

Brighton Marina Neighbourhood Forum

MINUTES OF FORUM STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD AT THE ESTATE OFFICE

Thursday 15 November 2018 @ 11am

Attendees:	Andrew Knight	BM Estate Management	AK (Chair)
	Mike Hatch	Marina Manager	MH
	Keith Malcolm	Resident	KM (Treasurer)
	Mary Pett	Resident	MP (Secretary)
	Kirsty Pollard	Savills	KP
	Ken Sainty	Resident	KS
	Andrew Ashcroft	Planning Consultant	AA

1 Apologies for absence

None

Mike Hatch was welcomed to his first meeting as a new co-opted member of the Steering Group. AK proposed that Mike's co-option would be put to the full Forum meeting that evening for ratification.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 September were agreed.

3 Matters arising

None

4 Andrew Ashcroft – Review of Proposal

Andrew Ashcroft, planning consultant, was welcomed to the meeting. He was thanked for the proposal he had submitted to the Steering Group for professional support in the preparation of our Neighbourhood Plan, and invited to present this proposal to the meeting. It was noted that all Steering Group members had been circulated the proposal but that the Group had not had the opportunity to discuss it prior to this meeting.

AA began by outlining his experience and expertise in the field of neighbourhood planning. He explained that his lifetime career had been in town planning in local government, notably in the Isle of Wight and Herefordshire. He had the opportunity to take retirement in 2015, since when he has worked as an independent consultant. He specialises in interim management (in which capacity he worked for Brighton & Hove City Council from April 2016 to January 2017) and in neighbourhood planning. He has been the independent examiner of a number of neighbourhood plans, as well as assisting parish councils to develop their plans (in which capacity he is currently working with Rottingdean Parish Council). He is also

a member of the steering committee for the neighbourhood plan in his own village.

AA proceeded to elaborate on four principal points:

- Neighbourhood planning is not “one size fits all”. The most important thing is for the plan to be unique and specific to the area for which it is made.
- Neighbourhood planning is all about the community. It is the only aspect of the planning system that involves a referendum. The plan needs to be approved by a majority of those taking part in the referendum – typically the turnout is around 40% of those eligible to vote, with 90% of those voting saying Yes. It is important to make sure the Forum takes the community with us at all stages of the process.

KM asked whether the fact that this is a business forum would complicate the referendum process. AA did not believe there would be any complication; it would simply be another strand to the process. He pointed out that the referendum area is decided by the Inspector and may be larger than the forum area.

MP stated that it was not clear how the franchise for the business strand would be determined, and that there was the likelihood of a disconnect between people who work in local restaurants and businesses, and those who own and/or manage them. It was noted that this was an important issue that the forum would need clarity on at the appropriate stage of in the process.

- It is important for the forum to be very close to the Council’s planning team. There is a legal obligation for the Neighbourhood Plan to be consistent with national and City planning policies, as well as European environmental regulations (irrespective of Brexit). The plan should **add value** to these wider policies. It is not possible to deliver less development than what is proposed in the City Plan, but it is possible to deliver more. The Neighbourhood Plan and the City Plan need to be in harmony. The Neighbourhood Plan will be assessed against whatever City Plan is in place at the time – i.e. definitely Part 1 and possibly Part 2, depending on the timescale. It is the City Council that procures the Inspection part of the Neighbourhood Planning process.
- The proposal that AA had submitted indicated the phases of the process where he felt his time could be best used. He stated that he wanted to focus his time on where he could add value to the expertise and capacity of the Steering Group. It was, however, a matter for the Group to choose to use as little or as much of AA’s time as it saw fit.

MP asked AA what he envisaged the Marina's Neighbourhood Plan might contain, given that, unusually, there is very little land contained within our area, and therefore no sites to be allocated for development.

AA responded that it was possible for Neighbourhood Plans to contain as many or as few policies that were relevant to the specific area. He cited an example of a Plan in Birkenhead that had contained only two policies, concerning the way in which the redevelopment of important Victorian town houses should be handled. Our Neighbourhood Plan could choose to focus on issues such as the quality of the public realm, potential future changes of use of existing buildings and urban design issues. He felt it would also be important for the Forum to seek to influence major planning applications that come forward. KS asked whether the Plan should be a series of statements about what we should expect from each development, and AA said that this was exactly right.

The Steering Group then discussed the issue of needing to work on two parallel tracks over the next few months: responding to the pre-application proposals that have emerged for the Outer Harbour; and developing the next stage of the Neighbourhood Plan, which would entail scoping policy topics for the plan and consulting on these with the community. It was noted that the Forum's agreed vision statement formed an important basis on which to respond to the Outer Harbour proposals. There had been a remarkable degree of consensus within the community on the content of the statement, and it was important to stress that this Forum is in favour of new development, unlike many who seek to limit or constrain it.

It was noted that much of the work on identifying policy topics had already been undertaken and consulted on at the previous full Forum meeting in May 2018, and that the Steering Group therefore already had a lot of information about the issues that the community felt were important to it.

It was felt important to encourage the Council to engage with the Forum on the scope and proposed content of any S106 agreement attached to the Outer Harbour development. AK stated that the Forum needed to campaign to ensure that the S106 agreement was relevant to the Marina's needs.

The question of the current status of the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy was raised. The Forum had responded to the second phase of consultation, but nothing had been heard since. AK agreed to investigate.

Action: AK

AA explained that the plan-making process usually took around two years to complete. Some plans are slower, and this can happen either if the steering group does not do an effective job in driving the process forward, or if too much consultation is undertaken. The challenge is to get engagement from people who do not usually attend meetings or volunteer opinions, as well as from those people who are more active.

AA explained the statutory stages that plan-making involves. The crucial time is from now until the formulation of the draft plan, at which point the plan is submitted to the City Council for them to undertake 6 weeks' consultation, prior to an Inspector being appointed. At that stage, it is important that local people have been sufficiently engaged that they make supportive and not negative comments to the Council.

Neighbourhood Plans could only contain policies relating to land use planning. Policies on other subjects (e.g. bus timetables) could be included as an Appendix, but would not form part of the 'made' Plan.

It is usual for the Inspector to recommend modifications to the content of the Plan's policies, and the City Council then decides whether or not to accept the Inspector's recommendations. Occasionally it can happen that a neighbourhood forum does not approve of the modifications that are made, and in that circumstance it is possible for the forum to withdraw the Plan, or alternatively to campaign for a 'No' vote in the referendum.

In terms of AA's proposed timetable for the plan, it was felt important to focus in the short term on inputting into the Outer Harbour proposals. It was considered that the Steering Group should seek discussions with the developer, the Council planners and the ward Councillors. KP agreed to liaise with the ward Councillors to set up a meeting.

Action: KP

KM felt that it would be beneficial to meet the planners and the developers together, but AA advised that the planners would probably prefer a separate meeting.

It was agreed that the Outer Harbour proposals coming forward at this time had the benefit of raising community awareness about planning matters, and that many of the issues and comments that people are making about the specific proposals were also likely to be relevant to the Plan as a whole. The Forum would benefit from this raised awareness when it undertakes consultation on policy topic areas over the period to February 2019. AA gave advice to the Group on how to undertake effective consultation, such as ensuring that there is an on-line response form available, that 2 / 3 weeks is given for people to respond, and that there should be a drop-in session organised during that time. Maps and photos can be used as well as written text to help people engage with the issues and give their views.

AA made the additional important point that during the plan-making process, the Steering Group would need to do some research to gather evidence to support the proposed policies. He said it was important to determine what policy areas would be in the plan first, in order to avoid doing research on unnecessary or irrelevant subjects.

AA also pointed out that Brighton and Hove had not yet had any experience of the end stages of making a Neighbourhood Plan, but that, if appointed, he would be able to advise and guide the planning officers.

AA was thanked for his very helpful and informative presentation.

MP asked what the current situation was regarding grant funding. AK replied that the Forum had received £1,000 so far, and it was possible to apply for up to a further £8,000. AA stated that Locality (the funding administrator) were generally eager to award grant-funding to Neighbourhood Forums, and that the process of applying was not onerous. AK stated that he assumed the Forum would be making an application to cover the costs of consultancy support and consultation materials.

Action: AK

5 Full Forum Meeting Agenda

AK proposed a draft agenda for the meeting:

- a) Report on progress
- b) Ratification of MH co-option onto the Steering Group
- c) Invitation to Forum members to comment on progress
- d) Discussion of the Outer Harbour proposals, with members asked for their positive and negative feedback.

KP reported that she had been requested to ask for the meeting to end at 7pm, so that forum members could attend the re-launch event at the Master Mariners which was also taking place that evening.

KP questioned what publicity there had been for the meeting. AK stated that all members had been sent an invitation e-mail. KP asked whether the e-mail list was being cleansed in line with data protection regulations, and AK replied that it was being kept up to date as and when changes were reported to him.

It was agreed that discussion in small groups would work well, as it had at the previous Forum meeting. AK stated that he was happy to report to the meeting on items a and b, and that he would also sum-up at the end of the meeting, encouraging all members to make their individual comments on the exhibition proposals, and informing them that the Steering Group would use their feedback to seek to make points to both the developer and the Council.

6 Any Other Business

None

7 Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold a meeting on Monday 19 November at 3pm – 4.30pm to discuss the Outer Harbour proposals.