

Democracy Group Meeting
Monday 19th March 2018, Oval Room, The Spetchells

PRESENT

Cllr Gerry Price, Cllr Angie Scott, Cllr Russ Greig, Cllr Chris Cuthbert, Cllr Jennifer McGee

Apologies: Cllr Yvonne Ritchie, Cllr Tracy Gilmore

1. Chair

It was **AGREED** that Cllr Russ Greig would chair the meetings of the Democracy Group.

2. Set-up and Terms of Reference

The members of the group were confirmed as those present and those having given apologies.

It was **AGREED** to recommend the following terms of reference:

The Democracy Group will engage with residents, community groups, businesses and all stakeholders to develop a vision for Prudhoe. They will publish the values of Prudhoe Town Council.

The Democracy Group will research other Town Plans with a view to creating a Town Plan for Prudhoe.

The Democracy Group will develop the meeting formats already available (i.e. Young People's Forum, Ordinary Meeting, Annual Town Meeting, Prudhoe Neighbourhood Management Committee) to engage in two-way communication with residents and stakeholders.

The Democracy Group will oversee the Prudhoe Town Council Newsletter and the Prudhoe Civic and Community Forum, to be chaired by Cllr Russ Greig.

It was **AGREED** that a report of each meeting would be presented to the council and would include all recommendations ***in bold***, for approval by full council.

3. A 'Town Plan' versus 'A Neighbourhood Plan'

A Neighbourhood Plan enables communities to play a much stronger role in shaping the areas in which they live and work and in supporting new development proposals. This is because unlike the parish, village or town plans that communities may have prepared, a neighbourhood plan forms part of the development plan and sits alongside the Local Plan prepared by the local planning authority (presently NCC are developing their Local Plan). Decisions on planning applications will be made using both the Local Plan and the neighbourhood plan, and any other material considerations.

Neighbourhood planning provides the opportunity for communities to set out a positive vision for how they want their community to develop over the next 10, 15, 20 years in ways that meet identified local need and make sense for local people. They can put in place planning policies that will help deliver that vision or grant planning permission for the development they want to see.¹

Cllr Jennifer McGee explained the differences between a 'Town Plan' and a 'Neighbourhood Plan' as she saw them. A Town Plan concerning how the Town Council wishes the town to move forward in regards everything; it's aims and objectives, a vision and respecting the needs of the

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#what-is-neighbourhood-planning>

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community whereas a Neighbourhood Plan is a more cumbersome and regulated process, that would require an investment of time and money, as well as a referendum.

It was discussed that other Towns had developed their own Neighbourhood Plan, but that it might be considered easier in smaller communities.² Additionally, the weight given to Neighbourhood Plans in the Planning Process was also questioned.

It was AGREED that it would be a good idea to contact NCC Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure for more information, but presently there were capacity issues with regards the office and workload.

4. Prudhoe Neighbourhood Management Meeting

It was discussed whether the meeting should be held more frequently as it offered an ideal opportunity to get stakeholders together.

It was AGREED that the invite for the next meeting should ask that groups be prepared to give an update, as is usual, but also to invite representatives to offer suggestions as to how the town/community could be improved, with a view to informing Town Council plans.

It was AGREED that Prudhoe Medical Group, Essity and Ferndene should be added to the list of attendees.

5. Creating a Vision and Values

It was AGREED that it was a priority for the Town Council to agree a vision and to publish its values.

The following were discussed as potential values but it was agreed that more discussion was needed:

- Support a thriving business community
- Protect green spaces
- Reduce carbon footprint
- Support sustainable growth
- Reduce congestion
- Improve the image of the town
- Input to neighbourhood plan

6. Engaging with residents

The question was asked whether the council should consider having an open public session at the outset of each Ordinary Meeting, as is done by some other Council's. The matter was discussed but no recommendation was made.

The Newsletter prepared by Cllr Russ Greig was received and discussed. Some suggestions were made and **it was AGREED** the Newsletter should be presented for approval to the council at the next meeting.

It was discussed that the office was working under pressure at the moment and this would not have been possible if Cllr Russ Greig had not accepted the job. Members thanked Cllr Russ Greig

² Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' on 23rd November 2017, see <http://www.ponteland-tc.gov.uk/ponteland-neighbourhood-plan-3/>

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for his time. The administrative officer advised that the Newsletter would have to go to print immediately following the meeting on 28th March as the delivery was booked for 9th April.

The following schedule was discussed **and agreed** for the Prudhoe Town Council Newsletter going forward, with important items noted throughout the calendar year, but notwithstanding other news and features:

February; agreed budget and grant aid awarded.

June; Cllr positions following the Annual General Meeting, Highfield Fest, In Bloom Competition, Allotment Gardening.

October – results of Miners Race, results of In Bloom, Christmas Switch-On, request for spending plans?

The figure set aside in the 2018-19 Budget for the Newsletter was £4,000 and this had to include printing and delivery.

7. Prudhoe Civic and Community Forum

It was AGREED to recommend to the council that the Civic and Community Forum comes under the umbrella of the Democracy Group as it fits well with the terms of reference.

It was AGREED that the chair of the Civic and Community Forum would be the agreed chair of the Democracy Group, Cllr Russ Greig.

It was discussed that the East Centre Working Group recommended a Civic and Community Forum for the East Survey and also to include the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The administrative officer advised that there was no confirmation from planning that they would attend. **It was AGREED** that the Forum should go ahead with these topics regardless.

8. Prudhoe Town Council Young People's Forum

Cllr Gerry Price advised that Ashley Brown had indicated that he wished the Town Council to remain involved and to chair the meetings, although there was no longer a contribution in monetary terms.

It was AGREED that a decision in response to Ashley Brown should be made by the full council.

9. Annual Town Meeting

It was AGREED to recommend that this year's Annual Town Meeting should ask all those invited to focus on the future, and what their vision for the town is. It was AGREED that it would be good to have some younger attendees and to contact Luke Shears (Youth Cabinet Member) to encourage this.

It was AGREED that refreshments would be placed in the hallway in view that room 3 is no longer available. The date suggested for the Annual Town Meeting is Thursday 17th May 2018.

It was AGREED that the next meeting would be held on **Monday 16th April 2018 at 4:00 pm**

The Ordinary Meeting of the Council, 28th March 2018, is asked to agree the proposals therein which are detailed in **bold**.