

APPENDIX TO AGENDA ITEM 8.1 (20 July 2021)

Pickmere Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Terms of Reference

The Steering Group

The Neighbourhood Plan is the responsibility of Pickmere Parish Council. Accordingly, decisions as to the form and content of the Plan, and the process of its preparation are also the responsibility of the Council as a whole. The Steering Group is to assist in leading the plan process, working within the agreed budget toward achieving the Council's aim of producing a Neighbourhood Plan that is adopted by Cheshire East Council as a statutory planning document.

Purpose and Powers of the Steering Group

The purpose of the Steering Group is to assist the Parish Council to prepare its Neighbourhood Plan. The Steering Group will be empowered by the Council to take such actions as are considered necessary to progress the Plan, including carrying out the activities listed below, while ensuring that regular reports are made to Council as to progress, issues arising, and outcomes. Any matters of Council policy as to the Plan or otherwise must be referred to the Council for decision.

- Investigating and identify support for the Neighbourhood Plan
- Identifying sources of funding
- Drafting Plan policies
- In conjunction with the Clerk to the Council taking responsibility for planning, budgeting and monitoring expenditure on the Neighbourhood Plan and reporting back to the Parish Council on these matters
- Liaising with relevant authorities and organisations to make the Neighbourhood Plan as effective as possible
- Identifying ways of involving the whole community and gather the views and opinions of as many groups and organisations in the community as possible
- Determining the types of evidence gathering to be used
- Being responsible for the analysis of information gathered, as well as the production and the distribution of the final report
- Identifying priorities and timescales for local action in the Project Plan, including the lead organisations and potential sources of project funding
- Holding meetings with the public to maintain information flow and maximise engagement

Membership of the Steering Group

The Council has already identified a Working Group of parish councillors which has commenced preparatory work on the plan process. The Working Group will select volunteers from the Pickmere community on the basis of individuals' expression of interest in joining the Steering Group. Selection will be based on a number of factors including the skills mix identified, length of residency in the village and past history of involvement with community issues and volunteering.

The Steering Group will be made up of 4 Parish Councillors nominated by the Parish Council and 4 representatives from the community and the Group will be advised by planning consultant Lucy Hughes, Cheshire Community Action.

The quorum for any Steering Group meeting will be three parish councillors.

Defining Roles

The Parish Council will select the Chair of the SG from among the Group's parish councillors. The Chair of the Group will have a casting vote where required in respect of any decision made by that Group.

Other members of the Steering Group may be elected to other key roles as required during the project. The Group may consider the early identification of an Administration Officer or similar to assist the Chair.

Roles & Relationships

In carrying out its work, any decision of the Steering Group that does not receive the support of a majority of the parish councillor members of the Group will be referred to the Parish Council for consideration.

Parish Council insurance will cover the previously agreed activities of the Steering Group and volunteers, but Steering Group members, in liaison with the Clerk to the Council, need to ensure that terms of the insurance are not breached.

The Chair and Administration Officer (if appointed) are responsible for reporting back to the Parish Council.

The Parish Council will provide the opportunity for the endorsement of regular Steering Group reports via its meeting agenda, and for making key decisions.

It is expected that all Steering Group members will abide by the principles and practice of the Parish Council Code of Conduct including making declarations of interest where appropriate.

Timing

The target date for a referendum is June 2022.

Meetings

The Steering Group shall normally meet monthly, or as required.

At least three clear days' notice of meetings shall be sent to members via the communication method agreed with, and appropriate to, each individual member, and will also be displayed on the Council's Neighbourhood Plan webpage.

Notices of meetings should detail the matters to be discussed.

The Administration Officer (if appointed) shall keep a record of meetings and circulate notes to Steering Group members and the Parish Council (via the Council Clerk) in a timely fashion.

Formal meetings of the Steering Group will generally be open to the public and may be held online. Such meetings are not confined by the current statute which requires all formal meetings of the Parish Council to be held in person.

Consultation and Task Groups

The Steering Group may form Consultation or Task Groups consisting of members of the community and representatives from the Parish Council. Such groups will have their own terms of reference and will report back to the Steering Group. In general they will carry out duties which may include, but are not limited to: (1) Data gathering (2) Consultations (3) Making recommendations

The make-up and purpose of Consultation or Task Groups will be regularly reviewed by the full Steering Group. The Steering Group will identify a lead person for each such group.

Finance

All grants and funding will be applied for and held by the Parish Council, who will ringfence the funds for Neighbourhood Plan purposes only.

Council has already delegated power to the Council Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer, in conjunction with the Chair of the Council, to authorise payments on Neighbourhood Plan matters up to a certain limit. Further consideration is being given to financial aspects to explore whether greater flexibility can be given to the Steering Group. However the Council's Financial Regulations are strict, in the interests of ensuring probity, and these Regulations are an extremely important factor in this consideration.

All planned expenditure will have to be authorised by the Clerk to the Council if within delegated limits or the Parish Council if higher. All expenditure must be so authorised before actual costs are incurred, and the Parish Council's normal procurement and ordering procedures adhered to. Parish Council preferred suppliers will be used where possible.

Invoices will be made out in the name of Pickmere Parish Council.

The Chair of the Steering Group will ensure the maintenance of a clear record of expenditure supported by receipted invoices and will regularly review and update the budget in liaison with the Clerk to the Council.

The Clerk to the Council will draw up and agree with the Steering Group procedures for volunteers who need to claim expenses: members of the community who are involved as volunteers with any of the Task Groups may claim back any previously agreed expenditure that was necessarily incurred during the process of producing the Neighbourhood Plan. This includes, but is not limited to, postage, stationery, telephone calls and travel costs.

The Clerk to the Council will report back to the Steering Group and the Parish Council on planned and actual expenditure for the project.

Dissolving the Steering Group

At the conclusion of the Neighbourhood Plan project the Parish Council and Steering Group should discuss the future working of the Steering Group. If the Steering Group wishes to dissolve it must notify the Parish Council. The Parish Council may at any time dissolve the Steering Group, or any other Consultation or Task Group, for any reason.

J Steel

Clerk to the Parish Council