

Report from Cllr J. Strange

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cllr Strange states they are currently at the stage of providing information to residents of what a Neighbourhood plan is, confirming flyers have already been posted to residents in Wethersfield and will also be distributed to Finchingfield residents within the Villager magazine. Also stated Cornish Hall End have already received the leaflet. Cllr Strange states there has been lots of input from members of the Neighbourhood plan, informative essays have been written on all the different subjects within the Neighbourhood plan which range from health, planning, education. This will form a questionnaire that will be sent out but will need support from residents.

Cllr Strange states there will be grants available from the government but unfortunately, they are not currently available, but in this time the Neighbourhood plan will need financing until the grants are available. Wethersfield Parish Council have put a reserve of £4,500 for the Neighbourhood plan.

Cllr Martin Smith suggests Finchingfield Parish Council earmark the same amount, Kevin Money (RFO) States the Council can set aside money into an earmarked reserve account and money will be released on approval of the council.

Cllr R Stanger states he is not in favour of a Neighbourhood plan, raising concerns in respect of finance, planning, and states this has not been budgeted for, suggests at this point £2,000 is earmarked.

Cllr Martin Smith asks councillors for a show of hands in favour to earmark £2,000, only two hands shown. Before going further Cllr Hammond & Cllr Braithwaite stated they would like to know exactly what the money is going towards. Cllr Duffin stated he is not in support and that Finchingfield Parish Council should match Wethersfield Parish Council's earmarked amount.

Cllr Martin Smith states the earmarked money is not released straight away, as soon as the Neighbourhood plan require funds, the council will be approached with what is specifically required at that time, and what it is for.

Cllr Duffin explains that the money will go towards and fund consultants that will help steer the Neighbourhood plan, the expectation was that government funding would be available now, however they are still waiting for the funding, also states all the good that a Neighbourhood plan can cover. Discussions between councillors whether to propose and earmark £2,000 or £4,500, councillors not in agreement at this moment – discussed further.

Cllr Braithwaite states would need to gain more of an understanding regarding what the Neighbourhood plan is.

Cllr A Stanger states the Neighbourhood plan can only work if BDC has a 5 year housing plan in place.

Cllr Hammond asks when does a decision regarding finance need to be made? Would like to make a decision after knowing more information on the Neighbourhood plan.

Cllr Ault states John Pearce is very knowledgeable, and is an expert in this area, Cllr Ault suggests he comes along to a Finchingfield Parish Council meeting to discuss and explain further and will be able to answer councillor's questions.

Kevin Money (Responsible Financial Officer) states firstly the council will not be spending £2,000, it is being moved to the earmarked reserve account only. The RFO states that in the last two Parish Council meetings £6,000 of unbudgeted money has been moved to the earmarked reserve account, in respect of WASC and the Neighbourhood plan, secondly after reading further in an e-mail it states that Wethersfield have put £4,500 towards the Neighbourhood plan until any grants become available. Therefore, assuming that if any money is given to the Neighbourhood plan from Finchingfield Parish Council, it would be received back via the grant money.

Further discussions between councillors.

RFO suggests if councillors are cautious then to earmark £2,000 in the reserves account which will provide some money in anticipation should it be needed, also stated, and confirmed following Cllr A Stanger's comment that Braintree District Council has 4.7 housing years of life.

Cllr Martin Smith agrees and thanks the RFO.

Cllr Martin Smith proposes to earmark £2,000 Seconded by Cllr R Stanger

RFO to transfer £2,000 from the current account to the earmarked reserve account under the heading Neighbourhood Plan.