

Localism Live Pilot Iwade:

Note of Local Stakeholder Meeting 11 December 2012

Preamble

The Iwade Localism Live Pilot is a part of Swale Borough's 'Members Championing Communities' project. The purpose of this project is to develop the community leadership role of frontline councillors in the context of the new agendas of Localism and Open Public Services. This project has been developed with and secured the buy-in of key officers, the Cabinet member responsible, the Members Development Working Group and Group Leaders. There is broad consensus on what the project is trying to achieve.

Attendance

The attendance sheet is attached to this note as appendix 1. Of those invited only PCSO Aaron Harris was unable to attend, and he contributed his thoughts on issues in advance of the meeting (which were picked up by other contributors also).

Introduction & Purpose

Mike Cosgrove welcomed participants and provided background to the Iwade pilot, and the localism live project more generally. The purpose of today would be to take on board the issues raised about challenges faced in Iwade, reflect on how the council could support local stakeholders, and in particular consider the role of the local councillor.

Part 1: The Issues

Cllr Stokes was then asked by Micah Gold (who was facilitating the session) to begin the first part of the meeting by setting out the key issues from his perspective. The issues he identified were as follows:

- The overdevelopment of the village, and concern among residents about this.
- A development situated on higher ground creating the run-off of water onto neighbouring properties
- The impact of the School Lane development in terms of narrowing the road and creating problems for traffic
- The need for a new village hall, and the uncertainty around current proposals
- Heavy goods vehicle usage of roads within the village causing traffic problems and minor damage

- Concern regarding the development of new industrial areas nearby that incorporates incinerators, and the impact on quality.

All attendees were then asked to, in turn, either add to this list of issues or to build on those already identified. Contributions from participants are listed below:

- Flooding is a major concern, although a flood plan is being created
- There is pressure from developers for more housing
- The parish council is concerned about the impact of welfare reform on its finances and the precept
- The population of the village is made up of young families, and whilst there is reasonable provision for under 7's, provision for older children is inadequate and will be needed in future
- The design of the roads within new developments, and planning policy in relation to parking (a maximum of 1.5 spaces per household) is creating an issue of antisocial parking which is only likely to get worse as children reach driving age. Whilst there is a decent bus service the rural nature of the village does mean a reliance upon cars
- Anti-social behaviour is low but there are some incidents including graffiti-ing of bus shelters, and drinking related litter
- Dog fouling has also gone up recently
- There are issues of fly tipping in country lanes
- Residents of social and shared equity housing are generally happy but there were issues raised in relation to children playing football in the roads, which links to the issue about facilities for older children
- There is a local stream that is not well looked after and can flood as a consequence affecting the social and shared equity housing properties
- Welfare reform will also have an impact on the tenants of social and shared equity housing properties
- Amicus Horizon do undertake local events and walkabouts and are keen to do more
- The profile of the village has changed as a consequence of development, with the new population being more aspirational, with their own views of what constitutes village life which may not be consistent with the old population
- Some families are looking to move out of the village to have better access to good secondary schools
- Youth provision will be an issue, and within the parish there are good ideas emerging as to how to respond, but the difficulty is often in how to implement them. For instance there is a large local football team that

currently have to use pitches outside the village because of a lack of provision within it. A skate park has also been suggested.

- The old and the new population have different expectations relating to education, with the new families having higher levels of aspiration
- However it is much more difficult to engage new families as they are often working and have less free time
- The scale of development and the growth in population has impacted upon the local school, there are some in Iwade who have not been able to secure places for their children, and as a result the school is considering expansion plans
- Parking and traffic are issues for the school
- The school provides out-of-school hours and holiday provision, but would like to open up its property for wider community use in the longer term
- There is a Facebook group for the village that currently has over 700 friends and has become a highly effective means of local communication and discussion, but also highlights differences between the old and the new communities
- There is a sports pavilion proposed as part of the planning gain from development. The parish has sought to combine this with the plans to develop a new village hall. It had been thought that an agreement had been reached in principle but more recently communication with the developer seems to have dried up, with a number of meetings being cancelled. Assistance was requested from the SBC here.
- The Charity commission requires that any new village hall is complete before the land on which the current village hall is situated can be sold
- A private developer is proposing a 60-bed care home. This is an example of how new proposals for development seem to come out of nowhere
- The old community feels that the village has been lost. New communities have different aspirations and want village life and atmosphere, but the way that they see and envisage it
- The church is seeing greater interest and demand and is seeking to adapt to meet this. It is seeking to renovate and increase the capacity of the church to support community usage, including for example a community café. The diocese is supportive of looking at this as a pilot.
- Longer term the church may look to build its own church hall, but is looking to focus first on how it might better use the church
- There are mapping and satellite navigation issues relating to the new roads that have yet to be incorporated. This is causing difficulties locally, and the Reverend has gone as far as to create his own local maps

- There is a need for greater cohesion between the old and new communities. Progress has been made and the key channels have been a village Facebook page (with 700 friends), a newsletter and a website. The
- The new community should be seen as a real opportunity. Many work from home and could get involved in the local community, although many others tend to leave early and come home late and are sometimes in the village only to sleep- engaging these residents will be more difficult.
- There is concern that the village is not fully reaping the benefits or proceeds of growth. An example was given of section 106 monies were provided to improve infrastructure, but this money sat with the county council and it was a struggle to get hold of it
- The local health centre is an issue. Not so much the building, which is a fantastic facility, but those operating it. Residents are having difficulty in getting appointments as the centre serves a wider population who have followed the health practitioners who have moved into the building
- The school also has pupils from outside of the village whilst some local residents cannot obtain places for their children. Admission policies are being changed which should help
- Planning permission for employment areas around the village is creating increased HGV traffic. These developments do come with infrastructure monies but the road improvements implemented tend to be the wrong solutions and are making the problems worse
- When local people shop they tend to use Sittingbourne or Bluewater. There are also lots of delivery vans arriving daily at the village suggesting online shopping is prevalent
- In terms of the separation between the old and new communities, this is beginning to change. One reason is the development of friendships, but there is increasingly coming together of agendas and viewpoints. In particular the new communities also want to see an end to development, as they came to live village life and do not want the village to become too large.
- There are examples of successful new community facilities in Swale, for example a new community centre in West Faversham. An offer was made to show people this facility, and to make the point that it pays to think big when looking at a new facility
- It was also suggested that whilst the current profile of the village meant there were few teenagers, this would change in the next 5 to 10 years which means this is the right time to start planning in terms of appropriate facilities.

Part 2: Walkabout

The meeting then departed to undertake a walkabout of the village and physical manifestations of some of the issues raised.

Part 3: Taking Forward the Issues and Roles

The meeting then reconvened. Councillor Cosgrove introduced the final part of the meeting, the purpose of which was to consider how Iwade could take forward its agendas, what the role of the local councillor should be in supporting this and how the council more widely could provide support.

A round table discussion then took place and key points are captured (but not attributed) below:

- How do we link in with other partners, such as the county council and the police, influencing upwards to where more resources are
- Need to change the relationship between planning and communities. Too many decisions are taken that do not take into account the needs of the local community
- This is not just a SBC issue, Kent county council are critical on planning and highways and schools
- In terms of the vision it seems the provision of a new village hall is key and many other ambitions will hang of this
- Residents tend to come to the parish council 1st with the issues. We can do some things quite quickly but find that the processes and procedures of other organisations slow things down. For instance we could quite quickly implement new road signage but need permission from KCC to put it on the lamppost.
- Financial decisions also slow things down. Might there be a way of implementing things and reconciling the finances retrospectively in order to speed things up?
- The parish council is active in communicating community views and needs within consultation processes, but planning policies often seem to overrule these, an example being provision of parking
- Who is the backstop, or the muscle, when things get promised but not delivered? Is this part of the role of the local councillor?
- This is often how the conversation happens, but to be effective the local councillor needs to be able to raise things with Cabinet Members who make decisions

- There is need for better lines of communication between localities and the Council
- There are relationships but these tend to be responsive. What is missing is the assured strategic vision, not just in terms of what's needed but also how it's going to be delivered
- Could the parish council set out a 10 point, 2 sides of A4 plan setting out ambitions for the village that could act as some sort of treaty that will focus the attention of all partners? Could this become the local councillors "reason for being"?
- This is a good suggestion but it needs to be wider than just the parish council for example it needs to include the school
- What prevents the parish from working in partnership? Need to remember the Parish councillors work and the parish clerk is only employed for 12 hours a week
- Would this group be prepared to meet again and develop the plan using these notes as a starting point?
- What would be really useful is an organisation chart for SBC. There has been a lot of staffing changes and we spend too much time going around the houses trying to work out who might be responsible for a particular issue
- Iwade has a community bodies (parish council, church, village hall, school) and staff that should enable a local plan to be developed, owned and delivered. Elsewhere where the capacity and involvement is less, this may be harder.
- If a multiagency partnership is created it needs to have a clear purpose. This might be the 10-point plan, or it might be even more focused perhaps around the issue of facilities. There are examples of similar groups elsewhere.
- A way forward might be that a neighbourhood partnership is formed that takes a lead on developing the agenda, with the local councillors supporting this and maintaining strategic linkages, with SBC providing support and muscle towards implementation.

Moving Forward & Actions

Councillor Cosgrove thanked all attendees, stating how useful and interesting the session had been. The next steps were as follows:

- A note of the meeting is to be produced by the 21 December
- This note could be the catalyst for action and helping the parish develop a 10-point plan
- Swale BC Group Leaders will be given the report to note.

- The Ward Member will act as the liaison and brief KCC Local Members
- Micah Gold has offered to support a further meeting if required by Iwade Parish

The meeting was asked if anyone had any final thoughts before concluding the meeting, and the following comments from residents were made:

- The village hall is crucial and needs support from SBC
- There needs to be a longer-term vision with the support of all stakeholders, and a 6 month action plan
- It was really good to have Borough Councillors come to Iwade, because it often feels that the Council is quite distant from the village.

Meeting closed.

Appendix 1 – Iwade Localism Live – Attendees

ORGANISATION/ POST	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
Parish Clerk	Lynda Fisher	01795 477015	iwadepc@blueyonder.co.uk
Parish Council (Chair & Vice-Chair)	Stephen Plumb	01795 429752	captainplumby@btinternet.com
	James Hunt	[Contact via Lynda]	
KCC Warden	Nick Mayatt	079 6958 4184	Nick.mayatt@kent.gov.uk
Iwade Primary School (Head of School & Executive Head)	Caroline Mariner	01795 472578	
	Katrina Ware		headteacher@iwade.kent.sch.uk
Amicus Horizon	Tanya Curson		Tanya.curson@AmicusHorizon.org.uk
	Nicki Treadwell		Nicki.treadwell@AmicusHorizon.org.uk
Iwade Church	Revd. Ron Partridge	01795 842007	Revdron.partridge@virgin.net

Councillors:

- Mike Cosgrove (Portfolio Holder: Localism)
- Gerry Lewin (Deputy Leader, Conservative)
- Roger Truelove (Labour Leader)
- Mike Henderson (Independent Leader)
- Ben Stokes (Local Councillor, Conservative)

Officers

- Emma Wiggins (Head of Economy and Communities)
- Micah Gold (Mobilise)
- Ian Duke (Mobilise)

Apologies

PCSO	Aaron Harris	077 7222 6115	Aaron.harris@kent.pnn.police.uk
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