

SPECIAL MEETING TO CONSIDER DRAFT SEDGEFIELD PLAN UPDATE REPORT (previously circulated to all Cllrs)

DATE: Monday 16th February 2015
TIME: 6.30pm
VENUE: Council Offices, Sedgefield

SEDGEFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

Present Cllr. Chris Lines (Chairman)
Cllr. Mel Carr (Vice Chairman) and
Cllrs. David Brown, Mark Cant, Vanessa Carmichael, Lynne Dentith, Ian
Sutherland, Alf Walton, Dudley Waters, Gloria Wills
Officer Dr. Jane Ayre (Town Clerk)

MINUTES

1. Apologies

Cllrs Tim Jeanes, John Robinson and Maxine Robinson.

2. Declaration of Interest

None.

3. Public Participation

The Chairman, Cllr Chris Lines, closed the meeting for the public to give their views and comments.

Mrs Julia Bowles expressed her concerns regarding the notes which had been taken during Stage One of the EIP by the Inspector's Assistant. Whilst she recognised the notes were not taken verbatim she felt they had not been accurate and as these could be used as an aide memoire in the future it is vital these reflect accurately the views and comments expressed by STC. She suggested STC may wish to request these

notes are corrected.

Cllr Chris Lines replied that the Town Council would await the Inspector's Interim Report and then consider if such action was necessary. Cllr Lines repeated the script which he had read out during the EIP in relation to Policy 30 (Housing Policy) to make it clear to all the message which was given, i.e. *"a maximum of 300 is the figure that the community in Sedgefield is prepared to accept"*.

The meeting was then re-opened.

4. Draft Sedgefield Plan Update Report – Consideration of Recommendations

Cllr Chris Lines reminded Cllrs that a Report by himself and the Clerk had been circulated to all Cllrs at the Monthly Meeting held on 9th February 2015 (with copies being posted the next day to those Cllrs not present). At this Monthly Meeting it had been agreed to hold today's Special Town Council meeting in order to consider the content and recommendations of the Report. To date two amendments to the report had been made by Cllrs both relating to the Statutory Consultees in relation to Regulation 14:

- Sedgefield Development Trust had been omitted from "voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit all or any part of the neighbourhood area"
- Hardwick Moto-X should read Quad Sport Leisure c/o Mrs Antoinette Walton (proprietor).

Cllr Lines opened the meeting up for Cllrs comments regarding the Report's recommendations on Page 5.

With regard to Recommendation 1 Cllr Gloria Wills asked if all of the provisos had been actioned. Cllr Lines stated that the Steering Group had informed the Town Council that the proof reading had been undertaken. The health check findings are not yet known, however, the Plan has been submitted to Planning Aid and the Steering Group have requested this be undertaken as a matter of urgency. Cllr Wills expressed concerns regarding the content of the Steering Group's minutes of 16th December 2014 in which it stated that DCC had expressed opposition to the use of the Pactiv site for housing. She stated this could not be ignored and that DCC's exact position on this matter. She also expressed concerns regarding the Town boundary and the possible danger that such a wide boundary area could lead to other areas within the Town inadvertently being offered as acceptable to DCC for future development. She requested the need

for the Town Council to obtain an assurance that if the Inspector says 300 new houses are to be built in Sedgefield then these will only be built upon those sites stipulated within the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Wills expressed her concern that the Draft Sedgefield Plan is premature and had concerns that it was not yet fully fit for purpose hence her offer to meet with members of the Neighbourhood Planning Group to discuss these in detail. Cllr Wills said ultimately she felt the Town Council needed assurance that the Town will not end up with more houses than it has said it would accept. Cllr Wills explicitly stated that she did not want to take anything away from the Steering Group or the hard work that they have done to date but instead felt it was important the Council takes a further amount of time to consider the risks which the current Draft Plan poses.

Cllr Lines replied that at the Special Town Council meeting held on 19th January 2015 Cllrs had discussed at length their views before voting to adopt the Draft Plan with the attached provisos having agreed that there are risks with the Plan. Cllr Wills did not feel the minutes had reflected these. Cllr Lines stated that he supported Cllr Wills offer to meet with members of the Steering Group in order to jointly discuss issues and concerns.

Cllr Lynne Dentith commented that a detailed discussion had taken place on 19th January 2015 at the Special Meeting of the Town Council which had been attended by Mr David Bowles. The feeling of the vast majority of Cllrs at that meeting was that the Town Council would never get the full answers to all its questions in relation to the County Durham Plan in its developing state. It was instead felt by the majority of Cllrs at the 19th January 2015 meeting to move on with the Draft Sedgefield Plan with the provisos given as reflected in the vote which was subsequently taken.

Cllr Vanessa Carmichael reminded Cllrs that she had spoken up at the meeting on 19th January 2015 and voiced her concerns that fellow Cllrs did not fully understand the issues being considered and the potential implications of prematurity instead of awaiting the answers which are needed. Cllr Carmichael had not felt that the Steering Group had provided the answers sought. Cllr Lines stated that he too had voiced some concerns at the meeting on 19th January 2015, however, in the opinion of the majority of Cllrs at that meeting Mr Bowles had provided answers. Cllr Carmichael stated that all parties should be working together and listening to each other in order to get the Neighbourhood Plan required by the Town.

Cllr Dudley Waters stated he was reluctant to criticise people who have spent an

enormous amount of time working on the Draft Plan. He felt the Town Council could not be given a guarantee that only 300 new homes would be built in the Town. He felt the Council must avoid giving the impression there is a chance of only 300 new homes. He believed it was likely that a higher allocation would be given and it was important not to unintentionally give the impression that the Town will only get 300.

Cllr Wills stated it was not the number of houses that is the only issue but is where those houses are to be located and the Town Council is potentially, through the Town boundary map, now presenting sites that have been previously scored by DCC as 'Red' or 'Amber'. She accepted the purpose of the boundary was to protect the Town but had concern that within that boundary were sites that have not been assessed at all. Cllr Wills belief was the Town Council should await the Inspector's Interim Report on the Draft County Durham Plan as there was a real danger of offering other sites when Developers are waiting and watching what is going on in the Town. Cllr Wills reiterated her earlier comment that the work of the Steering Group had been exemplary and she did not want to take anything away from their work but instead felt it would be prudent for the Council to allow a further period of time to allow the Interim Findings Report by the Inspector to be published and considered. Cllr Waters agreed with this.

Cllr Mel Carr stated that the number of houses detailed in the Sedgefield Plan does conflict with that number stated in DCC's Plan. Cllr Carr did not want to see the Council go down a route that could lead to unnecessary legal action and associated expenditure. A small time delay could be the best option for the Sedgefield Plan and perhaps to seek further advice. Cllr Lines reminded Cllrs that the Sedgefield Plan has been submitted to Planning Aid for an independent health check.

Cllr Dentith stated that all Cllrs had been given 2 opportunities to ask these questions, i.e. at Special Meetings on 5th and 19th January, and at the latter meeting the Council had, with provisos, approved the Draft Sedgefield Plan. For this reason she was unsure why Cllrs were now debating the issue of delaying the Plan's progress when instead the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the contents of the Report which had been presented to Cllrs.

Cllr Ian Sutherland asked for clarification as to who would ultimately decide if the Sedgefield Plan was fit for purpose. Cllr Lines explained the inspection process. Cllr Wills reiterated that this process for the Sedgefield Plan would be different and completely separate to that being undertaken currently by the County Durham Plan in the form of the EIP.

Cllr Alf Walton stated that he was not positive there would only be 300 houses in the Town and for this reason he had abstained from the vote at the meeting on 19th January 2015.

Picking up on Cllr Sutherland's question, Cllr Wills stated that the County Durham Plan would provide a strategic level view of development whilst the Sedgefield Plan would provide the local level detail such as the type of housing to be built, energy issues etc so whilst totally different plans there must be the ability for them to dovetail. Cllr Lines stated these issues had been discussed by Cllrs at the meeting on 19th January 2015 prior to Cllrs voting to adopt the Draft Sedgefield Plan with provisos. Cllr Wills stated that such a decision could be rescinded if necessary as per the Council's Standing Orders. Cllrs Wills and Carmichael again stated their lack of support for the current Draft Sedgefield Plan.

Cllr David Brown joined the meeting at this point.

Cllr Dudley Waters expressed his opposition to Recommendation 4, i.e. to factor on-going Plan production costs into the Town Council's 2015/16 budget, Cllr Lines stated that it was clear there is additional spending which needs to be incurred in order to bring the Sedgefield Plan to fruition, however, such spending must be controlled.

RESOLVED:

- i) To accept the report apart from Recommendation 4 and with the amendments to statutory consultees that were discussed during the meeting.**
- ii) To set up a special Finance Working Group meeting to plan a budget for the remainder of the Sedgefield Plan's development and to bring a proposal to the March 2015 P&R Committee.**

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.00p.m.