

Sandhurst Town Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Committee.

Minutes of the proceedings of the Steering Group Committee held on 17th July 2024

Present: -

Ian Booker (Chair)	IB
Dale Birch (Deputy Chair)	DB
Sylvia Trevis	ST
Michael Brossard	MB

Apologies for absence: -

Mike Butcher	NMB
Ashley Bower-Dyke	ABD
Jagjit Brar	JB

Matters arising: -

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

Previous minutes: - The previous minutes were approved by MB and seconded by ST.

1 Matters arising from the previous minutes-

Outstanding Estate Agents surveys: - MB has contacted Prospect but is awaiting a reply.

Chris Jackman contact: - DB noted that he had made contact with Chris Jackman, and that Chris Jackman wished to continue with being within the Steering Group communications circulations. It was noted that email contact with Chris may have been compromised during holiday periods at the RMA.

2 Update on appointed Planning Consultant: -

Notice had recently been received from Planning Consultant Navigus (Chris Bowden) that he was to leave Navigus and indeed that Navigus Planning was shortly to be disbanded. Navigus were therefore now unable to continue with their planning advice.

STC had been copied in with all communications from Navigus and as a consequence an email had been received from STC noting that it may not be appropriate to automatically engage the second tender as they had been rejected previously and

that the situation will need to be discussed at the S and P meeting on 25th July and new planning consultants approached for quotes.

For the Steering Group Committee to consider matters IB summarised salient matters associated with both the initial tender procedure and indeed the appointment recommendations made by Locality. The summary being tabled such that the committee could vote on proposals and recommendations for a way forward and for potential tabling at the 25th of July S and P meeting.

Locality appointment recommendations: - Locality proposed that only 30% of appointment marks be allocated to price. The remaining 70% being awarded to experience and understanding of what was required. Understanding of what was required would be greatly enhanced if a consultant had a detailed knowledge of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan, Neighbourhood Planning, and what was required for our particular needs.

IB noted that if a Planning Consultant be appointed who did not have a detailed knowledge of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan we could well end up, by default, for that consultant spending additional time, and it being charged, for making themselves familiar with the Local Plan's content.

The original tender list selection: - IB reminded the committee that the original tender list had been produced by including organisations that had previously worked on Bracknell Parish and Town Neighbourhood Plans or Local Planning Consultants who had a detail knowledge of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan and had experience of advising on nearby Neighbourhood Plans.

As other Bracknell Forest Parishes had appeared to only have used Navigus and O'Neil Homer the list would be, by default, limited. O'Neil Homer not being a current viable consultant as they had previously stepped down and are believed to have too high a workload to be reapproached.

In order to hopefully avoid any unnecessary delay, the Committee unanimously proposed the following recommendations: -

First option: - We approach second original tenderer ET Planning. This organisation being based in Crowthorne, had detailed knowledge of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan, and had a good Neighbourhood Plan consultancy record of advising on a number of Parishes just outside the Bracknell boundary.

The committee were reminded that discussions with ET's Director indicated that their 70% score element for knowledge of what was required and indeed knowledge of the BFC Local Plan was extremely high. They only being placed second for reasons of a marginally higher daily charge out rate than Navigus.

The committee were also reminded that ET's daily rates were well below the equivalent rates tabled by Hook based Bell Cornwell (albeit in the end Bell Cornwell did not submit a full quotation). Bell Cornwell previously having represented Finchampstead for their NP production.

Second Option (to avoid unnecessary delay should STC require a further tender process): - We approach Navigus to see if they are prepared to formally review and report on our proposed questionnaires. It being noted that Navigus will not be closing down until the first week in September. If this were to be instigated it may be possible (subject to STC directive) to formally distribute the questionnaires to residents and businesses shortly after the next S and P meeting/ during late August/September. If STC require a further round of tenders this could be done during the questionnaire response time.

Third Option: - If STC wish not to progress with the above options then a new quotation process could be instigated. This would lead to the NP process being delayed by circa two months and indeed could result in having to approach organisations outside our area and with limited current knowledge of the BFC Local Plan.

In conclusion the Steering Group Committee unanimously voted to recommend the first option of approaching ET Planning to enquire if they were prepared to be appointed on the basis of their original tender. If they were promptly approached and agreed to act as our consultant it would be likely that they could very quickly formally comment on our draft questionnaires. This may avoid further delay.

If ET Planning were not now able to help with the NP then a contingency solution could be for Navigus to be asked to formally comment on the questionnaires prior to and during a period when additional quotations were being processed.

The third and least favoured solution by the Steering Group Committee would be to start the whole tender process again with further potential consultants. This, by default, would likely involve consultants with reduced initial knowledge of local situations and indeed the BFC Local Plan.

In this regard Navigus had made some suggestions for alternative consultants. A basic check has been made on the recommendations and they appear to be remote from our area and with NP help to parishes many miles away from our area.

In the interim the Steering Group will not contact any of the consultants noted above until guidance had been received via STC/the S and P committee.

MB to table the Steering Committees' views at the forthcoming STC, S and P meeting, due to DB's absence.

Consultant's fee allocations: - DB noted that STC has a budget of £20,000 towards the cost of the NP. BFC will allocate up to the relevant government limit. Which may be £10,000 or if they have already set a budget it could be £20,000.

3 Cost Plan proposals: -

DB also tabled a action plan that has been /will be presented to STC. The plan included budget figures for printing costs, questionnaire delivery costs, analytical support, survey monkey fees and display boards. MB, in DB's absence, to discuss the plan and its potential STC approval at the S and P meeting. Aim being to progress matters on a timely basis. The action plan being emailed to the Steering Group members separately.

4 Update on meetings and liaison with Partners since the last meeting: -

Blackwater Vally Countryside Partnership: - IB noted that he had had a very positive meeting with Steve Bailey of the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership. Steve being responsible for the drafting of planning policy proposals for Council's with areas within the Blackwater Valley. These policy proposals being recommended to support the long-term protection of the Valley and surrounding countryside. Steve prepared a specific plan that could be included with our NP and indeed be used on display boards at public exhibitions. The plan recorded the boundaries to the area and potential future additional public footpaths (albeit this includes footpaths outside the Sandhurst boundary). Steve also offered, free of charge, to comment for compliance with the BVCP thinking on all future NP policies related to the Blackwater Valley protection and enhancement associated with nature and resident's benefit. A copy of the plan is attached.

ST noted that she had made contact with many of the Sandhurst Partners, these included Churches and Local Clubs. Responses are awaited.

IB noted that it was important that a full record of all of the "Partner" contacts be kept as these would be required to demonstrate to NP examiners our liaison actions we have taken to contact and gain the related views of Sandhurst based organisations.

5 Potential meetings to be arranged: -

It was proposed that within the coming weeks the following meetings be arranged. Following the agreement of related meetings IB would draft an agenda for discussion at these meetings.

Meetings with nearby Council's to establish updates on any planning matters/developments that may have an impact on the Sandhurst area: -

- i) Bracknell Forest Council, to gain an update on nearby developments (particularly within Crowthorne). DB to contact the new Planning EO to hopefully arrange a meeting. It was hoped that the meeting could also be attended by Jo Male (new lead Planning Officer). **Action DB**
- ii) Hart/ Yateley: - IB to make contact following agreement by STC.
- iii) Meeting also to be arranged for IB and DB to meet with Chris Jackman to discuss potential NP interfaces between Sandhurst and the RMA

6 Liaison with partner organisations: -

Steering Group members were reminded of the various “Partner” actions, all as defined within item 3 of the meeting minutes of 29th May.

7 Questionnaire update: -

DB noted that he had added an additional question and made adjustments to incorporate matters associated with the potential protection of the countryside. This being in accordance with earlier advice from Navigus. Copy of the draft questionnaire attached.

Date of next meeting: - This will be held in abeyance and be dependent on any decisions made at STC’s forthcoming S and P meeting.

