

Dogmersfield Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – Approved Minutes

Meeting of the Dogmersfield Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group held on Monday 13th June 2016 in the Dogmersfield Primary School starting after the finish of the meeting of the Dogmersfield Parish Council.

Those attending

Steering Group Members:

Chris Ward (CW)

Christine Lowe (CL)

Mark Lowe (ML)

Valery Scott (VS)

Carol Anne Harrison (CAH)

Lorraine Fullbrook (LF)

Geoff Beaven (GB)

Alastair Clarke (AC) representing Dogmersfield Parish Council

Members of the public:

Brian Leversha

Carol Leversha.

Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions.

GB invited all present to the inaugural meeting of the Dogmersfield Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. He explained that the agenda covers only procedural items associated with the formation of the Steering Group (SG) and the engagement of consultants to support the Neighbourhood Plan (NHP) activities. The discussions and decisions are needed to ensure that the expenditure of NHP grant funding is transparent and above board.

2. Acceptance of the Steering Group Terms of Reference

Draft Terms of Reference have been drawn up that reflect best practice from other similar local organisations but tailored to suit Dogmersfield's circumstances and needs. If accepted by the SG they would then need to be approved by the Parish Council as the SG is a delegated committee of the Council. GB drew attention to the emphasis on working closely with and reporting regularly to the Parish Council, keeping records of all meetings and abiding by the principles and practices of the Parish Council Code of Practice including a declaration of interests. Copies of the Code of Practice and declaration of interest forms were circulated prior to the meeting.

It was resolved that the draft Terms of Reference be accepted with immediate effect (CL proposed, LF seconded with all in favour).

Declaration of interest forms were collected and GB will hand these on the Parish Clerk for safe keeping.

3. Election of Chairman and Finance Co-ordinator and appointment of secretary.

GB offered to stand as Chairman on an interim basis until the SG is fully established.

It was resolved that GB be elected as SG Chairman (CW proposed, LF seconded with all in favour apart from GB who abstained)

CW offered to stand as Finance Co-ordinator.

It was resolved that CW be elected as Finance Co-ordinator (GB proposed, CL seconded with all in favour apart from CW who abstained).

CW was asked to liaise with the Parish Council Responsible Finance Officer to ensure that the SG's financial records also meet the Parish Council's needs.

GB explained that further work was need to recruit a secretary and that he would provide this service until the position was filled.

4. Setting up of Working Group to analyse questionnaire responses and develop proposals for plan objectives and vision.

GB explained that work was already underway to analyse questionnaire responses collected last autumn by the Parish Council and develop proposals for plan objectives and vision. He proposed that a Working Group should be set up to carry this work further.

It was resolved that a Working Group be established to analyse questionnaire responses collected last autumn by the Parish Council and develop proposals for plan objectives and vision. (CL proposed, ML seconded with all in favour).

Working Group members will be CW, CL, ML, LF and CAH.

5. Consideration of need for consultant support and proposal from 'Planet'.

Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan is a complex activity requiring some specialised planning expertise as well as a detailed understanding the specific plan procedures and of the expectations of what the plan will deliver. When deciding to launch the work to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for Dogmersfield the Parish Council anticipated that the support of consultants would be needed to provide this knowledge and expertise. It was also anticipated that grant funding would be sought to cover the cost involved which would not impact on the Council's precept income.

Steering Group Members (CW and LF) and two Councillors (GB and AC) have also held discussions with two representatives from consultants 'Planet' about the scope and cost for support that they can offer. Planet have supported most of the NHP activities of our neighbouring Parishes and are the logical choice of consultants for Dogmersfield.

Planet responded with an emailed costed proposal and quotation for £3715.00 VAT ex for the first 6 months support. This would be charged on a 'time spent' basis' so would only charge for the time spent on the job, up to an agreed fee ceiling. The full details of their quotation is provided by the briefing paper.

The government grant application process is also quite complex as project plans and costed proposals are needed. The second of two stages is now underway drawing heavily on Planet's advice and quotation. The process is nearing completion as the application has been approved but due diligence of the Council is now needed before the funding is transferred. A total of £9000 and specialist support are potentially available although

applications can only cover a period of 6 months or up to the end of March hence more than a single application will be needed.

Hart DC have also been approached and have awarded a grant of £2000 which has already been paid out with no preconditions or timescale restrictions.

The grant funding will be ring fenced for NHP activities but it will pass through the Parish Council's books and the Parish Council will need to formally engage the consultants through the award of a purchase order. Although the SG is to be responsible for efficient use of this funding the Parish Council must formally decide whether or not to enter into any commitments that it is requested to make.

The work to analyse the questionnaires returned by residents and to develop objectives and a vision for Dogmersfield is progressing well but consultants review and advice is needed before proceeding much further and certainly before this work can be completed.

Ideally a sequential approach would be followed whereby following receipt of the government grant funding the SG would request a commitment by the Parish Council. The Parish Council would consider this request and resolve a commitment tasking the Parish Clerk to issue a purchase order.

However, in the current circumstances engaging the consultants for an initial tranche of the activities described above within a limit of liability of £1500 will enable the objectives and vision work to move forward more quickly and maintain its momentum.

It is proposed that the £1500 initial tranche commitment would be funded from the Hart DC grant and when and if the government grant is forthcoming consideration can be given to an extension of the commitment to cover the full scope of the work quoted by Planet.

To achieve this objective in light of the timings of the relevant meeting requires the following steps.

At its meeting earlier this evening the Parish Council resolved the proposal to engage Planet for an initial tranche of consultant support with a limit of liability of £1500 subject to the Steering Group requesting this commitment.

At this meeting the SG must consider its need for consultancy support and whether to request a commitment by the Parish Council for an initial tranche of consultant support from Planet with a limited liability of £1500.

It was resolved that an initial tranche of consultant support should be sought from Planet with a limited liability of £1500. (CW proposed, LF seconded with all in favour)

6. Requests to Parish Council for commitment and engagement of consultant support.

It was resolved that the Parish Council should be requested to engage Planet for an initial tranche of consultancy support with a limited liability of £1500. (GB proposed, CL seconded with all in favour)

GB will pass this request to the Parish Clerk by email and ask for a purchase order to be raised as already agreed by the Parish Council. GB will also advise Planet of the decisions of the SG to encourage dialogue in anticipation of the formal commitment.

As the government grant funding should be available within the next week or so consideration of extending the Limit of Liability should be possible at the July meeting of the Parish Council

7. Future meetings

The Terms of Reference require SG meetings at least every two months. Holding these meetings on the same evening and following on from the Parish Council meetings is an efficient arrangement for a number of reasons. On this basis the next SG meeting could be held on 11th July with meetings scheduled from September onwards. GB will circulate details of possible dates for members to assess their availability. SG would also be arranged at other times as needed.

8. AOB

Nothing was raised and GB closed the meeting at 9.30pm