

Motion that the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Group involves the local community in its deliberations as it prepares a refreshed plan through the holding of a Community Launch Event.

The first Neighbourhood Plan was arrived at through much discussion with local interest groups, and by running surveys in the town with shoppers, visitors and businesses. The output from those groups was deliberated on, and formed into the first Neighbourhood Plan (NP), by representatives of each of the Community Groups who meet regularly.

That meeting was chaired successfully by Edward Baines, a member of Rutland County Council's Planning Committee, and a local business owner. He was able to provide useful input on the County Council's thinking, particularly on Planning, and was able to ensure that our objectives and outcomes aligned with those of the County Council where appropriate. Where the community had highlighted issues where the two plans would not align, Edward made us aware of it, and helped us to explain to RCC the reasons why we took a different approach. Therefore, the NP referenced Rutland County Council's then current Local Plan whilst being creative about how to meet the needs which had been established in the public consultations.

This process was time consuming, as we were starting with a blank sheet of paper. However it had the benefit of producing a great deal of qualitative information, which was used to inform the Neighbourhood Plan. I believe the reason why the residents of Uppingham overwhelmingly supported the plan at Referendum because it was their plan, and it reflected their views.

The Neighbourhood Plan subsequently came under the formal remit of the Town Council and the decision was taken by the Town Council to refresh it, as is required under planning guidance (*National Planning and Policy Framework*). Two formal reports have been commissioned from professional contractors, for which fees have been paid using the Town Council budget.

Whilst these reports make a useful contribution in linking Uppingham to the wider picture on Retail, the authors of the report do not appear to have interacted with members of the community during their research. Nor am I aware that any members of the Advisory Committee who are not Council Officers, or members of Community Groups have been asked to review the findings of these reports before formal submission. I am happy to be corrected on this by the Town Clerk and if that is the case I would be grateful if he would obtain from the Consultants a list of local groups, businesses and community members who have been consulted as part of the report drafting.

As a member of the original drafting group, I recognise that the first Plan included more qualitative (opinion) data and less quantitative (numerical) data. This approach followed the Guidance to consult with the Community. I assume that it is in an attempt to redress that balance that the Council's approach to the refresh has been to start to commission technical reports.

I believe it is important that the Advisory Group strikes a balance when considering the opinions of lay people and professionals. Professional input is important when building a robust case, but it should not be the prime driver of what our neighbourhood looks like in 2026. What the community says it wants, and believes it needs, may not be the same in 2019 as it was in 2015. I believe it is important to check back with them to ensure we are travelling in the right direction.

At the moment there are serious concerns held within the community that their voices are not being listened to. These concerns have been evidenced in writing to the Council. The latest decision by the Town Council not to agree to appoint the then committee's nominee Edward Baines as Chairman

(despite the Council not putting forward any alternative candidate) has widened the gulf of trust between the Council and members of the community.

An appropriate method of ensuring a balance of evidence available to the Group, when drawing up the forthcoming draft Plan, would be to consult further with the community and to consider the new information received alongside the professional reports.

It is important that the community's wishes are at the heart of the NP refresh process. I believe we can do this by ensuring that the first concrete step taken in starting that process is community consultation. A Community NP Launch Event should remind Uppingham residents of what was in the original plan, and seek their further input. Such an event should also seek feedback on the most appropriate form of governance, including what role the community wants the Town Council to play in the refresh, and how closely tied to Town Council procedure and control the group should be. I would envisage the source of nomination of a Chairman to form part of that governance discussion

A Community Launch Event must come before any formal announcement of the starting of the refresh process. Until such an event has been held (perhaps as early as February/March 2019), I believe it would not be appropriate to make any recommendations on formally notifying Rutland County Council that the refresh process has started.