

SOMERFORD KEYNES NDP NEWS

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

NDP stands for Neighbourhood Development Plan, but before you throw this in the bin, line the cat litter or set fire to the garden shed, please stay with us for a while longer, because this admittedly boring label could be of some considerable importance to our community.

Why? Because this is the way that we will be able to influence planning and development in our Parish for the next 25 years. The equally boring, but important, Localism Act 2011 gave Parish Councils, amongst others, the right to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) which states what each community would like to happen in their area. Once agreed, this is a legal document that must be taken into consideration whenever planning decisions are made in the future.

Didn't we just have a new Parish Plan, so why bother? Quite right, there was a new Parish Plan agreed in 2012, which set out an "action plan" of things we need to do in the Parish. However, the NDP has a different aim - it is to establish an agreed vision of our community in the future and, so, the kind of planning initiatives that we want to see.

WHAT IS IT TO DO WITH ME?

Everything! Whilst your Parish Council prepares the NDP, it is you, the community, who decides what goes into it. It must be the result of consultation, both at an early stage and when the ideas have been developed. Finally, unless it is approved by a referendum of the whole electorate of the Parish, it cannot be implemented.

This newsletter is an important part of keeping you in touch with what is happening.

SO WHAT HAPPENS?

A small team has been asked by the Parish Council to take the lead in preparing the NDP. The members are Cllrs Sarah Powell and Ron Munroe, and John Sweet, who led on the Parish Plan.

This process of consultation, revision and discussion will go on for the next few months at times to be well-publicised. If all goes well, we hope that the referendum will be timed to coincide with the General Election next May, so that it will be as easy as possible for people to vote on the NDP, at the same time that they are voting in the elections.

THE AREA OF THE NDP

The first stage in preparing the NDP is to identify the area that it covers. The Parish Council decided that it should follow the boundary of the Parish, which seems the most sensible choice. Following the recent review of parish boundaries, the Parish has recently been enlarged. With agreement with our neighbours in Poole Keynes, the Parish will include, from April 2015, Neigh Bridge and Lake 63, just on the other side of the Spine Road. This small change is included in the area covered by the NDP.

The Parish embraces four identifiable communities - Somerford Keynes, Shorncote, Four Acres and Lower Mill Estate. Each of these has its own characteristics and issues, which have to be covered in the NDP.

THE PROPOSED VISION FOR OUR PARISH

As a start point, we wanted to identify the overall way in which we thought the community would wish to see future development. We are suggesting the following as the overall intention of the NDP:-

"To maintain and enhance a vibrant community which is an attractive location to live, work and visit."

We want to know if that makes sense to you. If not, how would you like to see it change?

THE FOCUS FOR CHANGE

Whilst the NDP and the Parish Plan have different purposes, a great deal of the work in developing the Parish Plan is helping us to identify the issues for attention in the future. We have organised our thinking around six areas of interest. For each of them, we have agreed an aim and objectives, which will be the primary focus for the first round of consultation meetings in July.

The six areas and their main aims are:-

- **Amenity** - To maintain the current amenities of the Parish, develop and add to them to meet the needs of the community now and in the future.
- **Conservation** - To conserve and enhance rural settings, buildings and countryside of the parish.
- **Economy** - To make the parish an attractive place to work and a sustainable place from which residents can go to work.
- **Environment** - To adapt, enhance, maintain and protect the environment to improve the sustainability of all the settlements.
- **Housing** - To improve the demographic balance and, thereby, the continuing viability of the community by the appropriate development of housing.
- **Infrastructure** - To build on the existing infrastructure for the improvement of safety, work opportunities and communications within and between the communities of the Parish and beyond.

CONSULTATION DATES

The first round of consultation meetings will take place during the second half of July. Specifically, they are:-

- Thursday 17th July, in the Village Hall, 7:30-9:00pm
- Saturday 19th July, in the Village Hall, 10:00am-12:00noon
- Thursday 24th July, in the Village Hall, 10:00am-12:00noon (at the Church coffee morning)

These meetings will concentrate on the above vision and aims, as well as introducing some early thinking on the ways in which they may be achieved.

There will be further meetings scheduled later in the planning process to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to be informed of progress and to make comments. In addition, you are welcome to contact any of the NDP team. Be assured that all comments will be taken into account as we go forward with the Plan.

Continuous updates can be found on the village website - www.somerfordkeynes.org.uk

The NDP team can be contacted at the e-mail address - ndp@somerfordkeynes.org.uk, or via the Parish Council Clerk, Muriel Watkins (01285 861614, skpc@waterford.plus.com).

We look forward to meeting you during the consultation process.

The NDP team.