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Horsham Blueprint Neighbourhood Forum Annual General Meeting 2023
Held on Tuesday 19th September 2023 at Park Barn, North Street, Horsham.
Chaired by John Steele.

1. Welcome
John Steele introduced himself as Chair of Blueprint and thanked everyone for attending the Blueprint Annual General Meeting.

Apologies were received from Mike Dancy, Guy Stanley and John White.

2. Approval of Minutes of AGM held on 15th November 2022.

The minutes of the last Blueprint AGM were proposed and seconded. There were no objections so the minutes were accepted as approved. There were no matters arising raised and actions taken forward are covered in the Chair's Report.

3. Chair's Report

John Steele stated that since the last Blueprint AGM on 15th November 2022 the Blueprint Neighbourhood Plan was approved in December 2022 by Horsham District Council. This Plan is now part of the overall planning framework sitting beneath the NPPF and HDC's 2015 Local Plan.

John thanked everyone who had worked hard over several years to bring the Plan to fruition. In particular he thanked Andrew Cooke, the chair at the time who saw it over the line and Martin Boffey who took over the Chair in 2023 and who only stood down after the Local Elections when Martin became leader of the Council.

John set out two aspects of the Plan - The 15 Policies and the 22 'Non-Policy Actions' covering: conservation: protection and enhancement of our open spaces; public realm improvements; culture and creating an age friendly town.

Blueprint has had discussions internally and with Horsham District Council about the Steering Group's role in commenting on planning applications. The Steering Group has decided that the existing arrangements with the Neighbourhood Councils raising comments should be the norm with the Steering Group, on behalf of Blueprint being limited to the large/strategic planning applications or those creating unacceptable precedents.

These ‘Non-Policy’ aspects offer exciting proactive challenges for the Blueprint Steering Group with some funding available from CIL, with 25% to Blueprint. Discussions will continue with HDC on how and on what projects CIL funds should be allocated and Blueprint’s role in the process.

It is important that the Blueprint Steering Group maintains momentum and the interest of members to fulfil the aspirations of the Plan and to ensure that Blueprint is ready to review the Plan as necessary in light of HDC’s next Local Plan.

One further specific issue in the Plan that needs to be addressed in the coming year is to investigate the opportunity to form a Town Council.

To progress all this ‘fresh blood’ is needed on the Steering Group. Individuals willing to work with others across the town to generate ideas and interest to provide the momentum needed to do justice to the content of the Neighbourhood Plan and all those who have worked on it over a number of years.

Steering Group members need to work, live or represent organisations within the unparished area of Horsham. Blueprint is a Business Neighbourhood Forum so it would be particularly appropriate to have representatives from local businesses join the Steering Group.

4. Accounts and Treasurer’s Report

Diane Sumpter, member of the Blueprint Steering Group and Treasurer talked to the Report and Accounts which show a small credit of funds donated by the three Neighbourhood Councils.
The Bank balance at 31st March 2023 was £406.48.

It is recognised that additional funds will be needed in the future for Blueprint to cover administration costs.

5. Election of Officers and Members of the Steering Group

All current members of the Steering Group: John Steele, Diane Sumpter, Trudie Mitchell, Ruth Fletcher, Morag Warrack, Ron Bates, Graham Sitton, Sue Brundish have indicated their willingness to continue by completing the Steering Group Nomination Form 2023/2024.

In addition Andrew Cooke, John White and Francis Vernon have completed the Steering Group Nomination Form 2023/2024.

All were elected to the Blueprint Steering Group.

There were no new officer nominations, the existing holders indicated their willingness to continue and there were no objections; these officers were re-elected.

Chair - John Steele
Treasurer - Diane Sumpter
Secretary - Ron Bates

6. The Future Of Blueprint

Ruth Fletcher Horsham District Councillor for Denne and member of the Blueprint Steering Group talked of the future for Blueprint, explaining that the Neighbourhood Plan is a chance to progress projects in the town.

Ruth Fletcher thanked the Neighbourhood Councils and the Horsham Society for their constant involvement in getting the Plan over the line.

Ruth Fletcher talked of the vision for the town as set out in the nine Neighbourhood Plan Objectives, these include -
safeguarding the historic character of the town and the green spaces in the town;
protect and enhance the recreational and leisure facilities;
ensure that development is well designed;
encourage new housing for first-time buyers; encourage pedestrian and cycle access;
support Horsham Town to be a safe and welcoming place;
support business to achieve a sustainable local economy and
initiatives and schemes to create a low-carbon neighbourhood.

7. Horsham Green Spaces

Tim Thomas talked of the work of Horsham Green Spaces which included groups of people supporting Horsham Park, Horsham Green Gym and Horsham Allotments.

Tim Thomas talked of Horsham Green Spaces campaign to Keep Rookwood Green which was regarded as successful as it caused the proposed housing to be dropped.

The aims and objectives of Horsham Green space is to promote access to green space in the town for the wellbeing and recreation of residents and visitors through inclusive community involvement.

Other activities include the management of green spaces, training on habitat surveys and Get Horsham Buzzing and continual communication with HDC and other interested groups.

8. Horsham Town Community Partnership

Ron Bates a member of the Blueprint Steering Group and a Director of Horsham Town Community Partnership (HTCP) which is a Company Limited by Guarantee. HTCP includes representatives from Denne, Forest and Trafalgar Neighbourhood Councils, NHPC, Horsham Society, Horsham in Bloom, Horsham Older People's Forum and local residents. HTCP carries out projects in the town through volunteers and funding received from HDC and other public companies.

The best known project by HTCP being the Riverside Walk with development and maintenance financed by grants. Some proposed projects were identified, but there is a need for more funding which would finance these and other projects on the Riverside Walk.

Ron Bates showed two maps of the section of the Riverside Walk route that has to use Warnham Road and Pondtail Road. The maps showed a proposal for a new route through Rookwood and around the Warnham Local Nature Reserve and passing under the railway bridge by Gorringes Brook. This proposed route will link with the Riverside Walk on the opposite side of Pondtail Road. Early discussions have taken place with HDC and Rookwood Golf Course management.

Blueprint, not being established to carry out projects, may be a good fit with HTCP, which has the practical experience and proven track record of managing the Riverside Walk projects.

One project carried out by HTCP is the mobility scooter training, provided free and takes place in the Park Barn in Horsham Park. There are five volunteers trained as instructors.

Another project is the survey of bus routes across Horsham and the creation of a Horsham town integrated bus map. The 'Horsham Bus Map' is available to all on the website of that name. The latest version is dated 2022 and is updated when any changes occur by John White, one of the HTCP volunteers. John created the stylised map like the London Underground Map. A copy of the map is displayed outside the Horsham Railway Station, in the Carfax near the bus stops, Horsham Bus Station and at Horsham Hospital in the main reception. The map currently receives about 14 hits each day.

9. Questions and Next Steps

The Blueprint AGM finished with a question/comments and next steps.

Concern was raised that Horsham park needs to be protected for future generations.

There is a need for middle range homes for everyone, not just high end homes.

Affordable housing is needed and it is not right for developers to say it is not viable.

The Blueprint Plan needs to be disseminated to all the people in the town.

The permanent Shelley Memorial in Horsham Park is with HDC and then public consultation.

10. Any Other Business

There being no other business John Steele thanked everyone for attending the Blueprint AGM and wished everyone a safe journey home.
The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Attendees (34)
Martin Boffey, Trudie Mitchell. Jane Apostalou, Judy Pounds, Ruth Fletcher, John Milne, Hilary Key, Tim Thomas, Ron Bates, Graham Sitton, Nigel Emery, John Hastings. John Steele, Colin Minto, David Searle, Sam Raby, Rob Robertson, Donald Mahon, Joy Gough, Geoff Gough, Rachel Noel, Adam Key, Sarah Doy, Francis Vernon, Andrew Cooke, Olive Hobbs, Colin Bush, Morag Warrack, David Hide, Kevin O'Sullivan, Malcolm Gilbert, Sue Brundish, Charles Puckle, Diane Sumpter.