

Clevedon Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Report to Clevedon Town Council November 2017

Purpose:

- This is the fifth formal report to the Town Council on the work of its Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.
- This report is to update the Council on progress in developing its Neighbourhood Plan, outline issues the Steering Group is managing and make recommendations to the Council for the period up to the beginning of formal consultations with the community

Information:

1. The Group has met monthly since May 2016 and undertaken a number of engagement activities with the community and local organisations. These have allowed the development and testing to get views on what people like about Clevedon, the issues the town faces over the next 20 years and to set out a vision and objectives for a Neighbourhood Plan. The Council agreed the issues, vision and objectives for the plan at its June meeting this year.
2. Since then, the Steering Group has concentrated on two main tasks: a) Developing policy ideas from the six objectives to share with the public and b) securing DCLG funding from Locality for a website, social media campaign, print and distribution.
3. In relation to a) the Steering Group has added an hour focus session to its October, November and December meetings where individuals have been invited to discuss each Objective and the possible policies that arise. The first was on Objective 3: Housing, the second on Objective 1: Destination Clevedon and the remaining four will be explored in a December workshop.
4. In relation to b) the Steering Group (in liaison with the Town Clerk and relevant Councillors) submitted an application for £9,000 funding from Community Rights Programme, funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government. However, the assessor from Groundworks was unhappy with such a large resource being applied to marketing, website, leaflets, etc. She indicated an expectation that much of this would be provided by a Town Council. Nevertheless, on 1st November the Town Council was offered a grant of up to a maximum of £5,550.00 by the Community Rights Programme. The Council will recall it set aside £7,000 in its 2016/17 for the Neighbourhood Plan. The Steering Group's view is that we will need to call on that for a) additional printing and distribution costs and b) some time from an RPTI approved consultant to advise/revise the policies that emerge.
5. Whilst the views the Steering Group are receiving are in line with the agreed objectives and much of the emerging policy thinking, it is fair to say there is still a low awareness/engagement in the development of the plan from the community. In part this is due to the size of the town – Clevedon is one of the bigger Neighbourhood Plan population areas. However, it may also be due to the lack of development in Clevedon identified in the West of England Joint Strategic Plan. The lack of evident pressure for development may be leading the public to believe that little will change in the town. This contrasts with other settlements (Yatton, Backwell, Nailsea) where there is a lively community debate on development. Frome Town Council's admirable Neighbourhood Plan (for a similar sized town to Clevedon) was clearly the result of energy and hard work but also had to consider how to accommodate housing growth leading to a 24% increase in the Town's population by 2020 (and consequent CIL monies).
6. Clevedon's Neighbourhood Plan can focus on criteria based policies for considering developments. These could be set in an overall policy framework arising from the Vision and addressing the issues. This would – even as they emerge – provide the Town Council and its Planning Committee with an additional resource to consider individual applications as they arise. In part, however, key criteria that might be included on things

like affordable housing and carbon reduction are already North Somerset policies that are not being applied. When combined with the failure of the authority to maintain a five year housing sites supply, all parts of the District are being subject to opportunistic development proposals focussed on profit rather than meeting needs through application of policy. We have seen this in Clevedon with a series of housing developments in recent years that don't meet need or existing policy. In terms of responses to the work of the Steering Group, unaffordable housing is clearly an issue the community is concerned about.

7. So, the Steering Group - in developing the Objectives approved by the Council – is concerned about how to increase awareness and engagement with the community. This is essential for the credibility of the plan and the confidence the public can have in the Town Council delivering it.
8. As policies emerge further and the public engages with them, the plan will inevitably become more formal in its processes. As that happens the community will need to see the authority of the Council behind the work and leading the process through to the referendum. Moreover, is clear from the Locality Development Officer's comments, that the role of the Town Council, as the qualifying body, will be key to external assessment of a Neighbourhood Plan. The Steering Group includes several councillors who have done valuable work in taking the plan forward and keeping its progress in front of the whole Council. However, the group believes that this needs to be further formalised into the work of the Council, particularly through its Planning Committee.

Conclusion:

- The Council's Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group continues to develop a policy direction for the plan. However, public awareness and engagement is insufficient at this stage.
- Funding from Locality and the Town Council should help change this in the period to March 2018
- Alongside this, more formal leadership from the Council's Planning Committee should give the plan more authority, balancing this with the views of the community secured through the Engagement Strategy

Recommendation:

The Council:

1. Agrees with the issues raised by the Steering Group in moving to the next stages of formalising a Neighbourhood Plan for Clevedon
2. Agrees to strengthen the Planning Committee's involvement in the plan by:
 - a. Explicitly considering all planning applications that come before it against the approved Vision and Objectives of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, recording these in committee decisions and developing these considerations as the plan emerges further through community engagement
 - b. Integrating the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group into the Planning Committee's work and leadership including having a common Chair
 - c. Reporting to the press/community progress on the Neighbourhood Plan and its relationship to contemporary planning decisions and representations by the Council.
 - d. Supervising the use of the budget allocated by the Town Council in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan
3. Asks the Steering Group (including the existing Councillors assigned to it) to continue to develop the plan within this stronger remit

Peter Templeton
Chair of Steering Group

APPENDIX: VISION & OBJECTIVES AS APPROVED BY COUNCIL, JUNE 2017

Vision:

- By 2036 Clevedon will be a thriving, prosperous, self-reliant town which provides for both its population and that of the rural hinterland, as well as a popular destination for visitors, shoppers and innovative business development.
- There will local, regional and national recognition of Clevedon's protected historic heart, cultural and environmental assets and coastal setting
- The town centre will become a thriving local retail, service and innovation centre fulfilling the needs of residents and the surrounding area, complemented by other established specialist shopping streets
- The employment base will have strengthened allowing more opportunities for residents to work locally and to maintain a sustainable demographic profile. Enterprise and innovation will have increased the number of higher value and worthwhile jobs particularly around cultural, digital and environmental industries. Increasing numbers of those who travel to work outside Clevedon will make the journey by public transport, cycle or shared car journey. Access by public transport within Clevedon and between the other towns will be improved.
- New housing will contribute to the community's sustainability by prioritising affordable housing, designed for life, meeting demographic needs and contributing to carbon reduction
- Clevedon will have increased its locally generated energy contribution through sensitive schemes within residential, community, business and agricultural premises

Plan Objectives (to be developed into policy areas):

1. 'Destination Clevedon':
 - a. Protect and enhance the character and heritage of the sea-front and coastal areas
 - b. Redevelop and transform the town centre to diversify uses, bring in more trade, improve the range of shops and businesses and reduce shop vacancies
 - c. Build on the cultural assets of the town (Cinema, Pier, Princes Hall, etc.)
 - d. Promote innovative enterprise for more good quality jobs in Clevedon
2. Secure and develop the educational, health/wellbeing assets and services of the town (including digital readiness) to maintain and increase self-reliance
3. Encourage housing that is affordable, sustainable and helps secure a viable population profile
4. Protect a network of open spaces and develop community and sports assets by:
 - a. Protecting and extending green corridors, bio-diversity, river management and developing public accessibility
 - b. Protecting and developing informal and formal open spaces including sports and recreation areas.
5. Improve movement within, to and from the town:
 - a. Improve public transport services to, from and within Clevedon
 - b. Manage traffic issues arising from surrounding developments
 - c. Make walking, cycling and public transport more practical and realistic than car use
6. Integrate climate change reduction into all new developments and promote energy generation on existing buildings and suitable land