

REPORT TO PICKMERE PARISH COUNCIL

3rd December 2019

AGENDA ITEM 9.7 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

1. Background

- 1.1 Your council has from time to time given consideration to the idea of pursuing a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for the parish. Such a plan would require substantial inputs of time and financial resources and to date it has not been considered a worthwhile project bearing in mind that the great majority of the parish lies in the Green Belt, and that the remaining part that is currently excluded from the Green Belt (the 'inset') does not contain significant built development opportunities.
- 1.2 However at your meeting earlier this year you decided that a meeting should be arranged with CEC's NP officer so as to explore the merits or not of pursuing such a plan, including consideration of the financial costs and the scale of input likely to be required from council representatives.

2. Report

- 2.1 Your Chair and Clerk have consequently met officers of the Council's strategic planning team and have discussed with them the aspects referred to above.
- 2.2 Having discussed the kinds of planning issue that most affects Pickmere (principally the control over development in the Green Belt in terms of principle (especially 'infill' development), and policies over development in the inset – mainly issues of design and housing mix), the officers considered that a NP could enhance the level of controls in these cases, and that, importantly, if such a plan was restricted to more or less these issues, its preparation need not involve an overwhelming level of time or financial resource. The senior officer ventured that if of restricted scope as described, it may well be possible to prepare such a plan within a figure of £9000, which is the grant figure made available by central government to encourage such plan preparation.
- 2.3 Having said that, setting out on such a project would require a significant level of commitment from the parish council. It would require the initial establishment of a 'steering group' to guide the whole process. It is envisaged (though this is a question for the parish council) that a planning consultant would be commissioned to manage and implement the plan preparation process on the PC's behalf. There is a considerable role for public consultation in the plan process, including the carrying out of a formal referendum on the plan content once drafted, though it is understood that this particular element of the process (which would be organised and administered by CEC on behalf of the parish council) would be financed by CEC.
- 2.4 CEC have already sent some initial base plans. The next step would be for the council to decide whether it wishes to take the next step, and if so it is suggested that this might

be for the council to seek initial discussions and quotations from town planners with a track record of preparing NPs, which would enable the council to gauge the level of input – both financial and volunteer time and effort – that pursuing such a plan might require, as well as the suitability of the planning consultants that are contacted in this way.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That members consider whether to take the next steps in considering whether to pursue preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish, including the holding of discussions with a shortlist of potential planning consultants with a view to their submitting quotations for carrying out the organisation of such a plan process on the council's behalf.

Jack Steel
Clerk to Parish Council