

Maidenhead Neighbourhood Forum

Minutes / Action Points of the meeting held on 8th January 2020

at United Reformed Church, West Street, Maidenhead.

In attendance: Cllr Simon Bond, Sarah Bowden (via Skype), Richard Davenport, Bob Dulson, Mark Fessey, Andrew Ingram, Mick Jarvis, Martin McNamee, James Muir, Judith Littlewood, Derek Roberts, Ian Rose, Matthew Shaw, Derek Wilson, Andy Woodcock.

Observer: Grant Glovin – student from University of Harvard

Apologies: Ann Beauchamp, Bob Beauchamp, Rachel Cook, David Dyer

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members and Grant Glovin, a student from Harvard, researching the differences between Neighbourhood Forums in the UK and Local Community planning groups in the USA.

Minutes of last meeting and matters arising:

Minutes of the meeting held on 04 December 2019 were accepted.

Matters Arising:

No matters arising to report

Post meeting note: I have been asked to clarify the terminology for the Climate Emergency activity within the RBWM area.

The 'Climate Emergency Stakeholder Workshops' organised by Cllr Stimson are on behalf of the RBWM 'Climate Change Cross Party Working Group' - a Council body.

The RBWM CEC (Climate Emergency Coalition) is one of the stakeholder attendees, alongside the MNF. The RBWM CEC (often shortened to CEC) is a non-partisan group of volunteers who are calling upon individual residents, local groups and businesses, and the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Council to work together to address the Environment and Climate Emergency.

Report from Management Committee

The Chair reported on the activities of the Management Committee since the last meeting. Main activities being as follows:

Borough Local Plan Submitted Version – Proposed Changes (BLPSV-PC)

The Chair informed the meeting that following the discussion at the meeting on 4th December and subsequent Management Committee meeting, MNF has submitted comments on the BLPSV-PC prior to the consultation closing on 15/12/19. So far, no submissions have been uploaded to view on the RBWM website.

Maidenhead Neighbourhood Forum Consultation

RBWM launched the public consultation on 24th November, this covered two elements:

- the proposed Neighbourhood Plan Area

- the Neighbourhood Forum itself.

An update on the activities of MNF since the original application for designation was submitted by the Chair on behalf of the Forum prior to the closing date of 06 Jan 2020.

Several other organisations and individuals have made representations in response to the consultation; however no information has been posted on the RBWM website.

It is understood that there are several forthcoming Council Meetings at which a decision concerning the MNF designation could be made, so far there has been no indication as to which meeting a decision will be made.

To meet the obligations under the regulations RBWM is required to make a decision by 24 Feb 2020 at the latest.

It was suggested by some members that by monitoring the papers for the council meetings it should be possible to identify when the designation will be discussed, as the papers are prepared 1 week before the meeting and are available on the RBWM website.

The Management Committee has some concerns over the designation process arising from an email sent by one of the officers, which suggested that the membership of the Forum is not fully representative of the wider community. It was felt that this does not represent the true position, as over the months since the application was submitted, membership and interest in the work of the Forum has grown. It is recognised however that not all sections of the community will join in the activities of the Forum. The Forum remains open to all eligible members of the community.

There was some discussion as to whether MNF should be actively lobbying councillors to ensure that a positive picture was portrayed prior to the discussion in the cabinet. On balance it was felt that we should wait until we know what the Officers recommendation is before any commencing any lobbying activity.

Community Engagement

The Chair reported that MNF now has 56 members (the minimum required being 21), and between 500-600 followers. From recent Facebook postings the level of interest (measured as people who read and respond to MNF postings), has increased from around a 1000 to over 13000 people, representing rapid growth in a short period of time.

Topic Groups

Business Community – after the initial meeting this has been slow to develop due to difficulty reaching the target stakeholders. It appears that Maidenhead is covered by two separate Chambers of Commerce – Maidenhead CoC and Thames Valley CoC. It is understood that these groups only represent a small number of the overall businesses in the plan area. It is thought that the Business community is unlikely to respond in the same way to social media postings and therefore a more direct face to face approach is necessary.

Community Facilities – due to focussing on other issues this Topic Group has not yet started.

Getting About – recent work has focussed on developing a ‘Getting About’ survey – see below.

Meetings

JTP Town Centre Visioning - following on from the workshop held by JTP on behalf of RBWM, the Chair published a blog about the event and subsequently met with Charles Campion (JTP Director) to discuss the event and their findings. The findings are due to be presented at a public meeting on 14 Jan – several members are attending the evening event.

Surveys

With considerable assistance from Andrew Ingram, MNF has now completed two surveys and a third is due to be launched this week.

The surveys have proved useful in growing the interest in the work of the Forum and have led to the creation of a panel of individuals who are willing to participate in future surveys.

The current survey focusses on 'Getting About' Maidenhead by all modes and seeks out views of people's perception e.g. allowing their children to cycle etc., as well as hard information.

The survey is being issued in 3 batches – those on the survey panel/ those whose email addresses we hold/ anonymously using Facebook. We are aiming for around 300 responses to the survey.

Some concern that there are groups we are missing, particularly the younger members of the community whose preferred means of social media is either Snapchat or Instagram. MNF has an Instagram account, however we lack the resources to use it effectively.

Tall buildings briefing note

Following on from the JTP placemaking workshop, Judith Littlemore offered to produce a briefing paper on the current position regarding tall buildings, with particular reference to their wider impact on society. An area which seems to be overlooked in the current policy.

The Chair advised the meeting that it is the intention to publish as a blog and to place the briefing on the MNF web site

Finance

In the absence of a Treasurer (see below), the Secretary reported on the current MNF financial position.

Income: £4909.00

Expenditure: £539.68

Balance: £4369.32

There is approximately £63 of commitment for expenses not yet shown in the accounts for Facebook fees and postage associated with a letter sent to faith organisations before Christmas.

Treasurer

The role is still vacant, despite some potential interest in the role, no one has come forward. In the interim the Chair and Secretary are able to operate the Bank Account.

MNF Community Engagement Event

We have had in our project plan a one day/weekend event to engage face to face with members of the community. Originally this was planned for February, however due to the slippage with the designation consultation, this was put back to mid-March. Due to the uncertainty of the designation date, it is felt that this should be further delayed until we have certainty, with a suggestion that a date in mid-April is the earliest this could be achieved.

This prompted some discussion as to what our policies might look like and how they relate to the BLP given the seeming uncertainty as to next steps with the RBWM/Inspector.

Noted that the development of this event is to be discussed at a forthcoming Management Committee meeting.

AOB

Funding

The question of ongoing funding for the Forum was raised, noting that the initial funding package covered funding up until March 2020. It is understood that this was an initial 'start-up' package and that a further amount (up to a total of c.£17k) is available.

Date of next meeting

Due to the uncertainty of the designation decision, it was felt appropriate to postpone the date of the February meeting until 12th Feb.

Agreed that this would be a provisional date subject to the availability of the meeting room.

Meeting closed at 2050

Next Meeting: Date and time to be confirmed

AW

09/01/2020