

DRAFT

[Name of] PARISH COUNCIL

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP

1. Name

- 1.1. The name of the Committee shall be the [name of Parish Council] Neighbourhood Plan (NP) Steering Group.
- 1.2. The Steering Group is a formally constituted Committee of [name of Parish Council].

2. Role

- 2.1. The role of the NP Steering Group is to carry out the following Neighbourhood Plan tasks on behalf of the Parish Council:
- 2.2. Undertake the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Neighbourhood Area.
- 2.3. Through the Clerk, to secure external funding for the approval of the Parish Council and take responsibility for planning, budgeting and monitoring expenditure, providing regular feedback to PC meetings for scrutiny and ratification.
- 2.4. Liaise with relevant authorities, organisations and identified Stakeholders to ensure the NP is comprehensive and inclusive.
- 2.5. Identify and implement a wide variety of ways to engage the whole community throughout the process.
- 2.6. To appoint Theme Groups as necessary to undertake specific areas of work on behalf of the NP Steering Group, involving additional persons with specific expertise as required.
- 2.7. To be responsible for data analysis arising during the NP process and the production and distribution of the final report.
- 2.8. To work closely with both the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and the Parish Council throughout the process, with regular consultation and progress reports, resolving any major issues as they arise.
- 2.9. To submit the draft NP for consultation with the Parish Council, local residents and the LPA.
- 2.10. To secure the endorsement of the Parish Council for the final NP document.
- 2.11. To prepare the NP for examination by the Independent Examiner
- 2.12. To ensure the NP is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the LPA.
- 2.13. To ensure the NP meets the requirements of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, the Localism Act 2011 and other relevant legislation.

3. Membership

- 3.1. The NP Steering Group shall have a minimum of [determine numbers] members, including at least [number] from the Parish Council.
- 3.2. The NP Steering Group may co-opt additional members at the discretion of the Parish Council and shall appoint as necessary a Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary.
- 3.3. The membership and appointments are to be approved by the Parish Council and membership information included on the Parish Council website.

4. Meetings

- 4.1. The NP Steering Group shall hold a full meeting at least every two months or more frequently as may be required.
- 4.2. The meeting agenda shall be passed to all members, with the details of all supporting documentation, at least 3 clear days prior to each meeting and publicised on the Parish Council notice board.

- 4.3. Declarations of Interest for Agenda items shall be a standard agenda item at the beginning of each meeting.
- 4.4. The minutes of the meeting shall be produced and circulated to all members within at least 10 days following the meeting, for approval at the following meeting. Minutes shall be published once approved on the Parish Council notice board.
- 4.5. Resolutions shall be decided by a majority of votes of Parish Council Members, with the Chair having a casting vote if required.
- 4.6. A minimum quorum of members for the transaction of business is [number] members, including either the Chair or Vice Chair.
- 4.7. Meetings will normally be open to all members of the public. If a member of the public wishes to speak on a particular subject, the Chairman shall invite him/her to speak at the start of the meeting for no more than 5 minutes.

5. Theme Groups

- 5.1. The NP Steering Group may appoint specific Theme Groups to carry out agreed work on behalf of the NP Steering Group, with a nominated Leader for each Theme Group.
- 5.2. The Theme Groups are Advisory Committees of the Parish Council and are not therefore subject to the same governance requirements as the Parish Council Committees.
- 5.3. The Leader shall report on progress to the Steering Group.
- 5.4. The Leader may co-opt additional members to further the work of the Theme Group.
- 5.5. The Theme Group may make recommendations but decisions will be taken by the full NP Steering Group, for ratification by the Parish Council.

6. Finance

- 6.1. The Secretary shall maintain a record of all income and expenditures and follow the same financial procedures in accordance with the Parish Council practice.
- 6.2. A financial statement will be produced every three months or more frequently if required.
- 6.3. A financial report will be available for each Steering Group and Parish Council meeting.

7. General Conduct of NP Steering Group Members.

- 7.1. Members are expected to conduct themselves when working on the NP in a manner consistent with the standards of conduct required for those in public life, i.e. selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- 7.2. Members are required to read and sign the Parish Council Register of Interests and Code of Conduct. The Secretary will hold the signed forms in a central place.
- 7.3. Members, including co-opted members, should declare an interest at the beginning of a meeting if the member has a disclosable pecuniary interest relating to an agenda item to be discussed.

8. Public Access to Information

- 8.1. Members of the public, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, have the right of access to all meetings of the NP Steering Group, unless specific reasons have been announced in advance when confidential material may be discussed which might be prejudicial to the public interest. It is envisaged that this would rarely, if ever, be implemented.
- 8.2. Members of the public should declare an interest, if applicable, in respect of any agenda item to be discussed at the meeting.

9. Data Protection Policy and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

- 9.1. The NP Steering Group will handle all information provided by individuals in accordance with the guidelines for transparency, security and notification of the Data Protection Act 1998.

- 9.2. Appendix 1 summarises the detailed policies to be followed throughout the NP process and subsequently.
- 9.3. The Parish Council membership of the ICO includes the NP Steering Group, a sub-committee of the Parish Council.
- 9.4. All FOI requests should be addressed to the Clerk of the Parish Council, who will respond in accordance with the guidance of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO).

Appendix 1 – Data Protection Policy for NP Steering group

1. Information provided by individuals as part of the NP process is to be treated as personal; both in the general sense that it represents personal opinions and in the technical sense of falling within the definition in the Data Protection Act. The guidelines below are intended to minimise the risk of inappropriate use or disclosure of personal information.
2. Questionnaire forms completed on paper shall be stored in a secure filing cabinet by the NP Secretary. Prior to placing in the secure container, the forms shall be kept securely by those tasked to handle them.
3. Forms shall be withdrawn from storage only for the purpose of analysis and shall be returned to storage as soon as is practicable.
4. On-line forms and personal information shall be kept on a secure computer and passwords will only be given to selected individuals.
5. Research findings shall be presented in a manner which prevents identification of any participant.
6. Questionnaires and other data shall be securely retained for two years after the NP has been completed, after which all information shall be securely destroyed.
7. Everyone involved in the NP process shall be made aware of this policy and guidelines and agree to observe the restrictions on use and disclosure.
8. The Parish Council and NP Steering Group shall be registered with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO).