

Membury Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan

MINUTES OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD STEERING PLAN GROUP HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 17TH DECEMBER, 2014 AT THE MEETING PLACE AT 4.00 P.M.

Present: Alex, Beryl, Heather, Jason. Jeremy, John, Mark and Roger Clemens (Tree Warden)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Sam Dare

2. MATTERS ARISING

Tree Policy - Roger presented a draft copy, in thorough detail, which is attached to these Minutes.

The overall Policy was:-

"To secure, encourage and promote a wide range of tree species, woods and hedges in and around the village to enhance and benefit the community now and for the future."

There followed a discussion on the advantage of Tree Protection Orders (TPO) on trees in and around the village. Original copies of the TPO's had been lost and Roger would like to see tree tagging and a new Register of Trees compiled.

This information could then be put on the website.

It was agreed that we needed to be strong, clear and brief on the need to protect our trees. All the minutiae raised by Roger in his report could be written into an appendix. We need to clear with Stuart that we could put an annexe in the Plan and that we could add to it over future years.

Roger thanked for his work.

3. HOUSING

A copy of Jason's report on Housing proposals - CLT options read out and a copy of the full report attached to these Minutes.

There were several options regarding Housing Needs and the group discussed the Dalwood and Beer solutions. If we went down the route of two affordable houses and 3 - 5 retirement units (if suitable land could be found or donated by local land-owners) then we would need a Business Plan and a group of people to manage this project.

If we went down this road then a Project Manager would have to be employed.

At this point in the meeting Jason agreed that he would be happy, for a fee and if selected, to lead such a group but due to his involvement in the Steering Group there was a concern of a possible conflict of interests and he wished it to be known that he would be quite prepared to stand aside from any discussion. The Group understood the possible eventual conflict but decided that, at this time, we would benefit from his expertise.

Several options were discussed including whether it was too complicated at this stage to put anything in the Neighbourhood Plan. There followed a full and frank discussion on exactly what would be appropriate for us to do but as a Steering Group we must be careful

what we recommend. It was agreed that, without having consultations with the villagers, we should not pursue this further at this stage but pass on our surveys results to the Parish Council for their consideration and potential implementation.

4. Time, Date and Place of Next Meeting TBA in the new Year once there is a Draft Plan to discuss.

Membury Tree Policy

Policy

To secure, encourage and promote a wide range of tree species, woods and hedges in and around the village to enhance and benefit the community now and for the future.

The overall tree policy and related objectives are designed to address the enthusiastic support for tree issues indicated in the feedback taken from the findings of our recent Design Statement Questionnaire.

Objectives

Our aim is to achieve the policy through the following objectives:

1. Championing and protection of local heritage trees, copses and hedges.
2. Promotion of an awareness of the value of trees to the community.
3. Instruction and advice on how to grow your own trees.
4. Tree planting, planning and practice.
5. Management and care of trees.
6. Identification of threats and challenges to trees.
7. Knowledge of the law and its impact on trees.
8. Organisation of tree events and projects.

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting. 17th Dec 2014

Housing proposals- CLT options

Dalwood and Beer both have CLT projects nearing completion and have chosen different models

Dalwood identified a need from a Housing Needs Survey, found a site with help from a friendly local landowner and engaged a Housing Association to take it from there. They also got a grant to cover legal costs (I think some £5000) to set up the project and conditions. Through legal help, they are able to control allocations on a 'Parish connection' basis. The HA take all the risk. The CLT can choose to buy the entire project back on a rotating five year basis, but the project will revert to CLT ownership anyway after 125 years

Beer bought a commercially available site with planning permission on the open market, having presented a business plan in order to gain a loan. Using local expertise, they did the design and engineering work themselves and hired a main contractor for the build. Some of the houses are part-equity, which means they sold 80% of the value at market rates, to local people with an identified need and retain the other 20%. The sale of those houses paid off 2/3 of the loan and the remainder is serviced by rental income from the remaining properties. Like Dalwood, they have power of allocation. If the part equity house owners decide to sell in the future, first choice must be given to the CLT who will buy there-and-then at market price established as mathematical average of 5 Estate Agents valuation. The CLT will apply their rules to sell the property again to new local people in Housing Need. [Note: they have about 20 names from their Hsg. Needs Survey!]

There are pros and cons to both methods, but both prove that you can allocate on a local needs basis and retain the power to do so. Beer have more control, but accept more risk, Dalwood have no risk but have less control.

Membury, should it find the CLT route attractive, can use either of these models, or adapt them to suit. The reason we asked about local surveyors, architects, builders etc was to see if we could take a project to completion using only the professional expertise in Membury. That's has many advantages, both obvious and less so. Most obvious is that funds get spent and stay within the Parish economy. Less obvious is that trades people may be willing to work for wages, rather than profit, and reduce project costs. The Parish is also more likely to get a sympathetic design, and a job done to high standards if 'we' are doing it. Those same trades people can also be retained as maintenance contractors, again keeping money in the local economy

From the Housing Needs Survey, we suggest that two affordable houses are needed and, perhaps, 3-5 retirement units. Should these retirement units be 'pre-bought' by parishioners, the cross-subsidy to help pay for the affordable houses is self-evident. Should this not be possible, mortgages can be raised and paid off on completion of the project when people move into the retirement units, with any residual mortgage being serviced by rental income. It would also be possible to allocate shares in the CLT, to help fund the project, with the option of share buyback once units are sold. Both Beer and Dalwood report that they have had considerable interest in shares, Beer

offering a small return on their funds and therefore gaining a few purchases of £10,000 each from individuals.

A CLT relies on the availability of land coming, essentially, for free as land prices form the largest part of the cost of building new houses in the UK. As we don't have any council or govt owned land in Membury, one suggestion proffered to us was that a friendly landowner who donates the plot to the CLT gets one unit of the project to sell on the open market for themselves. Even if the landowner pays for the building of this unit, a tidy profit should make this an attractive proposal

The CLT will be able to allocate the affordable units on a 'Parish connection' basis and could potentially put a covenant or clause into the retirement units re-sale conditions that they be offered to people of the Parish first.

This whole proposal has implications on the setting out of the Neighbourhood Plan. Should we decide to do this, we will almost certainly need to do a Strategic Environmental Assessment, rather than just a Sustainability Appraisal. Its quite daunting, but probably not beyond us and we may get help from EDDC. Funding to help set up a CLT is available in grant form and there are specialist CLT networks who can guide us through the whole process from feasibility to completion for no up-front costs. People from both Beer and Dalwood CLT's; Wessex CLT Network (who 'walked' both groups through the entire project); the EDDC 'enabler' of both of these CLT's and the two ladies who came to visit us in the Summer from the Rural Housing Partnership are all happy to come and see us in the New Year and talk through our options if we would like to explore the idea further