

# Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee Terms of Reference

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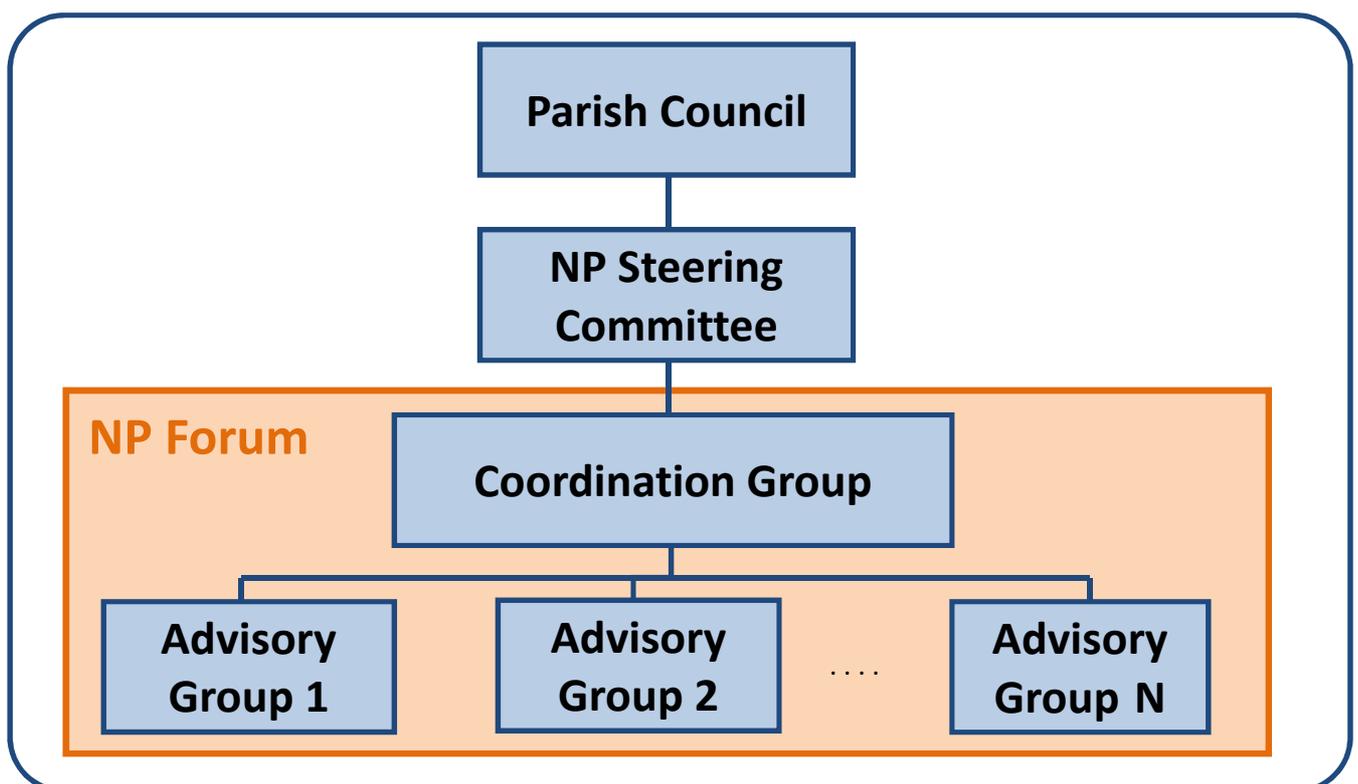
## Objectives

To manage the production of the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) on behalf of the Parish Council to achieve a target date of referendum of September 2017.

## Context

Under the SODC's 2012 Core Strategy, Watlington has to accommodate 79 more houses in the period to 2027, but revisions currently being carried out by SODC to the Local Plan for the period to 2031 may increase this number significantly. It is in Watlington's interests to define where these additional homes are built and to ensure that the infrastructure needed to support this increase in size develops in parallel with the growth of the town. A Neighbourhood Development Plan as defined under the Localism Act 2011 Schedule 9 gives the community some ability to control where new development takes place. The Watlington Neighbourhood Plan should use these powers to ensure this development is acceptable to the community and preserves the scale and character of Watlington.

To ensure the community is well engaged with the NP, a community forum is used to carry out much of the information, gathering and reporting. This group, the NP Forum (NPF), will be responsible to the NP Steering Committee for preparation of the WNP. Their role is to manage aspects of the work needed to prepare the WNP, using one or more advisory groups to carry out the bulk of the data gathering and analysis work. This structure is illustrated in the diagram below.



The NP Forum is a community group formed independently of the Parish Council but responsible to the Parish Council for work needed to prepare the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan. It is expected that a number of separate groups will address specific topics or tasks as allocated to them by a Coordination Group drawn from the Forum. Parish councillors may be members of the Forum but to ensure independence of the Forum are expected not to be members of the Coordination Group.

The WNP will be produced in accordance with current legislation and procedural requirements in consultation with SODC.

## **Duties of NP Steering Committee**

The primary role of the Steering Committee is to provide the Parish Council with a dedicated connection with the NPF Co-ordination Group. The Steering Committee is responsible for:

- preparing an overall schedule for delivery of the WNP, including dates for key deliverables from the Forum and for submission of documents for review by SODC or independent examination. The target is a referendum no later than September 2017;
- organising an initial public meeting to launch a NP Forum, including issuing specific invitations to residents on the basis of their expressions of interest in contributing;
- preparation of an initial briefing and subsequent updates of the expected elements of the Forum's work in developing the WNP, and the deliverable items expected from the Forum;
- meeting regularly with the Forum Coordinating Group, and keeping informed about about the current activities of the Forum;
- reporting monthly to Full Council based on meetings and correspondence with the Forum. These reports to detail progress against the plan for the preparation of the WNP as well as key tasks for coming months and spend against budget;
- providing feedback to the Forum based on the opinions of Full Council, and on their own evaluations of the work done and progress made;
- review and assessment of all public facing documents for suitability, completeness and quality before authorising their issue. It is probable that at least the versions of the NP submitted for pre-referendum consultation and for examination will require Full Council approval before issue;
- monitoring that the work of Forum is appropriate for the needs of the plan;
- preparing an annual budget for the WNP with input from the Coordination Group of the Forum, and agreeing this budget with the Finance Committee;
- management of day-to-day use of this budget for items up to the Parish Clerk's authorisation limit. Higher value expenditure must be included as specific items in the budget and approved by the Finance Committee;
- in conjunction with the Finance Committee, appointment of administrative support for the Steering Committee. The Finance Committee will determine the rate of pay for the employee. This administrative role may also be used to assist the Forum in managing data and documents resulting from their work;
- any Parish Council staff providing such support will report to the Parish Clerk, but the Steering Committee is also responsible for aspects of management their work. This includes:
  - specification of duties ;
  - prioritisation and management of the workload;
  - ensuring that necessary resources are available (workspace, IT facilities, etc.).

- monitoring that the data repository for the NP data collected is secure, auditable and, private;
- ensuring that a high standard of content and presentation of all public facing outputs is maintained;
- where necessary and feasible, arranging training for Steering Committee and Forum Coordinating Group members
- organising and managing all discussions and negotiations with landowners and/or developers;
- approving and managing any communications with the media on progress or issues with the WNP.

## **Governance**

The Steering Committee is accountable to the Parish Council and will report to the Full Council at least monthly. It is a full committee of the Council and its meetings will be covered by Council Standing Orders.

Any assets acquired by the Steering Committee will be the property of the Parish Council.

## **Membership**

The NP Steering Committee:

- Consists of at least six members drawn from the Parish Council at a Full Council meeting and reviewed at the Annual Parish Council meeting in May;
- The Chairman and members must be councillors.

The Parish Council may dissolve or alter membership of the Steering Committee, and shall notify such a decision to the committee at least one month before the date on which the Parish Council wishes the change to take place.

The Steering Committee at their first meeting in each year shall elect from their number a Chairman and Vice Chairman, and may define other roles and appoint members to them as necessary.

## **Conduct of business**

Notice of Steering Committee meetings will be posted on the Community Office notice board three clear days before each meeting giving the time and place of the meeting and its agenda. Also three clear days before the meeting a summons (i.e. the agenda) specifying the business to be transacted must be sent or delivered to the usual residence of each member.

Meetings of the Steering Committee are open to the public and the press who may, however, be excluded by resolution if publicity in a particular case would prejudice the public interest. Members of the public may participate in discussions by invitation of the committee Chairman.

A minute book shall be kept by the Steering Committee. Minutes of each meeting shall be taken by the Clerk or by somebody delegated by the Clerk, and should be circulated to each member of the NPF and to members of the Steering Group within a week of the meeting, and no later than the day

of issue of the summons to attend the next meeting. After consideration the minutes shall be approved for signature by the person presiding as a correct record. All minutes of the Steering Committee shall be kept open for the inspection of any member of the Parish Council.

## **Accounts**

The budget for the Neighbourhood Plan shall be held in the Parish Council bank accounts, and all payments will need to be authorised by the designated signatories for the Parish Council. The Steering Committee, will submit its budget recommendations, to include income and expenditure, for the following financial year to the Parish Council in November of each year. The Parish Council will fix the budget for the following year and determine the amount to be obtained from Parish Council resources.

The Steering Committee will be responsible for identifying additional sources of funds outside the Parish Council and preparing any bids for funds from these sources. Such bids will need to be agreed by the Parish Council, and submitted in the name of the Parish Council by the Parish Clerk.

## **Meetings**

The Steering Committee will meet at least monthly, and more frequently if necessary. If the Chairman is absent from any meeting, the Vice-Chairman shall preside. If neither are present, the members present shall choose one of their number to preside at that meeting. The Chairman (of the Steering Committee or the Parish Council) may summon an additional meeting of the committee at any time.