**Summary of Neighbourhood Plan Public Meeting**

**Neighbourhood Plan Open Meeting - 4th November 2017, at Saxmundham Free School.**

**Introduction:**

Jeremy Smith, Chair of Saxmundham Neighbourhood Planning initiative, opened the meeting with an overview of the long-term objectives and milestones to be adopted within the Neighbourhood planning process.

He underlined that that a Neighbourhood Plan is not a local Council initiative; it is, and needs to be, a community initiative, not a top-down exercise. However the process does require the Local Council to set it in motion and to timetable events. We need as many residents as possible to participate, including in the initial formation of (a) an overall Steering Group, and (b) specific Working Groups, as the process evolves.

**Phillip Dunnett**, Chairman of Saxmundham Town Council, reinforced Jeremy’s overview, and emphasized how important it is to make positive gestures about infrastructure, building the long-term future of Saxmundham. We must take care not to be negative; long-term it has to work. The Neighbourhood Plan needs to develop in parallel with the SCDC Local Plan; we need to work together to achieve a successful town and community.

**Gillian Benjamin,** from Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC), explained the obligations of SCDC to support parishes embarking on Neighbourhood Planning exercises; and that the process is eligible for grant funding.

The Neighbourhood Plan should not duplicate the SCDC Local Plan, but must reflect the wishes of the local community; it will culminate in a referendum with the Plan coming into effect if Saxmundham residents vote 51% in favour.

**Therese Coffey,** Suffolk Coastal MP, briefly explained that a successful Neighbourhood Plan increases the Community Infrastructure Levy, from new developments, from 15% to 25%. This to be used to fund community projects.

Following the presentations Jeremy Smith invited participants to work together in smaller groups to cover the following questions:

* What are the main issues and challenges facing Saxmundham, present and future?
* What needs to be done to create the necessary changes?

**Key points from group discussions, by theme:**

Each group reported on the main points arising from its members’ discussions, and these have been grouped into specific themes, to help in analying them. The groups had also been invited – if wished - to note points on large yellow sheets, and at the end of this note, we have transcribed these (as best we can!) for information.

General points on Plan

* A Neighbourhood Plan can only be a good thing.
* SCDC Local Plan will take precedence until Saxmundham NP is complete.
* The developed Plan needs to be Long-term not Short fix.
* Look at a holistic infrastructure, education, roads, activities.

Improving communication

* Contact from the centre lacking (Saxmundham Town Council and SCDC).
* Saxmundham needs more joined-up communications and coordination.
* Too much misinformation, the town needs to be better informed from the centre.

Key points for Saxmundham’s future

* Turn Saxmundham into a destination town.
* Saxmundham needs new business and employment.
* Young people - the next generation need to be provided for.
* There isn’t enough employment - decide dormitory town or working community.
* Is Saxmundham a dormitory town, a local community with employment opportunities or a heritage town which is attractive to visitors
* Think about the impact of Sizewell C.
* The railway station is a blot on the landscape and a very poor introduction to Saxmundham [point made before station building burnt!]

Town Centre issues

* The Town Centre needs to change.
* No through traffic in High street will be beneficial and make a difference.
* Parking is a massive issue in Saxmundham.
* Shops need to be open longer - tax incentives to do so.
* The White Hart opening is key to a vibrant high street.
* The developed Plan needs to be Long-term not Short fix.
* Pedestrianisation of the high street.
* Derelict buildings needs to be addressed - particularly the White Hart.
* Introduction of sustainable businesses - not so at present.
* How to go about town centre regeneration.

Housing & infrastructure

* More affordable housing for local people needs to be provided.
* Use developers as leverage to build community structures.
* The infrastructure doesn’t and won’t support increased housing.
* Why doesn’t Saxmundham attract more CIL than it does currently given the additional houses already built.
* Traffic congestion, too much housing, no services.

Public and community services, leisure & recreation

* Doctors and Dentists at maximum capacity.
* Primary education is at maximum capacity.
* Youth Facilities still inadequate.
* Saxmundham needs a central Community Centre.
* Sports Club is run by a Trust not the community and this needs to change.
* Saxmundham needs a sports hall to encourage good health for the whole community
* Carlton Sports club is run by a trust and the town does not have much input to what is offered
* Develop a Memorial field long-term plan.
* There are no social facilities or open spaces.
* To spend 2 million pounds on the Market Hall isn’t worth it, there are greater priorities for Saxmundham.
* Saxmundham needs a sports hall to encourage good health for the whole community

Environment

* The town requires Cycleways.
* Saxmundham suffers from Wildlife decline - more green space needed.

Transport & mobility (often overlaps with Town Centre)

* Public Transport, particularly buses requires coordination.
* Bus services are inadequate.
* Parking is a massive issue in Saxmundham.
* More cycle ways and walkways needed.
* Traffic lights are inadequate, as is parking.
* Traffic management is severely lacking as is parking.
* New roads - by pass required.
* Parking.
* Highways always say no to increasing road infrastructure.
* The three junctions onto the A12 are cheap and shoddy solutions

Public safety

* Traffic speed in town is unacceptable.
* Has anyone addressed emergency evacuation in the event of accidental release of radioactive waste?