

Community Charter and Resolve

On local amenities and sustainable leisure, fitness and culture provision in the Greater Littlehampton area

Preamble

This Charter is a statement of local community vision and resolve for a common-sense approach to decisions about our Locality that are evolving in the Littlehampton Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan and Strategies.

Our Charter sets out how community organisations will pro-actively collaborate and support locally elected Parish, Town, District and County Councillors, as well as Members of Parliament to realise this vision by shaping how the Plans develop and are implemented in our area. ⁱ

Our Charter aims to unlock community empowerment and local knowledge to better balance decisions on all our local amenities and our locality in all its aspects.

The Charter is intended to include all the diverse interests in our Community so all can contribute and shape future policies, but because of recent history a special focus is directed on local Leisure amenities, including the Leisure Centre (Swimming Pool and Sports Dome) and the Windmill on the seafront, and for sustainable leisure provision for 60,000+ people of all ages in greater Littlehampton, to provide for fitness, sport, entertainment, cinema, theatre, culture and leisure, which are at the heart of the well-being of residents of our coastal community, our heritage values and visitor economy.

The Community hereby agrees:

We the undersigned representatives of community organisations of greater Littlehampton agree and resolve the following:

1. On the community vision and core strategy for sustainable leisure provision

In recognition of many factors, including:

- (i) The community value our amenities generate, in part due to strategic location and accessibility not only for Littlehampton residents, but also families in Rustington, East Preston, Angmering and nearby Parishes to the east.
- (ii) The linkages to heritage and tourism centred on the seafront and river.
- (iii) Not to foreclose choices of future generations wishing to expand leisure provision on the waterfront (a core principle of sustainability).

- (iv) Local Strategic Policy to enhance visitor and leisure facilities along Littlehampton's seafront (Littlehampton Vision in latest Local Plan)ⁱⁱ
- not reduce them.

Resolution:

- 1.1. We reconfirm our support for the unanimous position of our locally elected Town and Parish Councils to keep the Windmill Entertainment Centre and Leisure Centre and refurbish them.
- 1.2. We welcome Arun District Council's recent decision (15 May 2013) on Strategy 1b to complete a full financial and viability assessment to compare the existing and potential new sites for a new, or refurbished Leisure Centre, and to undertake further public consultations .ⁱⁱⁱ
- 1.3. We call for a community liaison group (Resolution 3.2) to participate in the viability assessment (for Strategy 1b) and that it include factors we feel important in reaching a decision of such importance to residents.

Including explicit consideration of:

- i. Several key factors, namely:
- (a) Accessibility for all greater Littlehampton residents
 - (b) Public value for money
 - (c) Physical sustainability (of the refurbishment)
 - (d) Continuous provision (potential to build alongside the existing facility).
- ii. Leisure and fitness synergy the existing seafront location offers with:
- (a) Existing leisure in Norfolk Gardens with a balance of provision for all ages (i.e., tennis, bowls, pitch and putt, mini-golf and skate bowl, green space and conservation value)
 - (b) Sea sport and potential to expand and diversify the Aqua Centre
 - (c) Tourism and visitor economy.
- iii. Legitimate public concern on what happens to our Leisure Centre if our community asset is wholly, or partly demolished (recognising that flats are proposed) – (as in the "fast track approval" in the LA Neighbourhood Plan)
- 1.4. We support retaining the Aqua Center and multi-facility Sport Dome as well as their inclusion in Stage 1 work and the viability assessment (Resolution 1.3).
- 1.5. We reinforce our support for the Windmill Petition signed by over 5,400 area residents of all ages to:
- (i) keep local amateur theatre and cinema under one roof at the Windmill Entertainment Centre on Littlehampton's seafront.
 - (ii) support the community (or Inspire Leisure) in whatever is necessary, for the lease/purchase of digital projection equipment for the community's benefit in that cinema.

- 1.6. We call for the immediate restoration of first-run cinema for the residents of greater Littlehampton and categorically reject the notion that these residents should be content with occasional film shown by a Cinema Club in church halls or mobile cinema. The overwhelming vision is to keep Cinema and Theatre under one roof.
- 1.7. We welcome Arun District Council's (15 May 2013) agreement to speak to commercial operators and call for public feedback to the community liaison group for the Windmill (once set-up as in Resolution 3.2)^{iv} at its earliest convenience on the progress so that information on the status may be conveyed by community websites and social media.
- 1.8. We support and encourage commercial and entrepreneur proposals for restoring cinema at the Windmill Entertainment Centre and aim to have a private-community partnership as the best outcome for residents and long term sustainability.
- 1.9. We call for a transfer of the Windmill asset to Littlehampton Town Council (in the manner proposed by Arun District Council in 2002), or to a suitable Community Trust under the Community Right for Asset transfer and engagement of the Government Advisory Service Localities, or other intermediary, to provide third party facilitation of that negotiation, and thereafter community-private model to ensure a quality cinema provision with full community backing.
- 1.10. Overall we reject the notion, in the name of a leisure and cultural strategy, that our prime and most strategic community assets for leisure and culture, which the community has worked hard over the years to fundraise for, protect and maintain, will be sacrificed for a hotel and flats encroaching on our most precious community asset – the remaining open seafront.
- 1.11. We support an integrated approach to protecting our greensward and welcome the designated areas mentioned in the Littlehampton Neighbourhood Plan (4.6 June 2013) - 'The Green', Mewsbrook Park, Caffyns Field, Brook Field Park and Oakcroft Green. However, we want to ensure the inclusion of Norfolk Gardens and Maltravers Park (both community assets) to continue to be maintained and managed to maximise both the conservation value and recreational opportunities for all residents in the greater Littlehampton area.

2. On community empowerment and use of the Localism tools to achieve our aims

In recognition of the unprecedented public interest and controversy over Arun District Council's Leisure Strategy, at a time when the UK Parliament is trying to advance localism in England with legal tools to enable (not frustrate) our ability to decide what is built and how our area should develop, it is important that key decisions do not follow the recent debacle whereby leisure (cinema) provision was removed from Inspire Leisure's mandate. This runs counter not only to public interest, but also the UK Parliament's aim to empower local communities by giving them more control and allowing them to be actively involved in shaping the development of their area.

Resolution:

- 2.1. We will work in good faith with Councils at all levels to advocate and implement the provisions of this Charter. We will seek to ensure key implementation decisions on the Leisure Strategy (yet to come) are made in a collaborative, open and transparent manner based on models of community engagement “fit for purpose” in the era of localism.
- 2.2. We support value for taxpayer money in decisions about our community amenities, based on reasonable consideration of all direct and indirect cost to the community and the local economy. We categorically reject decisions based on misleading or limited financial analysis which are not subject to open public scrutiny and comment.
- 2.3. We ask that Arun Council Officers not draw up project and implementation plans, or undertake any further research concerning our legally registered assets of community value, impacted by the Leisure Strategy, until community liaison (oversight) mechanisms are in place, and presented in open public meetings for consideration, namely:
 - i. Community liaison groups are established and functional for the registered and all future assets of community value as cited in the draft Littlehampton Neighbourhood Plan (see again resolution 3.2 February 2013);
 - ii. Existing Terms of Reference (TOR) and reports relating to any statutory environment and social impact assessments, SEA, or sustainability assessments of the District Leisure Strategy, Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans are openly shared with the community liaison groups noted above. Thereafter these groups are involved in any further preparation of TOR, reviewing work in progress on impact statements at all key stages.
 - iii. An electronic evidence base is in place for timely dissemination of TORs for all studies undertaken with public money as well as the actual studies, and data supporting decisions with regard to the assets of community value, taking advice from community liaison groups as to what the evidence base may contain. Allowing community contributions to the evidence base that will be maintained in an open and transparent manner as endorsed by the community representatives.
 - iv. A communication strategy is drawn up for implementation of the Leisure Strategy in collaboration with the community representatives and endorsed by sufficient consensus in an open public community meeting.
- 2.4. We will ensure that all legal tools are employed to realise the community vision set out in this Charter (including but not limited to the Community Rights under the Localism Act (2011), such as Neighbourhood Plans, community asset transfer, dialogue with Independent Examiners, accessing grants offered through the government advisory body Localities, etc.), and where needed, systematic and sustained use of the Local Ombudsman and freedom of information mechanisms established by government for these purposes and invited in communications between Town and District Councils.

- 2.5. We will advocate the implementation of Leisure Strategy in greater Littlehampton be showcased in respect to how it adopts the new “fit for purpose” models of community engagement in studies and decision processes, with 2-way information dissemination, and full engagement of both traditional and social media – and becomes a good practice model to be shared with other communities and Districts.

3. On coherence in Neighbourhood Plans in greater Littlehampton

In recognition of the statutory nature of Neighbourhood Plans under development by Community Councils, plus the fact that:

- (i) local elected Town and Parish Councillors only facilitate NP processes, while residents provide content ^v
- (ii) District Council does not approve Neighbourhood Plans, rather an Independent Examiner (IE) assesses if Neighbourhood Plans are in general conformity with local strategic policy, and (iii) Parishes share the assets of community value under threat and physically located in Littlehampton Town, as in the case of the Leisure Centre bordering Rustington.^{vi}

Resolution:

- 3.1. We will work with locally elected Town and Parish Councillors to ensure resolutions of the Charter are incorporated in all Neighbourhood Plans in the greater Littlehampton area and Public meetings will be called to compare results. ^{vii}
- 3.2. In the case of the Neighbourhood Plan for Littlehampton Town, representatives of community organisations in Littlehampton commit to insist that community-liaison groups on all the listed assets of community value, namely: the Windmill, Leisure Centre, Norfolk Gardens and Maltravers Park) work with Council staff and advise the community on key planning and management issues (see Resolution 1.3 and 2.3). ^{viii}
- 3.3. We will ask the government advisory agency Localities to advise on grants to provide additional analysis and community inputs to Neighbourhood Plans under development and to have dialogue with Independent Examiners whose responsibility it is to calibrate the degree of local ownership of Neighbourhood Plans and the inclusion of this Charters in the Plans.

4. On linking our vision to the Local Plan and other Towns in Arun District

In recognition of the District-wide Local Plan and Town and Parish Neighbourhood Plans which all have a bearing on amenities in greater Littlehampton, and recognising the value of a coherent approach with

community organisations in other Towns and Villages in the Arun District as discussed in community-led Public meetings on the Leisure Strategy in 2012 and 2013:

- 4.1. We support the element of the Vision statement for Littlehampton contained in the Local Plan, citing "enhanced visitor and leisure facilities along the seafront". We feel this conforms to the community view to keep and refurbish our amenities on the seafront, as explained in section 1 of the Charter.
- 4.2. We support the linking Neighbourhood Plans for Littlehampton and Parishes of greater Littlehampton in an appropriate way and with cross reference, in particular with regard to the Leisure Centre and Windmill and aims of this Charter.
- 4.3. We support cooperation with the Civic Societies and Community Councils of other communities on Leisure Strategy issues of common concern to both areas.

Drawing lessons and sharing experience on asset transfer, approaching Arun District Council about the scope for a joint sustainability assessment and approaching the government advisory agency Localities for joint-programme of advisory support on key themes in Arun District regarding implementing localism and experience with the various planning and legal tools adapted to our needs.

5. On use of traditional and social media to achieve the community vision

In recognition of the importance of traditional media (local newspapers, radio and TV), the internet and especially the new social media platforms in advancing community empowerment and Localism as pursued by the UK Parliament:

- 5.1. We will work in close partnership with media to reduce misconceptions (and misdirection) about Localism; in particular, to provide clarity on the new Community Rights contained within the Localism Act that came into effect in 2012, devolving power from government to communities, local authorities and individuals and their relevance to implementation of the Leisure Strategy in greater Littlehampton.
- 5.2. We encourage and call for all local community organisations to name a representative of their organisation to be responsible for social media platforms, and coordinate and connect with other organisations, on implementation of the Leisure Strategy and access training if required.
- 5.3. We will seek advice of the government advisory body Localities on communication in relation to support, grants and training.
- 5.4. We will collectively work with local education institutions and seek to foster a proactive approach for training in social media specifically to advance aims of localism, build networks, and have a more empowered approach in Partnerships with Council Staff.

The community recognises that decisions on local and neighbourhood plans, Leisure Strategy and community amenities are linked to local policies in other areas including housing, infrastructure, environmental policies and climate change mitigation, and therefore will work with Parish, Town and District Council staff to ensure linkages to the Leisure Strategy are adequately reflected in the integrating tools like the emerging Local and Neighbourhood Plan that have legal effect.

Signed

Littlehampton Civic Society: _____
East Beach Residents Association: _____

Other potential organisations to sign:

ⁱ As a Community Forum and as individual groups as defined under the Localism Act (2011).

ⁱⁱ From the vision and objectives for Littlehampton 4.14 in new Local Plan.

ⁱⁱⁱ 1b. Provide New or Improved Leisure Centre for Littlehampton
STAGE 1. This is required in the short term. Upgrade the existing Littlehampton Swimming and Sports Centre (up to a value of £350,000) to improve its condition and financial performance for the next 8 years. STAGE 2. "As a direct result of the feedback from residents and the petition we received we will complete a full financial and viability assessment in order to compare the existing and any suitable potential new sites, undertake public consultation and seek to build a new larger leisure centre in Littlehampton OR undertake to refurbish the existing Centre. In the event that a new, larger leisure centre is built offering more facilities and a higher standard of leisure provision the current Centre should not close until the new facility is open".

^{iv} "The Assistant Director of Environmental Services meets with Inspire Leisure and members of the community in order to seek to facilitate the setting up of a cinema club or film society and assist the parties in exploring options to access appropriate projection equipment and/or speak to commercial operators."

^v As noted on Town and Parish websites and in the media.

^{vi} Thus while all residents in greater Littlehampton rely on the assets of community value, only Littlehampton residents can vote in a NP referendum on their fate.

^{vii} All of which are planned to have a six-week Pre-Submission Consultation after which the Independent Examiner will assess if they are ready to proceed to a community Referendum.

^{viii} As part of the philosophy of community empowerment and moving away from consultant-led approaches to planning, design and management of amenities. The purpose of the community liaison groups would broadly be:

(i) To work constructively with Town and District Council in the consideration of options and maximise use of local knowledge before consultants are engaged for planning and management studies (if required), and when required to comment on TORs, to advise on issues of particular interest to the community.

(ii) To help Council Staff monitor and report on significant developments that the wider community should be informed of in a timely way via websites and social media, and to call public meetings as appropriate.

19th June 2013