

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP Notes of the Meeting held on Monday 3rd March 2025 at 7.00pm at The Wick Community Centre
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Present: Cllr Alan Ball, Lynne Brooker (Secretary), Cllr Eunice Brockman, Henry Buckeldee, Jane Cresswell, Geoff Cllr Derek Harrison, Geoff Jenkins, Cllr Stuart Mott (Acting Chair), Cllr John Speller, Andreea Spineanu and Chris Wyle .

Nicky Joshua, Community Engagement Officer, Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)

Apologies: Cllr Kim Oakes, Cllr Steve Oakes and Linsey Woolridge

Resignations: Gerald Douse (Chairman), Cllr Louise Gann and Janet Nelson

For the new member of the group Nicky Joshua gave a brief overview of the parameters of producing a Neighbourhood plan; what it is and steps needed to be done to satisfy currently regulations

1. Minutes of the last meeting held on 27th November 2024 agreed as a correct record. It was noted that with the time lapse and subsequent resignations majority of the actions points were not undertaken.
2. A lengthy discussion took place on whether this Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group should continue, is it achievable, is it worthwhile!. Do we want to stop, continue or pause because we are losing people and not gaining enough support from the public. This is mainly because it is a very lengthy process and by the time it comes into effect, it will be too late to have any impact on a lot of the housing schemes already passed. It was agreed to continue for the time being with Cllr Stuart Mott stepping up as Acting Chair. At the next meeting a new Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer need to be appointed. A discussion centred around whether these roles need to be members of the public or Officers of Wickford Town Council. A mix of both would be the best balance which helps with information which is known to the Town Council but not to the general public. The group so far have found this to be a hindrance.
3. Finances: Cllr Kim Oakes, due to other commitments tendered here resignation from the role of Treasurer. Nicky Joshua noted that any money from the Locality grant that is not spent by 31st March 2025 must be returned. This is then kept in a "pot" until such a time as we are ready to proceed with the next steps i.e. design code, consultation. Town Clerk to ensure this money is returned.
4. Lynne Brooker raised the subject of admin support, previously stated that the Town Clerk is too busy to minute these groups and they are supposed to be resident lead. However that is not the case now, tenants have to be involved but can be lead via Town Councillors also Wickford Town Council are advertising for a part time administrator so could this be looked at again? It is hard to expect people to use their own resources, paper, printers etc to provide paperwork for the meetings. Also paperwork needs to be filed in a central location for when the project is presented by Wickford Town Council for adoption so makes sense to be kept in the Town Centre offices.
5. Neighbourhood plan: the meeting spoke about starting on one area and working out from that i.e. start with the Town Centre, then appendix The Wick, Nevedon etc. A design code could be requested to identify the town style, so going forward it states no building over say

4 floors, re specify the shutter and signage (Basildon Council have rules about this but are rarely enforced), window size and materials used etc. Could also look at riverways, parks, play areas. Wickford been called “hotchpotch” of dwellings because so many different designs in different areas. A design code can tease out what is right for the area. The Design Code can be short of long, depends on how many policies are wanted.

6. The plan should also identify historical buildings, areas of interest, community assets. So those not falling within the listed building category but with interest to the history of Wickford.
7. Need to carry out more surveys to see what is important to local people which should be included in the plan – not areas covered by Basildon/Essex ie potholes, unsociable behaviour and so on. There are the original survey/boards with feedback which will form part of the submission document need to ensure more people are aware of the Neighbourhood plan and contribute feedback or even get involved with the group.
8. Facebook page not set up because of possible legalities. Agreed for the time being that information to be produced and published on the Wickford Town Facebook page and members of this group will then share that post to other Facebook groups. Could do another leaflet drop but only received 20 + responses from last years one.
9. Agreed to contact those people who have left the group to see if they are interested in re-joining. Identify groups to contact for surveys/comments on the direction/what to be included in the Neighbourhood plan

Actions:

- A) SM to produce a blog for WTC website section on the NP. agreed upon at previous meeting.
- B) SM to liaise with JS on sharing the blog on social media. TC to confirm happy to share the blog on the TC Facebook page.
- C) Enquire with TC Clerk on finances and return of any unspent funds to locality.
- D) Next meeting agenda 1) election chair, 2) election vice chair, 3) finance officer and 4) other roles, 5) discuss any group ideas
- E) SM to set up a poll for next meeting date to be circulated. 6 options: 2, 14, 16. 7pm or 7:30pm. Next meeting to be held at WTC Office.
- F) LB will email leavers from NP project to ask if they want to re-join.