

Gnosall Parish Council

Minutes of Special Council Meeting Held on 29 June 2010 To discuss Affordable Housing following a Housing Survey

Present: Cllr Jamie Cook, Cllr Andy Bevington, Cllr Mary Booth (in the Chair),
Cllr Graham Payne, Cllr Dave Willetts, Cllr Roger Greatrex
Cllr Mike Deegan, Cllr Shirley Wallis, Miss Jayne Cooper

Mr Tony Price - Housing Plus
Mr John Lancaster - Rural Housing Enabler
Mr Colin Roff - Stafford and Rural Homes

2 members of the public

1. Public Forum

There were no matters raised.

2. Apologies

Cllr Jenny Tomkinson, Cllr Colin Sharp, Cllr Sheila Burgess, Cllr Ken
Williamson, Cllr Simkin, Cllr Haycock. Absent: Cllr Pat Alker

3. Declaration of Interest

None received

4. Housing Survey Report

After welcoming the visitors from the Housing team, Cllr Booth said that this meeting would look at three aspects:

- a) Consideration of a summary of the report
- b) Whether it be accepted or not
- c) Decision on method of site identification

She added that the report is independent and impartial, has had no financial cost to Gnosall Parish Council, is a very comprehensive study and is based on the survey only.

In the absence of some councillors, the Clerk reported that Cllr Burgess had reported that the numbers quoted in the report seemed high. She said that it would be necessary to work together to find land and thought that there was very little Section 106 land available. The Clerk reported that Cllr Sharp said that he would like to see houses that were already on the market used for affordable housing. Cllr Williamson had commented that he accepts the report and was in favour of a small scale scheme.

It was noted that not everyone had received a copy of the survey, some people in Moreton for instance. Mr Price replied that Stafford Borough Council had provided addresses from their database (the Council Tax List, not the Electoral Role). He said that the overall response rate was similar to other areas.

There was discussion on various aspects of the report including how the survey was carried out, the findings, rural boundaries, and current market prices.

It was proposed and seconded that the report be accepted. This was agreed by all with one abstention.

Discussion then followed on the numbers of properties identified in the report, as being in demand. It was confirmed that 36 surveys had stated that affordable housing is required. However, a smaller scale development might be more appropriate, it was felt.

A concern was for older residents was raised and Mr Roff said there were examples of elderly people in large houses who wished to downsize – there was insufficient housing for them but they were not a priority and not seen to be “in need” of housing. The need might be, therefore, for ‘open market development’ and not affordable housing.

Mr Roff commented that Stafford and Rural Homes do purchase some properties on the open market for letting. However, this was a limited option as a lot of property was out of the price range and might not be near other properties that they managed. After being asked if the scheme meant all the houses would be built in one place, Mr Price said that they liked to have houses near each other but it was unlikely that one site would encompass 36 houses and several sites of mixed housing were more likely. The best way forward was to look for sites and then see how many houses would fit in each.

The options for site identification were then explained:

Option 1 An independent assessment by Housing Enabler.

Option 2 Parish Council give a list of possible sites to Housing Enabler to look at.

Option 3 Housing Enabler adds possible sites to the list given by the Parish Council.

Option 4 The Parish Council and Housing Enabler mutually identify sites.

Option 5 The Parish Council and Housing Enabler walk round with representative from the SBC Planning Department and get a ‘without prejudice’ view.

It was noted that discussion on sites identified in all options is passed to the Planning Department and all possibilities have to be looked at including inside the settlement boundary.

Housing has to:

- a) Be adjacent to existing settlement boundary
- b) have safe access to and visibility of the highway

- c) take account of its impact on the landscape
- d) not have too much negative impact on adjacent properties
- e) be on a site that was not too expensive to develop

It was proposed that the independent housing enabler should look for sites, with information provided by the Parish Council ie option 3. This was seconded and agreed unanimously.

Stafford and Rural Homes would work in partnership with Housing Plus, managing the properties that Housing Plus had developed.

It is hoped that a report would be sent to the Parish Council by middle to end of August. Cllr Greatrex would locate information already held by the Parish Council on possible sites.

Mr Lancaster suggested that when feedback from the planners had been received and before any decision about specific sites were made, a public meeting is held to obtain the public's opinion.

The report would be discussed at the September Council Meeting and a Consultation Event would be held in September/October. A summary of the results of the housing needs survey would be sent to GPN for publication.

Cllr Booth thanked the representatives for attending and providing very useful information. They then left the meeting.

5. Distribution of Annual Report to Moreton

Councillors then discussed the option of whether Annual Reports are posted to Moreton properties or supplies left in the Millennium Centre.

After discussion about hand delivering Parish Council documents, it was felt that all methods of distribution, including postal distribution, are considered at a future Communications meeting.

It was proposed and seconded that as this current matter is exceptional, Annual Reports are posted to Moreton. It would not set a precedent. This was agreed by all, apart from one councillor, who voted against this proposal.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm.