**INFORMAL AGENTS MEETING**

**6 September 2016**

**MINUTES**

Present:

Chris Parsons Stuart Ashworth

Daniel Wallage Peter Jermany

Mike Hastings Lee Osler

Ben Ridgwell Ruth Redding

David Taylor

Peter Gidney

Shaun Gayton

1. Apologies

Grahame Seaton

John Maxey

Jason Law

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Chris Parsons (CP) welcomed the two new members to the group, David Taylor and Jason Law.

(7) Highways giving inconsistent information: Stuart Ashworth (SA) said he is meeting Highways on Friday 9 September and would pick it up with them at the meeting.

(7) Flood Maps: SA stated that we are still awaiting maps from the Environment Agency and would keep the group informed.

(7) Bat and Owl Surveys: SA said he will remind officers of the potential to condition further ecological surveys in certain circumstances.

3. LDF Update

**Site Allocations & Development Management Policies (SADMP) Plan**

The Inspector’s Report has been received following last year’s Examination and a report recommending Adoption with the Main Modifications is going to Cabinet on 7 September and full Council on 29 September <http://democracy.west-norfolk.gov.uk/documents/s9706/SADMP%20Adoption%20Cabinet%20Report%200916.pdf>

Saved Local Plan policies will then be superseded.

**CIL**

The CIL Examination was taking place today (6 September) <https://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/2122/cil_hearing_sessions_agenda.pdf> .  Once the Inspector’s Report was received and Council approval achieved the CIL could be implemented (late this year/early next).

**Local Plan Review**

A full review of the Local Plan had commenced covering both Core Strategy and Site Allocations/Development Management Policies elements.  A call for sites would be issued soon.  LDF Task Group Members had received papers on the draft vision, objectives and strategic options for growth which would feed into a document for consultation early in the New Year <http://democracy.west-norfolk.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=163&MId=819&Ver=4> .  The new plan would cover the period 2016-2036.

**Neighbourhood Plans**

A number of Neighbourhood Plans were in the process of being prepared.  There were 2 made plans (Brancaster and South Wootton); 11 designated areas ; 11 expressions of interest; and 2 expressed interest but unlikely to produce a plan <http://democracy.west-norfolk.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=163&MId=819&Ver=4>

4. Planning DC Update

SA explained;

* application numbers remain high.
* We are employing a graduate planner in October.
* A consultant planner is being employed to help clear the backlog
* Jade Calton will be going on maternity leave shortly.
* David Parkin, Principle Planner will be leaving this Authority in November.

PG asked whether the legislation that would allow Agents to determine applications ever came to anything? SA responded that plans were being made for a trial, but nothing has come to fruition.

SA reminded agents to check Land Registry Title before submitting planning applications, as this will save time later on completing legal agreements.

SA reminded agents that Legal Agreements must be completed within 4 months of the recommendation, otherwise it will result in a refusal of the planning application.

5. Planning Admin Update

LO informed the group of the following:

* Jo Rahman will be coming back from maternity leave early December.
* Our new CIL Officer is Mandy Driver
* The new website has caused some concern. If it is no longer informative, please let us know.
* The Council are considering not issuing cheques for goods/services. This may result in us not accepting cheques in the future?

(DT) concerned that the “Search by Agent” on the website is complicated and we should send instructions to Agents.

**ACTION: RR to email instructions to Agents**

(MH) noted that when searching spatially, once you select a result, Public Access won’t let you go back to the results page which means you have to start again?

(MH) informed the group that the “Validated this week” doesn’t show any results.

**ACTION: RR to test and resolve.**

6. Contact List

SA suggested that a contact list for Planners isn’t straightforward as Planners don’t now work in a single area. He will look into this and maybe put something on-line.

**ACTION: SA to look into completing a Contact List of Planners**

7. Habitat Regulation Fee

MH frustrated as the Habitat Fee cannot be paid via the Planning Portal. LO suggested that we raise this at the Planning Portal meeting in October.

**ACTION: LO to speak to the Portal at the meeting in October**

8. Poor Level of Service by Planners

SA invited comments from around the table;

DT concerned that inconsistency continues to be an issue as issues are not identified until near the end of the target date MH agreed. Also concerned that Extension of Time letters are being used too much.

DT suggested that issues raised by the Environment Agency should be challenged by the Planner. Also, Environmental Quality are asking for very expensive reports on contamination and then challenging what the ‘experts’ are saying in those reports. SA explained that they have to be thorough as they could be liable later on. SA said he would speak to the manager of the team that deals with contamination. MH suggested that trigger points are too low.

CP summed up 2 main issues:-

1. Inflexibility of consultees is frustrating.
2. How officers deal with requests from consultees.

**ACTION: SA to speak to manager of Environmental Quality**

9. Outline Applications via Planning Portal

CP informed the group that the Planning Portal insists on stating the number of dwellings on an outline application. Don’t always know how many at outline stage.

**ACTION: LO/RR to take to Portal meeting in October**

10. Any Other Business

MH has issues with NCC Archaeology – they wanted trial trenching done but found nothing, NCC wanted to inspect trench and then asked for another one.

**ACTION: SA to invite NCC Archaeology to next Formal Agents Meeting**

11. Date of Next Meeting

Formal Group: 29 November 2016

Informal Group: 7 March 2017