



## Community Sub-Group Report

### GTDP Board Meeting Wednesday 20th March 2019

Since the previous Board Meeting on 27th November, the Sub-Group has met once on 16th January. There will also be another meeting on the evening of 20th March. Details of both meetings can be found by following the “agenda and papers” at <http://www.gtdp.org.uk/community-subgroup>. Particular items of interest for the Board and things we need to raise are described below.

## 1 Public Concerns

### 1.1 Train Ticketing

At the November 2017 Sub-Group meeting, an issue was raised about passengers being charged more when buying tickets on the train compared with buying them at the station. In almost all cases, this shouldn't happen. The main exception is those travelling with East Midlands Trains, who do not give railcard discounts on the train if ticketing facilities are available at the station.

The Board wrote to East Midlands Trains about this issue in April, and got some initial positive engagement from the company. However, it was reported by Sam Chapman-Allen at the January 2019 Sub-Group meeting that East Midlands Trains had now said they were not prepared to examine their ticketing policies at the moment as their current franchise would be coming to an end shortly (August 2019).

The Sub-Group agreed to ask the Board to consider raising the matter with the Secretary of State for Transport, with a view to getting the rules changed to account for the fact that ticketing facilities might not be readily accessible to all.

### Suggested Action

- The Board agrees to write to the Secretary of State for Transport to ask that the national rules about not needing to give railcard discounts on trains should only be applied when there are ticketing facilities at the station that are readily accessible to those with limited mobility from the boarding platform.

## **1.2 GP and NHS Dentist Provision**

Concern had been expressed at various Community Sub-Group meetings about the lack of planning for expanded health-care provision for the new SUE residents. Further discussion of this matter took place at the January 2019 Sub-Group meeting. It was agreed to ask the Board to approach the practices in the town to get a better picture of the challenges they face.

### **Suggested Action**

- The Board agrees to write to the GP and dental practices in the town to enquire about their current status, including their ability to accept new patients, the level of care they are able to provide for existing patients, and what facilities and resources they might need to improve services.

## **1.3 Bus Routes for the Kingsfleet Phase 1**

A member of the public raised a query about Bus provision for the new houses in the SUE at Sub-Group's May 2018 meeting, and this came up again as a correction to the draft minutes at the September 2018 meeting. As result I looked into the planning policies and provisions currently being made. It appears that Breckland's own planning policy (TAAP TH26) requires bus services to operate from the first day of occupation of the SUE, but Breckland has not enforced this policy on the developer. There is also a question over whether the intended use of the Joe Blunt's Lane underpass for buses is consistent with another planning policy (TAAP TH11).

I asked Breckland's planning department to confirm and explain these apparent discrepancies (on 10th October and 5th November 2018), but received no response. I raised the issue at the GTDP Board Meeting on 27th November 2018, where Rob Walker (Breckland Executive Director of Place) promised to take up the matter. I asked for an update from Sam Chapman-Allen and Rob Walker before our January 2019 meeting, but none was forthcoming. However, Sam Chapman-Allen was present at that meeting and said that because of potential legal issues, the Council was still considering its response. At time of writing I have still not received a response to the queries.

## **1.4 Pedestrian Access to and from Kingsfleet Phase 1A**

At the November 2018 Sub-Group meeting, a member of the public raised the issue that there appeared to be no hard-surfaced footpaths being provided to link the first phase of new houses in the Kingsfleet development to the rest of the town. This will cause difficulties for those with mobility problems. I raised the matter at the November 2018 Board meeting, and was told that officers were already aware of the issue and were looking in to what could be done. As above, no update was forthcoming for the January 2019 meeting, and I have still not had a response on this matter.

## **2 Community Sub-Group Independent Member Recruitment**

Two new independent members were finally selected following the recruitment process that started last summer. I understand that there were more applicants, but the others withdrew from the process. Despite the date of our 16th January Sub-Group meeting being know well

in advance, the two selected candidates for the Community Sub-Group Independent Member positions were only informed of their success a shortly before the start of the meeting, which did not give them enough time to prepare and take up their positions. It was therefore agreed to postpone the planned election of a new Chair until the following meeting in March.

It was also agreed at the 16th January Sub-Group meeting that we would re-advertise for the remaining two Independent Member vacancies, with the aim of having a full compliment of members for the March Sub-Group meeting. All the independent members would then be involved in the election of the new Chair at that meeting.

Sam Chapman-Allen (who was present at the meeting) was happy with this plan, and said he would enquire about an advert in the February edition of About Thetford. I heard nothing further, and so when no such advert appeared, I sent a follow-up email to Sam asking what was going on with the recruitment, and what deadline we should advertise when promoting the positions. I received no response. As the Board has previously indicated that it wished to be in control of the Community Sub-Group recruitment process, I therefore felt it inappropriate to proceed unilaterally with the agreed recruitment.

### **Suggested Action**

- The Board agrees a plan to fill the two remaining independent member vacancies on the Community Sub-Group at the earliest opportunity.

## **3 Cycling and Walking Report**

When the Board considered the Sub-Group's Cycling and Walking report at its meeting in June 2018, it asked Norfolk County Council officers to meet with me to discuss the proposals. Despite my efforts to chase this up with the Board chair and officers, I have received no information about such a meeting.

In the absence of such a meeting being arranged, I feel that the Board should now vote on the five recommendations contained within the report without further delay. The full report can be found online at <http://www.gtdp.org.uk/cycling-walking>.

### **Suggested Action**

- The Board takes a formal vote on each of the five recommendations contained in the Community Sub-Group's Cycling and Walking Report, with the option to amend them first if deemed appropriate.

## **4 Communication and Public Engagement**

Communication from the Board and engagement with the public continues to be a problem. For example, I have seen no publicity for the upcoming Board Meeting, the GTDP Website is very out of date in places (see annex), and the report that Robert Walker promised on communication over a year ago has still yet to materialise.

There is also a problem that the public are not always seeing timely updates and/or responses to the issues that have been raised through the Community Sub-Group. See, for example, the

time-scales and lack of responses on some of the issues outlined in the section above. It makes life much more difficult for the Sub-Group Chair to have to keep chasing things, not knowing whether updates will be forthcoming, and not knowing when information might be available to prepare reports for the meetings. It also damages public relations when the Sub-Group Chair has to continually report that updates had been requested but not had been received.

We have also had a lack of substantive items to discuss at recent Sub-Group meetings and to use to help generate interest in the meetings. Various consultations and initiatives have been occurring, whose promoters could have involved the Community Sub-Group but did not do so. I have tried to flag things up where I am aware of them, but it would be easier for the Sub-Group chair if partners were more proactive.

Possible actions suggested at the most recent Sub-Group meeting included: more engagement with the Resident's Associations, a possible name change for the Board and Sub-Group to make it more accessible to the public, and a meeting between the Sub-Group, Board and Officer Group to discuss improvements and coordinate a forward plan.

### **Possible Actions**

- At its next meeting the Board has a main agenda item on communication and public engagement.
- A member of the GTDP Board is assigned the task of monitoring the website to ensure it is kept up to date.
- Each partner organisation appoints a named person to ensure that details any relevant news items and consultations are included on the GTDP website.
- Partners agree to work with the Community Sub-Group on any local public engagement and consultation tasks they require.
- The Board re-considers whether its name and that of the Community Sub-Group best reflects its work and purpose in the eyes of the public.
- A meeting is arranged between Board members and the two Sub-Groups to discuss improvements and coordinate a forward planning.

## **5 Advance Notice and Timing of Board Meetings**

When the Board was first set up, meeting dates were set and advertised in advance for a whole year at a time. This setup allowed more advanced publicity, members to plan for their attendance, and the Community Sub-Group to coordinate its meetings around those of the Board. This advanced planning has not happened more recently, which has led to problems with availability and poor timing of Sub-Group meetings relative to the Board meetings. (The previous Board meeting only took place only a week after a Sub-Group meeting. This Board meeting is taking place on the same day as a Sub-Group meeting.)

In addition, it has been noted that holding Board Meetings during working hours limits the involvement of a large number of members of the public. The view at the Sub-Group meeting was the evening meetings would be preferable for public engagement, but I realise that may not suit a number of Board members. Perhaps as a compromise the two Board meetings each year that incorporate a Public Forum should be held outside normal working hours.

## Suggested Actions

- The Officer Group coordinates a plan of meeting dates for the next year, to be agreed at the next Board meeting.
- To encourage public engagement and attendance at Board meetings, the two meetings a year that incorporate a Public Forum should be held outside normal working hours.

Robert Whittaker

*GTDP Community Sub-Group Chair*

11-Mar-2019

## Annex — GTDP Website Issues

A quick look at various pages of the GTDP website at <http://www.gtdp.org.uk/> reveals a lot of places where the content needs updating.

- The last Board meeting listed at <http://www.gtdp.org.uk/board> is 11 June 2018.
- The Terms of Reference at <http://www.gtdp.org.uk/board> is not the most recently agreed version.
- The list of members of the Community Sub-Group at <http://www.gtdp.org.uk/community-subgroup-members> needs updating following the Independent Member recruitment process.
- The news page at <http://www.gtdp.org.uk/news> has no new items since May 2018.
- The “Have Your Say” page at <http://www.gtdp.org.uk/get-involved> still includes details of the Community Sub-Group recruitment from last summer, and still lists the Community Governance Review Consultation and SUE Phase 1a Planning Application as open consultations, with nothing more recent included.
- All three of the regeneration pages linked from <http://www.gtdp.org.uk/regeneration> need updating with details of more recent developments.