

Notes from Open meeting to discuss the possibility of creating a Community Plan

24th August 2011 at 7:30pm in the Village Hall

Attendees:

Geoff Parcell, Jenny Steadman, Ian Steadman, Adrian Carter, Elizabeth Carter, Sarah-louise Beasley, Sarah Fitzgerald, Peter Fitzgerald, Andrew Jenkins, Ian Keith, Terry Ellis, Audrey Snuggs, Philip Snuggs, Bruce Bower, Richard Getting, Jane Ashman, John Adams, Stella Parcell, Hazel Baker, Cliff Clark, Anne Clark, Brian Young, Tom Stenson, Peter Llewellyn

Apologies from:

Dick Capron, Rita Capron, Terry Farris, Jill Wilson, Jennifer Bower, Nicky Furmage, Shaun Furmage, Chris Worrall, Annie Harvey, Sharon Rossiter, Dinah Randall

Geoff Parcell introduced the topic. **Pen Selwood** is a great place to live and has a good feeling of community. Those living here are lucky to have what they have. Many have chosen to move here for what it is. Some have lived here most or all of their lives. There are also those who wish for something more. Communities everywhere change continuously and people have strong views on whether change is for the better or worse.

Some people have lived here for much more than 20 years, others have arrived more recently. Undoubtedly that leads to different points of views. The process of creating the Community plan can identify those different points of view and take us beyond anecdotes to provide some data.

More than 3000 communities have already produced Parish or Community Plans. The plan considers all aspects of local life including social, economic and environmental issues of concern to the community, much broader than the planning permissions that people perhaps are more familiar with. The plan lays out a shared vision for the community over the next 10 years+ and contains some actions to move towards that vision. These have generally been developed by voluntary community groups with support from the parish council.

The approach is about giving everyone a voice. It creates a shared vision for the community for all those living **and working** in Pen Selwood. It creates possibilities for the community rather than a list of issues for someone else to resolve.

Success is ending up with a common view of what the residents want their community to be, that everyone feels they have been listened to and that everyone can recognise their contribution in the plan. We will have identified a few realistic actions that can be taken by members of the community in collaboration with other partners to move towards their desired future.

The meeting was held to take a view on whether the community think a community plan is worth developing, and if so to identify some volunteers who are willing to put time and energy into making it happen. The first step is to create a steering group, and then put together a process to get to the plan. Typically a plan can take 12 - 15 months to complete and the process of getting there is as important as the final document. The process will likely include informal gatherings to allow parishioners to share their hopes and concerns, and volunteers walking round with a questionnaire to provide some data as evidence. more people will be involved to help develop actions on particular topics. Then some priorities and first actions can be identified, in collaboration with other organisations, to move towards what has been agreed.

There are **resources** available to help do this. A number of approaches and examples are available on the web. There are organisations that can guide us. Geoff is prepared to put his time in to delivering a plan which represents a shared vision for Pen Selwood. There are lots more skills and experience in the village which if combined can make a powerful resource.

What are the benefits? It can give us each a sense of where the community is headed, so that whatever changes occur, the community has the strengths to deal with issues. It will give an opportunity for everyone in the community to have a voice. It will provide a greater sense of

community and a sense that things are being done **by us, and for us, rather than to us**. It will provide a motivation to contribute to the journey, and a sense of engagement by being part of the process.

Looking out 10 plus years what is our vision for Pen Selwood, what do we want it to be? What are some of our Hopes and Concerns relating to Pen Selwood?

[This was an initial sharing of thoughts, *not refined and not agreed.*]

Hopes

- An integrated community
- A focus
- To end loneliness
- Volunteers running something together like a pub or shop
- Keep this rural country village as it is
- No kerbs, No streetlights, No street signs, No road widening
- Continued access to the countryside. Looking after this AONB, maintaining footpaths etc.
- Preserve the strength and breadth of community activity
- A place where people live and work, not just for holidays or weekends
- Maintain Wincanton as a hub town providing essential services for us such as pharmacy, Post Office, and bank
- Provide access to Wincanton (transport)

Concerns

- We may lose our church
- We don't know the constitution of the village (demographics, boundaries, Leigh Common)
- If we don't have a plan then we can't say what we don't want
- The fragility of what we have now. We cannot take it for granted. (For example if Stourhead Woods changed hands would we lose access to the countryside?)
- Road maintenance, gritting, safety, hedgerows
- The size of extensions is increasing the house size
- Don't want to be swamped by outside developments
- The national draft policy planning framework may weaken the strength of AONB

These are the sorts of issues that can be addressed in a Community Plan.

Keeley Rudd of the Community Council for Somerset, explained a 9 step process for developing the plan and shared experience from other communities. She answered questions from the attendees and left a copy of the Planning toolkit from ACRE [which is currently being revised] See a summary on the village website or ask Geoff Parcell for a look at the toolkit.

Attendees voted overwhelmingly for developing a Community plan and many volunteered to be on the steering group or to help with tasks.

The **next step** is to form a steering group. Ideally it is to comprise about 8 - 10 people from within the community, representing the variety of residents, the clubs, businesses, church, young, elderly, fit and infirm. It should be as inclusive as possible. The Community plan should be driven by volunteers rather than the Parish Council, but it is useful to have a couple of Parish councillors on the steering group since they will be expected to adopt the plan. The primary role of the steering group is to oversee, coordinate and lead the entire process, and have a desire to see the actions occur not just produce a report. The Open meeting was attended by the interested and was not totally representative of residents.