

Othona Community Bradwell – Strategy 2017-2020

Essex Community Consultation meeting 11th March 2017.

The meeting was opened with prayer from Paul Gilman and was led by Ruth Bull who opened with welcome and introduction to the strategy.

Those in attendance were the majority of those who were attending the Working Weekend, plus some who came especially for the meeting including Ruth and Paul Gilman and Sue Fairweather. Martin Riemer joined electronically from Germany.

An Othona film and the Video of the outline strategy were shown, with focus on themes and statements. The context was explained – that this was drawn up in September 2016 by Bradwell Centre Committee members with the guidance of Andy Redfearn, and is intended to set the scene and prepare for business planning and action over the next four years, to be reviewed annually. We need to make changes, there is a lot to do. Roo shared points raised at the London Strategy meeting.

A strategy opens up the opportunity to prioritise what is important to the Community, put ideas into order, and identify what we will all do to achieve this. There will be working groups for each topic and volunteers to join are welcome. We are “bottom-up” not “top-down” in developing Bradwell’s plans for the future.

In open discussion time there was comment on how the strategy was set out with reference to specific actions under topic headings. It was explained that this is a strategy setting out the main topics identified after a weekend’s discussion by the Bradwell Centre Committee. This early stage consultation meeting was intended to look at the wider strategic concerns, not to focus on specifics.

“**Commitment**” was raised as important to anything happening at Othona, in the spirit of Community – “**Common unity**” or “**togetherness**.” There was emphasis on the **spiritual side of Othona** – how we love the place, make a personal commitment and look after each other. People of all social status or age come together to “recharge our batteries.” **Being an ambassador** for Othona involves bringing people in to this out-of-the-way place, but once they are here, people will find what is special about being here, and want to share it.

We considered the suggestion of having a permanent **Pastor**, alongside the value of having such a variety of contributions to worship. We recognised the contributions made throughout Othona’s history by ordained people in a leadership or pastoral role, that currently we have no such person: and that role models should be female as well as the traditional patriarchal image of Vicars. Othona welcomes the role of chaplain to help and encourage people of all faiths and none, to take chapel services rather than to take all the services.

Communication within and outside the community is a priority, as is our work in **reconciliation**. Should we work towards a strategy of “**Christian Spirituality**” or just “**spirituality**?” Should we look at “Local involvement” seeking to focus into achievable areas of influence in a huge world of need; or at “community involvement,” seeing the wide world as being within Othona’s reach? Or both?

Commented [DB1]:

Small Groups considered the points:

Which strategic topics are most important to you? Why? What should we do, and what could you do to make it happen?

Group 1 – retain inclusivity of approach to spirituality.

Group 2 – similar discussion, and the value of diversity, particularly enjoying the diversity of age-groups meeting together in a society where this does not often happen.

Group 3 – Spirituality and diversity, with outreach, saying that we are a spiritual community based on Christian values. Commitment is vital, Othona needs to make it clear how you get involved. Tim spoke of how we are an inclusive Christian Community made up of people of all faiths and none.

Group 4 - Are we still democratic? Should we be more democratic? This was the summary of points raised by Martin Riemer.

Group 5 –Queries were considered, about resources, finances and how we build. Sustainability – of everything – was emphasised by Jonnney, and Susanne summarised with a written contribution. Creativity must be real and live. Peace and Reconciliation are a number 1 priority for Othona.

In conclusion Roo said these discussions would be ongoing, both informally and formally. This brief time together cannot do justice to the huge enthusiasm of Othona to share experiences of the Othona Community with successive generations. Everyone has the opportunity to make a commitment to taking the strategy forward, by bringing in new faces and people of other faiths, by being an ambassador for Othona.

You are invited to volunteer your services (however small may be your time availability) to join a small group to discuss, and take forward one of the Strategy topics - **Education, Christian Spirituality, Reconciliation, Othona as a Local Resource, Communication – with the underlying principle of sustainability – and of assisting in the Audit of our existing Resources – energy, buildings, site and ecology.** Please talk to Tim, Roo, Susanne or any other Committee members

This is the start of the process working towards prioritising strategic goals and working towards achieving some things we can do quite soon, planning and prioritising those things that require extra resources to turn strategic thinking into the reality of tomorrow's Othona.