

Minutes of the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting: Tuesday, 29 April 2014

Present

Nigel Kay, Faversham Town Councillor (FTC) – Chairman
David Simmons, Mayor, Faversham Town Council
John Coulter, Faversham Town Councillor
Trevor Payne, Faversham Town Councillor
Cllr Mike Cosgrove, Swale Borough Council
Cllr Mike Henderson, Swale Borough Council
Andrew Osborne, Faversham Creek Consortium Management Group member
Anne Salmon, Faversham Creek Consortium Management Group member
Sue Akhurst, Faversham Creek Trust
Janet Turner, Faversham Society
Hilary Whelan (for Brenda Chester), Brents Community Association
Dr. Pat Reid, Faversham Creek Management Company.

In attendance

Jackie Westlake, Faversham Town Council Clerk – Secretary
Natalie Earl – senior planner, Swale Borough Council

Before the start of the meeting, the Chairman made the following statement:

It has been brought to my attention that previous meetings of the Steering Group and Town Council meetings have been recorded. This is not permitted under current legislation. Anyone found recording this or any Town Council meeting will be asked to leave.

The public will be able to ask questions for 15 minutes before the start of the meeting. The public will not be able to take part at any other time during the meeting. The public will also be asked to withdraw during any discussion relating to matters involving information of a confidential nature.

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Brenda Chester. Janice Hennessey had written to the Chairman to formally resign from the Steering Group owing to pressure of work. Dr Pat Reid, (Faversham Creek Management Company) would be replacing her. Nigel Kay (NK) welcomed Dr Reid to the Group.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising.

2.1 The minutes were agreed. All matters arising had been completed.

3. Draft Neighbourhood Plan

3.1 Cllr Kay (NK) gave a brief update of the Town Council meeting:

- He wanted to thank all those responsible for drafting the Plan or contributing to its development in some way.

- He was conscious of the complexity and high risk situation for the Creek, with numerous landowners and individual sites to be considered
- There were competing internal and external pressures to deliver a Plan that was sustainable, deliverable and viable
- The options that were removed from the draft as a result of last week's meeting did not fit with the resolutions of the Town Council on 28 October. The requirements of Standing Orders on rescission motions were not met and the alternatives could not, therefore, be put before the Town Council. At the Steering Group meetings, he was satisfied the proper procedures had been met
- The two sites' alternative options were based on the Business Case. The Business Case did establish there was a potential for a business but not on a commercial basis, as £1 million had to be found from a non-commercial source such as a donation or legacy.
- If the Town Council subsequently agreed the various alternatives, he was concerned they could be judged unrealistic and would be raising false hopes as to what the final Neighbourhood Plan could contain.

3.2 NK said he had advised Members that any further delay to the Plan process, which moved the referendum from January 2015, would mean that the referendum would not take place until well after the general and local elections in May 2015. It was his view it would be better to press ahead with the draft as it stood, seeking alternatives during the consultation process which could then be considered for the final draft.

3.3 The Mayor had proposed, and on being put to the meeting, it had been resolved by a vote of 10 to 3 that:

That the Town Council agrees the current draft to go out for statutory consultation. After that six week period, the draft will be refined based on the consultation feedback, and a final version of the Neighbourhood Plan will be put to the Town Council for agreement. The final version might be different to the current draft.

3.4 Sue Akhurst (SA) asked it to be noted that the Chair had been incorrect in his statement that the Business Case was not on a commercial basis and required £1 million to be found from a non-commercial source. The £1 million referred to was for the cost of an opening bridge, which had been approved as a policy in the Draft Plan. The actual amount of investment required for the business case was £430,000, spread over several years.

3.5 SA proposed to delete recently inserted paragraphs 2.11 to 2.15 and to amend 5.1, 5.6, 5.16, INF4, FL5, HO and 7.3 [of the draft Plan] and to make various amendments to the Evidence Base document. This was seconded by Hilary Whelan (HW).

3.6 Andrew Osborne (AO) proposed an alternative resolution – not to make any amendments to the draft Plan but to note that the Town Council

had approved the draft Plan to go to out to statutory consultation. The proposal was seconded by Mike Cosgrove (MC).

3.7 The Mayor, D Simmons (DS) said that the draft was just that, a draft. It was unlikely to be perfect at this stage, but any delay to the timetable (which would be necessary as the Town Council would have to debate the draft Plan if revised in the light of SA's amendments) would mean a postponement to the autumn of 2015 and beyond. Advice from Swale Borough Council planners was that prematurity was not a defence when refusing planning applications.

3.8 Members considered the two proposals. On being put to the vote, members voted 4 to 9 against, with 2 abstentions to the original proposal. Members voted 8 to 2 in favour, with 3 abstentions to the second proposal, and it was agreed not to make any amendments to the draft Plan but to note that the Town Council had approved the draft Plan to go to out to statutory consultation.

3.9 Members considered Part 2: the Evidence Base which hadn't gone to the Town Council and could, therefore, be considered separately from Part 1: the draft Plan. SA proposed, seconded by HW, that Part 2 be considered in detail by the Steering Group. AO proposed, seconded by MC, an amendment – to agree the draft as it stood. On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost by 7 votes to 5. The Group agreed to debate amendments to Part 2.

3.10 In discussion, the following points were raised:

- There were inconsistencies in some of the descriptions of documents
- The document needed page numbering
- There were a number of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors that needed to be addressed
- There were a number of factual inaccuracies, which were highlighted
- The Group agreed (6 votes to 5) not to include the financial detail of the Streetscape Strategy, as this was included in the report itself (Part 2 contained weblinks for this and other documents)
- The Group agreed to replace the current summary of the Business Case for the Repair and Maintenance of Traditional Vessels on Faversham Creek 2014 with the document's own summary, noting that the Town Council did not formally ask for the Business Case on 28 October, but welcomed the proposal
- The Group agreed (10 votes to 2) not to include further details of the summary of the Action for Market Towns report on questionnaire 2013, as it would be too long for Part 2

ACTION: Anne Salmon (AS) to amend and forward final proofs of Part 1 and Part 2 to Jude Sach for printing

4. Communications and Engagement

4.1 AS presented an update:

- 5 key events were highlighted on the poster, which members had been sent, with the draft leaflet. These had all been booked
- The draft poster, leaflet and banners were being finalised. Any amendments would have to be sent via the Town Clerk by Wednesday morning (30 April)
- A Survey Monkey account had been set up for the questionnaire. Members asked whether they could review the questions
ACTION: JW to circulate for comments by 30 April
- The website would have the questionnaire on it, as well as an introduction from the Mayor and the various documents, including the leaflet
- The purpose of the market stall was to reach those who didn't normally pick up on events relating to the Creek. This was also the case for the evening event in the Vaults Cask and Kitchen
- Steering Group members and the Town Council would be asked to help out on the various events
ACTION: JW to circulate a grid for completion by members
- Janet Turner (JT) said there would be an event at Davington School on 21 May.

4.2 MC thanked the sub group for an excellent piece of work which had had to be delivered quickly. Kirsty Northwood (KN) said the Traders Group was looking to arrange a breakfast meeting at which a presentation could be made by the Steering Group.

5. Budget

5.1 NK noted that the consultant had now been paid (£1,950) and the Royal Mail invoice (£698) had been received and was being processed.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 JW noted the URS seminar on Strategic Environmental Assessments. The Steering Group agreed Natalie Earl should attend

6.2 JT expressed her regret that the atmosphere at the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meetings could not be more constructive. There was good will around the table and it would be more helpful to progress in a spirit of harmony. To do otherwise was harmful to the strong community spirit that existed in Faversham.

6.2 The date of the next meeting was agreed: Wednesday 4 June at 7pm.

Public Questions

Q Had members of the Steering Group read the Planning Practice Guidance notes published by the DCLG in March, and how would they deal with the discrepancies between statements they had made about the Neighbourhood Plan and that which was said in the Guidance, particularly:

- The Neighbourhood Plan would be examined against the existing Swale Local Plan (including AAP2) and not against the emerging plan, and
- Assessing the viability of plans does not require individual testing of every site or assurance that individual sites are viable.

A. The guidance received from DCLG officials was that the nearer the Neighbourhood Plan's completion date was to the finalising of the emerging Local Plan the more it was appropriate to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan was in conformity with it.

On the issue of viability of sites, if one site was not viable, it was possible that the whole Plan could fail.