

CHILHAMS FUTURE DELIVERY BOARD (CFDB)

Notes from the Open Meeting held at St Mary's Church, Chilham on 25th March, 2010 at 7.30pm

Independent Chairman: George Kennedy

Attendees: Rob Berry, Ernie Taylor, Geoff Dear (all CFDB) and 42 members of the public

Apologies: Helen Kirwan (CFDB)

Presentation:

1. Geoff Dear presented the reasoning behind the next step in the CFDB project (a community engagement exercise planned for later in the year) and explained what CFDB hoped this exercise will achieve now they had received funding from the Kent Downs & Marshes Leader Programme and the exercise could go ahead.

2. He explained that the meeting was not to present detailed plans, but to present the process CFDB are following to get community agreement to a clear statement of what is required in the form of clear design parameters. It was important that attendees understand this process and agree that it is both appropriate and likely to succeed. The long and rigorous funding application had validated this approach as a good use of public money.

3. In summary, CFDB's aims are to enable the community aspirations identified in the Rummey feasibility study. CFDB do not have a particular vision for the Square. CFDBs current aim is to provide an opportunity for the community to agree its own common vision in the form of clearly understood design parameters.

To be successful in this aim, CFDB must choose the approach with the biggest chance of success

A process most likely to result in community agreement

A process providing a clear outcome the whole community can understand and relate to.

4. CFDB had received guidance that the next step is to identify a single scheme agreed by community – further funding will not be available without this - and a community engagement exercise was the best way to achieve this. The key outputs from this community engagement exercise will include:

(a) clear design parameters for the design of a single agreed scheme (eg. design objectives, space allocations and arrangements, parking provision by parking type and location, materials guidance, signing and lining standards, ...)

(b) plans of a fixed scheme and one or two sketch perspectives based upon these design parameters

Clear design parameters will make it easier to prioritise and evaluate options in the future.

The engagement exercise would include the community as well as statutory stakeholders such as ABC and KCC.

As a result CFDB would be able to deliver a brief brought about by the community with buy-in from statutory stakeholders.

5. CFDB had further been advised that focussed workshops involving key community and statutory stakeholder groups (people most affected with most knowledge of issues) were required and that these workshop worked best with around 20 attendees.

6. CFDB would provide regular updates on the community engagement exercise on their website, in Parish News and the local press.

7. Based upon a show of hands:

7.1 Out of the 42 attending 9 came from outside Chilham

7.2 The majority felt that something needed to be done and that a community engagement exercise was the right way forward

7.3 The majority felt the community engagement exercise should be open to the whole parish

Views and Questions:

Chairman George Kennedy invited attendees to express their views and ask questions.

Alan Millar asked how much money had been spent so far. Geoff Dear answered that CFDB had spent no money to date and the Rummey Feasibility Study had cost around £25k of which less than £1k came from parish council funds

Alan Millar felt CFDB were inept and the project had dragged on because they should have handed over the project to experts such as ABC or KCC from the beginning.

Alan Marsh said he couldn't understand why anything needed to change.

Alan Baker pointed out the parish council had concerns that, with the current situation, emergency vehicles would have difficulty gaining access to properties in the Square and its feeder streets - there was evidence that this had happened in the past - and that this was a reason for something to change.

Matt Wilson considered there were wider community issues to be addressed than the Square, such as transport.

Sue Smith felt that the engagement exercise needed to be totally inclusive and include representatives from the whole community

Tom Reed supported the idea but felt that Taylor's Hill car park needed to be included to stop parking dominating the Square. The selection of representatives is important and the process must be transparent.

Trevor Vallis felt we needed to decide what the Square should be. It was not just for cars but for people as well. It was important to make sure everyone knows what is going on.

Monica Hislop felt Felborough Close should be included in the workshops, it was necessary to involve the whole village.

Jim Smith felt the workshops should be a public invitation meeting.

Yve White supported the exercise and agreed it needed to involve the whole community.

Graham Swan felt the Jacob's report should be raised again.

Boro Cllr Jane Marriott felt we needed to use the Rummey Feasibility study as the foundation for further progress. Useful guidance could also be obtained from the Kent Downs Streetscape Design handbook.

Trevor Vallis felt the Rummey Feasibility study should be looked into and used going forward.

Graham Swan pointed out that Felborough Close was not included in the Feasibility Study.

Peter Wead felt that any solution needed to include the feeder streets as well as the Square. He didnt want a "twee" square but a practical solution.

Sue Smith suggested a questionnaire would be a good way of collecting community views

Nick Lester pointed out that in his experience in this type of community engagement a questionnaire was not the best approach, a community engagement exercise was more effective since it involved getting people to talk to each other and work towards the shared understanding needed to reach agreement. A questionnaire would not achieve this.

Geoff Dear (for CFDB) confirmed that CFDB were not promoting focus groups.

Meeting Conclusion:

George Kennedy brought the meeting to an end by getting agreement from attendees that:

- 1) all views had now been aired
- 2) CFDB should continue with their plans for a community engagement exercise but restructure them so that the whole community was represented in the workshops.

Post-meeting feedback:

As a result of the meeting CFDB have decided that the first step in the community engagement exercise will be an open workshop for the community to agree the set of clear design parameters to be taken forward in further workshops that will also involve statutory stakeholders.

The workshop will be at a date and time to be agreed by the end of the first week in April and will be open to all members of the community ... any person wishing to attend will need to contact CFDB by a specified date in order to arrange a place on this workshop.

This will enable CFDB to confirm numbers and make appropriate arrangements for running the workshop.

Details of the open workshop will be made available through village noticeboards, the local press and Parish News as well as CFDB and parish council websites.

CFDB consider that this is the best approach to accommodate the breadth of views raised at the open meeting ... these views ranged from "do nothing" through "a solution to address highways issues" to "a wider reaching solution to address local economy and community issues".