



Rural Area Working Party

Record of a Meeting held on 9 November 2011 at 5.00 pm in Room GFR14, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds

Present (please tick if present)

Mrs Broughton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Redhead	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Clifton Brown	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stevens	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hale	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thorndyke (Chairman)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pugh	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mrs Whittaker	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ray	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

Substitutes

Houlder	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mrs Rushen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nettleton	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

By Invitation

Gerald Brown, Representative of Ixworth and Stanton Free School Group
(for Minute 16 below only)

Tim Freathy, Community Development Officer, (Local Food), Suffolk ACRE
(for Minute 15 below only)

Joy Stodart, Children and Young People's Services Schools Infrastructure Section,
Suffolk County Council (for Minute 16 below only)

Officers in attendance

Dawn Hale
Simon Pickering
Kirsty Pitwood
Ian Poole
Alex Wilson

11. Substitute

The following substitution was declared:-

Councillor Mrs Rushen for Councillor Hale

12. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clifton-Brown, Hale and Mrs Whittaker.

13. Record of Previous Meeting

The record of the meeting held on 12 September 2011 was confirmed as a correct record.

14. Declarations of Interests

Members' declarations of interests are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

15. Update on Suffolk ACRE's Local Food Project

The Working Party received and noted an oral report from Tim Freathy, Community Development Officer (Local Food) of Suffolk ACRE regarding Suffolk ACRE's Local Food Project.

Mr Freathy explained that the Local Food Project had been launched approximately three months ago and aimed to provide help to local community groups to establish and operate local schemes involving the growing, sharing, eating or selling of local food. He added that he was specifically seeking leads for setting up such schemes in St Edmundsbury.

Support was shown for the project and the Working Party provided specific examples of locations in St Edmundsbury where crops were or could be locally grown by the community. A discussion was also held on the possibility of Suffolk County Council undertaking a 'food mapping' exercise, which was welcomed by Members.

It was agreed that Members would publicise the Local Food Project in their Wards and that Mr Freathy's contact details would be published in the Members' Bulletin to encourage other Members of rural Wards not present at the meeting to provide support.

(Mr Freathy left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

16. Parish Conference De-Brief: 20 October 2011

The Working Party received and noted an oral report from Dawn Hale, Management Support Officer, in respect of the Parish Conference held on 20 October 2011 at Great Whelnetham Village Hall.

Mrs Hale informed the Working Party that 32 representatives of Parish Councils had attended the Conference, together with 7 Borough Councillors. 19 evaluation forms had been returned and of these returns, all representatives had stated that the Conference was very useful and informative. Positive feedback had also been received on the workshops, particularly the Vision 2031 workshop.

Preparation was currently being undertaken on agreeing the topics and workshops for the next Parish Conference, which was likely to be held in May 2012. Together with the initial suggestions of 'Vision 2031' and 'Transport', Members proposed that the topic of 'Localism' also be included.

Mrs Hale wished to record her thanks to all persons involved in helping to clear and vacate the venue at the conclusion of the Conference. She also emphasised that Members should keep encouraging representatives from Parish Councils in their Wards to attend future Conferences.

17. Suffolk School Organisation Review: Restructuring the Thurston Area



RECOMMENDED:- That

- (1) the comments expressed in Section 4 of Report C210, together with the additional comments expressed at the meeting and stated below, should form the basis of St Edmundsbury Borough Council's (SEBC) response to the consultation on the School Organisation Review in the Thurston Area; and***
- (2) Suffolk County Council's Education Department be invited to work with SEBC officers to identify solutions that will mitigate the concerns raised in Report C210.***

The Working Party considered Report C210 (previously circulated) which sought approval for the comments contained in Section 4 of Report C210 to form the basis of the Borough Council's response to the consultation on the School Organisation Review in the Thurston Area.

Suffolk County Council (SCC) was consulting on the latest phase of restructuring the current three-tier school education system to two tiers. The consultation involved schools that fed into Thurston Community College and included a number of primary and middle schools in the rural north of the Borough.

Section 4 of Report C210 provided suggested comments to the proposals presented in the consultation document, which was attached as Appendix A to the Report. In addition, the Working Party received a presentation from Joy Stodart, an officer from the Schools Organisation Review team at Suffolk County Council, who expanded on SCC's proposals and answered Members' questions. Mr Gerald Brown, a representative of the Ixworth and Stanton Free School Group, was also in attendance to present the objectives of the Group to Members.

The Working Party endorsed the comments contained in Section 4 of the Report; however, it also requested that the following comments be added to those detailed in Section 4 of the Report:-

- (1) the retention of primary schools in the villages was welcomed, but that there needed to be a reassurance that adequate resources were made available to implement both physical and learning improvements;
- (2) the increase in numbers at some primary schools could worsen local traffic conditions and there needed to be a deliverable commitment to manage travel, including the provision of adequate parking on each site;
- (3) Ixworth was geographically located much closer to the centre of the Thurston Partnership area, therefore transportation times and traffic movements from the north of the area would be reduced. In addition,

Ixworth was served by both the A143 and the A1088, therefore access was far better than the roads accessing the sites at Thurston and Beyton;

- (4) the short-term investment required to increase the capacity at Ixworth would outweigh the long terms costs of transporting children in the north of the borough to Thurston and Beyton;
- (5) Beyton was not a suitable and sustainable location for a secondary school to serve this area where we would lose two middle schools which currently served 11 of the pyramid's 17 primary schools;
- (6) a Local Education Authority secondary school should be revived and expanded to the required capacity at Ixworth, on the current Middle School site;
- (7) if the County Council was not prepared to invest in the Ixworth site then a Free School on the site would be supported;
- (8) the relocation of Stanton Primary School to Blackbourne Middle site was supported if it was not to be used for secondary education. However, there must be positive engagement with the local community and the Borough Council to ensure the viability of providing community facilities on the remainder of the Blackbourne site and to explore options for the future use of the existing primary school site; and
- (9) the Borough Council needed to be reassured that the proposals had taken account of the planned development in the borough over the next 20 years.

(Mr Brown and Ms Stodart both left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

18. St Edmundsbury's Rural Youth Work Programme: Update



RECOMMENDED:- That

- (1) Supporting Contemporary Adolescence (SCA) or a similar group continue to be funded from the Rural Youth Work Programme budget and other external funding sources, to deliver a 'WOS UP' Project in the rural areas of St Edmundsbury, as outlined in Sections 6 and 7.1 of Report C211; and***
- (2) work be undertaken with Parish Councils with a view to increasing the number of 'WOS UP' sessions in rural villages.***

The Working Party considered Report C211 (previously circulated), which presented an update on the Rural Youth Work Programme and sought approval for funding to be continued to deliver the 'WOS UP' Project in the rural areas of St Edmundsbury.

The Working Party was updated on the various activities, events and projects that had been delivered for young people over the past twelve months which formed part of St Edmundsbury's Rural Youth Work Programme. It also provided an evaluation of the rural youth work project, 'WOS UP', which was now in its fourth year.

'WOS UP' was the name for a detached youth work provision delivered in rural areas. In 2011 and previous years, the Borough Council had commissioned Supporting Contemporary Adolescence (SCA) to deliver the project. This involved a 'Warrior' 4 x4 vehicle visiting a number of villages and providing young people with sports equipment, a tuck shop, DJ equipment and a mobile media suite, amongst others. Attendance at the sessions had risen from a total of 541 young people attending in 2010 to 583 in 2011, which was primarily due to an increase in the number of sessions from 60 in 2010 to 72 in 2011. In order to make provision for further sessions in 2012 and onwards, funding would need to be sourced from external partners, such as Parish Councils, in addition to allocating funding from the Borough Council's Rural Youth Work Programme budget.

The Working Party noted that where a Parish Council was unable or unwilling to match-fund the Borough Council's contribution to 'WOS UP' sessions in its village, then the Borough Council reserved the right to reallocate its funding to another village where match-funding was available.

19. St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Support to Rural Voluntary and Community Groups

The Working Party considered Report C212 (previously circulated), which sought approval for the production and distribution of a leaflet to provide further support to rural voluntary and community groups.

Given that the Council already provided support to rural voluntary and community groups in various ways, officers considered further work should be undertaken to ensure that this existing support and advice was fully understood and accessible by the groups that may benefit from it.

Consequently, attached as Appendix A to the Report, was a draft leaflet detailing the support and advice currently available to rural groups from the Borough Council. The intention was for this leaflet to be distributed to as many rural groups as possible, with support from rural Ward Members. It would also be made available on the Council's website and printed in a format suitable for noticeboards. Any small costs of producing the leaflet in-house would be met from existing budgets.

The Working Party strongly supported the design and content of the leaflet; however, some concern was expressed regarding the extensive use of 'corporate blue' in the leaflet and that every effort should be made to save on colour printing costs. In response, the officers stated that the format would be reviewed and the leaflet amended accordingly, with a view to distributing it as soon as possible.

RESOLVED:- That,

(1)

- (a) the leaflet contained in Appendix A to Report C212 be approved for distribution to rural voluntary and community groups in St Edmundsbury; and
- (b) funding for production of the leaflet be allocated from the existing Rural Action Plan budget; and

(2) the Economic Development Manager, in consultation with the Chairman of the Rural Area Working Party, be authorised to make minor spelling, grammatical, factual and formatting amendments to the leaflet, provided they do not materially affect the substance or meaning of the document.

20. Rural Area Working Party Work Programme

The Working Party received and noted Report C213 (previously circulated) which contained the proposed Work Programme for the Working Party.

21. Dates of Future Meetings

The Rural Area Working Party confirmed the following dates for future meetings in 2012:-

Monday 23 January; and
Wednesday 14 March.

Both meetings to commence at 5.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 7.20 pm

This record has been completed by Kirsty Pitwood, Economic Development Officer - Rural