

Neighbourhood Plan

To note the Town Clerk's suggestions for a way forward on the Neighbourhood Plan.

Recommendation:

1. That committee appoint a working party to meet before its next meeting, with Northumberland County Council (NCC) officers and others to develop a route forward for the Neighbourhood Plan.

	Yes	No
Does the decision involve new expenditure?		No
Is there an existing budget for the proposed expenditure (insert code)	N/A	
What procurement level is required?	N/A	
Are there equalities impacts / an equalities assessment required?		No
Does this require a full council decision? (Reports for full council decision should still be sent to the relevant committee where possible.)	N/A	
Is there a background paper or papers? (provide links below).	Yes	

1. A draft Neighbourhood Plan has previously been prepared by the Neighbourhood Plan steering group, and latterly, the Planning Committee.
2. In order to pass an examination and proceed to referendum, Neighbourhood Plans must meet a number of 'basic conditions'. To ensure they are legally compliant they must:
 - Have regard to national planning policy and guidance;
 - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan;
 - Contribute to sustainable development; and
 - Be compatible with any other legislative obligations.
3. The process of approval and adoption of the plan was delayed by an assertion that the boundary between Berwick-upon-Tweed and a neighbouring parish was either unclear, or had not been rectified despite previous assurances.
4. NCC have confirmed, during autumn 2023 that this is not the case, and that the boundary as originally asserted during the plan process is confirmed and certain.
5. External consultants have been appointed to undertake the necessary environmental assessment of the plan, and after a meeting in late September 2023, NCC have undertaken to prepare a parish profile and to calculate the up-to-date figures for housing completions and approvals to ensure conformity with the Local Plan.
6. Separately, Ord Parish Council have indicated that they intend to prepare a neighbourhood plan in conjunction with Ancroft, Duddo, Horncliffe, Kyloe, Norham and Shoreswood parishes.
7. The Town Clerk does not have delegated authority to take this issue beyond this point, and it is appropriate to revert to the position prior to the hiatus brought about by the boundary issues, and to have the Neighbourhood Plan process administered by the Planning Committee.
8. Previously Council provided for engagement with the wider public by co-opting members of the Planning Committee to act as members of the committee with regard to Neighbourhood Planning issues. This throws up considerable additional governance issues, since co-opted members are required to make declarations of interest and agree to be bound by the code of conduct in the same way as any other member of a council committee. It is therefore recommended that the management of the process be delegated to a working party appointed by the Planning Committee and reporting to it.

Issues arising from proposal

None.

Rationale for recommendation

Not applicable.