased to £17,000. This I will need to verify before acknowledging the sum available.

From those attending the gathering expenditure to date ranged from £500 to £30,000.

Whilst some considered the Neighbourhood Plan should merely cover future 'Land Use', others, like us, included all the infrastructure issues such as Education, Transport etc.

Some argued education, water sewerage, electricity etc. are the Statutory responsibility of the service providers and therefore they are simply obliged to provide the services to support new housing locations. The subject was not resolved and this really showed there is still considerable confusion of what should and should not go in the plan.

All accepted providing hard evidence to support Policies proves very difficult. Public comment was not greatly valued as evidence. Ideally the hard evidence coming from an independent source proves most helpful and we were advised to always research what National bodies like English Heritage, Natural England etc can contribute.

All accepted their plans included supplementary proposals as an Appendix. One Parish Council now included the subject as a 'Standing Item' on their agenda each month so that members of the community are aware the proposals have not been lost in the process of time.

Preparing for the referendum was discussed by those that had reached the stage.

Leaflet drops to every household in the parish.

Repeat leaflet drop shortly before day of referendum

Posters everywhere

Hand out leaflets at places of public gathering.

Press advertisement.

Facebook & twitter

'Pop up Shop'

Average turn out for referendum is around 30%

Be prepared for Objectors to do their own publicity immediately prior to the day. One wealthy parish objector paid for all his publicity to encourage residents to vote NO.

Suggestion that the BOSCOMBE & POKESDOWN Plan was worthy of reading when preparing your own plan.

It was considered the Neighbourhood Plan, once adopted was the property of the Local Authority Planning Department and not the Parish Council.

I can't say much was learnt for the benefit of completing our Plan. However, the opportunity to give feedback on experiences will hopefully benefit people in the future.

Neil Dickens
Chairman NPSG
6th June 2018