

Endorsement of Pitcombe Parish Plan 2015 (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to present a summary of the findings and actions from the Pitcombe Parish Plan and to ask members to formally endorse the plan.

Representatives of the steering group will be at the meeting to present the plan for endorsement.

Public Interest

Communities establish their own priorities and achieve their goals by mobilising residents and businesses. The priorities and issues for Pitcombe, identified through consultation, are set out along with specific solutions and actions in a published document.

Recommendation

That Area East Committee formally endorses the Pitcombe Parish Plan.

Background

Community Plans are effectively commissioned by the town/parish council and produced by local steering group with parish/town council representation. As they are primarily local documents, Town/Parish councils formally adopt them and endorsement by Area Committees has no legal status. Endorsement does however ensure that the community planning process is used to influence policy and action plans in particular the Area Development Plan (ADP).

Endorsement relates specifically to recognition of priorities and our support for helping them deliver the plan in a non-spatial sense but does not imply support for any land use allocation that would pre-empt a planning application. The full plan is attached as a separate document.

The Process

Pitcombe Parish Council started work on the parish plan in 2013 and circulated a wide-ranging questionnaire. The results of the household survey were used to produce a first draft which was launched at the Annual Parish Meeting in 2004. The draft was made available for comment and consultation, and the responses were used as a basis for a wider ranging and longer term policy document.

SSDC input has been minimal with some initial guidance provided at the beginning of the process and a grant through the Community grant scheme. The result is a very high quality policy document which should be useful for guiding local decision making on a range of issues including future planning applications.

The data gathered has been used to define some overall objectives which are used through the plan as the underlying basis for the 'approach for the future preservation and sustainability of the parish'. These objectives can be found on page 6 of the plan which has been sent to members under separate cover.

Actions based on key findings/major Issues

The Final report survey findings and actions have been arranged under the themes, Planning, Roads, Traffic & Public Transport, Parish Facilities & Cooperation, The PPC & Coordination, Emergency Services, Enterprise, Employment & Commerce, Flood Protection and Natural Environment.

Planning and development

The plan sets out very clearly the role of the Parish Council and the broader context and tiers of planning policy. It will be used to inform responses to planning applications and discussions with potential developers.

The plan communicates the concern felt by residents about unwanted development and states that there should be limited occasions on which the parish will endorse residential development. It also sets out examples of development that might be appropriate such as conversion of a former agricultural building, adaption of existing property to meet the needs of the current residents.

The main objective 'to protect the visual amenity, character and peaceful nature of the parish', so highly valued by the community, will be used to guide the Parish Council responses to planning applications. - It is the officer's view that further work could be done to describe the character such as a landscape study or a village design statement but this would need to be taken on by the Parish Council.

Roads, Traffic and Transport

The plan identifies a number of solutions that could help address issue of increasing levels of traffic on roads in the parish. It also acknowledges that they cannot be implemented by the Parish Council without support from SCC Highways. Solutions include:-

- A 30 mph speed limit between Ansford and Grove Cross; possibly beyond to Hadspen House
- Improve safety at Grove Cross junction by improving signage
- Support a 20mph ahead of physical calming on stretch of A359 past schools
- Review of limits, markings and signage
- Better clearance of mud on the roads by those causing it
- Changes to the A37 to accommodate larger lorries
- Consider possible improvements to bus service
- Investigate the potential for a parish transport sharing scheme
- Explore better use of community transport (CATbus & Winibus)

Parish Facilities and Co-operation

- The PPC, the hall, the church and the Pitcombe News considering the establishment of a Parish Coordination Group with a view to providing a forum for coordinating the parish programme of events, and possibly even generating discussion on policy level issues of interest to the parish.
- The hall encouraging ideas for new activities and events serving a broader age range, and creating even more opportunities for new volunteers to assist in organising and running events or to become involved as Trustees;
- The Pitcombe News as a key asset to the parish should be a high priority for continued fostering, both in terms of funding as well as support in kind, from all parish bodies and the parish community.

The PPC and Co-ordination

- An increased capacity, in the PPC, for closer planning co-ordination and response cohesion, using greater in house planning expertise to respond to development schemes impacting on the parish and generated within surrounding town councils, or at SSDC or County Council level.
- A summary of the agreed parish plan being distributed to all parish households.
- The PPC holding additional parish meetings during the year, separate from statutory annual and monthly PPC meetings, to inform, or update, or discuss specific matters that may be of concern to residents.
- The parish website being much more pro-active and useable than it is, perhaps with another co-opted volunteer to enhance and run it. It might also be worth considering Twitter or Facebook as an additional form of internal parish communication.
- Residents being informed in advance of the main and/or controversial issues arising (through the website/Pitcombe News/Twitter); and using the same methods of communication parishioners can be invited to raise their own issues for debate or for answers.
- Specifically for planning related matters, promoters of potential development affecting the parish either within or outside its boundaries invited to hold an open meeting to explain and debate their plans prior to formal planning applications being made.
- A wider range of issues to be reported to the Pitcombe News.
- Residents to be encouraged to use and develop the existing internal 'grape vine' to pass on details of issues that warrant consideration by all.

Emergency Services

- To consider ways of obtaining increased awareness, and possible subject matter expertise through the auspices of the PPC, who could also lead the way to establish regular liaison with emergency service representatives, perhaps through a programmed series of informative briefings and demonstrations.
- Through the above action the parish may come to consider what self-help measures might improve any given gaps in cover – for example the provision of a defibrillator at the village hall.

Enterprise, Employment and Commerce

- The parish supporting the maintenance, and expansion where appropriate, of the existing commercial activities.

- In considering any new enterprise or commercially based development proposals, the PPC as policy (addressed under the section 'Other planning related development') to encourage small scale commercial and industrial use of land provided that protection of the existing environment be the principal determinant.
- The PPC consulting existing parish businesses, to explore issues of importance to them.
- Home workers be invited to get together to comment on the efficacy and efficiency of existing broadband internet provision and coverage of mobile phone providers, with a view to the PPC considering what representations should be made on their behalf.
- The PPC to explore the opportunities to engage with BT Openreach with a view to pursuing communications improvements.

Implementation of the community plan

The plan has been adopted by Pitcombe Parish Council. It is expected that the Parish Council will instigate regular independent reviews of the Parish Plan to ensure that it is achieving the recommendations and to reappraise the relevance of the plan to the village at the appropriate times.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report however, if members agree the recommendation to endorse the plan, actions and projects identified will become eligible for support from the Community Planning Implementation budget subject to application.

Corporate Priority Implications

This work contributes towards increasing economic vitality and prosperity and ensuring safe, sustainable and cohesive communities.

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications

Improved local provision of facilities and activities within each village or town and increasing local participation reduce the need to travel.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The community planning process supported by SSDC aims to give every local resident the opportunity to have an input into the way in which their town or Parish develops.

Background Papers: *Pitcombe Parish Plan 2015*
