

1. **Chairman’s opening remarks:**

2. **Attendance Register**

Present: David Casewell (Chair & Uppingham Town Council), Alec Crombie (Uppingham Town Council), Chris Merricks (Leighfield School), Margaret Simpson (Beeches Residents Association), Ron Simpson (Uppingham Town Council), Pat Taylor (Limes, Firs & Spurs Residents Association & Methodist Church), Howard Thompson (Limes, Firs & Spurs Residents Association), Christine Edwards (Uppingham Town Council), Phil Wignell, Richard Reeve (Uppingham Town Council), Pam Dalby (Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum), David Ainslie (Uppingham Town Council), Ryan Breslin (Uppingham School), Kath Gilbert (Uppingham Business Forum), Janet Thompson (Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum), Amanda Shaw (Uppingham Business Forum), Margaret Demaine, (Beeches Residents Association) Miranda Jones (The Uppingham Partnership) and Jane Lang (Uppingham Business Forum).

In the public gallery: David Demaine and David Sanders (Caldecott Parish Councillor)

3. **Apologies for Absence** – Sharon Aumais (Uppingham Town Partnership), Stephen Taylor (Uppingham School), Mark Shaw (Beeches Residents Association) and Edward Baines (Uppingham First) - these were noted.

4. **Declaration of Members Interests and Requests for Dispensation:** None.

5. **To confirm the minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee on 23rd January 2018.**

Resolution: Minutes recommended to be approved with the amendment replacing ‘Department’ for ‘Ministry’. Proposed by David Casewell, seconded by Miranda Jones, 15 in favour and 4 abstentions.

6. **Democratic 15 minutes – an opportunity for the public to speak.**

A statement was made by David Sanders seeking support and an opportunity for both Caldecott Parish Council and members of the Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan Committee to work together in relation to transport / traffic issues on the A6003.

7. **Consider any actions and next steps to email correspondence from Caldecott councillor, David Sanders in relation to a proposed by-pass for the village.**

Resolution: Proposed by David Casewell that the Neighbourhood Plan Committee help support Caldecott Parish Council, that this issue is added to the work to be done on the Neighbourhood Plan refresh and that 3 delegates support this work. (Ryan Breslin, Ron Simpson & Christine Edwards). Seconded by David Ainslie, unanimously agreed.

8. **Consider the recent correspondence and hear feedback from members of the committee about how they would like to contribute and participate in future meetings.** (See correspondence from Limes, Firs and Spurs Residents Association, Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum and The Beeches Residents Association). **Resolution:**

Proposed by David Casewell that committee has expressed a preference to work as a larger group whilst acknowledging that if circumstances require there may be a need to work in smaller groups. Additionally there is a need to help train and increase knowledge of participants to help improve individual contributions from a broad number of community groups. Seconded by David Ainslie and unanimously agreed.

9. **Consider a proposal that both the Chairman and the Vice Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee should be chosen annually by the members of that committee rather than by the Town Council. In light of the resolution passed at the Town Council on 7th March 2018 concerning Agenda item 15 this motion will include consideration of recalling the Town Council decision if necessary.**

The following statement was made by David Ainslie:

Mr Chairman, I intend to stand to speak to this item as I would prefer not to be spoken over or interrupted during my contribution.

National Planning Policy Guidance contains the following advice:

Where a parish or town council chooses to produce a neighbourhood plan it should work with other members of the community who are interested in, or affected by, the neighbourhood planning proposals to allow them to play an active role in preparing a neighbourhood plan.....

The relationship between any group and the formal functions of the town or parish council should be transparent to the wider public. A parish or town council may choose to establish an advisory committee or sub-committee under section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and appoint local people (who need not be parish councillors) to those bodies. Members of such committees or sub-committees would have voting rights under section 13(3), (4) (e) or (4) (h) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The terms of reference for a steering group or other body should be published and the minutes of meetings made available to the public.

The more representative the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group is of the local community, the better the plan is likely to be. To maintain progress it will be important to identify a Chairman or facilitator - through which all discussion is directed, someone to produce agendas and someone to take notes.

You will please note that there is no legal requirement for the chairman to be selected by the Town Council.

Uppingham's Neighbourhood Plan Committee comprises of approximately 20 members being drawn from the Town Council and various community and business groups. The Town Council element comprises of 5 nominated members and so accounts for approximately 25% of the committee. However, as things are currently structured this minority group has a monopoly on deciding who is to be the committee's chairman.

Three of the existing community groups have written to the Town Clerk and the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Planning Committee expressing their concerns that the Town Council (with its 25% minority membership) is exerting too much influence on the Neighbourhood Plan Committee with the resulting feeling by some community members that they are not being fully involved in the decision making process. Tangible examples of this include the idea muted to have smaller working groups rather than involve all members of the committee, plus of course, the factor of having the Council impose a Chairman.

I have been accused by some councillors of having a personal interest in this matter as I was previously the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee and was defeated from this position at last year's annual meeting. I will not deny that I was upset by this and felt that there was an element of personal betrayal involved by someone who I had thought of as a friend. However, as someone said in a letter to me at the time "Thank God we live in a democracy" a sentiment that I wholly agree with and so I have accepted the outcome of the vote. My concern is much more fundamental than any personal ambition and in order to avoid any muddying of the waters I will repeat here what I said at full Council, namely that I do not intend to offer myself as a candidate for the role of Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee.

The key issue for me is whether or not the Neighbourhood Plan Committee is truly being empowered to do its job as set out in the various legislation. Unfortunately the Council's response to date is far from encouraging. As I said earlier the three groups wrote asking for these issues to be aired at the Neighbourhood Plan Committee but in a total disregard for this sensible request the Council rushed to squash the debate by passing a motion at this month's council meeting maintaining the status quo of imposing its own chairman on the committee. Only four councillors voted against this being me, Christine Edwards, Mark Shaw and Ron Simpson. Even a request from me to defer this item until we had heard the views of this committee was rejected.

Now that the Council has made its resolution on this motion it normally cannot be challenged for six months. However, a committee does have the power to make the council reconsider the matter at the next council meeting if we pass a resolution recalling the council's earlier decision. I believe that we are at a crucial point for our refreshed Neighbourhood Plan and I am saddened that the excellent collaborative approach that saw us achieve our current Neighbourhood Plan (with a non-council chairman) has all but disappeared. Of course, even if this committee does recall the Council's decision there is no guarantee that the Council will listen to our concerns but that would be a matter for the council.

Finally, I want to emphasise that I am not criticising the current chairman nor am I saying that he is in anyway restricting debate. Indeed, it is with his support that this item has actually made it onto the agenda today. My objection is one of process, not personality. I want to see the Town Council embrace its obligations under the National Planning Policy Guidance and one tangible way would be for this committee to choose its own chairman and not have one imposed upon it.

Thank you.

Resolution: Proposed by David Ainslie that the Chair and Vice Chair both be elected by the Neighbourhood Plan Committee and in light of the resolution passed by Uppingham Town Council that the committee ask for this to be recalled. Seconded by Ron Simpson 14 in favour and 5 against.

10. **Neighbourhood Planning Champion Update.**

Ron Simpson provided a brief update to confirm that Locality will again be the source of grant funding for support with new and refreshed Neighbourhood Plans. A concern was aired by some following publication of the draft National Planning Policy Framework of the potential impact on Neighbourhood Plans.

The link for background reading and support on Neighbourhood Planning: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>

11. **Consider a response on behalf of the community to the publication of the draft National Planning Policy Framework. Resolution:**

Proposed by David Casewell that this be the single agenda item for a meeting in April so that a response can be submitted by 18th May 2018. Seconded by Christine Edwards and unanimously agreed.

12. **Consider an update on responses from community groups for items to consider in a revised Neighbourhood Plan;**

- a) Limes, Firs & Spurs Residents Association.
- b) Uppingham First's Uppingham Town Centre & Business Zones Plan.
- c) Others on the night

Action for Clerk – chase responses and add items received so far to the spreadsheet started at the January meeting.

13. **Clerk's Update to include consideration of the following items;**

- a) The response to a request for specialist advice from The Culshaw Partnership. *A debate pro/anti the report resulted regarding the recommendations offered.*
- b) The updated brief provided to Opun and timescale for a response. *These were noted.*
- c) Update from Rutland CC on the Local Plan. **Resolution:** Proposed by David Ainslie that the Clerk is asked to write to Rutland County Council to state that the community through the Neighbourhood Plan, wish to allocate sites. Seconded by Ron Simpson, 18 in favour and 1 abstention.

Meeting closed at 9.01 pm.