



Community Sub-Group Report

GTDP Board Meeting Friday 15th December 2017

Since the previous Board Meeting on 13th October September, the Sub-Group has met once on 11th November. Highlights and draft minutes from this Sub-Group meeting should be available from the GTDP Website at <http://www.gtdp.org.uk/community-subgroup>. Particular items of interest for the Board are listed below.

Clerking Support

Unfortunately, Breckland Council were again unable to provide a Clerk for our recent meeting. This time though, we were not even told in advance that this would be the case. It was somewhat embarrassing to arrive at the meeting and find there was no clerk and also that the copies of the papers for members of the public that we had requested were not there either.

Rob Walker has since apologised on behalf of Breckland for their oversight, although this was not until more than a week after the meeting. On a more positive note, the Sub-Group would like to thank the Town Council, whose staff who provided copies of the papers for the public at the last minute.

It is very disappointing that clerking support has again been an issue after it was raised at the last Board meeting. As has been reported before, we do not think it is fair to ask one of the unpaid volunteer members of the Sub-Group to take minutes at the meeting (which would affect their ability to contribute) or to have to spend time typing them up afterwards. We would therefore suggest that the Board asks Breckland Council makes better arrangements for providing Clerking support for the Sub-Group, and that it has more effective contingency plans in place for if a Clerk is unavailable.

Board Transparency

The Sub-Group remains concerned at the lack of transparency and communication from the Board. Disquiet was expressed that there was no advance notice of the restructuring proposals that were brought to the last Board meeting. A list of specific actions is proposed (see separate document) and we would ask that the Board approves these.

Collaboration between Partners

The Sub-Group is also concerned about a lack of collaboration and information-sharing between partners, and would like to see this improved. In particular, Corinne Fulford of Leaping Hare was supposed to be helping with the work on Objective 2 (Making Thetford a Destination of Choice), but despite reaching out to the lead has not heard anything back yet. The Sub-Group also believes that there should be more and earlier collaboration between partners in preparing the HLF application in connection with the Market Towns Initiative and Objective 4 (Town Centre and Transport Links).

Transport Issues

The Sub-Group remains very concerned about traffic problems in and around the town, with areas for particular concern being the A11 roundabouts, the Mundford Road/Croxton Road junction, traffic flow long London Road and Norwich Road around the Town Centre, Bury Road, Nuns' Bridges, and The Chase cross-roads. The Sub-Group would like more information about the upcoming transport studies by Norfolk County Council. We have requested a briefing paper from NCC to be presented at this Board Meeting, and look forward to receiving this.

There is still significant local concern about parking provision and the accessibility of Thetford Railway station. This is an important issue, and we feel it needs to be picked up by the Board. It should be incorporated into the work on either Objective 1 (Strategic Infrastructure) or Objective 4 (Town Centre and Transport Links).

As part of this, there has been particular concern about the condition of Station Lane (the road the runs from the Norwich-bound platform to the A1066 Mundford Road). This provides the only vehicular access to that platform and so is important for those with limited mobility. The Sub-Group has investigated the ownership and status of this road, and a report for the Board is provided as a separate document.

Sub-Group Membership

In line with the Board's resolution at its last meeting, we have invited the Thetford Business Forum to nominate a representative to attend our meetings. The Sub-Group agreed to temporarily co-opt the representative pending a formal change to our Terms of Reference.

The Sub-Group would still be keen to have input from younger members of the community. In the long run we might like to have a specific youth member, but for now we will try to encourage younger people to attend and contribute to the meetings.

The matter of how the independent members might be re-appointed or refreshed was also discussed. The Sub-Group felt that the most appropriate way to select the independent members was through a pre-advertised vote at one of its normal public meetings, in much the same way as Residents' Association committees are elected. Given the frequency of the meetings and the slow pace of developments, it was thought that terms of 2 or 3 years would be more appropriate than electing the members on an annual basis.

Robert Whittaker
GTDP Community Sub-Group Chair
06-Dec-2017