

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton Disabled People's Forum

Tuesday, 25 March 2014

Present: Cllr. Larratt (Chair), Martin De Rosario (Co-chair), Christine Woodhams, Simon Burgess, Barbara Barber, Larry Barber, Graeme Wilson (NLT), Carl Weininger (British Polio Fellowship /Aerobility /Disabled Golf Society), Julie Gibson (NBC), Scott Gibson (NBC), Vicki Rockall (NBC), Alice Morgan (NBC*).

(*took minutes)

1. WELCOMES, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Matthew Torresen (NVC)

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Minutes were agreed as a true record.

Matters arising: Network Rail has sent there apologies for this meeting, but have confirmed that they will be attending the next meeting to discuss their feedback further.

3. REGENERATION IN THE TOWN - JULIE GIBSON (COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER), AND SCOTT GIBSON (URBAN DESIGN OFFICER), NBC

JG outlined different projects that are happening throughout the town, such as the Cultural Quarter and Project Angel. The aim, through these developments, is to give a strong branding and energy to the town. The Planning department work with a number of agencies and services, such as Northampton Association of the Blind and Centre for Independent Living, to ensure the needs of disabled people are taken into account through the planning process.

SG introduced his role of 'Urban Design Officer' – the role involves seeing how well projects work for the town, how different components come together and the effect they may have on the town. There is wide development happening in the town, especially in the enterprise zone and the relocation of the University of Northampton to the Riverside campus. By relocating the University, this will bring students into the town centre as well as their families who may visit. It is important to then look at how the infrastructure of the town will then support this, and how we can keep people in the town to work and live.

Bringing the elements of the town together is important, creating its own identity. We need to be clear what will attract people to the town to explore, stay and spend money. It was discussed that Northampton has an opportunity to do something different, through independent retail, history and diverse offers through the town.

A factor in working towards this is the advertising of the town. BB raised that in the past she recommended that we have a 'Welcome to Historic Northampton' sign on the motorway, but was told that this would distract drivers. It was asked why 'Billing Aquadrome' can have a sign if this is the case. SG explained that this would be down to Highways.

LB asked about the Battle Site near Delapre Abbey. JG and SG advised that an online consultation has been running about preserving the battle field and the conservation work to be done. This consultation has been well responded to. More work is to follow to preserve the heritage. The forum agreed that strengthening the connection between Delapre Abbey and the Town Centre would be beneficial. Cllr. Larratt also discussed the idea of opening up the railway.

LB queried why Nationwide are not moving to the Enterprise Zone. Another query was raised about the rolling out of Broadband across the County. JG and SG advised that these are not projects that they are leading on, but would follow this up after the meeting and provide a response to AM to distribute to the forum.

CW asked where plans are for the infrastructure of the town, raising that not having an inner and outer ring road means awful traffic, putting people off visiting. SG explained that although a ring road of sorts has been proposed, this is not to the scale that CW referred to. This is due to funding. JG added to this, explain that as we are not a unitary authority, the Borough Council has to negotiate with the County Council and Highways in projects such as this.

LB asked whether developers building housing in the Borough should be putting money into projects such as this. Section 106 money is a contribution from developers to cover any 'deficiency' in infrastructure and services where the development may be happening – all of which are negotiated on individual agreements. In addition, there can be a Community Infrastructure Levy. However, due to the economic climate, there is only so much that developers can contribute, and highways developments cost a lot of money.

Cllr. Larratt raised concerns over the lack of parking at the new University site. A discussion followed about parking difficulties in general. SG told the forum about the Urban Taskforce Report, where it is recommended that 1 ½ spaces are allocated per dwelling. This is to try and encourage less cars and more use of public transport. SB was particularly concerned over parking in Blackthorn – JG advised that Blackthorn Good Neighbours are making a neighbourhood plan. SB was advised to get involved with this, as they have the opportunity to make a real difference for the community there. When a planning application comes in for a development in a particular area, if there is a neighbourhood plan in place the planning department must ensure compliance with the neighbourhood plan as well as the local authority plan and central policy. There are also financial benefits to having a neighbourhood plan, where an allocation of the Community Infrastructure Levy would have to go towards the neighbourhood plan. MR advised that he is involved with Blackthorn Good Neighbours, and that he would follow this up with the

organisation for SB.

Cllr Larratt concluded that the three main priorities of the forum seem to be issues around infrastructure, parking standards and access to public transport. This feedback will be given to Steven Boyes, Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning at NBC.

The forum was advised that if they have any other questions or queries, please direct these to AM and she will pass on to the Planning Department.

4. PLANNING THE WORK OF THE FORUM - ACTION PLANNING

A copy of the action plan template and events calendar was circulated.

It was **AGREED** that the first action plan of the forum would be focused on increasing attendance, bringing different groups together to build upon the forum, and including service users as well as service providers. AM and VR told the forum that they are plugging the forum at every opportunity, and are working on a communications plan to increase attendance. MDR suggested that the forum be advertised on the Inspiration FM – VR advised that all communications and releases must go through the NBC Communications department. MDR also suggested that the forum links with the Roadmender who runs a meeting for disabled people – MDR to send AM and VR the dates.

GW told attendees about a forum he runs specifically around sport for disabled people, and shared his experience that it has been difficult to keep various disabled peoples group, who may be quite insular, to keep attending. GW agreed that having an action plan focusing on this and increasing attendance at this forum would be beneficial for the community. GW will contact AM and VR with the details of this forum.

5. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

- GW shared a number of items with the forum
 - o 16th April 2pm-5pm, relaunch of the multisport gym at Danes Camp – will send flyer to AM for distribution.
 - o Audit on inclusivity of the site at Danes Camp. Feedback was received from NAB and day care centres, as well as the NCC Shooting Stars group. Recommendations were made for improvements to the service for the future.
 - o Thursdays at Lings Forum – Disabled People’s Football, has been successful.
 - o Funding has been granted to the area, for para-football, racing wheelchairs, and adaptive boats, further improving provision.
 - o Weds 7th May, Women’s tour is starting in Northampton, which will see the top cyclists in the world coming to Northampton for stage one of the race.
 - o Susie Rees, who helped set up iDID Adventure, an adventure club for people with disabilities, won the Inspirational Women’s Award in

Northampton. GW suggested that Susie Rees receives an invite to attend the forum for the future.

- AM shared MT's information regarding the Credability Launch, supported by NVC. AM has arranged for Martin Austin, the Managing Director of Nimbus (the social enterprise which has launched the Credability scheme) to attend the next forum meeting in May to discuss the project launch and its progress.

6. ITEMS FOR NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

Items for discussion at the next meeting – Network Rail and Credability

Items for discussion at future meetings – it was **AGREED** that access to public transport would be added to the list of items for future discussion, and that the forum would invite NCC and bus companies to the forum in the future to discuss further.

7. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, 13th May from 17:30 in the Holding Room.

The meeting concluded at 7:00 pm