

# **CALNE COMMUNITY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

## **Introduction**

1. As a consequence of the Localism Act 2011, town and parish councils, nationally, were given powers to decide the fate of a raft of local issues; housing development, education, medical, commercial, transportation, tourism to name just a few. The result of the Act has meant that communities are now able to decide local issues at the local level via the means of a Neighbourhood Plan; it is key to getting local people to take responsibility for issues that affect them and their neighbourhood. Because of the close proximity and interdependence of their communities, Calne Town Council and Calne Without Parish Council have agreed to join forces in producing a mutually beneficial neighbourhood plan. This process is to be called the Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan (CCNP) and is currently underway, and is being led by the CCNP Steering Committee.

2. The most critical aspect of producing a neighbourhood plan is the requirement for the steering committee to have conducted a full and transparent engagement with their local community at every stage of the project. This action would ensure communicating the merits and benefits of a neighbourhood plan to the community, encouraging community ownership of the neighbourhood plan, and receiving feedback from the community about issues that they wish embodied into the neighbourhood plan. Ultimately of course, the finalised neighbourhood plan would need to be accepted by the community via a referendum. To fulfil these requirements, the CCNP needs a Community Engagement Plan (CEP). This document provides an outline proposal for a CEP.

## **Aim**

3. The aim of this paper is to present a structured outline of how the CCNP Steering Committee will communicate the requirement for a neighbourhood plan, ensure the community is made aware of progress in the formulation of the neighbourhood plan and ensure maximum participation by the community in the development of the neighbourhood plan.

## **Key Messages**

4. There are two key messages that need to be disseminated with remorseless repetition. The first is the need for public engagement with the CCNP Steering Committee because it remains a fundamental issue that without their involvement we will be unable to construct and deliver a proper neighbourhood plan. Secondly, and probably more importantly, is to drive home the absolute importance that the public need to buy into the neighbourhood plan and own it as their project; the CCNP Steering Committee is purely the conduit for developing and delivering the neighbourhood plan.

## **Stakeholders**

5. The following is a list of the stakeholders that have an interest in the development of the CCNP:

- Wiltshire Council.
- Calne Town Council.
- Calne Without Parish Council.
- Porte Marsh Working Group.
- Calne Area Transport Board.
- Calne Area Board.
- Calne: Our Place.
- Primary and Secondary Schools.
- Medical and Dental institutions.
- Renewable Energy Steering Group.
- Culture & Tourism Working Group.

## **Principles**

6. The underlying principle of this CEP is that it should be relentless in pushing the relevant messages at the community. Anyone shopping in Calne should face a barrage of information stressing the need for their participation in the development of the CCNP and would be kept informed of progress. Put simply, we must inform the community on the need for a neighbourhood plan, consult them for their views on what they think will best service their needs and encourage people to get involved at every step of the way. Further, we must emphasis ownership of the CCNP by the community. Only in this way will we manage to encourage increased participation by the community. An analogy would be the oft deployed First World War recruiting poster of the image of General Kitchener pointing out into the masses demanding that “the nation needs you”. In similar fashion we need the Calne and Calne Without communities to engage with the CCNP. To do this, we need to be relentless in engaging with them and take every opportunity to kill apathy. The constant and unrelenting message must be to exhort people to engage with us at CCNP and the importance that they take ownership of the plan. This CEP should run concurrently with all other CCNP Steering Committee activities.

## **Engagement Activities**

7. Overview. The following activities provide the best means of engaging with the community. It is not exhaustive but represents an acceptable starting point for that process. At the heart of the process is the need to track the progress of these efforts via means of a Public Engagement Matrix. The matrix records all engagement activities on a monthly basis. It should also record the effectiveness of that engagement process. This would, in turn, allow us to shift the emphasis to those activities that provide the best results.

8. Public Meetings/Briefings. As an initiator, the CCNP should hold a public meeting in the Town Hall. This meeting would inform the community of the reasons for a neighbourhood plan, our progress to date, future milestones in the development

of the project, and the urgent need for community participation and ownership of the CCNP. It should stress the need for openness, clarity and transparency throughout the entire process. These events should take place every 4 months, following the initial meeting, in order to encourage community engagement and feedback, and to report back on progress to date.

9. Leaflets/Questionnaires. From the outset, there will be a need for provision of a relevant leaflet outlining the principles of a neighbourhood plan including the ever important requirement for public participation throughout the entire project. As a means to garnering information on what the community wants, suitably couched questionnaires would need to be circulated for each of the relevant topics – transport, housing, education, etc.

10. Surgeries. Surgeries could be conducted at town events throughout the year. We should provide a CCNP gazebo with a suitable banner at every town event. Members of the CCNP Steering Committee must make an effort to help at these surgeries so as to engage with the public in attendance. Such an environment would provide us with the best way to engage, face-to-face, with the community to explain the principles behind the CCNP. It would also offer us the ideal opportunity to harvest the contact details of members of the community so that we could then keep them informed of progress and to issue relevant questionnaires when needed.

11. Candy Boards. So called because of the colourful, if not garish, way that information is presented. They are simple, self-standing, blackboard type A-boards, 4ft x 3ft, with information depicting the next location, date and timing of future briefings about CCNP progress or other issues of importance to the community. These would be located at strategic points around the town or villages for each day of the week preceding the publicised event. Town Council vehicles could also be utilised to display this information as a support to this type of community engagement.

12. Community Information Outlets. We should utilise the inside front page of every issue of *Calne Connect* to extoll the virtues of CCNP and report on progress as the project develops. We should expedite use of the *CCNP website* to bring the public up to date on progress so far with the CCNP and encourage people to engage with us at every surgery during Town events. In similar fashion, we should use *Shoutout Calne* and the *My Envolve website* as well as *Facebook* and other appropriate *social media sites* to promulgate our messages and statements of progress. Consideration should be made to using *blogging posts* and *podcasts* to spread information about the CCNP. We must take every opportunity to harvest a *database* of contact details, including *email addresses*, of the community and then continue to add to it as the need evolves. This would provide us with additional ways in which to reach out to our community to keep them involved in the process.

13. Wheelbarrow/Flatbeds. The wheelbarrow is exactly that. We would take a number of large wheelbarrows and position on them a blackboard A-frame. They could then be placed at suitably strategic locations in the Town, in village halls or outside the village shop. They could be located at village fetes or Town events that don't warrant the need for a gazebo. Unlike the candy boards however, the information placed on the wheelbarrow would be directly related to progress on the

CCNP and details of future developments with the plan. We could extend this principle to the use of a large A-frame, with the relevant information, placed on the back of a Town Council vehicle during a suitable Town event.

14. Gazette & Herald. Last, but by no means least, would be to get the Gazette & Herald engaged with the CCNP. Press Releases and update briefings should be conducted by Council officers and The Chair of the CCNP to keep the local readership abreast of developments with the CCNP.

### **Conclusion**

15. In conclusion then, the CCNP Steering Committee now needs to launch a community engagement plan to disseminate progress, thus far, with the neighbourhood plan, get the community to buy into the project and ultimately take ownership of it. Without the involvement of the community we will be unable to produce a meaningful neighbourhood plan that will stand up to the intense scrutiny of the examiner at the final hurdle.

16. We must now take consultation and engagement out into the community. This can be done, in the first instance, by Town Hall briefings and then updates every 4 months. Of enormous importance is that we establish a footfall at every major Town event by the presence of a CCNP gazebo through which we can meet and engage with those attending. We should utilise leaflets and questionnaires to engage the public imagination and meet with them at surgeries during Town events and village fetes. Candy boards and wheelbarrow devices should be deployed to convey appropriate messages to the community prior to main CCNP events, at Town events that do not warrant use of the gazebo and at village fetes. We should take every opportunity to use online and social media outlets, town and village newsletters, and of course the Gazette & Herald to get our messages out into the public domain.

17. To better control and co-ordinate progress of the CCNP CEP will require the help of a suitable community engagement matrix.

18. Lastly, there is an urgent requirement to engage with the public regarding the content of the CCNP and to encourage their ownership of the project. This paper offers several proposals that could be utilised to start that engagement process and provide for the life of the project. The CCNP Steering Committee is encouraged to accept these proposals and put them into effect as soon as possible.