West Itchenor Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Terms of Reference: Governance and Process Document

1. Introduction

West Itchenor Parish Council (WIPC) has agreed to put together a Neighbourhood Plan (NP), and has agreed with Chichester District Council the neighbourhood map. Neighbourhood Planning, introduced through the Localism Act 2012 , gives the community the opportunity to decide what it wants in the future for the betterment of the Parish covering Housing, Environment, Community and Recreational Facilities, Economic expansion and infrastructure requirements.

While any NP cannot conflict with the Local Plan nor be used to prevent development that is included in Local Plan, the following key criteria are likely for West Itchenor's NP document:

a) Identify the Local Planning Context (NPPF guidelines, Draft CDC Local Plan 2014-29, CHC Harbour Management Plan, West Itchenor Village Design Statement 2012 2nd edition)
b) The character and historic context of Itchenor.
c) The local economy and waterside activity.
d) Needs of the local community.
e) Develop a shared vision for the future.
f) Identify and protect important local green spaces.
g) Produce policies for future changes.

2. Governance and Process

a) An independent NP Steering Group (SG) has been appointed by the WIPC and includes members of the WIPC.
b) Timely governance of the Steering Group will be effected as follows;
   - In the event of a failure of the Steering Group to agree, this must be recorded in the SG meeting notes and the relevant issue elevated to the WIPC at the earliest opportunity.
c) The appointment of individual Steering Group members and Working Group members will be approved by WIPC;
d) The NP Steering group shall provide oversight on the NP process, report regularly to the West Itchenor Parish Council (WIPC) and ensure that all data and feedback arising from the process is properly managed, securely held and capable of reasonable audit to ensure proper representation;
e) The Steering Group shall ensure that all data collected be used for the sole purpose of compiling the Parish's NP;
f) The composition of the Steering group shall, as far as is practicable, include representatives from different areas within Itchenor and its members shall proactively seek, record and reflect the diverse views and needs as expressed by the Community;
g) Members of the Steering Group shall enter into a Declaration of Pecuniary and non-Pecuniary Interests, along with a list of Personal and Prejudicial Interests to cover any interest in land, business or membership of a relevant interest group within the Parish; this should mirror the same standard as required by membership of the WIPC;

h) The Steering Group may also co-opt further representation from any other person or organisation that is likely to bring additional benefit to the project. Details of any assistance offered by such parties must be declared publicly and should not be seen to compromise the integrity of the direction of the plan.

3. Terms of reference for the NP Steering group

a) The role of the Steering Group is to oversee the preparation of the NP ensuring that all issues are properly addressed in a timely manner with the highest level of community engagement;
b) The Steering Group shall encourage links between key organisations within the community, ensure that the Parish is kept well informed of progress on the NP, commission specific analysis as required and agree a draft NP document prior to its submission to all relevant bodies for consideration;
c) The Steering Group shall act as the NP's public face, facilitate discussions with all interested groups in the process and provide strategic guidance to the working groups in order to progress the NP into a final draft;
d) The Steering Group shall maintain close working links with Chichester Harbour Conservancy (CHC), Chichester District Council (CDC) and other statutory bodies to ensure compliance with planning policy;
e) The Steering Group shall not have the power to exercise, on behalf of the Parish Council, any authority, nor to incur expenditure without prior authority from the Parish Council
f) Steering Group meetings are informal and can be held anywhere without public notice.
g) Recommendations made as a result of Community Engagement shall be referred back to the Parish Council for decision making, such that the Draft Neighbourhood Plan when presented should have the full backing of the Parish Council as well as the Steering Committee alone.
h) Any allocation of funds to the NP process shall be approved by the Parish Council.

4. Other Committees

a) The WIPC has responsibility for approving the terms of reference under which the Steering Group and NP Process will work;
b) The setting up of working groups will then take place to take the lead on a number of specific local issues that the draft NP document will cover; the following broad areas/topics will be included:-

Adaption of VDS to Neighbourhood Plan
Tourism and Leisure
Drainage
Social Wellbeing
Transport and Access
Sustainable Development
Businesses large and small

c) The Working Groups will use the widest range of techniques to engage with all sectors of the local community;

d) All NP Committees/working groups shall be representative of the whole parish and shall be fairly comprised to avoid any one interest group dominating that committee.

5. Process

a) The responses to the August 2013 Questionnaire have been analysed and distributed to all members of the Steering Group by the Clerk to the WIPC and will be discussed by them.
b) An NP section to the WIPC website will be set up to keep the community informed of progress.
c) It is recognised that other means of communication than just the website will also be required.
d) The WIPC website will house all Minutes of NP Meetings throughout the process.
e) An NP database will be set up to record email addresses and other information for parishioners who have voiced interest in the NP whether to contribute to the NP or to be kept up to date with its development. This database will not be available to the Steering Group for Data Protection reasons.
f) The process will be led by a Chairman whose role is to coordinate and energise the process and to coordinate the NP Steering group's/committees, their roles and responsibilities with all of this to be under the oversight of Steering Group. The Chairman will also discuss with the Steering Group the forward planning and costs of the process as well as any impediments to its progress and conclusion. The Chairman is appointed by the Parish Council.
g) The Working Parties will be expected to provide a written report which outlines the progress made at each meeting.
h) The dissemination of progress reports will be recorded in order to review, test and prove thorough consultation throughout the process; all feedback and responses to the updates will be logged and collated.
i) All Minutes, meeting notes, notifications, communications, responses, feedback will be retained throughout the process;
j) The Parish Council will be involved throughout the process from its membership of the Steering Group; the WIPC will receive a regular report from the Steering Group Chairman and have the ability in conjunction with the Steering Group to sanction the Chairman and any member if it is unhappy with progress, community consultation or governance;
k) An initial draft of the neighbourhood plan will be subject to review by WIPC and in turn by CHC, and CDC. This version of the plan will be taken forward for public consultation by the WIPC (formally known as the Regulation 14 stage). The Steering Group will oversee changes to the Plan arising from the consultation and prepare the Plan to be ready for submission. A final version of the Plan will be provided to the WIPC with a recommendation to submit to CHC and CDC.
l) A key advantage for the Community is that the NP will build upon the West Itchenor Village Design Statement 2012 2nd edition to develop our shared vision for our Parish. The processes outlined will ensure that the NP is primarily a Parish document and not a Parish Council document.
m) The final Plan will be submitted by WIPC to the inspecting bodies. (CDC)
n) Once approved by the inspector a referendum will be held.