



**South Northamptonshire VCS Forum
29th April 2010 at South Northants Volunteer Bureau**

Seventeen people attended the meeting.

Welcome and Introductions

Barron Walton (acting chairman) welcomed everyone to the forum.

He introduced Roger Clarke, Chairman of Pattishall Parish Council to speak on "Enabling Good Communities - the benefits of a Parish Plan". A copy of his presentation is attached as an appendix.

Questions followed. Roger said that the great benefit of the parish plan process was the involvement of a wider cross section of younger people in the village. Hopefully, these in turn would take on responsibilities in the village in the future. It had the effect of opening up the village and bringing people together.

Keith Cousins (Evenley PC) said that in his village there had been several obstacles. An extension to the village hall incurred VAT which had to be paid. Only on appeal was it refunded.

The village shop had had to be helped by SNC as restrictions had been placed on some activities.

A play area behind the pub had been objected to by residents of an old people's home.

In answer to a question about a Village Design Statement (VDS), Beth Milne answered that it was best completed alongside a Parish Plan (PP). A VDS focuses on the built environment; a Parish Plan was more about re-invigorating a community. ACRE has funds available for a PP but not a VDS.

Roger Clarke (Pattishall) said that his village completed a housing needs survey alongside the Parish Plan.

The Pattishall Parish Plan took 15 months to complete. The executive summary was distributed to every home and the main document was on the village website. It was important to work to a budget.

Nick King (snvb) reinforced Roger Clarke's comment about the importance of a Parish Plan as he found that it provided evidence of need in any funding bid.

Roger Clarke said that the questionnaire was not provided by ACRE. It was designed themselves with concise and pertinent questions. It should be purposeful.

Blisworth had had 57 questions with a 70% response. They had organised distributors through the village having about 20 households apiece.

Syresham had had visitors helping householders ensuring 80% return.

On being asked about doing another PP, RC said they had a performance plan in place which was continuously monitored. There was an extension of the original plan which therefore would not involve a cold start to any new initiative.

Jean Jarvis (Deanshanger) asked if the community expected the parish council to be involved in the implementation of the plan. RC said the Parish Plan committee was independent of the Parish Council which was only engaged in some aspects of its implementation.

In Evenley, the Parish Council and the Residents Association worked together. Every new resident received a “meet and greet pack” containing information about buses, dentists, etc.

Beth Milne (ACRE) outlined their support for implementing Parish Plans. See appendix ii.

Community Information Exchange

Harpole Parish Council had received £70k in funding for improvements to their playing field which had brought the whole together and was a great village asset.

In Blisworth their pub had recently closed down. In addition, they had lost the Sun Moon and Stars development. SNC had decided to sell the building. The village plan for a heritage and community site was now lost.

In Evenley, the residents now run the pub. The same was true of Hinton in the Hedges.

The feeling was that the breweries charged too much of their tenants, impacting on the economics of running the pub.

In Syresham, a new computer club had started and was looking to acquire computers and laptops

Beth Milne returned to questions about the Village Design Statements in saying they covered private houses as well as businesses. They were an important evidence base as to the character of any new development.

Bridget Gibson (Northamptonshire LiNK) explained that her organization was independent since 2008 and worked with the PCT, hospitals and NCC on issues of social care and health. There was a website and newsletter.

Greg Ward (SNC) said that they had held a successful job club in Towcester and next week there was to be one in Brackley; thereafter, they were to be held in Towcester on alternate Tuesdays and in Brackley on alternate Thursdays.

Mark Rowntree (Northamptonshire Libraries) said that copy of Parish Plans were available in the libraries.

People could now join the library and reserve books online. Volunteers were now used in libraries for children’s sessions. In Deanshanger, there were one to one training sessions in computers. Also, these were available in people’s homes.

Countywide Forum Consultation. BW directed attention to this. Responses were due in by 19th May.

Any Other Business

Nick King had been on a recent course held by NCC to review their draft consultation document on Community Asset Transfer. He was told that specific district councils such as the SNC may be considering their own consultation but the position was unclear.

Blisworth residents had met with SNC and had been told that SNC was now definitely selling the Sun Moon & Stars building to private developers.

Keith Cousins had been to a NALC meeting in which it was observed that demand for allotments exceeds supply.

Dates of future meetings

BW asked for ideas for future meetings. Suggestions included the impact of the high speed train proposals; the future of the village pub and alternative usage; tourism; forestry commission land.

The next meeting of the FORUM is scheduled for 14th July 2010 at 10am at Milton Malsor Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 3.45.