

MINUTES OF THE BENGEO NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA PLAN WORKING PARTY MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 31 AUGUST 2017 IN THE ROBING ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD

PRESENT: Councillors S Newton (C), S Dunkley (VC), Dr L Radford, P Ruffles

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr A Stevenson; Cllr S Cousins; Mr J Whelan, Town Clerk; Ms J Veater, BNAP Consultant; Dr M Iancu, Project Officer.

209. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

210. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Cllr Ruffles declared an interest as President of the BengEO Club.

Cllrs Dunkley and Radford declared an interest as members of the Hertford Club.

211. THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the meeting held on 03 August 2017 were approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

212. QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

213. THE BENGEO NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA PLAN PROGRESS TO DATE (PAPERS A AND B)

The meeting started with the Members reviewing PAPER A. It was explained that this Paper does not contain meeting minutes, but it is an overview of the progress of BNAP in the last month. The Working Party noted PAPER A.

PAPER B contains the draft minutes of the interim Community Steering Group meeting on 9 August 2017, which were produced by its members and should be approved at the following meeting on 7 September 2017. It was discussed that the Minutes in PAPER B were redacted to remove names, in line with the practice at Hertford Town Council.

The Working Party received them, but since some Members of the Working Party attended the Community Steering Group meeting on 9 August, a few suggestions were made to the minutes.

One point suggested was to change the title of Cllr Peter Ruffles to read “town and district councillor, Bengo Club President”

The Working Party wanted to clarify the fact that the Terms of Reference were not included in the Agenda of the previous Working Party meeting, however they were referred to in the discussions of the Members.

It was discussed that reference to the Town Clerk could be clarified to explain that it is not the Town Clerk at Hertford Town Council, but the Chief Executive Officer at Bishops Stortford Town Council.

The Members felt it would be useful to add of the word “theoretically” to the phrase “It was stated that the CSG could *theoretically* be allowed to do just that [to be a body with a degree of independence]”. The condition for this to happen is to ensure that there are frequent meetings and collaboration with Hertford Town Council and the Working Party, who lead this project as per the Neighbourhood Planning regulations. The Working Party members should be allowed to review from time to time the progress of BNAP and approve it or request corrective actions.

On the phrase “An explicit reference should be made to the duty to liaise and cooperate...”, the Members felt that references could be made to working in partnership with neighbouring wards in Hertford. The reason for this is that the Town Centre is located both in Bengo ward and Castle ward and that the Hertford Urban Design Strategy (HUDS) currently being developed will have an impact on both wards. The Members felt that it might be useful if the Community Steering Group invited a Castle ward representative in the Group.

On the phrase “Members agreed to share information about the BNAP among residents in Great Molewood...”, the Working Party suggested to add the word “present” to read “Members *present* agreed to share information about the BNAP...”.

It was suggested that in the phrase “explore broader theme for preservation or future development”, it would be more appropriate to use the term “conservation” rather than “preservation”.

The Members discussed the point which proposed approval from Hertford Town Council for any communication of the Community Steering Group and the suggestion that approval should only be sought for communications in which the name and/or logo of Hertford Town Council are used. The Members considered that while it might be impractical to review all routine communications, the suggestion to review only those which contain the name and/or logo could pose a risk, as external communications might simply omit these.

The Working Party decided that the best solution is for internal communications (with the members of the Community Steering Group and the working groups) to be managed by a Management and Communications Group. This internal

group will also have the role to communicate with the Working Party. To ensure accuracy of the messages, it was recommended that the Planning Consultant be part of this Group. All external communications will have to be approved by Hertford Town Council.

The Members considered that two documents are needed at this stage of the Neighbourhood Plan: a detailed draft timetable for BNAP and a Communications Strategy that encompasses both online and offline communications. It is recommended that these are produced soon, in collaboration with the members of the interim Community Steering Group. When completed, they will be discussed at the earliest opportunity by the Working Party.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Working Party **noted** the report on the progress of BNAP.
- b) The Working Party **noted** the minutes of the meeting of the interim Community Steering Group and suggested some changes.

214. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE COMMUNITY STEERING GROUP

The Working Party Members went through the proposed Terms of Reference and agreed for the following changes:

It was suggested that the terms “Chair” and “Vice Chair” should be replaced with “Chairman” and “Vice Chairman”, respectively to be consistent with the titles used at Hertford Town Council.

All reference to the “Group” should be made explicit to read “the Community Steering Group”.

It was suggested that on the phrase “Regularly report back to the Councillors’ Working Party on progress, issues arising, and outcomes” should be added “according to the Project Plan’s timetable”.

It was considered that the point “The Group may also include a nominated representative (or a substitute) of other community organisations that the Group sees fit to co-opt from time to time (e.g. Hertford Civic Society)” relates to the suggested involvement of a representative from Castle ward.

It was discussed that while the Group is open to all residents, the recommended size of the Group should be 21 members, and should not exceed 25 people.

The phrase “Officers of Hertford Town Council and the Project Consultant will support the Group” can be made more explicit, to state “Through the medium of the Town Clerk, Officers at Hertford Town Council, and the Project Consultant will provide all reasonable efforts to support the Community Steering Group. By virtue of their role, they will not have the right to vote in the CSG meetings.” Another point should be added that all members of the CSG have a right to vote.

On the point “Any complaint about the behaviour of conduct of a member of the Group shall be made in writing to the Chair. The Chair and the Town Clerk will investigate the complaint and decide on the appropriate action”, it was suggested that the Town Clerk can investigate a complaint but will not decide on the appropriate action. Instead, the Town Clerk will refer to the Chairman of the CSG to make a decision, or if the investigation refers to the Chairman of the CSG, the decision will be given to the Chairman of the Working Party.

On the Equal Opportunities point, it was suggested to change the verb “should” with “shall” to indicate that discrimination is not permitted under any circumstances.

A point will be added about the formation of a group in charge of internal and external communications for the Community Steering Group. All Communications will be regulated by the future Communications Strategy. As discussed earlier in the meeting, it is recommended that the Planning Consultant will be a member of the Management and Communications group, to ensure that there is no discrepancy with the neighbourhood planning legislation and practices.

Regarding the public liability insurance, the Town Clerk will investigate if the current cover can be used solely for events organised directly by Hertford Town Council, or if it can cover the activity of the Community Steering Group as well. The point will be amended if needed in due course.

On the point “Whenever possible, notices of meetings should detail the matters to be discussed”, it was considered to replace “should” with “shall”, but allow “whenever possible” to include the possibility to discuss any other business.

The point “The Project Officer shall keep a record of the meeting....” should be clarified to explain that it refers to the Town Council’s Project Officer.

Regarding the finances for the Community Steering Group, it was considered to replace “Notification of all planned expenditure” with “Notification of anticipated expenditure”. It was suggested that the Working Party would benefit from receiving a spending profile from the Community Steering Group for the next six to 12 months.

On the point “Should direct funding become available, the Group may hold funds on its own account”, clarifications should be made to read “Should grant funding from public bodies (local and national government) become available...”. Such

clarification is needed in order to prevent funding from private individuals and organisation that could have a vested interest in the activity of the CSG.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Working Party **approved** the Terms of Reference with the changes suggested.
- b) The Working Party **noted** the Background Information attached to the Terms of Reference.

215. THE WEBSITE AND OTHER FORMS OF THE NEW MEDIA FOR BNAP (PAPER D)

Questions were asked why the website is named “Love Bengo” and does not make explicit reference to the Bengo Neighbourhood Area Plan. It was explained that this name was considered since August 2016, however the website was only opened in June 2017. At the moment the website and other pages named “Love Bengo” are used for the sole promotion of BNAP. It was agreed that this is an important matter, because BNAP is a neighbourhood plan project and it would not be desirable to be associated with any campaigns in which the community has been involved.

It was agreed that the future Communications Strategy will provide regulation on all digital and non-digital communications for BNAP.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Working Party **notes** the report.
- b) The Communications Strategy will regulate how communications are sent and reviewed in the digital and non-digital environment.

216. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED** that:

In view of the confidential nature of the following items, which relate to the business matters of other individuals and organisations, the public shall be excluded while the following items are discussed. This is in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by the Local Government Act 1972.

217. BENGEO NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA PLAN WEBSITE COSTS (PAPER E)

The Working Party received a report detailing the costs of the Love Bengo website.

It was discussed that the website is one useful modicum to reach people in Bengo, especially the younger population.
The Members felt that in the future it would be useful to receive some data on the traffic of this website to assess its cost-effectiveness.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Working Party **approves** the cost of the Love Bengo website for the first year. Support for the following years will be considered if there is compliance to the guidelines of the Communication Strategy.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 16:45.