

CHESIL BANK PARISH COUNCIL

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROJECT

Newsletter No 6 – October 2020

In consultation with the Parish Council we have now restarted the work on the Neighbourhood Plan [NP]. Inevitably, we have lost ground in the overall plan and its timescale, but also many aspects of our lives have changed as a result of Covid-19, and some of this may affect the NP. For example some of the responses to the various surveys we have carried out may now be different. This is especially true of the Business Survey, where many of the businesses in the area have already been adversely affected by the consequences of Covid-19. We are also aware that many employees have been furloughed during recent months and again their responses to the employment survey may now be different. It is also true that those of you who had aspirations to move to a new house and responded as such in the housing survey may now view their prospects differently.

The regular Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meetings are now being carried out on Zoom and an up-date given at each Parish Council meeting.

It is our intention to re-release the Business Survey and a follow-up survey to all households, encompassing some of the key questions which were part of the first two surveys, but also some additional questions on community facilities, the environment important views and renewable energy. Alongside this, arrangements have been made to photograph and list the green spaces which were identified in the first survey. Mapping software has been purchased to assist with the process of gathering information on location and area size, which will then form part of the NP documentation.

We plan to distribute the follow up survey by the end of September to each household, but it will also be available on-line, as this makes it much easier for us to compile the results. It also eliminates the need to handle paper responses, which in the present situation is an important safety measure, and we will be following the appropriate guidelines and processes for ensuring the safe packaging and distribution of the surveys. For those of you making paper returns details of the collection points for each village can be found in the survey.

A new survey, specifically for our Young People, this will be on-line only and is also planned for September to get views on the future of housing development in the parish along with general questions on lifestyle.

The suspension of work due to the Covid-19 situation has inevitably had an adverse impact on the timescales for completion of the plan. However, it has given us the opportunity to review the plan in more detail, and it seems that we now need to allow more time for consultation with the various stakeholders before we are ready to present the plan back to the community for comment and agreement. As a result, it is likely that it will be Spring 2022 before we are ready to prepare for the Referendum.

In order to prepare for the Public Pre-Consultation which must take place as part of the overall planning process, we are also anticipating holding a number of events, probably mid-late November, depending on the latest Government guidelines for “Lockdown” to bring the community up-to-date with key aspects of the NP. Details will be announced as soon as we have got firm plans.

Our request for funding from the Government Agency responsible for Neighbourhood Planning to support our local plan development for the coming year has now been approved and they have also agreed to fund a specialist consultancy to undertake the mainly technical Strategic Environmental Assessment which we are obliged to undertake as part of the overall planning process.

The Government has issued a White Paper consultation exercise on its proposals for a national housing and development strategy the NP Steering Group has drafted a response to this which is available on our website. The Parish Council will refer to this when it submits its formal response to the consultation.

We have undertaken a ‘call for sites’ as part of our NP consultation planning process and we have received a number of responses from across the parishes, for ‘in-principle’ housing development opportunities, and these will now be considered by the NPSG for inclusion in the final NP proposals, which cover 10-15 years.

The results from our second community survey, which focused on employment and business matters have now also been analysed, and we had a slightly lower response rate from this survey than the previous one, with 131 completed questionnaire forms returned.

Key points were: The smaller parishes of Langton Herring and Fleet were particularly well represented in the survey returns. Of the survey responses received, just under half (49%) were from those aged 66 and over. This older age profile was even more pronounced in Portesham, with 63% in that age range. We had very few responses from younger people (aged up to 30 years old) and therefore we do not have a very clear picture of the employment issues that may be facing that section of our community. More details on the results from this and the more focussed survey on the local businesses operating in the Parish can be found on our website.

If you wish to make any comments or would like more information related to the Neighbourhood Plan, then please contact your local village representative or any member of the Steering Group. The contact details are on our web site, www.Vision4Chesil.org.