

**ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**RURAL AREA WORKING PARTY**

**Minutes of a meeting held on Monday 3 September 2012 at 5.00 pm  
in Room GFR13, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds**

PRESENT: Councillor J Thorndyke (Chairman)  
Councillors Mrs Broughton, Clifton-Brown, Hale, Pugh, Ray,  
Redhead, Mrs Rushen and Stevens

**1. Substitutions**

No substitutions were declared.

**2. Election of Chairman**

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:-

That Councillor J Thorndyke be elected as Chairman of the Working Party.

**3. Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:-

That Councillor Mrs Broughton be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Working Party.

**4. Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

**5. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**6. Declarations of Interests**

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

**7. Parish Conference Planning**

Officers gave an oral report outlining the proposed programme for the forthcoming Parish Conference which would be held on Thursday 22 November 2012 at Gt. Whelnetham Community Centre at 6.00 pm. It was proposed that there would be three sessions involving speakers as follows:-

- (i) David Ruffley, MP, who would provide an update on relevant current Government initiatives for rural areas;
- (ii) Ian Gallin, Joint Chief Executive, St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council, who would update the meeting on the new senior management and service delivery arrangements for both Councils; and
- (iii) an update on changes to Local Government Finance which would be far reaching and affect Parish Council's directly.

This would be followed by an Open Forum and then workshop sessions on:-

- (a) how to make the most use of 2011 Census information; and
- (b) local food opportunities available for villages, eg community farm shops or orchards, and food cooperatives. Session to be led by the Local Foods Suffolk Team, Suffolk ACRE.

It was not intended at this stage that there would be a session on Rural Vision 2031 but officers would be available within the conference venue to provide information and answer questions relating to the document. It was confirmed that invitations would be circulated to all Parish Councils and Village Hall Committees to send representatives to the conference and that other individuals wishing to attend would not be precluded. In response to a Member's question officers acknowledged that an item on the National Planning Policy Framework could be included for a future Parish Conference.

The Working Party concurred with the proposed programme for the conference.

## **8. Rural Vision 2031 – Update**

The Working Party received and noted a narrative which advised that consultation on the first draft of the Vision 2031 document for the Rural Areas had taken place between 1 March 2012 and 30 April 2012. An extensive consultation programme had been organised by the Borough Council and there had been a good level of engagement and response. There had been 173 individual comments in relation to the Rural Vision 2031 document. All comments received during the formal consultation period had been registered by officers and were now available to view in full on the Council's website and at the Council's offices in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill.

Officers gave a presentation to the Working Party highlighting what were considered to be the key points and issues arising from the consultation.

Comments, generally, had been as follows:-

- (a) objections to overall housing numbers proposed;
- (b) housing settlement boundaries had been drawn up without consultation;
- (c) objections to the extension of settlement boundaries for 'infill villages';
- (d) settlement boundaries should be designated for all villages to allow some building rather than stifle all rural housing;
- (e) cost and complexities of producing neighbourhood plans would deter communities from producing these;
- (f) objections to development briefs and master plans;
- (g) encouragement should be given to small scale rural enterprises;
- (h) objection to level of development in all key and local service centres; and
- (i) objections to the phasing of developments.

Officers reported on the next steps to be taken which were to analyse comments received and to propose any revisions to the document as a consequence. Work would also be progressed jointly with Forest Heath District Council on developing Infrastructure Plans and Community Investment Levy requirements. The revised Rural Vision 2031 Document would be submitted to the Working Party for further consideration. Thereafter there were other stages to be carried out before the document was adopted as policy.

In relation to comments received from the public consultation officers discussed various points with the Working Party. A Member asked whether it would be possible to extend settlement boundaries to allow a degree of expansion to satisfy some specific Parish Councils' issues. Officers responded by advising that in key and local services centres there were proposals to enlarge such villages and in other situations development of social housing had been permitted on exception sites outside settlement boundaries. Officers advised that if a submission was received to expand an infill village then it would be considered against National and Local Policies. Such a submission should be put forward with evidence to support the expansion of infill villages which do not have the level of services or facilities that other Key or Local Service Centres have. This consideration could be given prior to final version of the Vision 2031 documents being submitted for Examination in Public. Members sought clarification as to the proposed phasing of developments and whether this was just an indication of possible timescale without being prescriptive. It was suggested that for example whilst a development was described as being medium term the Parish Council might be looking for implementation in the short term. Officers advised that the timing of developments shown in the Vision 2031 documents was being reviewed. Officers also advised that whereas speeding up the process of preparing the Local Plan document was kept under regular review the Council was obliged to follow statutory process and it had to ensure that any challenge as to its compliance in law was avoided.

## **9. Gypsy and Traveller Sites – Update**

The Working Party received and noted a narrative which advised that officers were working with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and the Local Government Association (LGA) to deliver a free training session as part of their National Training Programme. The training programme would explore the challenging issues surrounding Gypsies and Travellers in the UK, and would look at the potential solutions that Councillors, officers and local partners could put into practice in their area. The programme was designed for all elected Members, including town and parish councillors, with issues in their area plus key local authority housing, planning and equalities officers, together with local partners such as health and police. The training would be a half day session and would take place on 28 November 2012 at West Suffolk House from 1.00 pm to 4.00 pm. A range of partners from Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire would be invited.

In response to a Member's question officers advised that the proposed training session would have as an emphasis an update on recently introduced changes to Government guidance in relation to Gypsy and Traveller Sites. The Council's own position in relation to the provision of such sites was broadly discussed by the Working Party.

## **10. Rural Area Working Party Work Programme**

The Working Party received and noted Report D111 (previously circulated) which contained the proposed work programme for the Working Party. The Working Party was also informed that the revised Rural Vision 2031 document would be submitted to it at the meeting on 8 November 2012 (as referred to in minute 8 above).

## **11. Dates of Future Meetings**

The Working Party had already agreed the following dates for future meetings:-

Thursday 8 November 2012;  
Thursday 24 January 2013; and  
Wednesday 13 March 2013.

All meetings to commence at 5.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 5.55 pm.

**J THORNDYKE  
CHAIRMAN**