

# LOOK! ST ALBANS

*Inspired by the past...Picture your future!*

Minutes from the inaugural AGM of Look! St Albans - Our Community Voice on Design held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2013 at 7.00pm at Dagnall Street Baptist Church Upper Dagnall Street

Secretary designate established that there was a quorate in place in anticipation of the adoption of the constitution in part 4 of the meeting.

## **Part 1**

**19:00 to 19:15** Signing in and viewing of our draft design codes with comments from our 20th March meeting

## **Part 2 19:15 Guest speaker Tony Burton CBE:**

Chairman designate welcomed everyone on a bitterly cold evening and introduced Tony Burton who gave a talk with presentation on 'the planning power shift' brought about by the Localism Act.

Tony Burton talked of communities up and down the country taking up the opportunities of the new community rights found within the Localism Act; to challenge, to bid, to build and to plan. These opportunities helped communities to change the language and the starting point, from consultation to collaboration.

The presentation ended with questions and discussion points raised by members from the floor.

A flavour of comments questions and answers given are as follows;

**Question: Can neighbourhood planning meet the local challenges on highways issues?**

Reply: A neighbourhood plan can only deal with highways issues that directly affect the plan. The best way to tackle such issues TB would suggest is to build a relationship with key persons within the highways' department to raise the issues of concern.

**Comment from resident: During the last few years I have noticed that neighbours are more willing to talk to others in their area about many local issues.**

**Question: The initiatives you have described have already been tried by the local civic society without success. How will this achieve anything different?**

Reply: What is being proposed by Look! St Albans is completely different from the role that civic societies generally perform.

**Comment from resident: What is being proposed by Look! St Albans is excellent and I cannot understand why anyone at the meeting tonight would not be enthusiastic about it.**

### **Part 3 Introduction of AGM**

#### **Formal AGM commenced at 20:10**

Chairman designate introduced those standing for the representatives group.

Apologies for absence from those standing for the representatives group were read out; Councillor Daly, Catherine Morris, David Ellis and Fiona Couper who had provided a substitute Susie Noon for this meeting.

A number of people unable to attend had sent their best wishes and had asked to be kept informed of Look! St Albans progress. These best wishes came from a wide diversity of people interested in the project, including the mayor and deputy mayor, landowners, residents, architects and developers. Anne Main MP had sent her apologies as she did try to rearrange her diary to enable her attend the AGM but was unable to do so. She asked to be kept informed of Look! St Albans work and asked for a copy of the draft minutes from the AGM. Chairman designate assured those present these would be available via email where possible and posted on the Scribd web site <http://www.scribd.com/LookStAlbans>

#### **Chairman designate briefly updated the meeting on activities and financial position since the joint presentation of the workshop report in March 2013.**

The chairman designate handed over to the treasurer designate the sum of £186.76 which comprised of money collected at the March meeting plus a donation since received.

At the March meeting those present gave the then steering group the mandate to go away and prepare to become a fully constituted group. Afterwards Chris Debenham, Pat Larner and Vanessa Gregory formed a constitution sub group, later to be joined by Richard Hardy and Mel Hilbrow. They reviewed some neighbourhood forum's constitutions to see how these could be adapted to meet the needs of Look! St Albans. After consultation within the steering group a draft constitution had been prepared and circulated widely and was being offered for adoption at the AGM tonight.

Chairman designate invited members of the representatives group to join her on the platform and to answer some of the questions people had asked in advance of the meeting. The following gives a flavour of the answers given, but are not verbatim.

### **1) How is Look! St Albans funded? Answered by Vanessa Gregory**

Look! St Albans was able to access through The Princes Foundation for Building Community funding from Department of Communities and Local Government 'communities in planning programme'. This funded the workshops, open meetings and production of our 'Design workshop report updated January 2013'. Members of the steering group gave funds or help in kind towards publicity, venues and catering.

To carry on with our work we will need donations from our supporters and look into the availability of grants etc, which we will have to look at quite urgently post AGM. We could not apply for any grants until we become constituted. It is expected that developers will part fund charrettes and associated meetings.

### **2) Surely asking developers to part fund the charrettes and associated meetings will skew any outcome in their favour? Answered by Vanessa Gregory**

On any major development developers set aside sizeable sums of money to consult the community prior to submitting a planning application. By using that sum earlier on to fund independently facilitated design charrettes and associated meetings, this will ensure both the community and the developer have a more meaningful dialogue. Look! St Albans would bring to the table the draft design codes as found in the design workshop report update January 2013. It is important that the facilitators are well trained and we are fortunate in Look! St Albans to have built contacts with such trained professionals.

### **3) Does Look! St Albans comment on planning applications? Answered by Mel Hilbrow**

No. Look! St Albans is working within the spirit of neighbourhood collaborative planning. Look! does not *react* to planning applications our aim is to be *proactive* before substantial areas for redevelopment in central St Albans reach that stage. After a charrette and associated meetings have taken place on a specific site, *where consensus has been achieved*, Look! will produce to the developer, the Local Planning Authority, the Highways Authority and widely accessible local news channels a letter of recommendation for the jointly-created designs, supported by Look! St Albans. Should anyone or organisation who has taken part in the charrette and associated meetings, or indeed chose not to take part they still have the right to make their own representations in the usual way when the local authority has received a planning application.

### **4) What is Look! St Albans views on Pound shops? Answered by Mel Hilbrow**

Look! St Albans does not have a view on such issues; unless it is a design issue on a proposed new building containing shops. These draft codes can be found in our community-led collaborative 'Design workshop report updated January 2013'.

**5) Where does Look! St Albans see itself in three years time? Answered by Mel Hilbrow**

Hopefully Look! will have held a successful charrette and associated meetings, where a consensus has been built on design, which will have enabled to speed up the planning process. Look! would also like to see the building works commenced to allow everyone to see the buildings and open spaces we had helped design!

**6) Has Look! St Albans looked at becoming a charity? Answered by Chris Debenham**

This is not something Look! St Albans has actively looked into to date. Some neighbourhood forums have considered it, but I don't know of any who have. To be registered as a charity, Look! St Albans would have a charitable purpose e.g. 'the advancement of citizenship/community development'. There would be tax benefits of being a charity, but at the moment we cannot say that that Look! St Albans will generate sufficient income to warrant having such exemptions.

**7) Why has look! St Albans changed the name from steering group to representatives group? Answered by Tim Leicester**

Hopefully with the agreement of members tonight of a constitution a steering group becomes superfluous, as our purpose and aims will be agreed within the constitution. Having looked at a range of neighbourhood forum's constitutions it seemed to the constitution sub group, and agreed by the rest of the then steering group, that post AGM representatives group was the best description of what the group is. A group of people representing either a group or themselves as individuals to pursue the purpose and aims of Look! St Albans. To be a member of Look! St Albans reps group, each member agrees to the ethos and helping to arrange and take part in one charrette, associated meetings and community engagement per year should that be required.

**8) Why use the word charrette? Answered by Vanessa Gregory**

The word charrette is the correct description for what we plan to hold and is internationally recognised. They are very popular in North America and the Scottish government launched a £100,000 fund in August of this year to "*support design projects, known as charrettes, where local residents and businesses work with expert teams to create ideas for the future of their local area.*" A visioning charrette 'The Herts Guide to Growth' was held in Hertfordshire about 5 years ago, so it is not unheard of locally either.

**Part 4 Name, constitution and voting**

**Vote for Name:** Deputy Chairman designate introduced the name LOOK! ST ALBANS - OUR COMMUNITY VOICE ON DESIGN and asked for any questions on name. None were asked.

Deputy Chairman designate then proposed a vote and asked for a seconder for the proposal, Chris Debenham seconded. Vote was taken with unanimous approval.

**Introduction of Constitution:** Chairman designate introduced the constitution and formally identified Appendix A. Also drew attention to 5.2 (e) Admin group, those who have volunteered will offered to be ratified at 1<sup>st</sup> Rep group meeting after AGM.

Chairman designate informed the meeting that the admin group were volunteers drawn from the existing steering group, or those who had been intimately involved with the project for a long time, to offer continuity to the group going forward. The steering group mainly consisted of those heavily involved in other groups, therefore volunteers who had time to give for extra duties were asked to serve on the admin group. Fortunately enough volunteers stepped forward to fill the posts. The Chairman designate pointed out these were not positions of prestige to the individuals concerned, as during a charrette and associated meetings no one will have a louder voice than any other member of the community.

Chairman designate asked for any questions on the draft constitution. None were raised.

Chairman designate then proposed a vote and asked for a seconder Mike Hartley seconded. Vote was taken with unanimous approval.

This was greeted with a round of applause from those present.

### **Part 5 Conclusion**

Chairman designate thanked everyone for their support and reminded supporters there is no membership fee as Look! St Albans cannot have any barriers for anyone from the community who wishes in take part. Therefore any donations anyone could make in money or time would be gratefully received. Boxes were at the back of the Church for contributions.

The chairman designate declared the AGM closed at 20:41

These minutes were approved by those present and signed by the chairman at the 2<sup>nd</sup> AGM on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015

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Chair Look! St Albans Our Community Voice on Design