

COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY 12 JUNE 2018

FEEDBACK ON HCC / TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL'S BRIEFING EVENT

This event was originally planned for 1st March but was postponed due to the snowstorm experienced on that day.

It took place on 16th May.

Meeting Agenda

The exact nature of the meeting was focussed on a two table top discussions which were facilitated by HCC staff on specific topics (although, as a briefing event, it was unclear how the topics had been decided).

Following a brief introduction regarding the partnership aspirations of HCC in its work with Town and Parish Councils, each topic was introduced respectively with presentations as follows:

1. Place-shaping - the social aspect and sustaining healthy communities

- Presentation by HCC officers seeking to develop new and improved ways to deal effectively with demand management and prevention in supporting older and more vulnerable members of our communities

Then followed by a table top group discussion, seeking a response on the following:

- What are the opportunities to work more closely and effectively with PTCs to improve outcomes for local people?
- Are we sharing information about what's already being done effectively?
- Can we jointly signpost to support and resources more effectively?
- What role do PTCs want to play and what resources do we need to jointly consider?

2. Rights of Way and Access to the Countryside

- HCC officers will outline the existing powers of PTCs and also opportunities to develop the existing Community Engagement Ranger Programme orientated at meeting local objectives and priorities

Then followed by a table top group discussion, seeking a response on the following:

- Can PTCs use existing powers and resources to deliver local priorities more quickly and effectively?
- What are the resource implications PTC's foresee in getting local buy-in?
- Can the Community Engagement Ranger approach be expanded to help meet local aspirations and stimulate community participation and support?
- How might it be developed?

Finally, a standard plenary session allowed for feedback from each table with a promise of the presentations and feedback summaries being circulated to attendees in due course (I am not aware that anything, as yet, has been received from HCC in this regard).

Outcomes – see overleaf

Generally, the discussions were wide ranging in the group attended by Cllrs. Lucas and Goodwin. A number of issues were raised and comparisons made with other Parish Council Members on the table.

Notably, in respect of the first issue:

1. HCC is funding a new initiative in linking localised action with County wide developments in social care and support. (Cllr. Edward Heron is a key figure in this development). A focus appeared to be sharing information and enabling action for those at risk, vulnerable and in need
2. Key issues arising:
 - a. the communication between the County and local PC and T bodies – e.g. to contact the Council on issues, Town and Parish Councillors still have to use the public access mechanisms;
 - b. point made that there should be a dedicated network for communication – e.g. why not use some of the funding to establish the equivalent of an intranet system on which all Town and Parish Councillors were members and able to communicate directly with HCC officers etc;
 - c. also mentioned was the degree of ‘trust’ which needs to exist between HCC and Town and Parish Councils to work such a system (statement made that it almost feels as though the County does not exercise that ‘trust’;
 - d. How grant will be spent and who decides.

In respect of the second issue:

1. HCC initiative for Community Environment Rangers (as distinct from our Forest Rangers), working across the County on activity which supports the HCC Countryside Access Plan. This includes the award of grants to local communities via the Rural Community Fund which addresses inspections of access, signage, surface management (e.g. structure of pathways) and clearance. Grants are 50% funded typically between £1k to £8k value. The scheme also includes training workshops for local community groups in managing the areas covered and how to undertake projects.
2. Key issues arising:
 - a. how does this initiative fit with other activities such as the Lengthsman Scheme, PC inspections of paths and bridleways and liaison with other utilities on matters relating to access – e.g. Southern Water;
 - b. existing Parish and Town Council duties;
 - c. point was made that if grants were available why not use some funding to extend both the Lengthsman Scheme, which was universally supported on the group table and recognised as having genuine worth, and extend the ability of Town and Parish Council’s work on paths, footways and bridleways;
 - d. in the context of the above, the same issue was raised about communications and connectivity.

The meeting ended at 8.30 p.m. but officers / representative politicians from HCC remained in the room for some time to engage in one to one discussions.