

Ponteland Community Partnership
Annual General Meeting Wednesday 20th May 2015

Venue: Merton Hall, Ponteland.

Meeting Opened at 19.00.

Attending: Brian Prickett, Shirley Hill, Christine Greenwell, Syd Cowan, Frank Harrington, Alma Dunigan, PC Rob Anderson, George Clasper, Sheila Campbell and Mike Brown.

Apologies: Robin Ramsay and Carl Rawlings.

Welcome: The meeting was opened by the current Chairman Brian Prickett who welcomed all present.

Minutes from A.G.M. 21st May 2014: were read and passed.

Chairman's Report: As this will be my last Chairman's Report I am including a brief review of the progress that the PCP has made since its inception by the Interim Steering Group in October 2003. This progress has been severely limited by the continuing obfuscation and lack of information or support from the NCC.

Under the stewardship of Kevin Flaherty the Partnership kept going on a shoestring until support from Castle Morpeth put the Ponteland Community Partnership (PCP) on a more formal basis.

At that time, the PCP was one of four community partnerships established by Castle Morpeth Borough Council in accordance with the precepts of the Local Government Act 2000. These partnerships were responsible to Advancing Castle Morpeth, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for Castle Morpeth. The LSP linked in with the county wide Northumberland Strategic Partnership, thus providing a non-political route to the County Council. With the enlightened support of an annual grant of £100k from Castle Morpeth, over £1M of grant funding was levered in for local projects. This was all abolished by the Unitary Authority in 2009.

Activities:

Publication of Pont News & Views in conjunction with the Ponteland Town Council.
Supporting funding applications by local societies and organisations.

To achieve this, the PCP has the following Executive Committee sub-Groups, who are reporting later:-

Regeneration – Written report submitted by its retiring Chairman Mr Raymond Sproul.
Youth – report by PC Rob Anderson.

Transport – report by Mr David Gambles.
Environment – report by Mr George Clasper.
Neighbourhood Plan – report by Mrs Alma Dunigan.

The most significant activities of the PCP over the years have been the publication of Pont News & Views and the Merton Way regeneration project. As well as these projects the PCP has been instrumental in supporting funding applications for a wide range of local Ponteland societies and organisations, amounting to some £200,000.

From its first eight page issue in October 2005, Pont News & Views has flourished under the editorship of Chris Jennings. It is now up to issue 116, many comprising 20 pages, and keeps the community formed of the activities of the Town Council as well as the wide range of local societies and organisations.

In early 2007 the responsibility for overseeing the Merton Way regeneration passed to the PCP. The Regeneration sub-Group was set up charged with preparing a Design Brief. After a lot of hard work by Ray Sproul and his team the brief was produced and later endorsed by Castle Morpeth and approved by the community at a public meeting in February 2008. Potential developers were sought, two were approved and both prepared their proposals that were put out to public consultation in early 2009. This resulted in a preferred developer, MKP Partnership being endorsed by the Town Council and Castle Morpeth Borough Council.

The introduction of the Unitary Authority for Northumberland later in 2009 meant that the PCP's project team had to work with a totally new County Council administration. It soon became obvious that the County Council representatives, in my opinion, resisted progress with the project possibly because it had originated from the PCP and did not fit in with the County's infrastructure planning. Unfortunately, this approach has been perpetuated by the NCC's development arm, ARCH, judging by their continued lack of information or response the Ponteland Community Trust's proposals about the local library site. All this could have had a significant effect on the community's perception of the PCP's apparent lack of progress with the regeneration project.

On the positive side, we have been able to refurbish the Play Park on Callerton Lane, and also create a small skate park on an adjacent piece of land. This latter project has had its problems with noise complaints and lack of support from the contractor. Our latest project, a play pitch on the High School site has stalled due to the County Council's declared future plans for the Leisure Centre and school sites on Callerton Lane creating land tenancy uncertainty for potential funders.

Also I have been privileged to attend meetings of the Ponteland Community Trust and Ageing Well in Ponteland on your behalf.

Thanks:

I would like to express my thanks for the support I have received from our officers over the last eight years, Vice Chairman, Syd Cowan, Hon Secretary, Shirley Hill, and Hon Treasurer Christine Greenwell. The successes that we have achieved as a Community Partnership are due to the level of teamwork by the members of the Executive Committee in our sub-groups. In that regard, thanks are due to the sub-group chairmen, Ray Sproul –

Regeneration, George Clasper – Environment, David Gambles – Transport, Sheila Campbell and Rob Anderson – Youth and Alma Dunigan – Neighbourhood Plan Group.

The Future:

We are in a time of considerable uncertainty.

The impact of NCC's Core Strategy housing requirements has yet to be resolved. The inclusion of libraries into the County's leisure portfolio has significant implications for the town centre. The outcome of the Birney Hill housing enquiry has yet to be announced. Perhaps this is the time for the PCP to review its objectives and decide in which direction it wishes to go. I give my best wishes to the incoming Chairman for the future of the PCP.

Finally, I would like to reiterate my thanks to the Officers and all the members of the Executive Committee for the help and support you have given me over the period of my chairmanship.

Brian Prickett

There was a unanimous vote of thanks expressed to Brian for his eight years of dedicated work for the Partnership.

Treasurer's Report:

Christine Greenwell explained the accounts for PN&V as presented by the Ponteland Town Council and they were accepted.

The Ponteland Community Partnership balance was £243.63.
She then left the meeting at 19.30.

Reports from Chairmen of sub-Groups.

A Regeneration:

Raymond Sproul reported that early in 2014 the Northumberland County Council decided that the regeneration of Ponteland Town Centre which had been taken to the Preferred Developer stages by the PCP under the guidance of the previous administration of Castle Morpeth Borough Council would not be carried forward by them. This decision being taken after prolonged discussions between the preferred Developer and the administration.

They communicated this decision to Ponteland Town Council by letter, but did not have the courtesy to inform the PCP who had worked so hard on the Town Centre Proposal over many years; they also published this information to the local press.

In the communication they indicated that a Ponteland Town Centre Regeneration would be considered for the future but that this would be undertaken by their in-house Development Team ARCH.

The CEO of Arch Development Team called a meeting in September 2014 of all interested parties, with representatives from the Town Council, the Neighbourhood Plan Group, and

the PCP, to introduce himself and the Arch Team. It was indicated that Consultants with expertise in the retail and commercial property field would be appointed to look at the potential for the future of the Town Centre development. In the course of this meeting the representatives of the PCP asked that all parties be kept up to date on progress.

An e-mail was recently sent to Arch reminding them of this request, but at the time of writing this report, no response has been received.

Finally, as Chairman of the PCP regeneration sub-group I thank every member of the PCP for their support and encouragement throughout the years we have attempted to get Ponteland regenerated. Raymond Sproul.

Warm thanks were expressed to Raymond Sproul for his tireless efforts as Chairman of the Regeneration Committee. Brian Prickett would be writing to him.

B Environment:

George Clasper reported that it had not been an easy year for the Environment Committee. He said they had expressed their concerns for the following proposals:

- The development of the Old Mill site and its effect on the area.
- The Lugano decked viewing platform at 50 Runnymede Road and its impact on the neighbourhood.
- The access road into land behind the Italian Restaurant in the village.
- The very dirty state of the access road and paintwork to the rear of the Darras Hall shops.
- Worries concerning environmental issues in the Park and some footpaths.

Because most of the above issues could only be resolved by other bodies i.e. the PTC, the NCC, the DHEC, and the Ponteland Footpath and Bridle Path Groups it was decided to look at the future role of the Environment Committee. Because of the duplication of the raised topics the decision was made to meet just twice a year unless anything urgent necessitated an additional meeting.

Another problem had been getting all the Committee together for a meeting due to other commitments but, I would like to thank them for their concerns and their loyalty.

C Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Progress Report.

May 2014

3 meetings with the NCC

June 2014

Training for the group on "Preparing for the Visions & Objectives Event" by Planning Aid. 1 meeting with NCC

August 2014

Planning & preparation for Visions & Objectives Consultation event

1 meeting with ARCH

September 2014

Project Manager resigned

Visions & Objectives Community Consultation Events at the Memorial Hall

Surprise visit from Guy Oppermann to the Consultation Event

Who was invited? – all residents (through PN&V), Statutory Organisations, NCC, Education & Youth facilities, Business & Community/Social facilities.

October 2014

Analysis of the Consultation Community Event. Overwhelming support by the community on the work carried out by the Neighbourhood Plan Group.

Concerns & General Comments:-

- Importance of Character Statement maintaining the Greenbelt and keeping the strategic separation between Ponteland and Newcastle International Airport.
- Build housing that we need; use Brownfield sites, area prone to flooding & flash floods, maintenance of the river, watercourses, ditches, infrastructure overload.
- Regeneration of shopping facilities at Merton Way and Broadway with possible relocation of Industrial Estate.
- Manage traffic congestion; improve public transport, parking, cycle ways and possible relief road.
- Healthcare over capacity, greater use of school facilities for all age groups.
- 2 meetings with NCC

November 2014

Business Confidence Survey commissioned for Merton Way, Main Street, Meadowfield Industrial Estate and Broadway.

The way forward from the Community from the Community Consultation

- Planning Issues, Role of Ponteland in Northumberland
- Community Aspirations, flood protection, locations for business, housing allocation, conservation, future of Meadowfield Industrial Estate, Merton Way and Broadway.
- Possible relief road.

December 2014

Recommendation to the Town Council not to support the NCC Final Draft Core Strategy

January 2015

Continuing discussions with stakeholders

NCC Local Plan “Training Workshop” on Housing & Greenbelt.

February 2015

NCC “Training Workshop” on Employment Land & Premises Demand Study.

April 2015

The engagement of an Independent Planning Consultant reviewing all evidence and progress since 2012 as a pre-examination health check.

Invitation from NCC to contribute to a study on Retail/Business future demand in Ponteland.

Future

- Attend Party in the Park 2015
- Amendments to Neighbourhood Plan.

C Transport

In his absence David Gambles had not submitted a report.

D Youth

Rob Anderson reported that this year saw an end to the proposed Play Pitch being sited on the High School ground. The NCC's Core Strategy proposals indicated the High School being moved to Rotary Way, possibly in about five years' time and therefore such a facility as the Play Pitch would not now be looked at for the current site.

The advent of the 3G pitch at the Middle School has been welcomed but it has a timetable and has to be paid for. This is understandable as it needs to be maintained but the idea of a play pitch where no one has to book in or pay should still be considered and would be most in favour with the local youth.

Brian Prickett had managed to secure some funding to contribute to the £40,000 required to buy and set up a play pitch which should still be available but a new site is urgently needed before this money is used elsewhere.

Alma Dunigan and Rob Anderson spoke to Ashley Brown of Northumberland Youth Services and he is in agreement with ideas involving funding for the Youth Club and activities surrounding it. Alma was looking at projects which could be encompassed into the Core Strategy and Ashley appeared interested and supportive. There is still a potential for using an instructor to take a group of 10 youths to Higham Lakes for a day's fishing lessons.

The Skate Park is well attended and despite a complaint from a local resident it is still being used regularly by local young people of ages ranging from 8-18 years old. They appear to have taken more of an ownership of the facility and even go so far as to discourage other youths, who they see as being a potential threat to it being closed, from attending.

Election of Officers: 20th May 2015.

Nominations were received for:-

- Chairman - Alma Dunigan
- Vice Chairman - Syd Cowan
- Hon. Secretary - Shirley Hill
- Hon. Treasurer - Christine Greenwell

Member of the Executive:- Brian Prickett.

All of the above were unanimously elected but the election of sub-Group Chairmen was deferred until the June Meeting. This was deemed necessary as new Chairman, Alma Dunigan, felt that the PCP needed to be in a new place with a revised format for the future because the regeneration of Ponteland was now encapsulated within the Neighbourhood

Plan Group and there was also the advent of the Community Trust to take into consideration.

Elected Members of the Executive Council were:-

Brian Prickett, Frank Harrington, George Clasper, Mike Brown, Robin Ramsay and Sheila Campbell.

Co-opted: Carl Rawling – Mayor
Rob Anderson - Police Authority and Youth.
Churches Together – Faith Representation.

As newly elected Chairman Alma Dunigan said, having been involved with the initial inception of the PCP, it was nice to now return. She stated that she was fully committed to taking the group forward into a new chapter where it was essential to engage with our community, but that she had great respect for Brian Prickett's eight years of leadership.

Alma felt the following matters were paramount for the raising of the profile of the PCP:-

- Relaunch of the PCP in September
- A tailored web-site/facebook page.
- Insurance cover/vital
- Co-operation with Chris Jennings raising profile.
- Grant application for funding/essential.
- New youth activities.
- Seek organisations that might join us.
- Northumberland Clubs for Young People shown interest/Andy Render.
- Seek representative from Business Forum.
- Seek young representative from the High School.
- Activities for all age groups.
- Co-operation with U3A and Merton Hall.

These ideas were well received and supported by the group.

Alma again thanked the committee for accepting her as Chairman and expressed hope for the future.

A.O.B. None.

Date and Time of next PTC Meeting:- 17th June 2015 7.p.m. Merton Hall.