The *Prospective* Norwich Over the Wensum Neighbourhood Forum

Minutes of general meeting held via Zoom at 4pm on Saturday 19th February 2022

Attendance and confirmation of membership of those present

Members: Judith Ford (Chair), Simeon Jackson (Secretary), Stacey Wilson (Vice-Chair), Carrie Sant, Jemima Jackson, Evan Hancock, Frances Cooper, Nicholas Jackson, Pamela Gardener, Therese Bennett, Marta Soffker, Hugh McGlyn, William (?), Lisa Nunn, Paul Nunn.

Supporters: Pipa Clements

Apologies (including both members and supporters): Owen Jenkins, Gill Scobie

Minutes of the meeting of 18th : Approved

1. Update on consultation for designation of the forum by the council

An application was made to the council for designation as a neighbourhood forum on the 17th December. After clarifications with the council, including having to redo our survey about membership demographics, the application was finally published for consultation on Friday 11th February. The consultation lasts for six weeks, closing on the 25th March. The council must make a decision within 13 weeks of publishing the application (which would be 13th May).

The decision is only to determine whether the forum meets the criteria for neighbourhood forums, such as having enough members who come from a cross-section of the community that makes up the neighbourhood, and having a constitution suitable for such an organisation.

Members of the forum are very welcome to put in comments (preferably of support!) to the consultation. Go to norwich.gov.uk/consultations and click on 'Proposed designation of Norwich Over the Wensum Neighbourhood Forum'.

2. Update on community engagement and outreach

We're currently planning various engagement activities, with the aim of getting the local community's answers to three basic questions about *the neighbourhood area*:

- *What do you like?*
- *What don't you like?*
- *What could be improved?*

This will be through a variety of methods. The administrative committee are looking to do:

- planned engagement through outreach cafe event
- postcards with the three questions to all residents
- clip boards in Anglia square
- visiting shops "Informing and empowering" them.

We also considered the possibility of a notice board on St Augustine's church boundary and other locations within the area.

3. Update on grant funding

Till now we have been working without grant funding. I would like to say thanks to all who have offered their time, monies and/or in-kind support which has helped us get to where we are today.

Our current position

We have very recently been awarded a grant, offered to developing Forums, funded by the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

This grant is of a maximum £1,876.00 and our award is specifically for the purposes of Community Outreach activities, covering the printing costs and room hire, Public Liability insurance which will allow us to undertake group events such as walkabouts, to hire venues and also funding for the development of an improved Norwich Over The Wensum Forum website.

Given our current undesignated status we require an accountable body to hold these funds. Community Action Norfolk have agreed to undertake this function, holding these monies on our behalf. Their charges of £100.00 for this service are covered within this grant.

Spending will need to occur before end of this March, be as set out in our application and we will be required to report shortly thereafter.

The Future.

If following the current consultation we become a designated forum we will be able to apply for funding that will enable us to develop a neighbourhood plan. The future funding stream has yet to be announced and the update on this is expected from Locality in the near future.

In the meantime, with the technical support Locality offer us as a Forum, we will be considering our future financial structure, assessing community group bank accounts with a view to being able to hold funds as an organisation.

We would welcome members or supporters with skills that would help the forum with any financial matters to please let us know.

4. Approval of Terms of Reference for the Administrative Committee

Legally, the forum membership must remain the decision-making body of forum, and therefore we can only delegate administrative tasks to this smaller group, the committee cannot make decisions about planning issues. The administrative committee will do things like organising meetings and other events, liaising with consultants and other organisations, and producing promotional material such as leaflets and a website. See the draft terms of reference for more detail.

- There was a question regarding the third point of the objectives "to help prepare an evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan. It was clarified that the committee is to help the forum in developing an evidence base. This has been amended in the final version to read "To help NOW NF prepare an evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan".

A further amendment was made in relation to delegated responsibility for spending funds so that that clause now reads "The NOW Neighbourhood Forum will delegate to the Administrative Committee the responsibility to spend funds in line with the forum's budget to undertake community engagement, publicity, liaison and communication functions. The Forum solely retains responsibility for setting budgets."

A motion was proposed by Hugh McGlyn and seconded by Marta S to adopt the terms of reference as amended. This was unanimously agreed.

5. Administrative committee membership

The current administrative committee outlined that two members of the committee had had to step down. It was observed that the administrative committee would be able to carry out its secretariat function more effectively with a few more volunteers, and therefore we would welcome more people to step forward.

Therese Bennett volunteered to join the administrative committee. Other members interested in volunteering should contact info@norwichoverthewensum.org.uk.

6. The role of the forum in relation to the Anglia Square development

It was highlighted that the plans for Anglia Square, which we know is of significant interest to many forum members, are progressing fast.

So far, the administrative committee has been taking the approach of making sure that forum members and those signed up to our mailing list are kept informed of Anglia Square consultation events and what stage the plans are at, and encouraging members to form their own view and submit their own comments. When members of the administrative committee talk to the developers, the council, or other organisations about the scheme, they have been making it clear that any views expressed on the proposals are their personal opinions, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the forum membership as a whole.

While there are alternative approaches that could be taken, such as carrying out a survey of our members so that we can get an indicative view of the forum as a whole, this would take considerable time and effort to administer, at a time when the administrative committee already has its work cut out with other work. Therefore such an approach would only be possible with significant additional volunteer capacity.

In discussion, it was also raised that it would be difficult to arrive at complete agreement over any proposed development because individuals affected have very different views.

It was also raised that, given the approach of the current developers, there will be further engagement sessions during the coming months that residents can respond to.

We do not have the capacity to carry out a comprehensive survey of the membership's views on Anglia Square. Even within our administrative committee there is not a single unified view on the proposals, and the likelihood of coming to a clear conclusion in a short enough time-frame to influence the outcome of the application as a group are slim. Therefore we (the administrative committee) suggest that we continue to take the current approach.

Recommendation: to continue with our current approach of informing and empowering members, but not taking a view on the Anglia Square proposals as a forum. This was agreed.

7. Next steps – Priorities of the forum

Priorities raised: Mix of housing types and tenures. Reviewing what development is going on in the area. Sustainability – good energy efficient new build and facilitating retrofitting. Protecting green spaces (even the little left-over spaces) and access to public spaces. Following up on the development of Anglia Square. Liveability of the place, happiness and health. Creation of community. Performance, workshop and market space.

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It was raised that perhaps we should invite a speaker or someone to talk to spark discussion at a future meeting. It might be best for this to be a separate activity to our business meetings, since it might not be of interest to everyone.