

REPORT TO PICKMERE PARISH COUNCIL

3rd May 2022

AGENDA ITEM 9.2 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – REVIEW OF PROGRESS, STEERING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE, AND EXPENDITURE AGAINST GRANT 2021-22

1. REPORT - EXPENDITURE

- 1.1 The Neighbourhood Plan process has now been running since summer 2021. A government grant of £6279 to assist the process was received in August 2021, and at the end of that financial year, i.e. at 31 March 2022, the Council was required to submit a return of expenditure against grant to the body acting for the Government in this respect, with the requirement that any unspent grant be returned.
- 1.2 The Parish Council has expended £4058.67 during the year in respect of the Plan, against the Plan Grant of £6279. £2388 of this amount was spent on the commissioning of professional planning and nature conservation consultants to assist with the process, with the remainder spent on publicity materials including the printing etc of questionnaires, flyers etc. Accordingly the Council is required to return a sum of £2220.33 to the Government.
- 1.3 The Grant was sub-divided among several sub-headings as shown in the following table:

BUDGET HEADING	APPROVED AMOUNT	EXPENDITURE	UNDER or OVERSPEND
Consultants	£3,249.00	£855.00	£2,394.00
Technical reports	£1,460.00	£1,533.00	-£73.00
Publicity costs	£1,450.00	£1,670.67	-£220.67
Other	£120.00	£0.00	£120.00
Totals	£6,279.00	£4,058.67	£2,220.33

- 1.4 As can be seen, the allowed expenditure on Consultants was significantly underspent, in large part because the policy drafting part of the plan process has not yet been reached. Expenditure on the printing etc of publicity material, flyers, and community questionnaires slightly exceeded original estimates but at the time of writing such minor overspends have been accepted by the grant administrators, bearing in mind the overall underspend of £2220.33. The small amount of expenditure on refreshments at the Village Hall launch of the Plan had not been included in the grant and was therefore funded from the other funds the Council has earmarked to support preparation of the Plan.
- 1.5 Once the unspent grant has been returned to the grant administrators, it is open to the Council to apply for further grant to support the Plan process during 2022-23, up to a total maximum of £10,000.

2. REPORT – STEERING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 2.1 The Terms of Reference for the Steering Group (SG TORs) were approved by Council at the very early stage of the project, and it was envisaged that they made need updating and modifying over time and as experience of the project grew.
- 2.2 Accordingly the appendix to this report suggests several amendments to the TORs which, it is considered, will help the NP process and the working of the Group.
- 2.3 One aspect that has become clearer is that it would be helpful for the SG to have an identified 'Administrator', i.e. a person who is responsible for co-ordinating the overall running of the Group and also for communicating as necessary with the Council Clerk. This was envisaged in the originally approved TORs but the Group has not yet appointed such a person from its ranks. It is suggested therefore that the SG be asked by Council to choose such a person at its next meeting.

3. PROGRESS

- 3.1 Cllr Bold will report orally on progress of the Plan generally.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That members consider the proposed modified Steering Group Terms of Reference.
- 4.2 That the NP Steering Group be asked to select an 'Administrator' from membership of the Group to perform the role as described in the Steering Group Terms of Reference.

Jack Steel
Clerk to the Parish Council