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Minutes of the Parish Strategy Working Group
Thursday 4 April 2024 at 7.00pm in the Village Centre Conference Room

Present:

Cllr Mark Froud (Chair) Cllr Duncan Ranger
Cllr Barry Forster Cllr Annette Street
Sarah Groom, Clerk to the Council

1. Election of Chair:

The new Working Group had been formed at the 21 March 2024 Council meeting (Minute C23/24.148). Cllr Mark Froud was willing to Chair the new Working Group and he was duly elected.

2. Terms of Reference: The following terms of reference was agreed for the Working Group of 4 Members:

- To develop a plan for researching and drafting the Parish Strategy
- To manage the work that will develop the Parish Strategy
- To develop and manage the consultation exercise(s) for the Parish Strategy
- To develop a plan to launch and communicate the Parish Strategy
- To keep the Council informed about the progress of developing the Parish Strategy
- To make recommendations to the Council at key stages and at the draft Parish Strategy stage.

3. Review of the Route Map: The Chair introduced the Route Map which had been previously circulated and also discussed at the 21 March 2024 Council meeting. The recommendations agreed were that:

- a) The Council will develop a Parish strategy and action plan with supporting documentation by the end of 2024.
- b) The work to develop this strategy will be managed by a task and finish working group.
- c) The budget to support the strategy will come from budget line 5180 (Professional Support).

4. Plan Period: The plan period was considered. It was agreed a more detailed plan be developed for the next 4-5 years but that a longer term vision of 20-25 years for land and building assets would also be beneficial. For example, the Leases for the two key properties, the Village Centre Charity and the Court Bushes Community Hub both end in 2054.

A policy for monitoring and reviewing the Strategy will be included in the document. This may include a briefing to act as a guide for future councillors who will inherit the Strategy. For example the key objectives could be reviewed annually prior to the budget setting timetable which commences in November each year.

5. Review of Assets: The Asset Review document sets out a series of information items about each of the main land and building assets owned or managed by the Parish Council. This includes the Village Centre (Charity), Court Bushes Community Hub (Leased from MSDC), Public Conveniences, South Avenue Cemetery, Recreation Ground and the private road, plus Pitt Lane and South Lane, the Allotments, Chantry Stables (Charity Shop), Reeds Lane Recreation Ground, War Memorial (Village Green), Village Garden, Lower Churchyard at Holy Trinity, the land at Weald Close and all of Hurst Meadows and the ancient woodlands. The list also extends to bins, benches, noticeboards, bus shelters, street lights, play equipment, trees, fingerpost signs, village gateway signs and Christmas lights.

This document draws together a summary of key information into one place, for ease of reference and access. It is intended to be a working document that is kept updated. It can usefully serve as a document to be challenged in respect of why the Parish Council does things the way it does. It was considered an excellent starting point for councillors to access this information and it could even become a user friendly database. The question was also posed of what other assets in the parish might the Parish Council want more influence, control or ownership of, in order to benefit the community.

ACTION: Members were invited to edit and amend the document especially by adding to the issues and options boxes prior to the next meeting.

6. **Information Base:** The Chair had produced an information document for the Strategy. It was based on data taken from a number of sources such as the 2021 Census and 2014 Neighbourhood Plan research. The Chair offered to keep working on it, i.e. to add NHS health and wellbeing data, before it is shared with Council.

ACTION: All Members were invited to review the information base and to ask questions or make changes.

7. **Next Steps:** The series of next steps were reviewed:

- a) A SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) would be completed and would include challenges and/or opportunities, even those linked to the proposed number of new homes in the draft District Plan to 2039. A wish list had previously been submitted to MSDC as part of the Reg 19 consultation for future opportunities from Section 106 funding should it become available.

ACTION: All Members agreed the SWOT Analysis would be completed and presented to Council in June 2024.

- b) The approach to consultation will need to be carefully considered. One option is to define a vision and to then ask people for comments. Perhaps ask for their top three priorities from a prepared list of issues. Certain key stakeholder groups could be consulted initially. The general public could then be consulted via sources such as Hurst Life articles. The Information Base summary could be provided to help set the context.
- c) Risk/Reward approach: Currently risks are managed very carefully by the Parish Council and in future greater consideration of risk versus reward could be applied on a case by case basis to issues.
- d) Scenarios could be envisaged for greater change, versus the status quo. The likely development of 4000 new homes in the area provides ample opportunity such as maximising biodiversity, reducing deprivation and inequality, maximising economic benefits, expanding mobile coverage etc.
- e) It is essential to engage with all Members and have their agreement with how the Strategy develops. Their contributions will be required at stages such as informal update sessions or for short items on Council agendas. It was agreed to drip feed Members information on how the Strategy is developing.

8. **External Help Required:** An external facilitator may be required for one or two further informal sessions with councillors who is neutral and impartial so as not to lead the conversations in certain directions.

9. **Councillor Session:** It will be helpful to agree a date for a further councillor session and a date will be agreed.

10. **Date of Next Meeting:** The date of the next meeting will be arranged by the Clerk to ensure it is convenient for all Members of the Working Group.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Chair