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Horsham Blueprint Neighbourhood Forum Annual General Meeting 2024
Held on Thursday 5th December 2024 at Causeway Barn, Causeway, 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 Morag Warrack, Peter Beckley

2. Approval of Minutes of AGM held on 19th September 2023.

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

3.1 - John Steele thanked everyone on the Steering Group for their continued involvement over the past fourteen months and their future support to bring the Non-Policy Actions to fruition in 2025.

3.2 - John Steele invited anyone interested in joining the Steering Group to make themselves known and attend a future meeting to find out if it is to their interest.

3.3 - John Steele reminded those present at the AGM that there are two aspects of the Plan - The 15no. Policies and the 22no. 'Non-Policy Actions' covering: conservation: protection and enhancement of our open spaces; public realm improvements; culture and creating an age friendly town.

3.4 - These 'Non-Policy Actions' offer exciting proactive challenges for the Blueprint Steering Committee with some funding available from CIL, with 25% to Blueprint.

3.5 - John Steele said it is important that the Blueprint Steering Committee maintains momentum and the interest of members to fulfill the aspirations of the Plan, and to ensure that Blueprint is ready to review the Plan as necessary when the next HDC Local Plan is approved.

3.6 - John Steele said that Blueprint only comments on strategic planning applications, such as the YMCA proposal for a 3G football pitch at Gorings Mead which Blueprint supported. Blueprint also commented on the Denne Park Golf and Fitness Centre proposal for new housing, to which Blueprint objected.

3.7 - Blueprint published responses to HDC's consultations on Green Spaces, Horsham District Planning Framework and the Capitol Theatre refurbishment. Blueprint also responded to the Government Planning Consultation.

3.8 - To progress all this the Steering Committee needs additional help. Individuals willing to work with others across the town to provide the momentum needed to do justice to the content of the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.9 - Steering Committee 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 Committee.

4. Accounts and Treasurer's Report

4.1 - Diane Sumpter, member of the Blueprint Steering Committee and Treasurer talked of the Report and Accounts which show a small credit of funds donated by the three Neighbourhood Councils and Horsham District Council.
The Bank balance at 31st March 2024 was £248.36.

4.2 - Diane Sumpter confirmed that Blueprint has taken out and paid for public liability insurance which is being asked for with hall hire and will likely be needed for future Blueprint activities.

4.3 - 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 Committee

5.1 - Current members of the Steering Committee John Steele, Diane Sumpter, Trudie Mitchell, Ruth Fletcher, Morag Warrack, Andrew Cooke, John White, Francis Vernon, Malcolm Gilbert and Ron Bates, have indicated their willingness to continue by completing the Steering Committee Nomination Form 2024/2025.
All were elected to the Blueprint Steering Committee.

5.2 - Graham Sitton and Susan Brundish stood down from the Steering Committee.

5.3 - 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. Town Council - HDC Governance Review

6.1 - John Steele highlighted one of the specific aspects in the Plan is to investigate the opportunity to form a Town Council. John Steele confirmed that this has been discussed with HDC and by mutual agreement Blueprint formally requested on the 4th December 2024 a community governance review of the unparished area of Horsham town, that is Denne, Forest and Trafalgar Neighbourhoods, with a view to the establishment of a parish called Horsham, and that the parish should have a town council called Horsham Town Council.

6.2 - The governance review procedures are managed by HDC and their timetable of actions is awaited but require HDC to carry out a resident and business consultation and make a decision within twelve months and by 3rd December 2025.

6.3 - John Steele put forward a view that the residents of the unparished area of Horsham had not had the opportunity to vote for their local councillors for many years, which is similar to a number of parish councils. A new town council will give the opportunity for the electorate to choose accountable elected councillors with a precept of money to spend locally.

6.4 - John Steele put forward the view that with the Government's stated plans to replace district councils with Unitary Authorities it is likely that a town council may future proof Horsham from further government changes.

6.5 - Nigel Friswell said he was not against change but was apprehensive and would like to know more detail and asked that more information of this proposal be made available. John Steele repeated that the proposal for a town council and a governance review was in the neighbourhood plan.

7. Grant Funding available from the Community Infrastructure Levy

7.1 - John Steele stated that green field sites generate more CIL, the unparished area is an urban area with not much opportunity for more development and to generate large CIL funds.

7.2 - John Steele explained that Blueprint does not carry out work on projects but goes out to ask other organisations to come forward with projects and ask for CIL money to carry them out.

7.3 - John Steele explained that guidance notes on funding for community projects and requests for funding for local community projects should go out to local groups by the end of January 2025.

7.4 - John Steele asked those present to put the message out for interested groups to look for this information but they will have to wait until the request goes out at the end of January 2025. Match funding is also an opportunity to create larger projects.

7.5 - John Steele explained that there is about £160,000 currently available for the unparished area but not much more CIL funding to come in the future.

8. Brief updates on Non-Policy Actions in the Neighbourhood Plan

(All the presentations can be viewed on the Blueprint website)

8.1 - London Road Improvements

8.1.1 - Francis Vernon talked over a number of slides showing the proposed London Road Improvements and the proposed areas of 20mph speed limits, and that this was an opportunity to

tell West Sussex Highways of our views.

8.1.2 - London Road is regarded as a dangerous junction with Springfield Road with much through traffic to Albion Way. The proposed layout is shown on slides which can be seen on the Blueprint website.

8.2 - 20mph Speed Limits

8.2.1 - Francis Vernon explained - why 20mph for residential areas.
It's safer. Lower speeds lead to fewer less severe casualties.
Lower vehicle emissions and cleaner air.
People are more likely to walk and cycle if vehicle speeds are lower.

8.2.2 - Francis Vernon showed the proposal for the Rushams Road / Merryfield Drive area.

8.2.3 - Francis Vernon showed the proposal for roads inside the area bounded by Harwood Road / Comptons Lane / Brighton Road.

8.2.4 - Francis Vernon identified some of the WSCC consultation areas which closes on 14th January 2025, these included -
Rushams Road / Kings Road / North Street to Horsham town centre.
The A281 Guildford Road / Bishopric to Horsham town centre.
The B2237 North Parade / Wimblehurst Road junction

8.3 - Riverside Walk through Rookwood

8.3.1 - Ron Bates explained the discussions took place with HDC and other interested groups on 19th November 2024 about possibly extending the route of the Riverside Walk through the Rookwood Golf Course and around the Warnham Local Nature Reserve.

8.3 2 - Ron Bates showed maps of the sections of the Riverside Walk route that has to use Warnham Road and Pondtail Road.

8.3.3 - Section 1 map showed a proposal for a new route through Rookwood along the 14th hole, a possible new bridge over the river and then using the Warnham Road underpass.

8.3.4 - Section 2 map showed a possible path through Walnut Tree Plantation which is a separate part of the Warnham Local Nature Reserve

8.3.5 - Section 3 map showed a raised walkway, a fenced walkway along the railway line 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.

8.3.6 - Early discussions have taken place with HDC and Rookwood Golf Course management and interested local groups and there are differences of opinion and still much to discuss.

8.3.7 - A visit to the proposed Riverside Walk with all interested parties is being arranged during mid-January 2025.

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8.3.8 - Ron Bates showed two maps of some proposed Riverside Walk routes through Mowbray the North of Horsham development which have been discussed with Legal & General.

8.4 - Community Housing Trust

8.4.1 - Andrew Cooke talked over a number of slides to explain what is a Housing Co-operative, and their benefits, and how these are funded and managed.

8.4.2 - Andrew Cooke went through a case study of Stirchley Co-operative Development.

8.4.3 - Andrew Cooke explained that the Housing Co-operative in the unparished area of Horsham was working closely with the North Horsham Community Land Trust in the NHPC area which has similar aspirations for housing in that area.

8.4.4 - Andrew Cooke set out Blueprint's aim in that Blueprint believes that Housing Co-operatives can make a valuable contribution to meet the housing needs of the area. It therefore encourages HDC to work with prospective co-operatives to identify suitable sites.

8.4.5 - Andrew Cooke explained the co-operative structure means that individual flats are not for sale and cannot be privately owned and there is no right to buy, with rents set to cover the mortgage and maintenance costs.

8.4.6 - Jane Apostalou asked if this co-operative was restricted to the unparished area of Horsham. Andrew Cooke replied that the co-operative would be restricted to Horsham but there is the North Horsham Community Land Trust (NHCLT) looking at the NHPC area.

8.4.7 - Nigel Friswell raised the concern as to where the builders will come from to build these projects.

8.4.8 - Ruth Fletcher said the land will be the problem in the unparished area of Horsham, WSCC is looking at changing the commercial part of the Novartis development to residential and there may be an opportunity for the NHCLT as this site is in North Horsham.

8.4.9 - Andrew Cooke said that the next step is to arrange a public meeting to launch the Housing Co-operative which will be independent of Blueprint.

8.4.10 - Andrew Cooke said if anyone is interested in knowing more or being involved, a clipboard is available tonight to set down your details and that he will make contact. Jim Pounds signed up.

9. Questions

9.1 - John Steele said that Blueprint was not established to carry out projects, but to provide a framework for other organisations and groups to take the lead. An example is that the Riverside Walk through Rookwood may be a good fit with Horsham Town Community Partnership which has the practical experience and proven track record of managing the Riverside Walk projects.

9.2 - Jane Apostalou talked of the work of the Wimblehurst Residents Association which has received notice of a public meeting about the Novartis Development. This meeting is to explain that as no organisations have shown interest in the commercial part of the site the proposal is for additional housing. The public meeting is in Roffey Millennium Hall on 12th December 2024.

9.3 - Jane Apostalou said that the Water Neutrality issue is being overcome by off-setting from other areas in the District and County. Ruth Fletcher said that Water Neutrality issues are an issue of water extraction with no additional water taken than is currently taken. This issue is still being worked on with no solution yet found.

10. Any Other Business & Close

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 8.55pm.

Attendees (21)
Trudie Mitchell. Jane Apostalou, Aki Apostalou, Judy Pounds, Jim Pounds, Ruth Fletcher, Tim Thomas, Ron Bates, Graham Sitton John Steele, Francis Vernon, Andrew Cooke, Malcolm Gilbert, Diane Sumpter, Sally Sanderson, Leslie Barnes, Julian Thompson, Neil Henry, John Stech, Nigel Friswell, Belinda Walters.