

Minutes of a meeting of the Crowborough Neighbourhood Plan **Commercial Group** held in the Town Hall, The Broadway, Crowborough on Wednesday 8th April 2015 at 7.30pm

Present:

Michael Cooke
Chris Lawson
Craig Murrell
Greg Rose
Charles Tankard
Chantal Wilson
Melanie Street – Crowborough Town Council

Apologies:

David Larkin
Judy Nobbs
Matthew Street

Topics and Decisions	Action
<p>1. Apologies for Absence</p> <p>As recorded above.</p>	
<p>2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p> <p>The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.</p>	
<p>3. Matters Arising</p> <p>There were no matters arising from the minutes except those already included as agenda items. Issues raised from the previous minutes have all been actioned.</p>	
<p>4. Matters from Members of the Public</p> <p>There were no members of the public present.</p>	
<p>5. Questions Raised with Tony Fullwood – Responses</p> <p>Following the previous meeting the Chairman had emailed a list of questions to Tony Fullwood. The email sent in response was distributed amongst the group. In summary, Tony Fullwood has looked at the Vision document and used much of it; however, having been completed several years ago, he believes there is a need for recent, published evidence to form part of the Neighbourhood Plan. In his email Tony Fullwood referred to the Neighbourhood Plan carrying 'statutory weight' in the decision making of Wealden District Council, as opposed to the Vision document which does not. Members discussed this and their understanding was that the Vision document does indeed carry 'statutory weight', having formed part of the Core Strategy.</p> <p>The group also discussed Tony Fullwood's response to the question of the possible pedestrianisation of the High Street raised by this Working Group. It is his belief that this issue is best dealt with via the Steering Group. Members agreed to this.</p>	

<p>6. Mapping</p> <p>The Chairman had contacted Andrew Steen prior to the meeting to request an update on the situation with the mapping software. It was confirmed that software has been purchased and will be available for groups to utilise soon; training still has to take place and Working Groups must decide who will use the system.</p>	
<p>7. Report from Chris Lawson</p> <p>Using his own software Chris Lawson had produced a map of the Town Centre shops and services, which he circulated amongst the group. He had classified all units. Within the core area of the town he had identified 69 retail units, 15 restaurants and take-aways and 11 A2's.</p> <p>He then continued to give a verbal report on the changing nature of the High Street, both within Crowborough and the Wealden towns in general. This focussed on the increasing power of the internet, location, rates, types of businesses interested, the need for premises, restrictions within the Fernbank Centre, size of units in the town and lack of interest from national retail chains. Chris Lawson was asked to transfer this information into a written report.</p> <p>Members discussed the environment of the High Street, with particular focus on the units with narrow pavements leading up to the Crowborough Cross. It was understood that a previous retail report, interviewing local residents, claimed that 56% of people thought the environment of the High Street unattractive to shop in. Members agreed to discuss this with Tony Fullwood for his opinion as to how best to address this within the framework of the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>The group questioned the next step in the process and it was decided that it now needs to use the evidence gathered to make proposals to forward to the Steering Group. Planning Consultant Tony Fullwood will aim to attend the next meeting and the group will seek his opinion and recommendations at this meeting.</p>	<p>Chris Lawson to produce written report.</p> <p>Mike Cooke to include as agenda item for next meeting.</p>
<p>8. Report from Greg Rose</p> <p>Greg Rose circulated a written report on 'Tourism, Accommodation and Attractions within Crowborough' which he then discussed with the group. In summary, this identified 11 attractions, 13 events, 6 Bed and Breakfasts, 3 self-catering accommodations and 90 campsite pitches. Members discussed potential for increasing tourism within the town, focussing on the Ashdown Forest and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. After considering the report the group wished to discuss analysis, recommendations and proposals at the next meeting with Tony Fullwood.</p>	<p>Mike Cooke to include as agenda item for next meeting.</p>
<p>9. Report of Mead House Car Park Survey</p> <p>The Chairman distributed the report for consideration and gave a verbal summary. The survey was carried out during March 2015 and covered all days of the week; this was in contrast to the Pelham Survey which covered only 3 days and took place three years ago. The group expressed concern that a</p>	

<p>reduction in car parking spaces for the town was in direct opposition to the Department for Transport's 'Action for Roads' report (2013) which forecasts an increase in UK traffic from a minimum of 24%, and an average of 46%, by 2040. The Mead House survey noted that the car park was 100% full during large evening events for the Community Centre (Cinema night, Business Expo, Pantomime) and retained, on average, 20 parked cars during certain parts of the day when the survey was conducted. The group discussed the Chase & Partners Retail Study which concluded one of the positive attractions of the town was the availability of free car parking.</p> <p>Members understand that the Mead House car park has already been designated for residential development. Discussion focussed on the potential land at Bluebell Wood and the parcel of land currently above the Mead House car park which is owned by East Sussex County Council. The potential use of a Community Right to Build order was also discussed in relation to the car park. The group agreed there is a need to investigate further the future of car parking within the town; and that further analysis, recommendations and proposals will be discussed with Tony Fullwood at the next meeting.</p>	<p>Mike Cooke to include as agenda item for next meeting.</p>
<p>10. Report on Mapping of High Street and Jarvis Brook Shops and Businesses</p> <p>The Chairman distributed the report for consideration and gave a verbal summary. All units have now been classified and marked on a map. As requested by the Steering Group, all other clusters of shops within the town had been identified and classified. The next stage is to transfer this report onto the professional mapping software.</p> <p>Members agreed it was not likely that the Neighbourhood Plan will include provision of new land for retail businesses.</p>	
<p>11. Report on Mapping Industrial Units in Jarvis Brook</p> <p>The Chairman distributed the report for consideration and gave a verbal summary. Results of the mapping indicated that, with a 93% occupancy, there is a potential for land requirement under the Neighbourhood Plan. Chris Lawson gave his professional opinion that most developers will not build speculatively, that most units in the town are owner-occupied and that the most sought-after units are between 1,500 and 5,000sqft. It was agreed there was a need to analyse this further and to make recommendations and proposals at the next meeting with the advice of Tony Fullwood.</p>	<p>Mike Cooke to include as agenda item for next meeting.</p>
<p>12. Provision of New Land for Businesses</p> <p>Members had covered this item during discussion on Points 10 and 11.</p>	
<p>13. Retail Survey for the Core Strategy</p> <p>As requested at the previous meeting the link to the retail survey had been circulated amongst the group prior to the meeting. Having received the Chairman's report at their last meeting, the Steering Group had informed members that a more recent retail survey was available (2010). This information was passed to the group. Members agreed that, at previous points in the evening, they had already discussed the key points of the report: car parking</p>	

<p>spaces, High Street environment, poor choice and vehicular/pedestrian conflict. It was agreed that the report was generally accurate, although failed to include the impact of internet shopping on the High Street.</p>	
<p>14. Future Action</p> <p>It was agreed that the group is now at the stage that it requires the professional input of Tony Fullwood. It was agreed to invite him to the next meeting and seek his opinions on discussions in points 7, 8, 9 and 11.</p> <p>As suggested by the Community Facilities Group, and endorsed by the Steering Group, members agreed it would be beneficial to upload all reports to a cloud file so they could be accessed by everyone in the group quickly and easily. This is being progressed by the Steering Group.</p> <p>Members reviewed Tony Fullwood's recommendations for the group which he presented to the Steering Group. It was agreed that they have all been considered and acted upon.</p>	<p>Mike Cooke to contact Tony Fullwood with date of next meeting.</p>
<p>15. Any Other Business</p> <p>There was no further business raised for discussion.</p>	
<p>16. Next Meeting Date</p> <p>It was agreed to meet next on Wednesday 3rd June 2015, 7.30pm at the Town Hall.</p>	
<p>Meeting closed at 9.20pm</p>	