

The Neighbourhood Plan Development Group last met on Thursday 30th August. The meeting followed a period of relative silence, in terms of news, though not inactivity.

Compiling the Evidence Base

South Somerset District Council has been particularly helpful in furnishing the group with much of the documentation requested for the Neighbourhood Plan's evidence base, whilst volunteers on the group shared their own findings on key themes, such as transport and infrastructure. Individuals have been identified to lead on analysing the evidence supporting each of our key themes and begin to draw some initial conclusions and recommendations, upon which further community engagement activity can be based.

Administrative Support

Scott Waldie has kindly offered to undertake the tasks, set out within the person specification for the Administration Support Officer role, on a voluntary basis, which was welcomed by the group. The group expressed their thanks to Davina, who had been supporting the group to date and will continue to do so, albeit on some of the more strategic tasks. It was agreed that Scott will commence in post as soon as he is able and, all being well before the next meeting in September. The role would be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the Neighbourhood Planning process.

Consultancy Support

The work to appoint a consultant has stalled somewhat over the summer period but has been picked up again in recent weeks. The immediate priority is to agree the final specification for a consultant and ensure that the Neighbourhood Planning process remains driven and owned by the group, despite the very apparent need for technical support and a dedicated resource to progress key activities.

Community Engagement

The Neighbourhood Plan was represented at the Community Drive during this year's Ilminster Midsummer Experience, in June. A number of individuals expressed an interest in engaging with the Neighbourhood Planning process and have been invited to join a future meeting. It was agreed that the Ilminster Press free paper and some social media platforms would be used to keep the community updated on progress and opportunities to engage.

Chairmanship

Natalie Wainwright expressed her disappointment at not being able to give more time to the Neighbourhood Planning process, having taken on the role of Chair, on an interim basis, back in February. Due to a number of other commitments, the group would welcome conversations with any individual interested in taking on this role. A document, outlining the main roles and responsibilities, will be produced to support the search for Natalie's successor.

Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is confirmed as 27th September 2018, from 19:00 at the Council Chamber. Should anyone wish to attend, but find access to the building difficult, please contact Davina in the first instance, in order that an alternative accessible venue can be found.

The focus of the meeting will be on further shaping the vision statements for each of the themes.