

Town and Parish Councillor Area Forum
Holt Community Centre
24th June 2010 1pm to 4pm

Note: This Area Form followed a public meeting hosted by Norfolk Constabulary called Face the People which started at 1pm

Present:	Cllr R Combe	Astley Ward
	Peter Bullimore	Beeston Regis and Weybourne PC
	R Eggleton	Briston Parish Council
	Cllr Bartlett	Cromer Town Council
	Carol Otty	High Kelling Parish council
	Diana Dalton	Gresham Parish Council
	Cllr Philip High	Holt Ward
	??	Overstrand Parish Council
	Jenny Mackay	Hanworth Parish Council
	Bryan Payne	Holt Town Council
	Colin Hipperson	Holt Town Council
	Di Dann	Holt Town Council
	Cllr Gloria Lisher	Lancaster South Ward
		Also Member Champion for Town & Parish Councils
		Gloria.Lisher@north-norfolk.gov.uk tel: 01328 829063
	John Lisher	Lancaster South Ward
	Heather Bowes	Melton Constable Parish Council
	John Perry-Warnes	Norfolk County Council
		Cllr Corpusty Ward
	Eric Vickers	Overstrand Parish Council
	D Ramsbottham	Plumstead Parish Council
	Peter Burns	Sheringham Town Council
	MP Chesterman	Stody Parish Council
	F.W. Key	Thurning Parish Council
	Y Farrow	Upcher Local Area Partnership
NNDC	Steve Blatch	Strategic Director NNDC
	Maureen Clarke	Supporting Communities Team (SCT) Manager
	Julie Souter	SCT Community Development Officer
	Steve Hems	Environmental Health Manager
	Frances Haywood	SCT Administration Support
Apologies	Cllr Henry Cordeaux	High Heath Ward
	Philip Burton	Chief Executive NNDC
	Aubrey Poberefsky	Saxthorpe Parish Council

Introduction and Welcome

Steve Blatch introduced these twice yearly face to face events between NNDC and Town and Parish Councils. This was one of three such events being staged during June/July. Steve Hems, and Maureen Clarke, Supporting Communities Manager. He then handed over to Maureen Clarke accordingly.

Community Empowerment Strategy (CES)

Maureen gave a brief update on the Council's approach to community empowerment.

She introduced the Councillor Consultation pack that everyone had been given; she explained how this works. The Consultation is to increase the number of people who can influence decisions made, regarding matters important to them in North Norfolk.

Maureen discussed how the Community Empowerment Strategy and action plan are being drawn up by the a steering group made up of individuals from District Council, partners, e.g. Housing Landlords, Police, Education, NRCC (Norfolk Rural Community Council), NALC (National Association of Local Councils); she welcomed others to get involved.

The action plan will ensure residents' views are obtained to see what they would like to see happen in the District; awareness projects are already taking place regarding involvement in the democratic process as well as greater communication with groups in the district, directly, via the Town & Parish Councils, the LAPs and the Voluntary Sector;

Additional consultation packs are available – by contacting Supporting Communities Team on 01263 516346. Consultation ends mid to late September.

These need to be requested before September 6th to allow for posting.

The Councillor Consultation is one of many taking place over a 12 week from July to September. All comments will be taken into consideration and analysed; Feedback will be given after the consultation and any suggestions not taken forward will be explained; an action plan will then be drawn up.

Notifications

NCC's Vocal Local campaign (Website: www.vocallocal.org.uk) is to build awareness of involvement by local people in democracy and community projects. Free merchandise, stickers, posters, t-shirts, etc. can be obtained from Anne Tansley-Thomas at Norfolk County Council, Consultation & Community Relations Officer, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH or via email anne.tansleythomas@norfolk.gov.uk or Tel: 01603 222844.

This campaign complements the Community Empowerment Strategy which highlights that only 32% of people in North Norfolk felt they could be involved and 60% of people don't know how to be involved in their Town & Parish Council.

“Your Question Time”

Steve introduced this section and confirmed that questions that could not be answered would be taken away and a response will be given by officers directly.

If Town or Parish Councils had concerns over poor response to communications with the District Council – either members or officers, they should contact Kirsty Read on 01263 516017 who will make sure that the Council’s ‘Our Standards’ are observed. “ **Letters/fax/email** - We will aim to respond to all queries, written correspondence, faxes and emails within seven working days of receipt. If the subject matter is more complex, we will contact you to explain the reason for the delay and, where possible, say when a response should be available. All our letters to customers will have a named person and telephone number for you to contact.’

Some questions come from Town and Parish Councils which had forwarded questions in advance and from the floor.

Corpusty asked: Why does NNDC not enforce its own Planning Guidelines? Often it goes against its own policy – This wasn’t discussed at the meeting as there was no-one present from Corpusty Parish Council. The answer is, however as follows:

Whilst it was noted that the wording of this question is not fully understood, Steve Oxenham, Head of Planning and Building Control had prepared the following response in advance of the meeting, “Planning decisions are required by law to be made in accordance with adopted planning policy unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. Exceptions to policy can only be made with specific agreement of elected District Councillors or by Development Control Committee, when Town or Parish Councils are given a full report and public speaking rights.”

Cromer Town Council asked: Would NNDC support DCLG initiative to give power to allow parish councils to build affordable houses, up to a small figure, without going through normal planning procedures? Has this been proposed by Mr. Healey?

Response prepared in advance from Steve Oxenham, the Council’s Head of Planning and Building Control, “The outgoing government proposed giving Parish Councils rights to construct affordable housing without requiring planning permission. The new government plans to return decision-making powers to local Councils on housing and planning, to create new housing trusts to facilitate the provision of homes for local people, and to encourage farmers to convert buildings into affordable housing. These proposals appear promising, provided they include measures to ensure that properties remain affordable, but no details have been given at this stage. To by-pass the planning system would give rise to serious questions concerning whether

consultation would take place, how conflicts within communities would be resolved and how the necessary infrastructure associated with housing would be secured.”

In response to further expansion of the Town Council’s question by Cllr. Bartlett, Steve Blatch commented that the Local Development Framework (LDF) process continues, with the next stage being the examination in public by a Planning Inspector of “Site Specific Proposals” which will set out sites for future development. This examination will be held at NNDC’s offices over nine days, commencing 2nd July. The LDF provides for 8000 new homes within the context of the Regional Spatial Strategy approved by East of England Regional Assembly (EERA). The Coalition Government has announced its intention to abandon regional strategies; but NNDC is intending to retain the 8000 homes so as to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing to meet housing need. Affordable housing will be provided through two routes moving forward either from market developments through S.106 agreements or in the form of grant aided schemes, albeit that the finance available for the latter is anticipated to reduce moving forward. The most significant developments proposed will take place at Fakenham, North Walsham and Cromer. NNDC anticipates a reduced amount of money available through social housing grants. The Coalition Government has also proposed that affordable housing could be provided by land/country estates, although no formal guidance has been issued on this as yet.

Cllr Chris Bartlett commented that Cromer Town Council (CTC) are concerned that their response to the draft SSP Plan missed the LDF deadline and therefore never went before the regional inspector and will therefore not be reviewed. The impression the inspector will assume is that Cromer are happy with development matters, when in fact, they are not.

Steve Blatch responded to this by noting that Cromer helped set the Spatial Strategy and looked at all the sites at that time. No comment was subsequently made by CTC during the statutory period of consultation on the Plan during June/July 2009. NNDC had publicized the consultation process widely in advance and many town and parish councils, other stakeholder groups and individuals had submitted comments during the consultation period. Steve was unable to comment why Cromer Town council had not submitted comments at this stage of the process.

Cllr. Perry Warnes mentioned 5 possible sites villages in his ward that could accommodate affordable homes – including Bodham, Corpusty, Little Barningham, Baconsthorpe and Edgefield.

Steve Blatch commented that he understood the sites referred to at Bodham and Little Barningham were being considered for Exceptions housing schemes; that it was unlikely a further scheme would be developed at Corpusty as one such scheme had recently been completed in that community and that he was unaware of the site at Baconsthorpe or that any scheme was being proposed at Edgefield. He would however be happy to discuss any of these proposals further with Cllr. Perry Warnes.

Steve further added that NNDC has a number of Rural Exceptions proposals which it would like to move forward; although often such proposals were the subject of objection – as currently at Field Dalling and Hempton. Under Rural Exceptions schemes grant funds need to be secured and NNDC has to bid for such funds in conjunction with Housing Partners. A scheme developed in Fulmodeston had recently been considered too expensive. The Council did however have a pipeline of 141 units over 18 months where finances had been identified.

Plumstead Parish Council asked: What is the situation regarding 2nd Homes in North Norfolk? and Could there be a policy to stop 2nd Homes?

Currently there is no planning legislation which can limit the number of 2nd Homes in a community; although such concerns could be taken up with the new Government. NNDC has previously looked at options to cover this; as part of the District is an Area of Outstanding Nature Beauty where demand for Second Homes is strong. Some National Park Authorities have adopted policies where new build market housing has been restricted for people living and working in the National park, but no authority has been able to restrict sales of existing properties for use as second homes. Currently 2nd Home owners contribute council tax at 90%. A large proportion of this income is passed to Norfolk County Council. Historically some of this funding has been passed back to North Norfolk District Council through the Local Strategic Partnership to support the provision of affordable homes in the district, although the County Council has recently declared that in future such funds would be directed to a Norfolk Infrastructure Fund.

What is the position of officers and elected members on any proposal to establish onshore windfarms in NNDC?

Response prepared in advance from Steve Oxenham, “The adopted Core Strategy supports renewable energy proposals in principle provided that there is no significant adverse impact on landscape, historic features, residents’ amenities, highway safety or biodiversity. Large scale proposals are more strictly controlled in areas of national importance and should deliver benefits to the local area where they are accepted. “

Is there any chance of waste collection centres taking all waste without any restrictions to help solve Fly Tipping?

Richard Garfield, Environmental Services Manager and Steve Hems, “Norfolk County Council operates the Household Waste Recycling Centres and it is their rules which limit the type of waste taken. If the sites took all waste, commercial disposal would be funded by the tax payer rather than those with legal responsibility. Investigating and clearing the number of fly tipping incidents in North Norfolk is far more cost effective.” (See Flytipping presentation below)

Plumstead also raised a query regarding unelected representation on the Holt Area Partnership board.

Cllr Robin Combe, answered from the floor – that he was looking for the engagement of elected members in the work of the Holt Area Partnership Board; currently there are insufficient people standing for election”

Passed to Beatrix
Ward 01263 516248
NNCP Manager

Steve explained that a number of Town and Parish councils had little awareness of the Local Area Partnership role. The previous Government had pursued a largely urban agenda and had sought to empower the local communities at the estate or neighbourhood level where, Town and Parish councils did not exist to become more involved in local decision making.

NNDC had proposed Local Area Partnership structures based upon the district’s market and coastal towns as areas of defined community interest to try and put North Norfolk communities on an equal footing with communities in more urban areas in terms of access to sources of funding which were not available to local authorities – including town and parish councils. The intention was that LAPs and Town and Parish Councils would work along side each other, however this does not always appear to have worked in practice.

Good examples do however work in the Cromer Poppyland Partnership and Sheringham Upcher Partnership areas – where in Sheringham for example funds and community projects are thriving. Steve added that there were different experiences across the district; however it is important to give residents as many opportunities as possible.

Peter Burns, Upcher Area Partnership (Sheringham), commented that the LAPs were not to be seen as a threat to Town & Parish Councils. They are ideally positioned to open up further areas of funding. All members are elected and any person can join an LAP. Projects can be moved forward immediately as there is no need to wait for a parish meeting (which could take between 6 – 12

weeks to happen). The experience in Sheringham has been excellent and has given rise to many community projects and engagements which would never got off the ground otherwise.

Briston Parish Council asked:

Of the LDF sites likely to be approved will there be any areas for private development?

Steve Blatch commented that sites allocated through the LDF SSP process are for market development. If a parish is identified as a service village within the LDF, then development within the settlement boundary would be still be permissible in principle in addition to the allocations being made through the SSP. The LDF Core Strategy has policies which seek to respect the surrounding character of the area with planning permission being declined for this reason. This reflects recent statements by Government about 'garden grabbing'.

The cost of LDF communication paperwork over the last 4 years has been vast, often sending entire documentation to all parishes when only that affecting their parish would have been appropriate.

Steve Blatch said he would take this observation back to the Planning Policy Team. Documentation is also available on-line; getting the balance of communication material right is difficult as it is a matter of personal and parish choice and providing sufficient material to fully inform.

Holt Town Council asked: Regarding 106 Benefits (a legal agreement attached to Planning Permission) – can NNDC assure Town & Parish Councils that they will consult based on local need. (Holt has written to both District Councillors and Officers, however there does not appear to have been any response.)

The LDF Working Party has looked at each site proposed through the SSP process and taken local needs into account in developing site specific policies. However the economic climate was challenging and a number of developers may now say on the grounds of viability that all the policy requirements cannot be met.

Steve commented that after the planning inspector has adjudicated on the SSP, NNDC will seek to prepare a Planning Obligations statement outline the approach which will need to be adopted in seeking Section 106 contributions from developers. A major applications team will engage on large site development.

Bryan Payne, from Holt Town Council commented that at a regional meeting of local councils, which he attended recently, Costessey will receive

£0.5million from developers. Steve Blatch commented that at one scheme in South Norfolk (Queens Hills) Section 106 obligations for community infrastructure had not been realized because the developer had gone into receivership. He also commented that the scale of development in Costessey was very significant compared to that being proposed in most communities in North Norfolk and would therefore yield a larger Section 106 contribution.

Di Dann stated that Holt have been corresponding over the last 7 years regarding this issue.

Will there be an early consultation and when can councils expect to find out what is happening? Steve Blatch commented that the inspector's report is expected in Oct/Nov and Cabinet will discuss this in the first quarter of 2011. NNDC Planning Policy team will commence consideration of the Section 106 issue further in the autumn. They will be looking at current developer proposals; developers are all at different stages of work.

Wickmere asked: What can the council do to discourage fly tipping in the countryside? Does the council prosecute fly tippers and litterers and would they prosecute if witnesses were able to get a registration number at the scene of crime?

Response given by Steve Hems, "We have a highly successful record of taking action against fly tipping. We have previously prosecuted based on eye witness evidence and judge the reliability of the evidence in each case." (See Flytipping presentation below)

Gunthorpe asked: Are you (NNDC) doing anything about the serious decline in rural bus services? This was not addressed at the meeting as no representative was present from Gunthorpe.

Northrepps asked: Express train services are needed (Cromer – London – Cromer) if possible?

This question would need to be directed to Norfolk County Council

High Kelling asked:

How can we deal with residents encroach on unadopted roads and the highways with decorative features on the periphery of their gardens?

If the encroachment is on the highway you can contact that department at County Hall. If the encroachment is on private land (unadopted roads) it is up to individuals to question this activity using civil law.

This question needs to be directed to Norfolk County Council

Stody asked: The council's annual report 2009/10 for the standards committee code of conduct states District Council assesses all complaints within the national standards limit. What is the time limit?

53 complaints were made; 21 were investigated; 30 were given 'no action' and 6 are still to be completed and marked "referred for hearing". What does referred for hearing mean? Cromer TC felt the time limit was 6 months.

Steve commented that this is a corporate governance issue which he is not able to answer. A response will be made directly to the parish concerned. He did agree that whilst the council operates within current guidance and legislation complaints which are made against parish councillors can feel very personal.

Steve Blatch to inform

Flytipping presentation by Steve Hems

Waste centres are operated by County Council; NNDC has no power to direct their policy. When centres are shut or temporarily closed waste is often dumped. A recent prosecution found that waste had been dumped purely for this reason. The individual was fined £500 and paid £250 costs. Last year NNDC spent £17,500.

In Melton Constable they had severe flytipping issues. NNDC works swiftly to remove the rubbish which helps to keep control of the situation. We investigate all viable cases and will use witness accounts where appropriate. The council has a zero tolerance policy and places campaigns in The Outlook and local papers. Where evidence is clear, individuals are interviewed under caution; they will be given a formal caution or prosecuted accordingly. NNDC is proactive with trading standards and the police to stop suspected 'waste carriers' and licenses are checked. All businesses have to produce a Duty of Care document. NNDC will give fixed penalty notices up to £300 for a first offence moving to prosecution where necessary.

Norfolk County Council was prosecuted by NNDC regarding the dumping of materials by a road repair truck.

Both individuals and businesses are targeted; most instances concern householders and residents. Flytipping is cleared as quickly as possible (usually within 2 days) to deter repeat offences.

We are not required to clear waste on private land; the landowner has a legal responsibility to bear the cost of removal; a balance to assist where possible.

2007/8	436 Fly tips	£24800 cost to NNDC
2008/9	374 Fly tips	£19000 cost to NNDC
2009/10	276 Fly tips	£17700 cost to NNDC

The figures show that our proactive approach is reducing levels of flytipping. With public support we are happy to act and continue to reduce the dumping of waste in North Norfolk.

Any Other Business

Steve thanked all for their questions and participation.

These notes are given in good faith and represent an accurate account of the discussions which took place. If anything contained in these notes is not according to your understanding of the meeting please contact SCT on 01263 516346 and ask for Frances Haywood.

Notes End

Area Forum 24th June 2010 held at Holt Community Centre 1 – 4pm