

Shaugh Prior Neighbourhood Plan

Minutes of a Communications Group Meeting held at 7.30pm on 7 August 2024 at Shaugh Prior Village Hall

In attendance: Barrie Spencer; Simon Francis; Ian Cleaver; Jason Elmers;
Paul Vann;

Apologies: Cathie Boulting;

1. The Meeting was opened by Barrie Spencer as acting Chair. It was agreed that the appointment of a Comms Group Chair should be made as soon as practicable and that the appointee should be sought from the wider Steering Group membership, ideally at the next General Meeting scheduled for 7.30pm on 28 August at Lee Moor Public Hall.
2. The previously circulated Communications Strategy Document was reviewed and approved. It was agreed that the Document was well drafted and covered all salient aspects of marketing and communicating the concept and rationale behind the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. Its primary objective is to inform, engage with and persuade the wider community to “buy into” the Plan, thereby providing vital feedback throughout the process and, ultimately, approval of the Plan. It is estimated that the entire process could take 24-36 months to complete.
3. It was agreed that a copy of the Communications Strategy document should be circulated to the wider Steering Group in advance of the meeting on 28 August to encourage discussion and any additional “tweaks” at the meeting. A brief presentation of the Strategy together with a summary of “next steps” including allocation of “ownership” of each of these steps is to be given at the meeting by Ian Cleaver/Jason Elmers. Once finalised and approved by the Steering Group, the Comms Strategy will be submitted to The Parish Council as part of the “formal” process. Barrie Spencer confirmed that notes on “getting started” had already been prepared during earlier Parish Council meetings and will forward a copy to Ian Cleaver.
4. The importance of generating “Community Engagement” was highlighted as vital to the success of the project. Publicity will comprise a “sales pitch” to the wider community. It was agreed that this might require “topping and tailing” of the actual communications docs to reach specific targeted groups (i.e. priorities may differ between residents of Shaugh Prior, Wotter and Lee Moor). This will be a primary outreach to everyone in the community highlighting the top-level benefits of the Plan, plus secondary audience specific comms as required. We are not talking about a particularly large audience, maybe something around 750 individuals (340 households?) comprising residents (the vast majority), business owners, community groups, landowners and including local authority representatives (e.g. in the first instance, business owners should be contacted directly as CEO/MD, and residents via a Flyer through the letterbox).

This initial communication must be punchy, must be in straightforward language and **must** grab the attention; it is likely to be one side of A4 and in the style of a press release rather than correspondence, comprising:

- Why are you receiving this communication?
- What is a Neighbourhood Plan?
- Why does this Parish need one?
- Why we need your engagement/participation.
- We need you to look out for and complete the forthcoming Questionnaire over the next few weeks (electronically delivered and returned)

The recent change of Government and potentially significant changes to Planning Laws may help our case in terms of greater awareness/selling the need for the Plan.

The Flyer is then followed up with a carefully drafted Questionnaire to be delivered by email. Drafting will require a team effort (forming a separate working group) to ensure that all bases are covered and that it is sufficiently “user-friendly” for recipients to buy into it and are willing and able to complete and return it. As we won’t have everyone’s email addresses in the database, we will need to create a “Link” to the questionnaire (once it is available online - on the website?) to be included in posters/Flyers etc so we can harvest addresses. Also, for those unable to respond online, we will produce/deliver hard copies. We need to work on how best to manage this.

Gauging the response - Persuading the Community to “buy-in” to the need for the Plan and, de facto, complete the Questionnaire is key to the success of the project as a whole. We will be able to judge how successful the initial campaign has been based on the level of responses. (NB we will need to consider Data Protection Protocols, although these are already largely in place via the Parish Council).

5. The above strategy will require the building of a Community **Database** (names, addresses, emails etc.) of each household/business within the Parish (from last Census/Local Authority Records?). This Database will need to be regularly updated to show who has and has not responded to various comms activities (the most important being the Questionnaire) to enable follow-up emails/visits. **Ownership?**

There are approx. 340 dwellings/places of business and around 750 individuals (of all ages) within the Parish. It was agreed that those households which do not respond to the Questionnaire for whatever reason are “chased-up” initially by email, followed, if necessary, by a maximum of two home visits (people may be out the first time). A number of “hand deliveries” (and collections) will be required but only for those not online as it was felt that responses to “hard copy” deliveries are not only much lower than online but are also far more labour intensive to collect/chase-up. All chase-ups and hand deliveries need to be accurately recorded on the Database.

6. Public Meetings: Barrie noted that previous plans with which he had been involved had benefitted significantly, in terms of generating interest and engagement, from holding Public Meetings. It was agreed that we should hold a Public Meeting to explain the “whys and wherefores” of the Neighbourhood Plan as an important part of the Marketing Comms (Lee Moor or Shaugh Prior?). Also ticks an important box in obtaining approval of the Plan. This will require a ppt. presentation.

7. Next Steps:

- Circulate Comms Strategy Document to Steering Group ahead of next meeting scheduled for 7.30pm, 28 August at Lee Moor Public Hall
- Brief Presentations to be given at meeting on Comms Strategy and next practical steps
- Appointment of Comms Group Chair
- Create Database of Community constituents
- Draft A4 Flyer - Neighbourhood Plan, Questionnaire and need for engagement & participation
- Appoint working group to draft Questionnaire.
- Appoint “owners” of above tasks including editorial “staff” for key documentation
- Document Printing – who has the capacity

To maintain momentum, we need to allocate specific tasks above to individuals and/or working groups at the next meeting.

8. AOB: Date of next Comms Group meeting to follow on from Steering Group Meeting.