

Droitwich Spa Town Council

TOWN MEETING 18TH MARCH 2019

Neighbourhood Plan Project

A subject of strong emotion and opinion during my year in Office as Town Mayor has been the Neighbourhood Plan project and notably the difficult decision to suspend work reached by the Council on 24 September 2018. I wish to reiterate that contrary to various press and social media reporting over recent months, which has not been entirely accurate or well informed – The Town Council IS NOT against the principle of a Neighbourhood Plan for Droitwich Spa.

To clarify further the decision to suspend work was unavoidable given a variety of factors which affected progress and delivery to the original schedule and timescale. Having carefully interpreted these factors with associated options and risks, the best practical decision reached was to suspend work with a recommendation to the new Council Administration after May 2019 for further review of all options at that time. An important key factor in the decision was the significant risk that the original NHP project delivery was too late to influence the ongoing South Worcestershire Development Plan review. As such the original Droitwich Spa Neighbourhood plan project would not have been entirely fit for purpose, not representative of value for the time and money being invested and would have been compromised in terms of longevity and legacy for the Town. These factors within the overall suspension decision have been endorsed by the Leader and Managing Director of Wychavon District Council as of August 2018, who also represented the opinion of the Local Planning Authority.

As determined within the Town Council resolution of 24 September 2018, appreciation is expressed to all involved with the NHP project up until the time of suspension and especially the volunteer group. Moving forward the success of any project relies on positive collaboration, enthusiastic team working, flexibility & tolerance with mutual respect, understanding & trust. I am pleased to report that a very positive discussion has taken place recently on 26 February 2019 between a delegation of the original NHP Group, the Leader of the Town Council and the Town Clerk. This meeting was professional and conducive towards further discussion and preparation of presenting the aforementioned options to the New Council Administration after May 2019. The option to resurrect a Neighbourhood Plan project can of course be considered fully as one of those components and include the work undertaken and learnings up to September 2018.

Copies of this statement are available as a part of my Mayoral report and the forthcoming minutes of this meeting.