

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

(Adopted by the Parish Council on 6 January 2015)

1 Membership of the Steering Group

- (i) The Steering Group shall be formed from parish councillors, residents and the local business community. Preference will be given to those who are either registered electors or work within the parish, or can contribute in some other way to the process (this latter qualification to be a matter of judgement for the Parish Council).
- (ii) The Steering Group shall remain extant until the Neighbourhood Plan has been assessed and approved by the independent examiner.
- (iii) Comprise a maximum of three parish councillors and four non-parish councillors (any increase in the number of non-parish councillors shall be decided by the Parish Council);
- (iv) If a member of the Steering Group fails to attend three consecutive meetings, the member will be deemed to have resigned unless otherwise agreed by the Steering Group. This provision does not prevent any parish councillor from resigning from the Steering Group by providing the Chairman of the Parish Council with written notice (e-mail to suffice).
- (v) Any person who wishes to join the Steering Group, after commencement of the Neighbourhood Planning process shall apply to the Steering Group which shall make the decision. Where it is decided to admit a new member, the Parish Council shall ratify the appointment at its next meeting, provided that the number does not exceed (iii) above.
- (vi) The Steering Group may form working groups to undertake various aspects of the work involved in producing the Neighbourhood Plan. These working groups will act as 'fact-finders' under the instructions of the Steering Group and shall have no authority to make their own decisions.

2 Roles and Responsibilities

The Steering Group shall NOT:

- (i) Have the power to exercise on behalf of the Parish Council any authority, nor to incur expenditure without prior authority from the Parish Council.

The Steering Group shall:

- (ii) Be responsible for drawing up a draft Neighbourhood Plan and making any revisions which may be necessary as a result of the on-going consultation process.
- (iii) Submit the draft Neighbourhood Plan to the Parish Council for approval prior to its submission to Cheshire East Council.
- (iv) Promote the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, be encouraged to participate and provide its views and opinions on the specific topics which are covered during the preparation of the Plan.
- (v) Arrange meetings and appoint working groups to gather views and consult on emerging policies which are considered appropriate for incorporation in the draft Plan.
- (vi) Assess existing evidence about the needs and aspirations of the parish.

- (vii) Liaise with relevant organisations and stakeholders to secure their input in the process.
- (viii) Analyse the results of questionnaires or other evidence received during the planning process and use them to prepare a robust draft Neighbourhood Plan.
- (ix) Prepare applications for outside funding and submit these to the Parish Council for approval.
- (x) Report to the Parish Council on a bi-monthly basis, by way of submission of notes/minutes of its meetings, in accordance with public notice requirements.
- (xi) Refer back to the Parish Council for decision-making, recommendations made as a result of community engagement.
- (xii) Work in partnership with the Parish Council (as the lead in the process) to ensure that the final Plan meets the needs of the community and can be perceived as the result of an on-going consultation process.

The Parish Council shall:

- (i) Support the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan providing sufficient assistance and financial resources to ensure that the Plan is prepared expeditiously, providing that overall expenditure falls within the budget allocated by the Council;
- (ii) Facilitate, if required, contact with the relevant statutory bodies or parties which must be consulted during the Plan-making process (Schedule 1 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General Regulations 2012 (SI 2012 No. 637) – hereafter called ‘the Regulations’).
- (iii) Carry out all statutory duties contained within the Regulations and engage with Cheshire East Council during the referendum process for which the principal authority is responsible.
- (iv) Following approval of the Plan, submit it to Cheshire East Council (as the Local Planning Authority) for inspection and independent examination. (Note: In the event of the Parish Council holding any funds received from an outside source, at this time (specifically related to the Neighbourhood Plan); or if the Steering Group is disbanded prior to the Neighbourhood Plan being approved and is holding funds, such funds shall be returned to the organisation from which the funds were obtained.)
- (v) All members of the Steering Group and any working group members shall:
 - Declare any interest that may be perceived as being relevant to any decisions or recommendations made by the Steering Group. This may include membership of an organisation, ownership of an interest in land (directly or indirectly) or a business; or any other matter likely to be relevant to the work undertaken by the Steering Group.

Parish Councillors shall be bound by the Council’s Code of Conduct.

- Ensure that there is no discrimination in the Plan-making process and that it is a wholly inclusive, open and transparent process to all groups in the parish and to those wishing to undertake development or be involved in the Plan-making process.
- Work together for the benefit of the communities established within the parish. Treat other members of the Steering Group with respect and dignity, allowing members to express their views without prejudice and interruption.

3. Steering Group Chairman

- (i) The Steering Group shall elect a Chairman who need not be a parish councillor.
- (ii) The Steering Group shall elect a Vice-Chairman who will chair meetings in the absence of the Chairman.

4. Frequency, Timing and Procedure of Meetings

- (i) The Steering Group shall meet as and when required.
- (ii) The Parish Council's Standing Orders (the Parish Council does not currently have formal Standing Orders in place) shall not apply to the procedure of these meetings, save for the need for Parish Councillors to be mindful to make declarations of interest, as appropriate and for those declarations to be recorded in the notes/minutes of meetings, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
- (iii) The Steering Group is not subject to public notice requirements and can, therefore, hold its meetings in private; however, in the interests of inclusivity, it is suggested that if any members of the public become aware of meetings, and wish to attend as observers, the Group considers carefully whether it would be appropriate to include or exclude them from the meeting.
- (iv) Agendas and accompanying papers shall be e-mailed to all members of the Steering Group unless any Member without access to the Internet requests a paper copy.
- (v) Voting: Decisions should be reached by consensus. If there are any matters which require a vote, it is only the Parish Councillors who are able to vote. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chairman shall have the casting vote. (Note: If the Chairman is a non-Parish Councillor he/she would not have an original vote, but would have the casting vote.)
- (vi) The quorum for the Steering Group shall be one-third of the full membership (but no fewer than three) and this quorum must comprise at least two parish councillors.

5. Application of Terms of Reference

- (i) These terms shall apply from the date of this document and retrospectively where relevant to the date of the inception of the Steering Group.
- (ii) The Terms of Reference will be reviewed during the life of the project and relevant amendments will be made, as and when appropriate, following either a recommendation by the Steering Group, or directly by the Parish Council.