

Chorleywood Parish Council: Extraordinary Meeting of Full Council

Notes by GH (in attendance as a representative of the Friends of Chorleywood Common) of matters discussed at the Extraordinary Meeting, held on 29 October 2013, to consider proposals for a "Neighbourhood Plan" or a "Parish Plan / Community Plan" and for listing "local assets" needing protection.

NB: (1) *The decisions taken by the Council and noted below are very much the start of a process which is meant to involve the whole community, and will include a wide-ranging consultation to find out what the residents of the Parish considered to be important issues. If any members of the Friends have any topic which they think should be considered in this process, please let the Committee know and we will pass it on.*

(2) *Attached to these Notes are copies of documents produced by the Parish Council describing "Neighbourhood" and "Community / Parish" Plans and explaining the next steps.*

Recommendations from Planning Committee: the Council adopted the recommendations of the Planning Committee that it should -

- (1) consider taking forward either a Neighbourhood Plan or a Parish Plan, working with local interest groups; and
- (2) start a list of local assets considered to need protection.

Discussion with community representatives: the Chairman suspended the Council meeting to enable discussion to take place between the Councillors and representatives of interest groups. *[GH and Michael Hyde for FoCC; Owen Edis for the Residents' Association; Alison Rubens for the Community Orchard; the Chorleywood Business Association had been invited to attend but could not do so.]*

Cllr Mrs White explained the general nature of a Neighbourhood Plan *[see attached; in brief]*: once prepared and adopted, by a process which includes a local referendum, it is a legally binding document; it is principally concerned with planning, and enables the community to "have its say" in working out the detailed application of the planning policies for its area - it has to work within, and cannot override, policies set at a higher level. The procedure for adopting such a Plan is detailed and highly prescriptive; funding can be obtained to assist the process.

The Clerk explained a Parish or Community Plan *[see attached; in brief]*: it does not have legally binding effect, but it is prepared in conjunction with the whole community and can include anything that the community considers is important; (in Sarratt, one is-

sue which was raised was availability of high-speed broadband connections;) the most important steps in the process are the preparation and distribution of a questionnaire to find out what matters to the community, and the analysis of the results. One possible course is to start with a Parish Plan and, as it develops, to consider extending it into a Neighbourhood Plan.

The interest group representatives supported the idea of having, or starting with, a Parish Plan, and also favoured using the alternative designation of "Community Plan".

Decisions: the Chairman re-convened the Council meeting, and:

(1) **Community Plan:** after further discussion the meeting resolved to take forward a Community Plan and to form a Steering Group to facilitate it. The Steering Group is to include one representative of the elderly (probably from the WRVS "Meals on Wheels"); one representative of young families (probably from Chorleywood Mums); two representatives of the Residents Association [*see end-note**]; one representative of the Friends of the Common; one representative of Neighbourhood Watch and one representative of the Business Association; and four councillors, Cllr Mrs Worrall, Cllr Mrs White, Cllr Watkins and Cllr Mrs Lantree. (If a nominated representative cannot attend a meeting, he or she may send a fully briefed substitute.) It was felt that the Steering Group should be able to ask for assistance from any person or organisation with relevant knowledge or expertise, either within Chorleywood or from other parishes which have already been through the Parish Plan process. The Clerk will write to the relevant interest groups and the proposal will also be publicised in Chorleywood Matters. [*The first meeting of the Steering Group has been arranged for 16 December.*]

(2) **Local Assets:** the meeting resolved (by a majority of 11 to 1) that the Council should start a formal list of local assets of value to the community that should be protected, and that the inclusion of assets in this list should be one of the topics for the Community Plan Questionnaire.

[**End-note:* apparently a question has arisen, in the course of arranging the Steering Group meeting, whether it should include two representatives of Chorleywood Residents' Association, or one representative of that Association and one from Loudwater Residents' Association; my recollection, for what it is worth, is that the Chorleywood Association was to have two representatives on the basis that it is by some way the largest local interest group in the Parish. It may be that this question will be resolved at the next meeting of the Parish Council, 10 December 2013.]

GH
(with apologies for delay!)

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood Planning is a new way for communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work by putting in place planning policies for the future development and growth of their neighbourhood. The plan will be a community-led, consultation-based project which identifies the most valued aspects of an area, the areas of concern and the wishes for improvement: -

- Choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built and giving guidance for future development and growth of an area. It may contain a vision, aims, planning policies, proposals for improving the area or providing new facilities, even the allocation of key sites for specific kinds of development
- Have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided
- It may deal with a wide range of issues including housing, employment, heritage, and transport, or it may focus on one of two main issues that are of particular importance in the local area.

What is a Parish Plan?

Parish plans take a broader look at issues in an area. They are evolving documents, outlining how a community would like to develop over the next 10 years. It would include a vision for the future, an expression of the residents' views and an action plan detailing how these developments can be achieved. It would outline how the parishioners, the Parish Council, Government (at all levels) and local service providers can act to deliver the plan addressing the residents' wishes. Well researched and structured parish plans would contain the actions needed and highlight how the parish priorities fit with wider government priorities (including housing needs), and would contribute to more effective engagement with their mainstream providers (local authorities) than those focused purely on a local audience

Localism Act

The Government have introduced the means for local people to have a say in how their area develops.

The first step is to define "the Neighbourhood". As Chorleywood has a Parish Council the area of the Parish seems the most logical definition of the Neighbourhood. The organisation should not be too small and it is likely that the Parish Council will take the lead but it must include representatives of the local community including residents, employers and business. If it is approved it can call itself a "Neighbourhood Forum".

For any plan to be effective, it needs input from all interested parties! For the plan to have weight, it needs to be able to demonstrate that all of the residents have had an opportunity to give their input, and that the key conclusions are jointly chosen.

How have we got to the point we are now?

Diary of Events

1. 1 May 2013 - HAPTC Training on Neighbourhood Planning attended by Cllr. Worrall
2. 25 June 2013 – Full Council. The meeting unanimously approved two actions; that it would write to local associations to see if they would be interested in joining the Parish Council in producing a Parish Plan; for Cllr. Worrall to pursue locally listing any building or asset in conjunction with Open Spaces Committee and local organisations. Both of these recommendations had been put to Full Council by the Parish Council Planning Committee following some disappointing planning decisions at both TRDC and on appeal
3. 3 July 2013 – Training on Neighbourhood Planning repeated for Chorleywood Parish Councillors and members of local associations. The feedback received suggests this was valuable
4. 29 October 2013 – to decide whether Parish Plan or Neighbourhood Plan best suits the needs of Chorleywood and whether local associations are prepared to join in with the exercise

What plans already exist within Three Rivers District Council? :-

- **Three Rivers District Council** has created and adopted the Local Development Framework. This is a series of documents setting out the spatial vision and strategic objectives of the planning framework within the District.
- **Sarratt Parish Council** has published a Parish Plan. In the introduction they state that it sets out details of the action plans designed to sustain and improve the quality of life for their community.
- **Croxley Green Parish Council** are in the process of producing a Community Plan. In the introduction they ask for people to say how they feel about their village and what facilities they want developed there. Currently it is not clear whether they will be producing a Parish Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan. It is possible that this decision will be made once they know what priorities their residents want

Support and Help available

Locality and RTPI Planning Aid have grants available and can offer advice and support for the production of a Neighbourhood Plan

TRDC has a legal duty to provide advice and assistance and also has access to funding. However the Neighbourhood Plan must conform to TRDC's Local Development Framework but can add lower level detail and is recognised in law. However a community cannot use a plan to block the building of new homes and businesses they must contribute to achieving sustainable development.

Once a plan has been prepared an independent examiner will check that it meets the basic standards before a community referendum has the final say. Once in force decision makers are obliged to consider proposals for developments against the Neighbourhood Plan.

A Community Plan for Chorleywood Parish

The Parish Council is excited to announce a partnership with local interest groups as work starts on a Community Plan for the Chorleywood Parish area.

What is a Community Plan?

- Also known as a Parish Plan or a Community-Led Plan
- It is a document *produced by the community* setting out its shared vision for the future,
- It identifies key issues that need to be addressed within the local area, and actions needed to achieve them.

Why have a Community Plan?

- It celebrates the positives aspects of Chorleywood life and highlights areas of local need.
- Helps residents to become more involved in what goes on around them.
- Gives the statutory authorities, including the Parish & TRDC, vital information about the needs and views of our community.

Who draws up the Community Plan?

- ALL parishioners will get an opportunity to have their say about the their community, how they would like it to develop & what they would like protected.
- The Parish Council will lead the process, in partnership with local interest groups such as the Residents' Association and Friends of the Common.

How is a Community Plan produced?

- A Steering Group of Parish Councillors and members of local interest groups will be formed to take the process forward.
- A series of community consultations will take place to find out what issues need to be addressed.
- A questionnaire will be compiled and sent to every Parish resident over 18, and the results will be analysed.
- An action plan will be drafted from the results of the questionnaire, and feedback from the community will be sought.
- Once other consultees, such as TRDC, have had their input, the final plan can be put forward for adoption.

A Steering Group is in the process of being finalized, and Chorleywood News will bring you updates as work progresses.