Minutes of Lakenheath Neighbourhood Plan Group Wednesday 16th June 2021 at 7 pm

Present:

Gerald Kelly
Roy Norman
Alan Gyte
Wendy Overy
Peta Gyte
Stephen Frost
Judy Cahill
Hermione Brown

Apologies:

Ed Morley
Kevin Watts
Paul Tams

Gerald opened the meeting advising he had distributed software output and also sent out an abbreviated headline report results for the non-housing element of the survey. This includes what is a need, having asked the question have we got an answer, what we have to do about it if we can. There may be somethings that we cannot do anything about such as aircraft noise and such like. However, what we have got, if we parcel them up a bit, is one of the things as a for instance is that top of the pops in so far as if money was available what would you like to see in the village. Number 1 was basically sports equipment. That breaks down to a swimming pool at the top and we know that that will not happen. We have just had a new one at Mildenhall. It is unrealistic to consider it. Number 2, with a lot of votes for it, was either an inside or outside some sort of gym facilities for adults. Historically there was a plan to do something about this I think the other side of The Cut. That did not happen but actually there are things we could do without spending a fortune. We have the Playing Fields Association and several other groups who are into exercise and sport. The sort of things you see in an outdoor gym, is basically things that stand up in a park are fitness equipment. Mildenhall have some behind the Jubilee centre and in Thetford. With a little bit of scratching around for some grant funding together with cooperation from those interested in groups, not necessarily represented within this group, we could come up with something useful and tick the box in terms of what people say that they want.

We need someone to hold this idea together. As there will be a number of these things, I have already bent Mr Gytes ear as he has a vesting interest in football. As a Councillor he can also report back to the Parish Council as well as to our group. I think what is needed is to get groups round the table, see what is possible, how much will it cost and are groups prepared to put in the effort to make it happen?

AG happy to lead this.

GK That lays out the ground for where I want to go with other bits as well. This is because in terms of what is wrong, with no ifs or buts, mainly to do with roads, traffic, parking and that sort of stuff. We are not likely to get very far if we just pass it up the line as it will merely be passed back down the line. I think we need to have a get together with several groups involved namely the police, Highways and West Suffolk because they now have the responsibility for parking issues. Pull that

together we will make them aware that we have results of survey, showing how the village feels. It could be we are turned down due to lack of money or other reason! If that's the case that is what is reported back to the village as the response we got. Not the response we want but will show that we asked the questions, got the answers and what are we going to do about it. If the answer, is we cannot do anything we report that.

We do have sat amongst us our Speed watch leader.

PG Yes and we were out yesterday. The top speed noted at Station Road was 38 mph. Last week top speed again at Station Road was 49 mph!

GK Question for you Peta, if this was your project would you lump it all together or split it up? We have Stephen here and of course West Suffolk deals with the parking issue. Is it part of that?

PG I think so but I am anxious that as Parish Councillors we need to be seen to be doing this and then reporting back to the council. As this is a much wider committee, I would like to involve others outside this group and the Parish Council. So that they feel included. I can get evidence from the speed watch results. I have historical evidence from previous speed watch checks and also the SIDs when it comes to the evidence for the need for this, there is data to be used. We can delegate the West Suffolk Business namely the parking and the wardens out to Stephen.

GK We are not in the business to delegate; Stephen is it something you can get involved in?

SF Nothing, I can do about the speeding. I can chase the wardens and gently get the ball rolling to see how often they get to Lakenheath. When they are next here, I could come and see them. This needs to start on a warm and friendly basis. There is a team of two covering Newmarket, Mildenhall, Lakenheath and Brandon. I have seen them in Lakenheath and in Mildenhall. It is worthy of a catch up and I can report to the next meeting. This will be how often they have been here and what results were achieved.

GK Historically, we had a referendum and we were going to get a PCSO. But when close to taking it on the Police then said parking now is nothing to do with us. The figurehead for the scheme was asked whether there was anything we can do as we can put some money into it to get the parking problem addressed. A scheme was then to take on a part time second village keeper who after training could become a parking warden. That door is still not closed so if it did require something from the Parish it could still be accommodated. Part of the issue is wardens do come into Lakenheath and every bit of bad parking magically disappears. When they are in uniform no one will offend!

PG This is the point I was trying to make at the Parish Meeting that CSW is fine and if we ever persuade them that there is a need the actual police camaras on the road are fine as a traffic calming device. We are only there for an hour and when we are seen on speed watch people slow down. What the village needs is some kind of a permanent traffic calming system. That is not Suffolk Highways policy. First job is to ascertain what is the policy if there is any. No point of talking about sleeping policemen for the roads if they are never to be obtained. We need to Talk to someone at Highways or at the County and see that they think can be permanent traffic calming. This will be my first job.

HB If we have someone part time can the hours be varied to cover different times of the day over the day.

GK it is a case of what can we do but behind this we can put in are we prepared to put something in particularly in relation to the zebra crossing which is dangerous.

RN Asked when Station Road developed were they not to put in traffic calming measures?

HB No. They are to provide a Pelican crossing from Woodlands crossing Station Road near to Drift Road to provide safe access to the proposed school. Nothing else that I recall.

GK can we leave it that we have a success in that Stephen will contact someone at West Suffolk and we now have a little group to tackle this issue.

PG Will anyone assist the group? HB agreed to so long as not too time consuming with current busy life.

GK Paul Tams is another who may be willing to join in anything like that. As there are particular issues at Sedge Fen Perhaps Wendy can be involved. She agreed

GK The next item on the list is the Environment. Several bits which could be taken further. Firstly, this covers lots of issue around footbaths, litter and can we green the place up a bit. First the last litter pick was much better than ever before. It involved more people than ever before and a lot more rubbish. That is one aspect. At the time it was agreed to do this more often other than just when it is the village Spring Clean.

JC I am proposing to do one in January when vegetation has died back.

HB suggested to involve Beavers and Scouts as they have community badges to work for. RAF Lakenheath too for the same reason.

JC Maggie did contact RAF Lakenheath for the last clean up but unfortunately, they were not able to provide any volunteers.

SF They have just appointed a new RAF Base Commander from RAF Marham who was successful in working with the community. He has only been in place for a week. He is Squadron Leader Stuart Geary. I will catch up with him next week on another matter for Eriswell. I will try to fight for you Judy on that one. Let see what he can drum up in future.

GK We were caught out with timing. With no Base Commander we were in the hands of talking with the public relations people.

The other one although not on the group for the last few meetings is the manager at the RSPB reserve, Lakenheath Fen which is in Lakenheath of course. Another possible connection is a contact I have with Suffolk Wildlife who I am sure will become involved.

To all those that have agreed help I hope that it is a given that you will all agree to muck in where required.

JC The only matter of concern is the Footpaths. Who looks after them?

AG West Suffolk

GK if litter down to us. Signage West Suffolk If cutting back not sure.

HB In the old days it was County (Highways) who used to pay the parish to clear the paths but that all stopped many years ago. They agreed to do the major ones but only once per annum.

AG The warren is managed by West Suffolk

HB They took over the management, it is owned by Elveden Estates who leased it to West Suffolk to enable them to provide a Nature reserve and trail for the education of the children of the village. Ever since John Smithson retired from West Suffolk it has been very neglected.

PG signage is disintegrating and now very poor.

GK The other major item in terms of peoples desires for improvement is around health. Which gets very messy as top of the pops on the wish list is the supply of a dentist. Unless someone wants to start up a practice no one is going to just put one in. If health facilities are developed in any way, they could make room for one somewhere possibly. A conversation needs to be had not over one thing but to include several health issues possibly as a start by way of a friendly chat with the practise. Quite clearly there are issues for the clinical commissioning group. It is multifactorial issues.

SF I heard that there is a national shortage of dentists.

PG There is some kind of patient doctor liaison group that meets at the surgery. You are invited to go and talk to the doctors about the way the practise is run etc. They used to meet on a reasonably regular basis. Not sure whether it still occurs.

GK Again this is a thing we have to say that these things are raised by the village as concerns and not just complaints. This needs a home. If we are sharing out the jobs, as we are, I have to admit to 24 years working within the NHS might just mean this is my job.

I am glad that this is no longer the Gerald show and that others can move items along too.

There were several issues about the Chemist. Is there anything that we can do? Both in terms of what they do as in giving advice and opening hours, particularly a Saturday opening.

That covers the main elements health related.

The next item, Ian suggests a drop in event in the village Hall. Can we get these themed areas and get posters up basically “this is what you said and this is what we did”. Earliest will be August because of publishing dates in getting it into the Lakenheath Time so people have time to book.

SF if you aim for getting into the August issue many people do not receive their copy till the second week of the month. Must arrange therefore for mid-August to give people time to arrange attendance. What is a drop-in session? Is it that we as a group will be there to answer any questions?

GK The real crunch will be the ones who want to lean on particular areas but hopefully by then the level of expertise will be unsurpassed.

PG hopefully by then we shall have some answers for them.

JO Can I ask about the project High street regeneration. It seems we have only picked on a few things, wondered why only the few and not other items raised. Eg shops or events that people want to see?

GK The biggest bit missing is around housing. We have now had the Housing Needs Assessment back and have to find out how to include this in a plan. This is Ian’s job and he has gone away to start working on that. It will be housing needs assessment plus survey and he will come back to us with that. The issue with shop; we are not in a position to say we want a butcher, baker etc. Bank is the biggest item we need.

PG the issue with shops is we have no control over who comes and tries to set up a business. It is down to the village to make a success of it or not, if they are not going to use the facility, they will simply close. Difficult for us to have any influence over what shops are in our High Street. Who will open up and try?

JO I was reading we could get the High Street Regeneration project funded?

GK The answer is there is a competition no results yet announced, in fact at the moment deadly silence from the Government.

HB Can a start in the High Street be that some letters go to certain individuals who have the tattiest fronts or gardens and ask people to clean them up.

GK Absolutely. I am not sure what we can do. In some areas if you don't keep it tidy you get a yellow letter but I have never seen one nor known the consequences of ignoring a yellow letter.

SF Why don't we post something up say to clean up for the Queens platinum jubilee next year: Best dressed house on the High Street or shop and chuck in a prize or two? See what comes of it and what it engenders as a competition.

JC Gerald had in the past suggested plant daffodil bulbs along the Eriswell Road.

GK The issue is not money; bulbs are really cheap it is more about ownership of land. There are other areas where we could do the same thing.

WO What SF is suggesting I think that would be a nice way forwards to improve the High Street.

GK Scotty is "wilding" the churchyard where he spots flowers he leaves them to die off and they still manage to come up year after year. That is what we want to do as it will make a heck of a difference. Wendy sounds like you have taken up the job.

WO I don't mind being involved.

GK I know of at least 3 prize givers.

JC Can I ask why we cannot do Lakenheath in Bloom?

HB we have done it in the past and won awards for doing so.

JO Scott has been involved in Brandon in Bloom before

GK There were a large number of people who said that they would be prepared to put some time in. This can be asked at the drop in event. At that time Wendy will have a super-duper scheme to present

HB Can that include a farmers' market? Was that not a top item people wanted?

JC perhaps someone can visit one and see how these things are organised.

WO Actually Judy I attend farmers markets as it is where I sell my flowers. Freckenham has a good set up. I am very willing to help with that as I have the knowledge already as to how they run.

JC Perhaps it can be arranged on the Playing Fields.

WO Inside or outside or both.

GK plenty of potential venues. Let's pursue it and see how it pans out

WO Freckenham Village Hall run one. I can work with them to help us. Insurance etc. All the Traders are not allowed to park in the car park so as to leave it for the public. That is a plus point to having a car park.

SF use the Pavilion.

HB The Pavilion run craft fairs or have done maybe the two things can be run in tandem. The more you bring in the better they can be.

GK Just one other sub group type thing that is worthwhile which is issues around youth activities. Paul Tams was happy from day one with this can we let him lead on that one? Anything which improves interest for our youth is no bad thing.

AG Roy can you give him a hand on that one?

RN Of course

PG Kevin not here tonight.

AG I want to pull Keven on board with me if you don't mind as a link with the Playing fields ie sporting.

SF Put the two things together sport and fitness. Sporting and youngsters. The other thing is there is a gentleman down Undley interested in getting a table tennis club started in the Community Centre. Post Covid West Suffolk want to promote activities particularly amongst younger people. This is to try to build up the health of West Suffolk. Be sure that will come on line shortly. I am prepared to support it. Something for the youth. I have spoken with Lesley Ann for money from locality.

PG She is a good link for the community development ideas.

SF If we get it going maybe table tennis in one room and a youth group in the other.

GK Thank you very much. Stephen mention of Undley is a good reminder that the whole parish is our stumping ground not just within the village boundary. Thanks again especially to all those who have volunteered.

RN If Wendy gets hold of us both me and my wife will happily get involved in the street scene thing.

Meeting closed 8.03 pm