

## Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group:

### Terms of Reference

#### Purpose and Objectives of SG

The Neighbourhood Plan (NP) Steering Group (SG) will oversee the process whereby the Chippenham NP is prepared, consulted upon, and taken through to referendum. The SG will aim to ensure that the NP is representative of the views of the Chippenham community, whilst complying with the Regulations of the English Town Planning system and being in conformity with the Development Plan prepared by Wiltshire Council.

The SG's ultimate objective will be to produce a Neighbourhood Plan that sets a vision for the future, influences the type, design, location and mix of new development, within the bounds of existing local planning policies and becomes part of the planning policy against which planning applications will be assessed.

#### Function and Operation of SG

The SG will be sponsored by and report to Chippenham Town Council (CTC), which will be the Accountable Body, receiving regular reports from the Group. CTC will administer all funding and payments according to its financial regulations. The SG will operate on a non-political basis and will be comprised of 6 Town Councillors and 6 Community Members, supported by the Director of Community Services, Planning Officer, Planning Consultant(s), and other staff where required.

Town Councillors (only) will nominate substitutes for meetings that they are unable to attend, to ensure the necessary governance is provided by the Accountable Body. This will not apply to Community Members.

The SG will meet on a monthly basis. It will form Topic Groups (TG) in Year 2 of the NP, which will regularly report back to the SG.

#### Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference have been developed so that the governance and decision-making of the SG is transparent to local residents and other stakeholders. The Terms of Reference will be reviewed, and amended if necessary, by the SG every 6 months.

#### The Steering Group will:

- Elect a Vice-Chairman at the first meeting, who shall be a member of CTC
- Determine the overall scope and objectives of the NP
- Manage the process of preparing the plan, and prepare and monitor a project plan
- Seek professional support and advice on technical planning matters either from the Director of Community Services, Planning Officer, Consultant(s) or others

- Consult the Chippenham community as fully as possible, seeking to reach all sectors of the community when identifying priorities and considering delivery options
- Communicate with stakeholders by preparing and executing a Communications Strategy
- Consider the financial implications of preparing the NP and provide recommendations for decision on them to the CTC
- Regularly update CTC Full Council on the progress of the NP and how any risks arising are being managed
- Form TG whose purpose is to progress individual policy topics
- Oversee and agree the scope, quality and coverage of evidence prepared by TG, and to make recommendations on necessary amendments or other matters of importance
- Oversee the overall consultation process and public engagement activities
- Engage in constructive dialogue with all stakeholders, including the Local Planning Authority, to seek to negotiate policies and outcomes that are fit for purpose and which represent the views of the community in the best manner possible
- Oversee the production of all stages of the NP's preparation through to referendum
- Produce minutes, reports, communication materials in accordance with the Communications Strategy, and other material needed for the production of the NP
- Nominate a replacement SG member to CTC Full Council for agreement should a vacancy arise
- Oversee the population and maintenance of the NP website
- Recommend to CTC commissioning appropriate technical studies as part of the process of developing and producing the NP
- Oversee the work of engaged professional consultants and report any concerns to CTC

### Topic Groups will:

- Each have a Chairman and Vice Chairman that are SG Members
- Propose the overall scope and objectives of the policy topic, in conjunction with the SG Chairman, Planning Officer and Planning Consultant, which shall then be agreed by the SG
- Manage the process of preparing planning evidence in support of the topic
- Seek professional support and advice on technical planning matters either from the Planning Officer, the Consultant(s) or others
- Consult the Chippenham community as fully as possible, seeking to reach all sectors of the community when identifying priorities and considering delivery options
- Report progress to each SG Meeting, in the form of action points recorded from each TG Meeting, and accept recommendations from the SG on the overall direction and rate of progress of the topic
- At the end of 6 months, each produce a report for the SG, detailing evidence gathered and draft policies, which will be edited by the Planning Consultant/Planning Officer to ensure conformity and relevance to planning
- Not have their meetings open to members of the public to attend
- Obtain advance permission from the SG, or if urgent from the SG Chair, for any engagement with the public required as part of the TG work
- Notify the Planning Officer of their meeting time/date and venue, in advance of their meeting

## Chairmanship:

- The SG will have a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman both of whom will be Town Councillors
- The SG Chairman shall be elected by Full Council and the Vice-Chairman by the SG
- The appointment of SG Chairman and Vice Chairman shall be endorsed by the SG on an annual basis from the anniversary of its inaugural meeting
- The SG Chairman and Vice-Chairman will be subject to re-election (Town Councillor Members) and/or re-appointment (Community Members) in the event that a majority of the SG fail to endorse their respective appointments
- The SG Chairman's main duties are to oversee the smooth running of the meetings and outputs of the SG, represent the SG externally and to be the main point of contact for the elected representatives of CTC and external organisations with whom the SG is working
- The SG Chairman will be supported by the Planning Officer and the Consultant(s)
- Should the Chairman be unable to chair a meeting, the Vice-Chairman will fulfil the role for the meeting in question
- The Vice-Chairman may be delegated authority by the Chairman
- The SG Chairman and Planning Officer, in consultation with professional support and the SG, will be responsible for preparing regular update reports for CTC Full Council on the progress of the NP and how any risks arising are being managed
- The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman will undertake their duties in a transparent and fair manner and will ensure that all views may be expressed at the SG meeting
- The Chairman and Vice-Chairman will ensure that the Terms of Reference are met

## Declarations of Interest:

- All members of the SG and TG will seek to put the interest of the Chippenham community before their own interest
- All members of the SG and TG must declare any pecuniary or personal interests that may be perceived as relevant to a decision of the SG or TG
  - "Interests" include public issues that individual members have championed in the past, work or social commitments to a group or issue; ownership of land or a business that is connected with the NP; or any other matters that may be considered relevant
  - Such interests shall be recorded and made publicly available in the case of the SG

## SG Meetings:

- The SG will aim to meet once a month, although there may be breaks to account for holiday periods
- Meetings will usually take place in Chippenham Town Hall
- Extra meetings may be called by the Chairman to address special circumstances with a minimum of one calendar weeks' notice
- A valid quorum of the meeting will be 3 Town Councillors and 3 Community Members
- Voting will be by simple majority with the Chairman having the casting vote in the event of a tie
- Decisions with financial implications will be referred to CTC
- The Chief Executive shall ensure that appropriate clerking arrangements are in place for Steering Group meetings and that agendas, papers and minutes are properly prepared, distributed and publicised in a timely fashion
- If a member of the SG fails to attend 3 consecutive meetings without sending prior apologies, the member will be deemed to have resigned from the SG unless otherwise agreed by the SG. This provision does not prevent any member

resigning from the SG by providing the Chairman written notice of their resignation

## Membership of SG and TG:

- The SG shall be ratified (but not re-elected or re-appointed) by Full Council at the Annual Meeting of the Town Council in May of each year, in line with CTC's own internal processes
- Members shall agree to be bound by the Seven Principles of Public Life ("The Nolan Principles"), which are: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership. Chippenham Town Councillors elected to the SG and TG shall also agree to abide by CTC's Code of Conduct. Community Members of the SG and TG shall make themselves familiar with the Code of Conduct, and although not being bound by it, shall follow it wherever possible
- Wherever possible all members of the SG should have a specific role, to be agreed by the SG
- Members will attend all scheduled meetings wherever possible and to give apologies with an explanation in advance for non-attendance
- Members will read all papers and prepare for meetings
- Members will participate fully and constructively in meetings
- Members will complete agreed tasks between meetings
- Members will maintain the good reputation of the NP, the SG and CTC
- Members will fairly and impartially represent all sectors of the Chippenham community equally
- Members will treat all members and supporting officers of the SG and TG respectfully
- Members shall not communicate with the press or via social media about the NP in their role as SG or TG Member, without the prior agreement of the SG Chairman and the Planning Officer and the CTC Communications & Customer Service Manager
- Members will refer any grievances arising in TGs to the TG Chairman to try to resolve. Should it not be possible for the TG Chairman to resolve, it should be passed to the SG Chairman to try to resolve
- TG Members shall inform the TG Chairman and Planning Officer if they wish to liaise directly with external stakeholders

## Freedom of Information and GDPR

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (2000), as an extension of a Local Authority, the SG will make available to the public minutes of meetings, evidence gathered and draft documents, its organisational structure and information on budget, expenditure and allowances.

Data used by the SG will be processed in accordance with the Town Council's Privacy Statement and Data Protection Policy.

**Date adopted: 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

**Date last revised: 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2019**