

# WESTCOTT VILLAGE FORUM

Minutes of Village Forum Group meeting held at 7.30pm on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012 at The Hut, Furlong Road, Westcott.

**Present:** Alex Segal (Acting Chairman)  
See list appendix (a)

**Apologies** See list appendix (a)

## 1. Introduction

Welcome and introduction by Alex Segal.

Outlined some advantages of creating a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for Westcott, as that we can identify what we want to see, what we don't, where we wish to see it, and MVDC will then be required to follow it. It will not be approached in a negative way – it is not a tool to keep things out, but quite the contrary. Our aim is to identify Village concerns which will lead to positive changes. The vehicle for this identification process is initially the Village Survey. The aim is to distribute this to all households & businesses within Westcott in the spring of 2013. The target return rate is in the region of 80% as achieved by Bookham Vanguard. (Reference to Bookham Vanguard group as a resource for information & guidance).

Brief overview of how the groundwork will be covered by the Working Party.

List of attendees confirmed and members wishing to join the Forum loosely established.

*Election of Chairman.* From those wishing to be on the Forum, Alex Segal was voted Chairman (proposed by James Friend, seconded by Chris Smewing).

## 2. Setting the scene for Working Party groups

The relationship between the Working Party, which will split into 6 key groups each with their own remit, and how these will feed into the Forum Group for debate and decision making, was discussed.

It was re-iterated that all those present were currently prospective Forum members.

The six key groups were introduced:

1. Governance & Finance introduced by James Friend - Aim to ensure constitution signed off and the Forum gains official recognition by MVDC. Ensure things are done by the terms of the Localism Act. Press MVDC to cover incidental costs etc.
2. Survey design and Analysis introduced by Chris Smewing – Tasked to bring survey together, Analyse the data collected. Identify how to ensure we're collecting the data which is needed by other groups.
3. Member Services introduced by Sue Winch – Admin role, central point of contact, co-ordinate meetings, queries, member lists etc.
4. Marketing and Participation introduced by Andrea Gabb – Advertising, delivery of Surveys, assisting their completion, target 80% return rate to ensure that we're representative of everyone in the village.
5. Policy Writing introduced by Mike Flower – Aim to submit the final policy. A close liaison with the Survey and analysis group, MVDC Planning team and the Forum,
6. Project Management introduced by Kevin Foo - To ensure each group delivers key elements on time. Identify roles, timescales and plan the programme.

## 3. Advice from Jack Straw (Manager, Planning Policy. Mole Valley District Council)

This is the beginning of a collaborative process with MVDC Planning team working with us rather than directing us. MVDC can assist with the provision of information & resources, so we're not starting from a plateau of no knowledge.

Jack suggested we familiarise ourselves with 'Neighbourhood Planning Regulations' and the 'Localism Act' (new legislation). Reading material on these topics available on the web (or contact MVDC for further guidance).

Jack identified Neighbourhood DEVELOPMENT planning as a process whereby community needs are identified and then taken forward. It is a 'Land Use Planning' issue.

It must be in compliance with strategic policies such as MVDC Local Plan, and Core Strategy which set out the planning framework in the District and which have significance to Westcott. (eg set out Green Belt policies, Surrey Hills AONB) all of which need to be taken into account when developing our NDP.

Key Advice: Make sure the questions we ask on our survey are those which will provide answers to inform the NDP relating to Land Use Planning issues rather than smaller, more localised issues.

One of our first tasks will be to apply to MVDC for Formal Identification of the geographical area to which our NDP will apply.

For formal 'Forum designation' to be approved (recognised) it needs to be demonstrated by us that we are inclusive and representative. We will also need a formal written constitution.

Next Steps: Begin data collection and analysis, which will lead on to identifying issues. We then have to think how we're going to accommodate these. A draft NDP should be produced and consulted on in the community to demonstrate how we're working WITH the community, and to help avoid 'show-stoppers' at

later stages of approval. Once the community is happy with the NDP it is submitted to MVDC, which triggers a referendum. If it is voted for by 50% +1 (of those turning out to vote) it is adopted within the MVDC Local Planning Policy Framework. Future Planning Applications received will then be considered within our NDP, along with the District Planning Policies.

Questions taken:

1. *How long does the NDP last?*
  - 10 years.
2. *How much weight in planning terms does the NDP carry?*
  - It is very weighty. – if a proposal is received not in accordance with the NDP, there is a presumption against (refusal), unless other considerations strongly outweigh the policy. (some examples were given to further demonstrate this point)
3. *How does the NDP fit in with the land allocations of the District Plan?*
  - The District Plan makes land allocations throughout the district, but it will not include areas covered by individual Local Plans (such as the NDP) Because we are setting the agenda for Westcott WITHIN the Strategic Planning strategies of MVDC our plan HAS to be in accordance with the District Plan. Therefore MVDC will not endeavour to use land covered by the Westcott Plan.
4. *Who would ensure our NDP is adhered to as the Forum disbands after it's completion?*
  - The NDP goes into custodianship of Mole Valley and as such it is treated as all other Planning Policies – so it is MVDC planning Officers responsibility.
5. *Who will have a Statutory Consultee Role?*
  - Currently, those bodies chosen by MVDC who are the statutory consultee on all proposals. However, a Parish Council could also have the role of statutory consultee if there were one in Westcott. The Forum needs to address the question of having a Parish Council rather than a Village Association as a separate issue. James Friend clarified that any representation identifying a breach of planning policy whether from a statutory body, a residents association or an individual carries equal weight.
6. *What happens if each area within the district is covered by a NDP, no sites come forward, targets are not being met, and the District council needs to provide 500 homes within the next 5 years – what does MVDC do?*
  - Government requires Objectively Assessed Housing Need targets. In the old days this was done through the Regional Plans (in our case the South East Plan), which looked at the identification of Housing Requirements within the District, as driven down directly from central government. As Mole Valley is a tightly constrained district, it led us to have lower housing targets than our need was. This System has now gone, and we have to establish the Objectively Assessed Housing Target within the MDVC. The purpose of the NDP (as in Bookham) is just this. Several Villages have shown interest, currently Ockley, Ashted, Westcott, in addition to Bookham who are much further into the process.
7. *If Westcott identifies need for affordable housing for its residents, and MVDC receive a planning application, is there any way to control that local residents of Westcott are homed there, rather than these homes being used by residents from outside the area?*
  - There is no control over who gets housed in those affordable homes- it is managed on a priority basis within the district, to allow those who are in most need get homed first. The only vehicle to offer affordable homes to those within the village is through the Rural Exception Scheme. If an exception to the greenbelt boundary is allowed for the provision of affordable homes, they can be targeted towards the local community.
8. *The NDP has a lifetime of 10 years. This seems a long time without a review. Is this satisfactory?*
  - The long term goal may be 15 years, and it's generally accepted that a plan is reviewed every 5 years, alongside monitoring to see if it is working effectively in delivering the requirements.
9. *Do we need to do this process every 5 years?*
  - It will take 2 years+ to write the plan, possibly the Forum could do a quick review in year 4 before it disbands (it has a 5 year lifespan). Options would be to perhaps have a Parish Council by then, or re-constitute the Forum to write the plan to proceed the NDP.
10. *How often should the Forum meet?*
  - Using Bookham Vanguard as an example, their Forum meet quarterly, and their task force meets monthly.
11. *How do we anticipate outside forces coming into Westcott? Eg. If we've identified and allocated a site and it's used up by outside growth?*
  - Look at your processes. Jack offered assistance by attending working party groups. He also offered the assistance of Bookham Vanguard who are happy to be approached with questions and will offer help & advice.

#### **4. Volunteers for the Working Party groups.**

Alex asked group representatives to stand and others in the room to go and join a working party group. Each group should elect and vote a chairman, and discuss group aims.

#### **5. Discussion in individual groups and election of group leaders.**

See appendix (b)

#### **6. Closing plenary session of Forum and Working Group members.**

Those keen to be Forum members were asked to confirm they still wished to be a member of the Forum. (all listed in appendix (b)). Final thanks to those attending and taking an interest. It was re-iterated that the Forum should be inclusive of the whole community therefore we should go to lengths to ensure this is the case. Forum members were asked to place a pin in a map of Westcott Ward, to identify the road in which they live, as a visual demonstration of the geographical spread of the members. Representation from other groups within Westcott should be sought. This could be achieved by encouraging other groups to take part. Each member was tasked with asking other groups (which they might belong to) to contact the Marketing and Participation group chairman, Andrea Gabb for inclusion. Working groups will make their own arrangement for future meetings and strategies.

#### **5. Any Other Business.**

None

#### **6. Close of Meeting.**

The next meeting will be held at the St Johns church hall at 7.30pm Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January. Venue to be confirmed.

Working Party Groups to set their own meeting schedules.

The meeting was closed at 9pm.

**Action: Member Services Group**

## Appendix (a)

Westcott Village Forum Meeting 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

### **List of attendees**

Kevin Foo  
Stuart Ryland  
Andrea Gabb  
Heather Woods  
Andrew Gordon  
Sue Winch  
Hazel Watson  
Graham Clarke  
Debbie Fenton-Jones  
Pamela Wilson  
James Leaver  
Madeline Brooks  
Stuart Glass  
Mike Flower  
Alex Segal  
Debbie Aston  
Rond Salter  
James Friend  
Chris Smewing  
Alan Jonas  
David McCombe  
Patrick Salmon  
Chris Dale  
Steve Brooks  
Sandra Ede  
David Webb  
Richard Scivier

### **List of apologies**

Nicky Rowling  
Tony Fenton-Jones  
Vicki Hutchins  
Vere Druce  
Heather Forster  
Willy Forster  
Bertram bees  
Frances Robinson  
Lois Cremmen  
Naomi Wye  
Justin Emrich  
Tony Winch

Appendix (b)

Westcott Village Forum Meeting 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

**List of Working Party Groups (Item 5)**

<b>Programme Management.</b> Kevin Foo – voted Chairman Alex Segal Andrew Gordon	<b>Governance &amp; Finance.</b> James Friend – voted Chairman Patrick Salmon Chris Dale
<b>Survey Design &amp; Analysis.</b> Chris Smewing – voted Chairman Tony Fenton-Jones James Leaver Pamela Wilson Madeline Brooks Alan Jonas	<b>Policy Writing.</b> Mike Flower – voted Chairman Debbie Aston Rond Salter David McCombe James Leaver Graham Clarke
<b>Marketing and Participation.</b> Andrea Gabb To be confirmed	<b>Member Services.</b> Sue Winch – voted Chair Heather Woods Debbie Fenton-Jones

**Prospective Forum Group Members as confirmed at meeting (Item 6).**

Kevin Foo  
Stuart Ryland  
Andrea Gabb  
Heather Woods  
Andrew Gordon  
Sue Winch  
Hazel Watson  
Graham Clarke  
Debbie Fenton-Jones  
Pamela Wilson  
James Leaver  
Madeline Brooks  
Stuart Glass  
Mike Flower  
Alex Segal  
Debbie Aston  
Rond Salter  
James Friend  
Chris Smewing  
Alan Jonas  
David McCombe