

Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan update for the Annual Parish Meeting 6th May 2021

The the last Annual Meeting update was in 2019 so this report will briefly review what has been happening since then.

Engaging a planning consultant

Having no planning expertise in the group, we engaged a planning consultant to help us develop and write the plan. We approached several people, obtained quotes and started working with Sally Chapman after a successful initial meeting.

As a large proportion of our grant funding is likely to go on paying for her help, here is an outline of what she is bringing to the project. It includes knowledge of the planning environment, including policy, language and how planning decisions are made. The aim is for her to write the plan and help make it as influential as possible, directing our efforts to what can be achieved rather than what cannot. She also brings enthusiasm and experience in moving the Neighbourhood Plan process forward.

Background

Sally, who lives at Wing, Buckinghamshire, previously worked as a policy planner in Bedfordshire. She first worked on neighbourhood planning in Central Bedfordshire, then in villages near her home in Aylesbury Vale. She was now contracted to various neighbourhood plan groups. She is a Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

Supporting documents

2019 saw us gathering information about the village and developing supporting documents for the plan, such as a history, a transport report, and early work on a character assessment, which looked at housing styles, street layout etc.

Developing the questionnaire

This used the results from the feedback form and drew on other questionnaires. Drafts were tested and clarifications made. Effort was put into making questions about the school, in particular, as neutral as possible. Feedback showed a strong preference for online completion.

Mike Jones used his expertise to make a bright and professional paper version and Sam Zalin-Miller recreated it on Survey Monkey.

Questionnaire distribution

This was put on hold over spring and summer due to COVID-19. We came back to it in the autumn and decided to go ahead, with an emphasis on online completion. The questionnaire was available online 27 Oct to 21 Dec 2020, released just as lockdown started. Hard copies could also be collected/returned to Ickleford Stores or via a phone messaging service.

It was extensively publicised via posters, banners, email, Facebook and a leaflet to every household. The limited opportunity for face-to-face contact meant effort was put

into making the posters and banners very visible across the whole village with bright reminder notices added towards the end of the consultation period and reminders on social media.

A total 355 questionnaires were received, all but 10 of which were completed online. This is a response rate of around 40%, which is good for this type of survey, even without COVID restrictions.

The postcode data indicated a broad coverage across the village, with age profile data similar to the 2011 census. There was a higher proportion of homeowners and greater car ownership than the 2011 census data. There may therefore have been a smaller proportion of lower income households/vulnerable people taking part than the wider population.

Given the good overall response rate and the large degree of agreement across many themes, this is unlikely to have a great impact on the value of the findings on most issues. However, it should be borne in mind in considering areas such as housing affordability and public transport, and reminds us that the neighbourhood plan should address the needs of the whole community.

Analysis of findings

The data was pulled out of Survey Monkey as Excel spreadsheets. Numerical data was put into charts and tables. Analysis of written comments involved a bit more work. For each question, one member of the steering group developed codes for different concepts, which were then reviewed and merged into more general themes. These were then reviewed by a second steering group member. The work was greatly assisted by an Excel coding template created by Robert Overett. Respondents provided lots of detailed written comments, with some questions yielding over a hundred responses.

Although the analysis of qualitative data is always subjective to some extent, we wanted to be as balanced in our approach as possible. Residents had put a lot of time and effort into doing the survey and we wanted to draw out as much as we could from their data.

Judith has just been given a draft report for the Parish Council to consider and feedback on. We plan to share this more widely when it is finalised and are also working on some slides to summarise the findings in a more accessible manner.

Next steps

We have recently had a workshop with Sally to start developing our vision and objectives, and the plan policies. Sally is currently redrafting it following our first round of feedback. We will continue to develop this and draw together the evidence to support the plan, with Sally then writing plan.

Finances and grant applications

At the end of each financial year unspent funds must be returned to the funding body, Locality/Groundwork, and grant reapplied for. This has just been done so there is currently very little in the account.

Following discussions at the workshop and Sally's advice, Louise has applied for two technical support packages as well as the general grant. These are for developing design codes and for a new housing assessment. We are keen to include the best data we can to strengthen and support the plan.

Louise and I had a diagnostic call yesterday with AECOM, who provide the technical support, to determine our needs. He will be recommending we are given the support and we hope to hear from Locality by the end of May. AECOM would be paid directly by Locality, separately from the general grant. However, there is a possibility that the general grant may not be confirmed until the technical support is finalised.

2021 financial summary

The 2020-21 grant was for £8172.00. We spent £1669.81, as broken down below, and returned £6502.19 (many thanks to Judith for admin involving all these payments).

A new grant has been applied for covering almost the balance of the £10,000 we can have over the course of the plan. We hope that this will take us to completion. We are currently awaiting notification that the funds have been approved - it may be waiting for the approval of our technical support (see above), but we have no outgoings planned until then that would not be covered by the balance of our David Barnard locality grants (£183.50)

Domain names	£197.74
Survey Monkey	£384.00
Mobile phone	£12.99
Posts for signboards	£70.50
Amber Publications (leaflet distribution)	£42.00
Printing costs	£412.00
Brochure holders / drop boxes / plastic envelopes	£58.58
Sally Chapman Invoice 2	£420.00
Banners	£72.00