COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
(PLANNING)

TUESDAY 9th FEBRUARY 2016

ITEM NO: 5 – AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A report prepared by Councillor Simon Lucas
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Purpose:
This paper sets out proposals / recommendations for the future operation of the Council's work programme on the Affordable Housing initiative. This includes recommendations for the lead in to, management of and recording of outcomes of the Open Forum on 16th March 2016. It also identifies a particular set of issues regarding our specific communications strategy for the Affordable Housing work programme.

Rationale and Nature of the Council's Work
There are a key set of drivers regarding the Council's work programme on the Affordable Housing initiative. They are:
1. We have identified and agreed a work programme with a defined set of activities leading to a final decision making process by the Council at a meeting yet to be arranged, but probably sometime in the late summer 2016. This commits us to a process;
2. We have not yet identified a Council Working Group to manage the detail within the work programme on behalf of the Council, creating materials which are needed and organising communications, all of which are required to ensure the work programme functions properly. This needs to be done as soon as possible (note that the Working Group should be small and work in coordination with the Council meetings to ensure the appropriate decision making);
3. We will need to create the Feedback Forms for use after the Open Forum – job for Working Group;
4. We will need to identify and liaise with the relevant person(s) who will be tasked by us with analysing the feedback outcomes and working with the designated group on creating the report to the Council – another job for the Working Group;
5. We need to agree as soon as possible how we intend operating the Open Forum to gain the most effective outcome and best results in the interests of the Community of Copythorne Parish, and finally;
6. We need to be clear about the role of the Council and its discussions in this next period of the work programme, leading to the report production.

Below, these matters are dealt with, starting with the Open Forum

Open Forum
There is no doubt that the management of the Open Forum is of critical importance to the success of this exercise / work programme – i.e. achieving a result which is fair, open and transparent.

Therefore, I propose the following for the management of the Open Forum – starting at 19.00 and closing at 21.00:
1. Timings are tight – we have two hours, so I suggest that time is allocated:

a. <u>15 minutes</u> – Chair to make welcome and introductions and very brief reminder (best if we use slides on a screen), of how we got to this point and the purpose of the meeting – being clear it is about questions and clarifications and not presentations. Housekeeping and way the meeting will be chaired, explained:
    i. no mobile phones and we request that attendees respect peoples' rights that no recording should be undertaken as we do not have their consent;
    ii. every questioner must use no more than 3 minutes, preferably less and respondees the same;
    iii. no supplementary questions from the same questioner, as our objective is to involve as many people as possible;
    iv. once someone has asked a question, they can't ask another, and
    v. Chair will stop people if they stray over the time limit – questioners and respondees alike

2. <u>30 minutes</u> (up to) - Using the collated pre-submitted questions, I believe that we will have around 6 but no more than 10 actual questions from all of them. I propose we put these on the screen and will have asked respondees in advance to prepare brief answers – allow 10 x 3 minutes.
3. <u>65 minutes</u> - Q and A session Open Forum. This equates to a further 11 questions if everyone uses the maximum time allowed – we should achieve more like 20 questions if people are brief.
4. <u>10 minutes</u> – closing remarks by Chair, slide with next steps and further prompting on the Feedback Form
5. Close at <u>21.00</u>

Council Meetings
The Parish Council is responsible for the management and conduct of this information and consultation work programme through to the receipt of the Feedback Outcomes Report.

As this is the case, it is clear that we should confine our discussions to that management activity, concentrating on ensuring we are achieving absolute clarity, transparency and achievability of the best possible outcomes. In this way we cannot be challenged on the process, which is one of the main areas where we can be challenged.

Therefore, I propose that during the period leading to the Report stage:
1. We concentrate our discussions on managing the process for the information and consultation exercise and do not undertake discussions in any form regarding the actual proposals themselves and how they may be shaping, and equally
2. We no longer accept questions in Council meetings from the public about the proposals themselves, but we will accept questions regarding the process and management of the consultation (if members of the public wish to ask more questions post the Open Forum, they should use the Feedback Forms available in hard copy and on the website).

I believe that this is crucial to a successful process.

Working Group for Managing the Affordable Housing Information and Consultation
There is a significant amount of detail to be worked out in respect of the process itself, the feedback process, the analysis and the oversight of the report drafting prior to review and final presentation to the Council.

Therefore, I propose that
A small Councillor Working Group is formed with immediate effect to undertake this role – comprising no more than 3 Members.

Communications
We will need to use both printed media (inc. Stanley's Own) and electronic media (website etc.), for our communication strategy. This is critical to our communications as of now, for the Affordable Housing initiative. Specifically, we are seeking to have an interactive feedback form for the website which can used by members of the public to make 'electronic submissions'. For print media, we should promote Stanley's Own as much as possible, as well as other 'hard copy' mechanisms although we need to be aware of the additional costs. Finally, we should seek to use electronic mailing lists available from other community groups, if they will allow us to do so.

The next phase of the information and consultation process into the potential provision of Affordable Housing in Copythorne will include the Open Forum meeting and the receipt of feedback / comments not only from that meeting but also from the exhibition. A considerable amount of information and feedback needs to be provided to residents and other interested parties via the Parish Council's website. To do so, we need to obtain an on-line feedback and comments facility. This would also greatly assist in our analysis of feedback and comments. Our existing web site cannot facilitate this as it is only a basic HTML website and thus, can't support the software needed to do this. It is far more efficient to use a database with the appropriate software to make our feedback and comment forms work properly. Therefore, using software especially written to do this type of work is the only option.

In discussions with TLC Online, who are our web supplier and maintenance advisers, they have recommended that to deliver an on-line feedback/comment facility software, such as 'WordPress', should be utilised. This will enable us to incorporate their recommended database, and analysis software. But to do so, we need a new website capable of supporting the software.

TLC have recommended that we create a new 'satellite website' for Affordable Housing that would be accessed via a link from the existing Copythorne Parish Council website, (with a link from the Affordable Housing 'satellite website' back to the Parish Council website). This new 'satellite website' would eventually be used when the rest of the Parish Council's website is revamped and is, thus, an investment. The new 'satellite website' would also be able to handle applications from smart phones and tablets, which our current one can't and therefore feedback can be received from mobile devices and via Facebook and Twitter, if necessary.

TLC have quoted a fee of £ 100.00 to undertake this piece of work, but maintaining the 'satellite website' would fall within our current, normal, maintenance fee.

Therefore, I propose that:
1. We provide Stanley's Own with a small display at the Open Forum to promote it with a view to raising circulation and agree the use of two rather than one page for our reports from now on. (Eventually we will have to increase payment for this, but not immediately and for only a modest amount).
2. We approve the creation of the 'satellite website' at a cost of £100 (deferred over a specified period) to enable us to use interactive feedback forms etc.
3. We contact the local groups with mailing lists requesting use of them to mail out our communications.

Simon Lucas – Feb 2016