

## NOTES OF MEETING

<i>Meeting of /between:</i>	LEWES NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP	
<i>Venue:</i>	Council Chamber, Town Hall	
<i>Date:</i>	7:00pm Tuesday 26 <sup>th</sup> November 2013	
<i>Attending:</i>	<p>Cllr Merlin Milner            Lewes Town Council lead for Environment &amp; Tourism  Cllr Roger Murray            Lewes Town Council lead for Youth &amp; Community matters  Cllr Susan Murray            Chairman, Lewes Town Council Planning Committee  Cllr Ruth O’Keeffe            Mayor of Lewes 2013/14  Cllr Dr Mike Turner            Lewes Town Council lead for Policy &amp; Finance matters  Steve Brigden                  Town Clerk  Chris Paterson                South Downs National Park Strategy Lead Officer (Communities)  Andrew Triggs                South Downs National Park Planning Policy Officer</p> <p><i>Community organization representatives:</i></p> <p>Barons Down Housing Association            Jim Etherington  Cliffe Residents Association                    Bill Ball  Cycle Lewes    Matthew Bird  Diversity Lewes                                      Anthony Kalume  Friends of Lewes                                   Neil Merchant  Grange Road Residents Association           Penny Jones  Lewes Chamber of Commerce                 Jackie Price  Lewes Community Land Trust                 Pru Rowntree  Lewes Local CIC                                    Polly Senter  Lewes Seniors Forum                            Richard Partridge  Malling Tenants &amp; Residents Association    Brian French  Nevill Residents Association                 Daphne Wyatt  Transition Town Lewes                         Kirsten Firth</p>	
<i>Apologies:</i>	<p>Cllr M Chartier            Lewes Town Council, and Chairman Lewes District Council 2013/14  Cllr I Eiloart                Lewes Town Council lead for Communications</p>	

### NOTES:

#### 1 WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS:

Cllr Susan Murray welcomed everyone to the meeting, and briefly rehearsed the reasons for it:

The Town Council had announced earlier in the year year that it intends to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for Lewes, using the provisions of the Localism Act 2011. A series of open public meetings had been held to begin the process, and now the “real work” would start. There would be assistance from the local planning authority, the South Downs National Park Authority, and it may be appropriate to invite or co-opt other organizations to assist as the plan evolves. It was explained that the Council must agree and publish the Plan, but the actual definition of its policy scope and content would be drafted by the community Steering Group. This is seen as the best way of ensuring that the whole community has input to the plan, which must ultimately pass through a formal process: being submitted to an independent Planning Inspector and then needing to attract more than a 50% affirmative vote in a public referendum.

Cllr Murray outlined how more young people were being engaged with the process: The Town Council had been approached by Action in Rural Sussex and Brighton University to introduce their *Community 21: Digital Citizenship* project. It could be hard to engage young people in the planning of their local communities, even though it could make a real difference to their own lives, and the *Community 21* project aimed to change this by working with young people on the design, development and use of modern digital technology to encourage community participation. This had begun very well and was now developing several specific ‘strands’ of activity.

The Council had agreed a list of local organisations it felt should be represented on the Steering Group. The list was thought to represent a wide cross-section of the community. Seven Town Councillors

would also participate. This was not necessarily an exclusive group, and it was hoped that others would engage as the work progressed. The organisations had each been invited to nominate a representative to the steering group, which would make the important decisions on questions such as: How would the process operate? Was there a need to employ a consultant? What topics should be covered by a Lewes neighbourhood plan? This was the first meeting in a process that was likely to develop over eighteen months to two years. An indicative agenda for the meeting had been prepared, and it was hoped that the representatives would engage with this work and would have the time to commit to further meetings as the project developed.

## 2 THE TASK AHEAD:

Cllr Murray introduced Chris Paterson, Strategy Lead Officer (Communities) for the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), Andrew Triggs, Planning Policy Officer at the SDNPA, and the Town Clerk, who gave presentations on the background to developing a Neighbourhood Plan (N-Plan), and insights gained from experience elsewhere. Mr Paterson lived in Petersfield, and had been closely connected with the development of the N-Plan there, both as a resident and in his professional capacity. He explained the work of ‘front-runners’ – areas that had piloted the process; some of whom had now progressed to the adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan. Their experience of obstacles, pitfalls, and common issues would be invaluable to Lewes, and it was considered that it was beginning the process at an ideal time – given that it was the largest town in any National Park, and had so many unique attributes. The N-Plan must ‘fit’ with the planning authority’s Local Plan, and in Lewes that was currently a joint plan adopted by SDNPA and Lewes District Council. The SDNPA would evolve its own Local Plan for the park within the next few years. The need for solid evidence to support all elements of a N-Plan could not be overstated – many areas had found that they needed to engage independent consultants to fill ‘gaps’ in their Local Plan or to legitimize their community’s aspirations in areas where no evidence currently existed. Where a Local Plan had evolved as a result of thorough consultation and community-involvement, it had been argued that there was little need for a N-Plan, and this was recognized as a valid viewpoint. It was important to recognize what the N-Plan could, and could not, achieve – and what was *sensible* to include. Many areas were facing the prospect of large numbers of newly-built houses and had opted to make housing a major topical element of the N-Plan as they were keen to have influence on the disposition of those buildings within their neighbourhood. It was pointed-out that Lewes town was likely to face relatively low numbers of new homes as it was constrained by the Downs. An important point was made here: that the N-Plan could not influence any planning applications that were extant or agreed before its adoption, and therefore would not affect the anticipated (imminent) major redevelopment of the North Street Quarter.

The vital importance of clear vision; appropriate evidence, and thorough communication was stressed throughout these presentations. Also; the need to recognize the volume of work involved and the real possibility of “volunteer exhaustion”. There was, it was demonstrated, a wealth of existing reference material available. Over 30 documents were listed by Lewes District Council alone, as the background documents for local planning policy and this included many in-depth studies with supporting data from surveys *etc.* Statistical profiles of Lewes were available from several sources, and a recent example offered was a 50-page document recently produced by Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE,) and others which used data brought together from many official sources, including the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Home Office, analysed by Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI). An example of one of the few ‘completed’ N-Plans was that of Exeter St James, for which a neighbourhood forum had been established, as there was no parish council. There was a comprehensive list of documents related to this plan on the Exeter City Council website.

Some funding was available from the SDNPA, and from a government-sponsored grant fund administered by the national community network organization, ‘Locality’. There might also be contributions from Lewes District Council. The SDNPA, as planning authority for the area, would also offer practical support by officers. The Town Council had made financial provision for the process, although it was not yet possible to budget accurately. One of the early decisions that the Steering Group would need to take, it was advised, was on the matter of engaging a project manager with relevant experience in the N-Plan process. Several such consultants offered this service and help would be available in making any selection.

3	<p><b>FIRST STEPS:</b></p> <p>The meeting then moved on to discuss the scope of the plan; what it might include; and how best to address the work. It was recognized that the provisional timescale indicated March 2015 as the earliest likely time for completion of the programme. The first, fundamental, decision was on the area to be encompassed. The intended area must be registered with the planning authority, who must then allow a period for public consultation. There was discussion as to the relative apparent merits of a plan for the whole Parish, as against any geographical sub-division. The Parish boundary was indicated on a large map, and discussion briefly touched-upon the advantages of a plan for a wider area, which was possible by means of joint agreements with adjoining parishes. In the case of Lewes, it was decided, the most beneficial approach would be to produce a single plan for the Parish, and this was <b>agreed</b>.</p>																		
4	<p>There followed a general discussion on potential topical strands that could be covered by the N-Plan. It was obvious that the subject areas initially proposed would need careful thought before the structure of the plan could be defined, and that the meeting would not be able to fit this within the time available that evening. A further meeting had been provisionally scheduled for Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2014 and a choice was offered as to 3pm or 7pm start-times. The majority decision was for a 7pm meeting, at which the topic areas could be discussed, refined, and agreed. Work on individual ‘strands’ would ultimately be done by smaller groups, and with the assistance of additional co-optees if appropriate.</p>																		
5	<p>The initial thoughts of those present resulted in a list for further refinement (in no particular order):</p> <table border="0" data-bbox="177 741 1474 1066"> <tr> <td>Land use – retail and other business</td> <td>Housing allocation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Business/economic mix</td> <td>Natural environment</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Leisure and cultural provision</td> <td>A “lifetime town”</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Climate - adaptation and resilience</td> <td>Education</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Built environment – sustainability</td> <td>Public realm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sustainable energy-use targets</td> <td>Health: food/fuel poverty</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transport and car-parking</td> <td>Sports facilities</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Youth employment</td> <td>Public Houses and other licensed premises</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Affordable housing (needs working definition)</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Land use – retail and other business	Housing allocation	Business/economic mix	Natural environment	Leisure and cultural provision	A “lifetime town”	Climate - adaptation and resilience	Education	Built environment – sustainability	Public realm	Sustainable energy-use targets	Health: food/fuel poverty	Transport and car-parking	Sports facilities	Youth employment	Public Houses and other licensed premises	Affordable housing (needs working definition)	
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6	<p>Cllr Murray thanked everyone for attending, and expressed the hope that they had not been deterred from the task ahead!</p>																		

*Meeting ended 9:50pm*