

MARKET LAVINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2
STEERING GROUP MEETING 3 December 2024/004 – MINUTES

- 1. PRESENT:** Gerald Milward-Oliver (GMO) - Chair, Jacky Macqueen (JM) – Vice-Chair, Ian Macqueen (IM), Jack Mason (JM), Penny Shearcroft (PS), Duncan Poole (DP) – Market Lavington Parish Council, Chloe Stevens (CS) - Chair, Market Lavington Parish Council, and Carol Hackett (CH) - Clerk, Market Lavington Parish Council, secretarial support.

Three members of the public.

APOLOGIES: Trys Negus (TN) and Tony Archer (TA - apologies received after the meeting).

ABSENT: Richard Clark (RC).

GMO welcomed everyone to the meeting.

- 2. Conflicts of Interest declared by those present**

Those members who had previously declared an interest confirmed that their interests remained the same: PS (owns SHELAA site 3627 off Drove Lane (5.5 acres).

- 3. Minutes of Steering Group**

The minutes of the Steering Group meeting held on the 29th of October, having been previously circulated to members were approved and signed as a correct record.

- 4. Adjournment for Public Participation (1)**

Member of the public present referred to the letter of complaint received by the Parish Council from the Planning Consultant Anthony Northcote dated 21st of October and questioned some of the actions taken. The Chair referred to item 6 on the agenda which would provide an update on the matter.

- 5. Redefinition of the Steering Group as a working group of the Parish Council rather than a sub-committee - Register of interests**

GMO explained the situation to Steering Group members (as highlighted in the letter received from Anthony Northcote), noting that it appeared according to the Localism Act 2011, which governs how Parish Councils run their affairs, that members of sub-committees are considered to be co-opted to the Parish Council. The Act defines “A ‘co-opted member’ “a person who is not a member of the authority but is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority”. It would seem therefore that in law Steering Group members are seen as co-opted in some form to the Council. He noted that this was not something that Wiltshire Council were initially aware of when contacted for clarification, and the Act does not appear to be clear as to the implications of that, particularly any legal responsibility a co-opted member may have. GMO noted the likely surprise this could be to members and referred to some information that provided guidance on the matter - *The Parish Council has a main council that can delegate some of its statutory functions to one or more committees or sub-committees. If there’s a specific task-focused activity then Working Groups may be set up. Working groups are not constituted as committees, therefore legally, they do not have the power to make decisions or spend money. Instead working groups act in a purely advisory role. This enables councillors to gather technical information and input from architects, planners, surveyors and other building professionals, ecologists and other specialists, and residents with local knowledge.* With this in mind, GMO therefore proposed that a request be submitted to the Parish Council to redefine the Steering Group as a Working Group of the Parish Council and not a sub-committee, in order to remove any further confusion or uncertainty. The process would involve simply amending the final sentence of Paragraph three of the Steering Group’s Terms of Reference. The current sentence states that “The Group is a sub-committee of Market Lavington Parish Council” and would need to be amended to read “The Group is a working party of the Parish Council”. GMO noted that whilst it was not a requirement for working group meetings to be open to the public, he suggested that formal meetings of the Steering Group continued to be operated in this way. There then followed a time of open discussion between members, after which it was proposed by GMO, seconded by PS and resolved to make this request to the Parish Council at its meeting on the 17th of December.

6. Report from Cllr Chloe Stevens following online discussion between Cllr Stevens, Cllr Poole, and Anthony Northcote re consultancy services

CS referred to the online 'without prejudice' meeting held with Cllr Poole, herself and Anthony Northcote on the 27th of November. It was noted that it had been a very positive meeting, with the opportunity to provide explanations for actions taken by the Parish Council. The meeting had concluded with Mr Northcote's proposal for a reasonable financial settlement, which would need to be put to the Parish Council for consideration. For the purpose of the Steering Group, it was noted that Anthony Northcote had withdrawn his business and would therefore take no further part in the preparation of the new Neighbourhood Plan. With just the one quote for consultancy services now, CS noted that the Parish Council would need to consider this further, with a view to concluding the appointment of a consultant by mid-January.

GMO referred to some initial research that he had undertaken into other consultancies.

7. Report from Gerald Milward-Oliver re: website; creation of sub-groups for housing and consultation; creation of sub-group for infrastructure to come

GMO noted that the website was up and running, and the Neighbourhood Plan was being promoted through social media and the Parish Magazine. Sub-groups had already been set up on Housing and Consultation (which will be happening in the new year) and will also be setting up ones on Transport & Infrastructure, and Green Spaces. He then referred to the Wiltshire Council Draft Local Transport Plan, which was currently being consulted on, and the Government's new NPPF (no indication as yet as to when this might be published).

8. Sub-groups: Gerald Milward-Oliver on housing sub-group; Jacky Macqueen on consultation sub-group

GMO noted that the first introductory meeting of the Housing sub-group had taken place in the middle of November (members: PS TA JM GMO JM). The call for sites will finish on the 8th of December and had so far generated four responses, and it was hoped that others would be submitted before the deadline. Discussions were due to take place with Wiltshire Council to consider other ways the Steering Group could explore potential sites, and also to check at what stage the identified sites should be made public.

JM noted that Consultation would start in earnest the New Year, with a large general meeting to be held in the Community Hall and drop-ins at the Old School. The sub-group will be looking to develop as many links as possible with people in the community for that personal contact, alongside the usual questionnaires etc. It was hoped to meet up with the volunteers who had helped with the original Neighbourhood plan, for their feedback on what had worked well, and anything that they felt could have been done differently. The overall aim of the sub-group would be to actively engage with as many of those in the community as possible.

GMO referred to the Housing Needs Survey undertaken by Wiltshire Council in 2017, noting that this was something that they no longer carried out. With this in mind, thought would need to be given as to how the Steering Group might ascertain the current local housing need within the village. There then followed general discussion between members regarding housing growth in the village and the possibility of a new railway station at some point in the future.

9. Call for people to get involved with sub-groups

GMO encouraged members to consider any other people who may be interested in becoming involved in any of the sub-groups, and referred to a potential new member of the Steering Group who had been put forward by TA. It was hoped that more people would come forward following the consultation events.

10. Any other business

There was none.

11. Adjournment for Public Participation (2)

The same member of the public expressed his frustration regarding the desire of the Steering Group to expand the size of the village with additional housing, without making any effort to object to any housing allocations put upon us by Wiltshire Council in response to Government requirements. In response, Steering Group members stressed the need for proper process, noting that the best way to ensure that any imposed housing allocations are built within sites supported by the community, was to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.

12. Date of next meeting/s

Wednesday 15th January 7pm in the Old School (4th February, 4th March).

13. Closure of meeting

The meeting was closed at 7.48pm.