



## **Parish Plan Steering Group**

### **Status Report October 2014**

Since the Parish Plan initiative commenced in 2010 considerable time has been taken in trying to understand the wishes of the Oldbury Parishioners to improve the sustainability of the Parish in the coming years. This culminated in the published plan in 2012 a copy of which was distributed to each household in the Parish.

The suggestions and aspirations of those who took the trouble to respond have been the basis for ongoing work to try and put in place those things that people said



they felt were necessary/important to make Oldbury sustainable and move us forward into the future.

Overall, the Parish Plan work has achieved far more than could have been envisaged when the idea was first floated. What it has achieved is a one directional approach with a significant number of parishioners providing additional resource to the Parish Council. This has enabled a number of objectives defined by parishioners to be realised. The fact that the survey was done and the results published analysed and acted on has in less than 2 years attracted in excess of £100k into the parish by way of grants demonstrates this . There is still a long way to go to realise the aspirations of those who told us what they felt but we can be optimistic that we are in pretty good shape to achieve more in the years to come.



The Steering Group comprising parishioners and parish councillors consolidated the responses into 7 sections and to allocate a Champion for each:-

Since November 2012 the champions have been seeking to realise the best outcomes for their subject groups.

To summarise what has happened since then :-

## **Community Shop -**

Sarah Hayden picked up the short straw on this. The issue of where a Shop could be suitably located was discussed with



South Gloucestershire Planning. Based on their advice the site opposite Allan Knapp's workshop was chosen as it had the greatest chance of being given planning consent in a good central location. At the same time the funding for the venture was explored and a large grant was made by Village SOS (Big Lottery Fund), this and other funding sources provided the basis to launch the project.

Planning permission was sought and granted in mid-2013. Issues with Building Regulations imposed higher than budgeted costs onto construction but finally the shop was finished late in 2013.

Additional funds were required to offset the extra construction costs, this was provided by way of a share issue and donations. As can be seen the shop is now up and running, due to the efforts of a small and dedicated group of Parishioners and is proving a success matching

at least the business plans initially created. The Shop has planning consent up until July 2016 and a preferential lease for that period with the opportunity to extend.

As far as the Parish Plan Steering Group is concerned the Shop is now a separate entity and the original objective has been achieved.

**Planning and Development** - This is a key issue for the Parish and in particular the Village. Following discussions with the Parish Council a Working Group comprising Councillors and Resident Volunteers was formed. Allan Coles is champion of this group. The purpose of the group was to devise a plan which would satisfy the aspirations of the community in line with the responses to the Parish Plan and in accordance with the policies emerging from the Core Strategy adopted by South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) effective from now up until 2027. All development is controlled through the auspices of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), this has particular significance for the Parish due to the flood risk category assigned to it by the Environment Agency. The Planning and Development Initiative goes 'hand in glove' with the main subject matter for the Environment/ Flooding Working Group.

The Planning Working Group produced recommendations which the full Parish Council adopted.

This was sent to SGC as the Parish response to the Call for Sites; part of the Draft Policies Sites and Places Development Plan and incorporated into the draft proposals which are currently out for consultation.

As far as the Parish Plan Steering Group is concerned the Plan is now a separate entity and the original objective has been achieved, we await the outcome of the consultation.

**Environment/Flooding** - This Working Group



championed by Barry Turner has taken flood risk as its main subject. This is against a background of a number of issues relating to Flood Risk Management and the way the parish and adjacent area is classified by the Environment Agency (EA).

The working group comprises both parish councillors and volunteer parishioners and is (similar to the Development Working Group) working under the auspices of and jointly with the Parish Council.

A number of meetings have been held with SGC as the Lead Local Flood Authority and representatives of the

Lower Severn Drainage Board and the Environment Agency. Progress is painfully slow due largely to the stance taken by the Environment Agency.

There are a number of aspects the Working Group have been trying to clarify – protection of existing property being paramount whether it be from the river or the result of internal flooding . A plan of action has been agreed to improve some of the recurring flooding problems in and around the Village but actual execution is controlled by the availability of Local Authority funds. The Environment Agency has as the result of comments made by the working group amended the flood risk assessment maps but this does not fully address the issues we have raised.

The relationship with Development Plans is very strong and we have made it clear that we wish to challenge the logic of how the EA classify the area. SGC have not yet responded to this challenge.

It is clear that a great deal more work is required on this subject which will be an open item for some time to come.

**Communications** - In response to the Parish Plan Questionnaire the Communications Working Group championed by Keith Sullivan with a cross section of parishioner volunteers have been developing the website into what we hope will be a useful and proactive tool to promote interaction within the community. The Community Website has been re-vamped and now provides publicity for businesses and social events as well as the more formal communications. It also provides a link back to the Parish Council which Parishioners can use.



Notice Boards have a part to play in the overall picture and the Shepperdine end of the Parish now has its own notice board.

4WARD is still a well-used means of communication. Often communications are published in dual harness with the website and there is a link to 4Ward which provides the means to read the magazine electronically.



For the future, the use of e-mail to communicate important events is being developed, subject of course to the Data Protection Act. Although not all members of

the community have the internet, the number that does is significantly large enough to make this effective.

The original communications objective is largely achieved; it is now a case of using it. Advances in the types of media being made available for communication mean this objective will be kept under review with the intent of maintaining the most effective tools for the task.

The website [www.oldburyonsevern.org.uk](http://www.oldburyonsevern.org.uk) maintenance and development is supported by a professional Webmaster.

**Playing Fields and Memorial Hall** - In response to the responses from the 2010 Parish Plan Questionnaire it was felt that there was merit in trying to improve the facilities of these parish assets. It seemed sensible to try and optimise any improvements which could be achieved and to exploit the synergy wherever it was appropriate to do so. Peter Everton was the champion of this initiative.



The Memorial Hall has its own management arrangements of a longstanding nature and had for some time been



working on plans to improve the fabric of the building and were concerned about any change of direction to the plan. After some discussion it was agreed to exclude the Memorial Hall from the work of the Parish Plan Working Group and to concentrate efforts at improving facilities at the Playing Fields. A Playing Fields Committee (PFC) meeting was attended where it was made clear that the stumbling block to improvements as usual was finance and the inability of the PFC to generate income/funds quickly enough for it to be a realistic proposition. One of the schemes the PFC were discussing was the need to replace the children's (up to 11 years) play equipment which was no longer fit for purpose and would in the short term need to be removed. This was a scheme for which quotes circa £60k had been provided. The problem of funds was referred back to the Parish Plan Steering Group who (to summarise) were successful in seeking a landfill tax refund grant (£50k), this and the other funds the PFC had accrued is sufficient to provide excellent facilities which will require little maintenance. The order was placed in July and



completed in September . The High Sherriff of Gloucestershire officially opened the facilities on the 24<sup>th</sup> October .

The nature of this improvement initiative means it is ongoing and members of the Steering Group are now working as members of the PFC to reinvigorate the interest in football.

How far Playing Field and Pavilion improvements can be taken is difficult to say but the Parish Plan Steering Group will play an active role in supporting improvement initiatives.

**Roads, Transport and Signage** - This working group has a diverse remit and is championed by Peter Orford. Working in Conjunction with South Gloucestershire Council Officers a number of actions have been planned and executed. These include improving safety by way of road marking which has been simple but very effective in terms of cost and safety.



One of the major issues parishioners have is speeding vehicles. As a deterrent to speeding and in conjunction with the Avon & Somerset

Police and the South Gloucestershire Council Safer Stronger Community Group a speed watch group has been set up. Prior to undertaking this role, Group members had to be equipped and trained and, after a lengthy lead in time, speed watch is now operational at various points within the village. This will be an ongoing activity and will involve liaison with Avon & Somerset police.

**Security** - This in effect was to meet the desire of a significant number of parishioners that we establish a Neighbourhood Watch around the Parish. By its widespread nature the parish is not easy to zone and volunteers are needed to operate it effectively. The outcome of our efforts working in conjunction with Avon and Somerset Constabulary and the SGC Safer Stronger Communities Officer can be seen in a limited number of locations and can only be extended if more volunteers come forward. It is interesting to note that those areas with an effective neighbourhood watch can enjoy lower insurance premiums. This objective is considered achieved.



For the future the question is what shape and form does the Steering Group take, do we continue or do we just concentrate on what we started and then wind it up?

One of the ideas is to form a charitable organisation which would allow quite legally the ability to seek grant funding for beneficial projects and support to parishioners trying to encourage community cohesion and involvement. Additionally it could be the means of distributing profit moneys from projects like the community shop without falling foul of HMRC.



After 4 years it is time to ask some questions on what direction parishioners feel we should be taking next. We need to consider how best

to get feedback. The response to the first questionnaire circulated to all parishioners back in 2010 was very encouraging we would like to think that



even more parishioners will provide feedback, give their point of view and get involved to help realise the improvements the community feel is needed . We can be contacted at [oo parishplan@gmail.com](mailto:oo parishplan@gmail.com) .

[www.oldburyonsevern.org.uk](http://www.oldburyonsevern.org.uk)