

5 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (NON-PARISH COUNCILLORS) [STANDING ITEM FOR EACH AGENDA]

Non-parish councillors were invited to declare any potential conflict of interest which they may have in connection with the business of the Steering Group and in respect of any item of business on the agenda.

No declarations were made.

6 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE STEERING GROUP

The adopted Terms of Reference for the Steering Group were received for information, although the Steering Group could make recommendations for change if it wished.

It was noted that paragraph 4 (i) was to be submitted to the Parish Council as a proposed amendment to the Terms of Reference. Paragraph 4 (i) required meetings of the Steering Group *'to be held in the Village Hall or such other public place as shall be arranged from time-to-time'*. The purpose was to allow members of the public to observe the proceedings, in the interests of openness and transparency.

7 APPOINTMENT OF SECRETARY

The Steering Group was invited to appoint a Member as a minute-taker. This could rotate amongst all Members of the Steering Group or one Member could take on the responsibility for the life of the Group.

RESOLVED: That a minute-taker be appointed at each meeting of the Steering Group.

8 TEAM BUILDING

The Steering Group was invited to consider if a team-building exercise should be arranged to enable Members to become acquainted with each other in a less formal setting. This would also allow the exploration of the various skill-sets for each of the Members.

One of the volunteers, who was not present at the meeting, managed her own research and marketing business and had offered to facilitate a team-working exercise.

Members **AGREED** that this could be considered at a future meeting.

9 PREPARATION OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Rhiannon Monaghan, an Officer in the Cheshire East Council Spatial Planning Team, was in attendance and explained the process for preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

There were several key stages, the first of which would be to define the area of the Plan. This would normally comprise the whole of the Parish Council area, but some of the smaller parishes in the borough had grouped together to form a much larger area.

As the Parish Council was required to take the lead, the neighbourhood area would be likely to comprise the whole of the parish.

Once decided, a neighbourhood area application would need to be submitted to Cheshire East Council (CEC), together with a map of the area. CEC would publicise for six weeks and then make a decision as to whether to designate the neighbourhood area. CEC could provide a map for this purpose.

The Plan

- Must conform to local and national policies (e.g. CEC Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework – NPPF)
- Could not be used to block building of new homes and businesses if the Borough Council had decided that the area must grow; however, the Plan could be used to influence the type, design, location and mix of new development.
- Must contribute to achieving sustainable development
- Should relate principally to land-use.

The Plan would need to be sufficiently robust to ensure that new development in the parish would be determined against its policies and this meant a strong evidence-base to support the aims and ambitions of the Plan.

In due course, the Draft Plan would be examined by an independent examiner, appointed by Cheshire East Council. The examiner would check that the Plan met the basic conditions.

When the Plan reached referendum stage, CEC would arrange the referendum and if more than 50% of those voting, voted in favour, the Plan would be 'made', i.e. adopted by CEC and would have statutory weight as a planning document.

Support for the Council

Cheshire East Council, as the local planning authority, had a duty to support the process and was obliged to assist in drawing up the Plan. There was some funding available (up to £7,000 from CEC and up to £8,000 from DCLG). CEC preferred local councils to apply for national funding first. Such funding must be used within 6 months of receipt of the funds or by the end of the financial year, whichever was the later.

Members were given advice about the type of policies which could be included within the Neighbourhood Plan and, following comments from Members, Ms Monaghan clarified the following terms:

- Green belt Nationally recognised area. Within Cheshire East, the majority of green belt land was in the north of the Borough.
- Green gap An area to separate two towns.
- Green space This could be included in a Neighbourhood Plan but would need to comply with specific criteria to show that they were well-defined and well-used for a specific purpose. Such land could be protected against development.
- Settlements These were not necessarily coterminous with parish council boundaries.

Ms Monaghan then went on to explain the current status of the Local Plan which was out for consultation until 19 April 2016. Shavington had been designated as a local service centre. Following comments from Members, Ms Monaghan undertook to confirm the extent of the boundary for the Shavington area determined as a service centre.

Ms Monaghan was thanked for attending the meeting and withdrew at this point in the proceedings.

10 IDENTIFYING THE AREA OF THE PLAN

Members **AGREED** to defer consideration of this to a future meeting.

11 FINANCE

Budget responsibility lay with the Parish Council. Any requests for finance must be submitted to the Clerk for recommendation to the Parish Council.

Members **AGREED** that there were no financial matters at this stage, but suggested that meetings of the Steering Group should be scheduled to allow timely submission of requests for financial assistance.

12 PROJECT PLANNING

The Steering Group would consider preparing a Project Plan, in due course.

Members also discussed the means by which residents could be kept informed of progress. A number of suggestions were made and it was **AGREED** that this be added as an item for the next agenda.

13 PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

The Steering Group was invited to consider if the services of a consultant were required. Members **AGREED** that no action be taken at this time.

14 FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

It was agreed that, initially, meetings should be held monthly.

The dates of 13 or 20 April were suggested for the next meeting and the Clerk was asked to enquire into the availability of the downstairs room in the Village Hall and report back to Members.

15 CLOSING REMARKS

In closing the meeting, the Chairman encouraged Members to carry out as much research as they could, examining finished Neighbourhood Plans across the country.

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