

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

**SUTTON COLDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

**STEERING GROUP MEETING**

**MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2015**

**AT**

**1800 HOURS**

**THE BEDFORD SUITE**

**SUTTON COLDFIELD TOWN HALL**

**PRESENT:-**

Group Chairman: Cllr Anne Underwood  
Group Vice Chairman: Ken Rushton  
Group Members: Eilizabeth Allison, Cllr Lyn Collin, Cllr Maureen Cornish,  
Paul Long, Cllr Ewan Mackey, Cllr David Pears, Cllr Rob  
Pocock, Stephen Smallwood and Cllr Claire Spencer

**IN ATTENDANCE:-**

Beverly Edmead – Community Governance Manager, BCC  
Ifor Jones – Service Director, Localisation, BCC  
Olive O’Sullivan – Community Governance Support Officer, BCC

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1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllrs David Barrie, Meirion Jenkins, Stephanie Patrick (YMCA) and Cllr Ken Wood.

The Chairman welcomed approximately 30 members of the public who were present and briefly advised that whilst a decision had since been taken by the Steering Group Members to hold the meeting in public following requests from

residents interested in proceedings, participation and discussion on the agenda items and matters to be discussed were not permitted at this stage.

***Action: All to Note***

2. **NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Referring to the discussion on Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, Elizabeth Allison advised that her comment should have been recorded as an Asset of Community Interest and not Community Asset Interest as noted.

**Noting the amendment, the Notes from the Business Meeting held on 9 November 2015 at the end of the Steering Group Away Day, having been circulated to the Group Members were agreed.**

3. **DRAFT REORGANISATION ORDER**

Ifor Jones presented the report, and reminded Group Members that the terms of the draft order would be submitted to Council Business Management Committee (CBM) Meeting on 17 November 2015 for approval, and briefly outlined the contents of the report, which had been discussed at length at the Steering Group Away Day.

Cllr Pocock sought further clarity on the process for setting the first year's budget for the Parish Council, and whether residents would have the opportunity to put forward suggestions regarding how the budget should be spent.

Ifor advised that consultation would be required to be undertaken; this could be done in a number of ways, including the use of Sutton Coldfield residents on the Citizen's Panel, Sutton Coldfield Independent Residents Group, residents groups and Neighbourhood Forums as well as individual residents. Further details on how this would be done would be outlined in the final report to CBM in December.

Ifor further advised that it was important for the Steering Group/Interim Parish Council to identify and agree priorities as discussed at the Away Day; these should

include early/quick wins; improvements; assets and services.

Cllr Cornish and Cllr Pears sought further clarity regarding any associated collection charges for the precept by the City Council. Cllr Cornish felt that staff and accommodation costs would need to be determined first, and that once the Parish Council was established, the first 12 months could prove to be challenging if the appropriate support arrangements were not in place.

In response to the Cllrs' queries, Ifor advised that as a billing authority, the City Council would not be charging the Parish Council for the collection of the precept. Collection of the would be administered in the same way as it is for Frankley Parish Council, West Midlands Police and West Midlands Fire Authority.

The staffing arrangements and associated costs would need to be determined by the Parish Council along with the type of council it would be - commissioning, delivery or a combination of both. The appointment of an experienced Interim Town Clerk was critical for providing guidance, advice and support to the parish councillors as well as the providing the democratic, civic and governance arrangements.

Ifor further advised that the civic arrangement proposals, including mayoral costs would also need to be consulted on as this would have to be met from the Parish Council budget.

**Following a request from the Chairman, the Steering Group agreed to endorse the terms of the Draft Reorganisation Order as discussed at the Away Day.**

***Action: All to Note***

#### 4. **INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR A PARISH CLERK**

Ifor Jones advised that given the current arrangements, and in particular the timescales for staff recruitment, it was unlikely the Interim Parish Clerk would be in place to support the Steering Group before the end of the year.

Following the Away Day, it was agreed that the services of the Interim Parish Clerk would be procured through an agency; Helen Ball had advised on the process and appropriate agencies recommended. Preliminary discussions had already started so that arrangements could be made for the Interim Parish Clerk to be made in post by December. The specification would be developed and circulated to the group for comment prior to the procurement process. Three agencies had been identified as suitable for the task required.

Ifor further advised that details of the criteria for evaluating the tender submission and selection process would be circulated to the Steering Group members for information, however the involvement of all group members on the selection panel would not be appropriate.

It was suggested and agreed that a small task group, consisting of the Chairman, Vice Chairman and a group member should be set up specifically for this task.

In response to questions from Group Members regarding the remuneration costs, Ifor advised this would have to be considered and agreed by the Steering Group; however, the rate of pay must be appropriately priced and proportionate to the role to be undertaken. Paul advised that the agency costs must be agreed from the outset.

Cllr Pocock felt it would be useful to seek advice from NALC regarding the Interim Parish Clerk arrangements/appointment.

The Chairman requested that all comments and feedback from Group Members was submitted by email as soon as possible.

#### **Action:**

***(i) All to Note the verbal update.***

***(ii) Ifor to make the arrangements for the task group and to circulate the specification and criteria for the tender evaluation process to Group Members.***

**5. STEERING GROUP AWAY DAY**

Ifor advised that the draft notes, actions and identified priorities from the Away Day would be circulated to Group Members for comment.

Group Members agreed that the day had been very useful and informative; the input, support and guidance from Helen Ball was invaluable. Members requested that a letter of appreciation was sent to Helen on behalf of the Steering Group.

**Action:**

***(i) All to Note***

***(ii) Ifor to arrange for a Thank You letter to be sent to Helen Ball on behalf of the Steering Group.***

**6. PEOPLES PANEL FOCUS GROUP**

Ifor advised that the Focus Group would consist of 24 local residents drawn from the Peoples Panel Database; all of whom had actively participated in previous consultations and discussion forums undertaken by the City Council.

The views of the Focus Group would be sought on:-

- the Draft Reorganisation Order
- the budget/precept
- the democratic arrangements (including mayoral duties) and emerging priorities

In response to questions from Cllr Pears, Ifor confirmed that there was representation from across the four wards on the focus group; age and gender were also widely represented as far as possible, however it was acknowledged that a wider engagement approach would be needed to capture the views of residents across the district.

Cllr Pocock felt that the key points for consideration by the Focus Group should also Include:-

- views on assets to be owned/not to be owned by the Parish Council
- enhancements /commissioning of services
- flagship achievements

Ifor confirmed that Olive would be making the final arrangements for the meetings; these were expected to take place in approximately two weeks' time.

***Action: All to Note***

## **7. WIDER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Referring to recent email correspondence between Group Members, the Chairman Advised of the important role that all resident groups (e.g. Neighbourhood Forums, Resident Groups and Associations) had to play in contributing to the consultation process.

Referring to the comments made regarding Neighbourhood Forums, the Vice Chairman expressed his disappointment that there appeared to be a question about Role and areas covered by existing Neighbourhood Forums. The Vice Chairman advised that each of the Forums had a contact base of over 1700 households, and that they were widely and actively involved in consulting all residents across the district on a number of issues. In addition to the Forums, the Vice Chairman added that the Sutton Coldfield Independent Residents Group (formerly Sutton Coldfield Town Council Referendum Group) included residents from across the four Sutton wards.

Responding to the Vice Chairman's comments, the role and contribution of Neighbourhood Forums was acknowledged and appreciated by Members. However, it was also noted that not all areas of Sutton Coldfield were covered by a Forum and that there were two wards without a Forum. It was stressed that arrangements

needed to be put in place to consult and engage as fully as possible with all residents in Sutton Coldfield.

If proposed that a community engagement network and database was created, which would incorporate all the Forums, Sutton Coldfield Independent Residents Group, Residents and Community Groups, Young Peoples' Groups and Forums, as well as individual residents. This would enable everyone wanting to contribute to be able to do so through a website link or consultation data base as the arrangements for the Parish Council progressed.

Cllr Pocock felt that it would be useful to access the Community Empowerment Network set up by Be Birmingham as this had a very useful contact database and was widely representative of the district.

Paul Long made reference to the City Council's consultation database and felt a similar format would be useful for the Steering Group/Parish Council and should be considered, and supported Ken's comments that the work of the Sutton Coldfield Independent Residents' Group fully embraced and extended the role undertaken by the Neighbourhood Forums across the wider District.

Elizabeth Allison referred to the information sent out to residents by the Sutton Coldfield Independents Residents' Group prior to the consultative ballot, and that whilst those residents who voted returned a 'Yes' vote, a significant number of residents failed to respond, and these were the residents that needed to be engaged with, and views obtained, on how the Parish Council should move forward.

In addition, not every household received a copy of the Sutton Coldfield Observer, and this should not be solely relied upon for media publicity.

Stephen Smallwood gave details on the work that he was currently doing across Falcon Lodge Estate with residents using Social Media, particularly Facebook. This had proved to be very well used and informative, and an excellent way of getting in touch and communicating with those residents with whom face to face contact

would be difficult. The Vice Chairman added that the work undertaken by Stephen with hard to reach residents helped to support and underpin the expansive community engagement role carried out by the Sutton Coldfield Independent Residents Group and Neighbourhood Forums. Stephen Smallwood suggested that the use of a consultation database like Survey Monkey would be a very effective and useful way of obtaining comments, views and feedback from residents.

The Chairman welcomed the suggestion and felt that this would be a very good way of reaching out to residents and obtaining their views; however the questions put to residents regardless of the method and format must be consistent, and suggested that a Task Group should be set up building on the work already carried out by Stephen Smallwood and Paul Long to explore this further.

Cllr Pears felt it would be useful to have details of the active groups and Forums circulated to the Steering Group. Cllr Cornish advised caution was needed regarding the over-reliance of the internet and social media, given that not all residents used the internet and were in danger of being excluded from submitting their views and comments. Cllr Cornish advised that even though every household was contacted for the consultative ballot, not everyone was fully aware of what the implications and role of a Parish Council were. Every effort must be made to engage residents at all levels and all methods of communication must be considered and used if everyone was to be involved. Many residents welcomed the face to face interaction and that this must be factored in alongside the use of social media/the internet.

During the course of further discussion, Group Members agreed that a range of methods must be considered and used if maximum engagement and involvement of residents was to be obtained. Residents' expectations must also be managed regarding the role, functions and capabilities of the Parish Council, and felt that the questions put forward to the Peoples' Panel would lead the way forward.



Summing up, Ifor advised that all the views and comments would be taken on board, and that an engagement framework and database would be created, and the work and good practises of the Neighbourhood Forum, Residents Groups and Sutton Coldfield Independents Residents Groups would be included.

**Action:**

***(i) All to Note.***

***(ii) Task Groups to be set up to look at the wider engagement framework and the Criteria/tender submission assessments for the appointment of the Interim Parish Clerk.***

**8. STEERING GROUP WEBSITE PRESENTATION**

The Chairman advised this would be discussed further under the next Agenda item - Any Other Business.

**9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**(i) Parish Council Website**

Paul Long requested that consideration was given urgently to the creation of a website for the Steering Group/Interim Parish Council, and expressed concerns that the timescales and procurement of services to enable this facility were extremely tight and may not be in place for the Interim Parish Council in March.

**(ii) Neighbourhood Planning/Boldmere Futures Partnership**

Paul Long briefly advised of the ongoing work of the Boldmere Futures Partnership, This was made up of the three active Neighbourhood Forums, local Traders Association, Church Groups, and a number of social and voluntary groups and Organisations – all working together to outline the vision and create a Neighbourhood Plan for Boldmere. He further advised of the benefits of having this sort of plan in place, which could successfully attract and secure funding for a designated area/the Parish Council as a whole.

**The Chairman proposed that the items be included on the Agenda at a**

**Future meeting, and that a Planning Officer should be invited to advise on the process.**

**Steering Group Meeting Times**

Cllr Mackey suggested a later starting time for the Steering Group meetings to allow for traffic delays as several Group Members were attending straight from work.

Following a brief discussion amongst Group Members, it was agreed that meetings would continue to commence at 6pm unless otherwise advised.

The Chairman proposed if necessary, a special meeting be held on Thursday 3 December to address the community engagement database and survey, the website and Neighbourhood Planning.

**Action:**

***(i) All to Note.***

***(ii) That the items be included in a future Agenda and that a Planning Officer be invited to attend a future meeting of the Steering Group.***

***(iii) That an additional meeting be held if necessary on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December to discuss the community engagement survey/database, the website and Neighbourhood Planning.***

**Questions and Answers Session with Residents following the Meeting**

Group Members agreed that given the number of residents present at the meeting and the interest in proceedings regarding the role of the Steering Group and Interim Parish Council, it would be useful for Group Members to host a Questions and Answers session at the end of the meeting to help address these issues.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

An additional Meeting for Thursday 3 December 2015, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall to be confirmed if required.

**The monthly Meeting agreed for Monday 14 December 2015, 6.00pm,  
Sutton Coldfield Town Hall.**

**Action: *All to Note***

The meeting closed at 1910hrs