

Sandy Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Thursday 15 July 2021 at 7pm via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Present: Nigel Aldis, Robert Baker, Richard Barlow, Anne Elliott-Flockhart, Amanda Gibson (Chair), Ruth Lock, Chris Patterson and Anne Ramsay. Tom Price from Central Bedfordshire Council and Jemma McLean from BRCC.

Apologies: Tim Gardiner, Arnold Gilpin, Joanna Hewitt and Gary Wearing.

1. Approve minutes from meeting held on 17 June 2021

The minutes were approved.

2. Initial consultation Feedback to date – Key Themes emerging

Even though Tim was unable to attend the meeting he had sent through the data from the online surveys.

251 surveys have been completed, 163 online and 88 paper ones. 93% of responders live in Sandy. 62% work in Sandy and 10% were visiting. Most responders were from the 31-61 age group and 72% were female.

- Key themes were that people didn't like the word hate in the survey, the A1, the lack of variety in the shops on the High Street, anti-social behaviour and lack of policing.
- People like the greenspaces, community spirit and good transport links.
- People would like to see improvements to the High Street, Sandye Place and recreation grounds, they would also like to see a swimming pool.
- People were pleased to be consulted.
- ~25% have left email addresses for further information and a few asked about how to get involved.

A member of the group had looked at the negative comments and was struck by references to crime and drug taking, but mostly comments were that Sandy is a bit scruffy or were minor criticisms about minor things.

There were quite a lot of micro comments which will have to be addressed via other channels so that people don't feel like they've been ignored.

Tom from CBC explained that the group needs to feed back to the community at each stage and think about the wording it uses, as housing is the reason most towns undertake a neighbourhood plan.

In relation to the High Street issues, the class uses have changed which will make retail space more flexible. CBC has more information on this and vacant units. Locality

have a High Street improvement grant, which the group applied for but haven't heard back from yet.

He went onto say that the A1 is difficult as there is nothing much you can do about it but it's useful to document it, same with anti-social behaviour and comments on medical facilities.

Tom reported that CBC's local plan has been approved and the review will start shortly. The future is uncertain due to government plans and the east west rail.

Jemma from BRCC noted that the group had had a good response to its first survey. It's not just about getting data but raising the profile of the group and engaging people in the process. She advised that it's probably better to wait until the survey closes before you start analysing data.

It was decided to close the survey at the end of the August so that we can try and reach some other residents and community groups in Sandy. Sandy secondary have included a page in their newsletter which includes the QR code.

3. Guidance for next steps - Q&A discussion with Tom Price CBC & Jemma McClean BRCC

3.1 When/how do we determine the plan structure?

The Chair noted that the Potton NP group advised that you should decide the structure of the plan document early in the process. With this in mind the Chair had sent out some information regarding the Locality suggested structure of the plan before the meeting.

Jemma noted that there are key elements that need to be included such as aims and visions but policies and some other aspects will be led by consultation. She advised members to look at other town plans, those that are similar in size or have similar issues to get an idea. There are also some statutory steps that need to be met which are detailed in the Locality information.

Tom agreed with Jemma and noted that the introduction and history sections could be started whilst the consultation process is still under way. The gaps can be filled in later.

The Chair noted that the community plan included a preamble and history and asked if this could be used. Tom responded that it could as it would be a timesaver. Haynes have built on their community plan to build their neighbourhood plan.

The group also needs to evidence consultation with documents and photos. Tom also noted that there is a NP Health-check package available which means that the plan can be checked prior to submission to ensure it will meet the statutory requirements.

Members agreed that we would follow the structure sent out by the Chair.

3.2 Evidence of engagement – do we need to meet a threshold of a % of population?

Jemma noted that you don't have to meet a threshold for engagement, but you need to evidence that you have tried to meet as much of the community as possible.

For the referendum 50% of the people who turn out need to vote yes.

3.3 What determines if a Housing Needs Survey should be carried out?

It was noted that planning and housing wasn't really mentioned in the surveys that have been returned. A member commented that we will have to be sensitive in how we address the housing issue. There will be some people who want housing in Sandy but a lot won't want any.

Tom had sent some information to the Chair regarding how many people were looking for rented or social accommodation within Sandy which was a considerable number (1647). These numbers would suggest that we need to do a housing needs survey. We can't ignore housing or we will end up having someone else's views thrust upon us.

Jemma said that a housing needs survey gathers evidence from Sandy residents and whilst this might seem counterintuitive, residents of Sandy may have family that want to move into Sandy and can't at the moment. It can gather good evidence on housing needs in the next ten years.

The Chair also noted that the estate agents have said there is not enough housing stock in Sandy.

Jemma noted that funding is available for housing needs surveys and BRCC can undertake the survey, as well as the green infrastructure plan, for the group.

The **Chair** will get a quote for these and then we can apply to Locality for a grant.

A housing needs survey takes about eight weeks to produce, with a 4 week consultation and 3 weeks to be analysed.

The questionnaire for a housing needs survey is delivered to every house in Sandy, it can be delivered via a distribution company or members of the group can deliver it.

A member asked if we could offer an incentive for people to complete the survey. Jemma noted that another town offered entry into a competition for a hamper that had been donated to residents that had taken part in the survey.

The Chair asked when should we go out to landowners and how would we identify them. Tom replied that it's important to go out to landowners particularly with regard to identifying land suitable for housing but also for landowners with land being designated as green spaces. CBC can provide a list of their landholdings in Sandy. Other landowners would be harder to identify. However, like CBC did for the local plan, we could put out a

call for sites. Though not all sites previously put forward would be agreeable to residents for housing.

3.4 Should we update the Green Infrastructure Plan for Sandy?

Tom noted that a green infrastructure plan is worth doing as it gives a high level of protection to green spaces and designated green spaces. This alongside the housing needs survey provide key evidence that underpins the plan.

A green infrastructure plan takes 4-6 months. Prior to covid, workshops were held, during covid these were held online. These are widely advertised.

3.5 Any tips/tools for analysing unstructured data?

Jemma noted that in the early stages it is best to ask open ended questions and the only way to analyse unstructured data is to go through it manually and highlight topics in different colours.

She also noted that it was good to make a note of the insightful comments that perhaps don't fit a topic. You can test these comments at the next stage to see if there is any support for them.

In the next phase of the consultation it would be better to ask more closed questions.

The Chair thanked Jemma and Tom for their time. Tom informed members that he is leaving the neighbourhood plan team and moving to the sustainability team within CBC, but will be available until his replacement is on board.

4. Engagement & Initial Consultation Questions for Businesses

Chris had shared his ideas for the business consultation prior to the meeting, the group had the following comments:

Q1 Amended to how long have you operated in Sandy.

Q2 Amended to are your headquarters in Sandy.

Q3 No amendments

Q4 Split into two questions – How many people do you employ in Sandy and how many live in Sandy. It is up to the businesses to decide if they can or will answer this question.

Other questions were agreed.

There was some discussion regarding the potential to add a question asking if the businesses have access to people with the right skills in Sandy. This might come out under Q6 but could be added as 'can you identify any particular skills gap in the Sandy workforce'. This is out of the scope for the NP but could be passed on to relevant authorities.

A member asked if this was going to all the businesses in Sandy, from Sunderland Road to the RSPB via the High Street. Arnold had already volunteered to deliver the leaflets in person.

The Chair mentioned that now restrictions are lifting we could invite businesses to a meeting and the invitation could go out with the questionnaires. The **Chair** would ask the village hall for a quote as a venue to hold the meeting and if so draft a letter to go out with the questionnaires.

Update since the meeting the Business Questionnaire is now live on our one click link and QR Code will also take you to this page <https://linktr.ee/SandyBedsNP>

5. Future Engagement Events & Social Media (including PR)

Sandy Town Council are holding a market in the town centre on Sunday 22 August, there will also be a fun day at Bedford Road recreation ground on the same day. Which provides the group with an opportunity for more face to face discussions with residents.

Instead of having two separate stands at each event, it was decided to have a stand in the town centre and have people handing out leaflets at Bedford Road directing people to the stand in the town centre.

The next meeting is only a few days prior to the event so there will be a subgroup meeting to discuss it consisting of **Nigel, Rob, Amanda and Chris**.

6. Structure of Plan

Structure was discussed earlier in the meeting under point 3.1. **Nigel** volunteered to start putting the structure together in a word document that will be shared on drop box.

Anne EF is collating a list of evidence regarding consultation.

7. Review Project Plan and Timelines

Chris talked the group through the timeline, which will be delayed as we are not going to close the initial consultation until the end of August. Then we will need to analyse and collate the data before we can decide our aims and visions.

We also need to factor in time for the housing needs survey and green infrastructure plan.

The Chair noted that the project plan is comprehensive and ambitious but that she had no qualms regarding extending the timelines to ensure we reach as many people as possible. She called for **members** to identify community groups that they can approach to spread the word regarding the neighbourhood plan. Please let **Anne EF** know which groups you can talk to.

It was felt that the group is treading water at the moment and we need to start making decisions between meetings to keep the momentum going. It was suggested we could all take some questionnaires to analyse.

8. Next Meeting 19 August

The group preference is to be meet in person, **Anne EF** will ask the Council if the chamber is available for use on the 19th.