

## Newbury Town Council

### **Public Report**

#### **Report to:**

Planning and Highways Committee, 24 October 2016

#### **Agenda Item No 9:**

**To consider** proposals for the preparation of a Newbury Town Plan, including establishing a Steering Group and Terms of Reference for the Group

#### **Background**

The Town Council's Strategy includes an objective to work towards the development of a Newbury Town Plan and a short term objective to prepare an operational plan to create the Town Plan (TS16). The longer term aim is to prepare a Newbury Town Plan which fully meets the objectives of Newbury Town Council's Strategy (TL10).

On 3 October 2016 the Planning and Highways Committee agreed to work towards a Town Plan which would feed into the review of the Core Strategy, rather than a Neighbourhood Development Plan, per the Localism Act and to establish a Working Group to take this forward.

It was also agreed that the area to be covered by the Plan should be the Newbury Settlement Area, as defined in the current West Berkshire District Council Core Strategy.

It is expected that the Newbury Town Plan will contribute to the review of the Core Strategy and, when adopted, will be a material consideration when considering applications for planning permission within the settlement area.

#### **Process**

The Planning and Highways Committee will take the lead in the preparation and drafting of the Town Plan. The Steering Group will plan and progress the drafting of the Plan and will regularly take reports and recommendations to the committee.

The Committee will consider all of the reports and recommendations of the Steering Group and will present a draft Plan to Full Council for approval to go to public consultation.

The Steering Group will consider all of the responses received from the public consultation and report back to the Planning and Highways Committee. The Committee will consider this report and send a final draft to Full Council for approval.

#### **Why do we need a Steering Group?**

Due to the work involved in producing the Town Plan and the area proposed to be covered by the Plan, we will require additional people to those who are on the existing Planning and Highways Committee. The establishment of a Steering Group will enable us to draw on the expertise, experience and contribution of other interested parties and stakeholders and give them more responsibility, involvement and "ownership" of the Plan.

## **What is the main role of a Steering Group?**

As the Planning and Highways Committee remains the responsible body for the Town Plan, the Steering Group must report to the Committee on a regular basis and receive ongoing endorsement, via Planning and Highways Committee minutes, during production of the Town Plan.

A Steering Group should be able to:

- Consider the overall aims of the Town Plan.
- Set a project plan and consultation plan for the production of the Town Plan within any budget and time –frame agreed by the Planning and Highways Committee.
- Report regularly to its parent Committee, Planning and Highways, including recommendations, and receive prompt and constructive feedback

The Planning and Highways Committee are accountable for the expenditure and ensuring that the project remains on track. Therefore, the Steering Group needs to keep the Planning and Highways Committee informed of any changes in timetable or budget requirements.

## **Setting up a Steering Group**

The Steering Group should be representative of the Plan area. As the plan area covers more than the parish of Newbury, this should be reflected in the membership of the Group. We should consider inviting representation from the other parishes (or parts of parishes) covered by the plan area.

The Steering Group may include both Planning and Highways Committee members and members of the community. There is no required size for a Group but smaller Groups can sometimes lack the breadth of experience or resources required whilst larger ones can lose focus.

- Throughout the development and implementation period of the Town Plan there needs to be a standing Town Plan item on the Planning and Highways Committee agenda.
- There should be minutes of Planning and Highways Committee decisions in relation to the Steering Group and Town Plan.
- The Steering Group may identify a need for funded expertise from other bodies and make recommendations to the Planning and Highways Committee.
- Budget responsibility lies with the Planning and Highways Committee and not the Steering Group.
- It is recommended that the Steering Group gives a presentation to the town via a town meeting, at key stages of the Town Plan process.
- Conflict within the Steering Group should be referred to the Planning and Highways Committee.
- Terms of Reference used by the Steering Group will have been agreed by the Planning and Highways Committee.

There is no set of rules needed, however, it is recommended for the Steering Group meetings there needs to be:

- A 'Terms of Reference' developed that are approved by the Planning and Highways Committee- see appendix 1.
- A chair or facilitator, through which all discussion is handled.
- An agenda, which discussion should follow.
- Meetings support, to be provided by Newbury Town Council

## **Financial considerations**

- A budget will be agreed by the Planning and Highways Committee.
- Substantial decisions, such as contracting a planning consultant, must be approved by the Planning and Highways Committee. The Planning and Highways Committee will also need to approve the terms and conditions of the contract.
- Any commissioning of funded expertise from other bodies must be undertaken by the Planning and Highways Committee.

## **Terms of Reference**

Producing a simple 'Terms of Reference' for the Group would be helpful. This should set out the purpose and remit of the Group and the reporting and decision making procedures. Terms of Reference for the Steering Group should be approved by a meeting of the Planning and Highways Committee.

## **Recommendation(s)**

That the Planning and Highways Committee establishes a Steering Group to plan and progress the preparation of the Newbury Town Plan, in accordance with the attached terms of reference.

**Signed:** Hugh Peacocke, Chief Executive Officer

19 October 2016

## **Newbury Town Plan Steering Group**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **Name**

The name of the organisation shall be the Newbury Town Plan Steering Group.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Steering Group shall be to support the Planning and Highways Committee to carry out the following tasks:

- Prepare and co-ordinate the Town Plan.
- Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to make the Town Plan as effective as possible.
- Identify ways of involving the whole community and gather the views and opinions of as many Groups and organisations in the community as possible.
- Determine the types of survey and information gathering to be used.
- Be responsible for the analysis of the survey, as well as the production and the distribution of reports and recommendations to The Planning and Highways Committee.
- Identify priorities and timescales for local action in the Project Plan
- Regularly report back to the Planning and Highways Committee's Planning and Highways Committee on progress, issues arising and outcomes.

The Steering Group will have regard to the report considered by the Planning and Highways Committee on 3 October which sets out some broad parameters for the Town Plan.

#### **Membership**

- Up to 8 Members of Newbury Town Council, nominated by the Planning and Highways Committee
- Each of the other parishes in the settlement area will be invited to nominate a representative
- The Steering group may co-opt any other persons who can usefully contribute to the preparation of the Plan or represent the interests of key sectors of the community

#### **Defining Roles**

- At the first meeting, the Steering Group will elect a Chairman and deputy Chairman
- Secretarial and meeting support will be provided by Newbury Town Council

#### **Roles & Relationships**

Planning and Highways Committee members who are also members of the Steering Group, will act as a liaison between the two bodies and provide a regular report to the Planning and Highways Committee, for endorsement.

The Planning and Highways Committee will provide the opportunity for the endorsement of regular reports via its Planning and Highways Committee meeting agenda. The Town plan will be a standing item on the Committee's agenda until it is completed.

It is expected that all Steering Group members abide by the principles and practice of the Council's Code of Conduct including declarations of interest. Copies of the Code of Conduct will be available at all meetings.

## **Meetings**

The Steering Group shall normally meet monthly (but every two months as a minimum), or as may be 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.

Whenever possible, notices of meetings should detail the matters to be discussed.

The Secretary shall keep a record of meetings, and circulate notes to Steering Group members and the Planning and Highways Committee in a timely fashion.

Decisions will be by consensus and agreement of all, if possible. If this is not achieved, all of the options will be reported to the planning and Highways committee who will consider them and make the final recommendations to full Council.

## **Finances**

The Steering Group cannot make any financial decisions on behalf of the Planning and Highways Committee. However the Group may request financial assistance from the Committee and can decide how to spend any budget allocated to the Group by the Committee.

## **Working Groups**

The Steering Group may establish such Working Groups as it considers necessary to carry out the functions specified by the Steering Group. This can relate to issues requiring particular sectoral input/expertise, such as housing, employment, education, leisure, conservation, etc. or for a particular geographic area, such as the Town Centre or Sandlesford, for example.

Working Groups may carry out duties specified by the full Steering Group, which may include, but is not limited to:-

- Data gathering
- Consultations
- Making recommendations

The make-up and purpose of Working Groups will be established by the Steering Group. Each Working Group should have a lead person.

## **Dissolving the Steering Group**

At the conclusion of the Town Plan project the Planning and Highways Committee should discuss the future working of the Steering Group. If no further role is required, the Committee may dissolve the Steering Group.