

Ince Parish Council

Minutes of the Initial Meeting held at Ince Village Hall 11th June 2019

Residents Present: Andy Ankers, Barbara Ankers, Angela Bellion, Drew Bellis, Pam Bellis, Helen Brindle, R and R Chapman, Barbara Crawford, Andy Eardley, C.J. Gallagher, M Gallagher, Maureen Hassell, Ray Hassell, Kevin Hickson, Shelley Hickson, Chris Jackson, Alison Johnson, Sharon Kim, Tim Lloyd, A Lomax, Neil Pond, Paul Solari, Sheila Solari, Shirley Wilson, (25 residents)

Also Present: John Heselwood – Cheshire Community Action

Chris Jackson opened the meeting, thanking residents for attending, explained that Ince Parish Council were proposing to write a Neighbourhood Plan and the purpose of the meeting was to inform residents about what a Neighbourhood Plan involved. Chris introduced John Heselwood from Cheshire Community Action.

John informed the meeting that Cheshire Community Action is a not for profit organisation funded through grants and generated income. Since 2011 the organisation has supported rural communities in the Warrington and Cheshire area with Health and Well-being projects and offering advice on writing Neighbourhood plans. The organisation also has a working relationship with Cheshire West and Chester Planning department.

John explained that if the Parish Council decided to proceed with the Neighbourhood Plan, they would require the support of the residents and that the final plan, which is a legal document, would go to a village referendum before it could be agreed. He also explained the costs and that there are grants available to support this. He gave his presentation highlighting the following:

- A neighbourhood plan is a whole village plan; it is quite involved and is a legal document
- Set up a steering group with Terms of Reference responsible for writing the plan but use the expertise / contributions of residents where possible
- Have regular information meetings for residents during the process
- Cheshire West and Chester Council will use the Neighbourhood Plan when determining planning applications together with National Policy and Regulations and Cheshire's Local Plan
 - National Policy governs the whole of the country
 - Cheshire Local Plan governs local county level
 - Neighbourhood Plan is the local detail where communities have the right to set out their views under Localism Act of 2011
- **Resident's Question: How much weight would the plan have?** John explained that planning is a legal discipline and planning law frequently changes. By having a detailed Neighbourhood Plan it is more likely to influence local decisions. He advised that the plan should not duplicate/reflect the Local Plan but should identify specifically where and what housing / employment the local community would want, supported by evidence. The plan will be able to manage what comes, but not block all development

In order to be successful the plan should:

- Be produced and supported by the community
- Focus on land use and be aspirational for the community – the plan does not cover

- local issues such as transport etc
- In preparation should take note of Cheshire's Local Plan – they have a revised plan due out possibly in the autumn
- Set out any design requirements for building in the area
- Set out additional protection for green space and community buildings with reasons and evidence
- Include a Vision for Ince – John advised tying this to the same period as the Local plan ie. to 2030
- Set out objectives for the community / employment / heritage / protecting wildlife etc.
- Have detailed policies under each objective which should be specific, clear and robust to scrutiny and backed up with evidence. E.g. for wild life areas – detailed surveys of the area with evidence
 - the number of policies in the plan is for the community to decide, but the policies must be supported by evidence
- Detail what control of development is required ie. the mix of any future development could stipulate local affordable house
- Set out what is distinctive to Ince and what should be preserved and why
- Be thorough

John advised that communication with the community and local stakeholders is key as they will vote on the final plan. There are approximately 2,500 communities round the country producing plans. The average time to produce a plan is 3.5 years and the process includes:

- Submit a map and description of the area to the council – takes approximately 6 weeks
- Scope out the community issues to be addressed in the plan. This can be done through meetings, surveys, communications. Suggested putting local suggestion boxes in the pub, local venues, local groups etc.
- Build up the evidence. Consult the Local Plan to see what has been identified for this area
- Look at local greenspaces
- Look at protection of vistas and views – eg may want to protect a local field which communities use for events – fetes, winter sledging
- Use photographic evidence to support
- Once evidence is gathered – draw up initial draft plan and take it to the community and stakeholders for consultation and discussion.
- Include English Heritage / Local Conservation in consultation process who will comment on the policies
- Make all relevant agreed changes
- Final plan will be submitted to Cheshire West when an Independent Examiner is appointed – Parish Council will have the opportunity to interview and choose the Independent Examiner
- The Examiner will investigate the plan in connection with National and Local Plans, how it supports sustainability, local habitats affected etc.
- Process takes approximately 1 month and small amendments may be required. At this stage they are not normally rejected
- Once passed examination it will go to referendum with local residents. The

- referendum is organised by Cheshire West and Chester council.
- Steering Group should promote the plan and encourage the community to vote.

Residents asked the following questions

Q How often is the draft plan sent out?

Only at Regulation 14, but it is worth the Parish Council keeping the community updated for key points

Q How long will it take?

Depends on the complexity of the plan and what the Parish Council and community wish to achieve

Q Once the plan has passed the referendum is it set in stone, can we change it?

Ince Parish Council can review it and suggest changes if required. If National or Local Policy change, may want to update the plan. The Parish Council should be informed of all local planning applications and they can check how they sit with the Local Plan

Q How much will it cost and how much time will it take?

It depends on how detailed the plan is and what you want to include. Suggest using available skills of local residents – eg IT / Maps / Local knowledge / Communication / book keeping etc. The Chair of the Steering Group is crucial. The average time is equivalent to 1.6fte working for a year

Funding and support

There is £9,000 grant support through the government and CCA will support if requested. CCA will get Cheshire West to pay their fees in order to get Ince Plan up and running. The on-line application is done through the Parish Council. The funding has to be spent within the year it is applied for but the grant requests can be split and spread across financial years. IT support is available through ACOM who produce technical reports which can form part of the plan

Q Why should we bother?

Development is inevitable and a Neighbourhood Plan is the best way to influence it, it gives power and control to the community. It allows the residents to decide what will benefit the community. Plans can be used to fight appeals and if sites are allocated for development it enables the community to influence what is developed

Top Tips

- Take advice – look at existing good examples of plans
- Inform Cheshire West and Chester of our intentions
- Produce robust plans
- Make Policies clear, realistic, achievable and backed up with evidence
- Keep the community informed
- Make sure the focus is land use
- Use existing toolkits – Cheshire West's is a good one

Q Regarding designated greenbelt – can it be preserved?

The only way is through the Local Plan.

Peel have produced a plan to build on all areas – this is still sitting in Cheshire West

Greenbelt is the highest protection of land. A Rural Exception is the only way of breaking this which would be fore affordable housing but this would be difficult to get through.

Q Where is our greenbelt area? We want to hold on to what we've got and maintain agricultural land and heritage buildings.

A map will be sent out

Q Does it matter who owns the land?

Yes, you will need to engage with the landowner

Q How will the plan sit with Government ministers overturning planning applications?

Some win and cases can be taken to the High Court / Supreme Court

Q If a site has outline consent already, can we influence this with the plan?

It might be difficult to influence existing planning applications, it depends what is planned

Q If we obtain a grant, spend some of it then decide not to proceed with the plan, do we have to pay back what has been spent?

No you would only pay back any unspent grant

Q Do we have to have a separate bank account for the grant?

No the funding would go through the Parish Council bank account

It was agreed that this would now be taken back to the Parish Council for further discussion. A further letter would be sent out detailing how the Parish Council wish to proceed. If the decision is taken to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, a further meeting would be held to set up the Steering Group and agree the Terms of Reference. It would be included on the Parish website and it was suggested setting it up on Social Media.

Thanks to everyone for their attendance