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Steering Group terms of reference

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[redacted] Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group
Established [redacted] (including relevant Parish Council date)

1. Purpose of the steering group

- a. The [redacted] Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will oversee the preparation of the [redacted] Neighbourhood Plan so that it can progress to independent examination, successful community referendum and be adopted by Wiltshire Council to become planning policy.
- b. The Steering Group will engage the local community throughout the plan-making process to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan accurately represents the views and ambitions of residents and other stakeholders.

2. Principles

- a. [redacted] Council is the responsible body for bringing a neighbourhood plan into planning policy.
[redacted] Council appoints the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group as a subcommittee of the Council.
- b. The Steering Group will undertake the process in a democratic, transparent and fair fashion, encouraging widespread participation and giving equal consideration to opinions and ideas from all members of the community.
- c. All decisions made shall be fully evidenced and supported through consultation with the local community and will be reported back to the Council for approval.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Activities that the Steering Group might be involved in [add or remove as necessary]:

- a. Be accountable to the Parish Council and act as a focal point for the neighbourhood plan for people living and/or working in the neighbourhood area.
- b. Agree and prepare a project plan with timetable and endeavour to secure compliance.

- c. Identify ways of involving the whole community and gather the views and opinions of as many individuals, groups and organisations in the community as possible in order to meet the requirements for consultation and engagement;
- d. Report back to and receive endorsement from the Council on progress, issues arising and outcomes throughout the process.
- e. To undertake analysis and evidence gathering to support the neighbourhood plan production process;
- f. Actively support and promote the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan throughout the duration of the project;
- g. Identify and apply for sources of funding and support;
- h. Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to make the plan as effective as possible.
- i. Gather data from a wide range of sources to ensure that the conclusions reached are fully evidenced and that the aspirations and issues of all residents are understood.
- j. Consult as widely and thoroughly as is possible to ensure that the draft Neighbourhood Plan is representative of the views of residents.
- k. Work positively with the Local Planning Authority to ensure the plan is in conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted development plan;
- l. Agree, subject to ratification by the Council, a final submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan;
- m. Actively support and promote the preparation of the plan throughout the duration of the project.

4. Membership

- a. The Steering Group will be made up of a cross section of volunteers which might include town/parish councillors, local residents, representatives of local community organisations and local business owners.
- b. The Steering Group members and the responsibility of those members (including substitutes) is as follows [add or remove as necessary]:

Position	Role	Name(s) / organisations
Chair	Chair Steering Group meetings and liaise with parish/town council	
Vice-Chair	Step in when Chair is away	
Secretary	Arranges and minutes meetings.	
Treasurer	Handling finances.	

Project manager	Creates, monitors and maintains the project plan (schedule), undertakes agreed actions.
Project team members [insert number]	Use their individual skills and experiences to undertake various aspects of project work.
Parish Clerk	Ensures relevant Council procedures and policies are followed.

- c. The Steering Group will elect a Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary from its membership to remain in those positions until the project is completed. If these positions should become vacant, the Group will elect an alternate. The election of a Chair will require ratification by the Parish Council.
- d. Membership of the Steering Group will be open to the public indefinitely, [up to a maximum of [x] members (optional)].
- e. Steering Group membership will be reviewed from time to time. Whilst organisations have their nominated representatives, it will be acceptable for reserves to attend meetings as necessary.

5. Decision making

- a. [] Council is the qualifying body for the purpose of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan. The preparation of plan documents, consultation and community engagement exercises will be undertaken by or on behalf of the Council with appropriate recognition of the Council's position given in all communications associated with the project.
- b. The Steering Group has full delegated authority from the [] Council to deliver its plan making functions up to and including publication of the Consultation Draft Plan. The Group will report (monthly) to the Council setting out progress on its work. The Group will require approval (minuted) by the Parish Council for Submission of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan prior to publication for consultation and independent examination.

- c. Decisions made by the Steering Group should normally be by consensus at Steering Group meetings. Where a vote is required, each member shall have one vote. A minimum [x] members shall be present where matters are presented for decisions to be taken. A simple majority vote will be required to support any motion. The Chairman should have one casting vote.

6. Meetings

- a. Steering Group meetings will take place [monthly].
- b. Where possible, all meetings should be held within the Parish.
- c. The dates of future meetings will be made publicly available via the [parish council] website and the Steering Group webpage.
- d. Notice and associated papers shall normally be despatched [x] clear days before the date of the meeting.
- e. A record of meetings and minutes will be circulated to Steering Group members and the Parish Council in a timely fashion.
- f. Minutes will be made publicly available on the website.

7. Working groups

- a. The Steering Group may establish working groups, made up of volunteers from the community to aid them in any Neighbourhood Plan related work.
- b. Each working group should have a lead person from the Steering Group.
- c. Members of the community will be encouraged to participate in the process at all stages.

8. Financial issues

- a. All grants and funding will be applied and held by the Parish Council, who will ring-fence the funds for Neighbourhood Plan work.
- b. The Steering Group will notify the Parish Council, advising them of any planned expenditure before it is incurred.
- c. Steering Group members and volunteers from any working groups may claim back any previously agreed expenditure incurred during any Neighbourhood Plan related work.

9. Conduct and conflicts of interest.

- a. It is expected that all Steering Group members should abide by the principle and practice of the Parish Council Code of Conduct including declarations of interest.

- b. Steering Group members should declare an interest where there is a potential financial or pecuniary benefit to themselves, or their company/organisation arising from the decisions or recommendations of the group.
- c. Members of the Steering Group will:
 - i. Be clear and open when their individual roles or interests are in conflict.
 - ii. Treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion and belief.
 - iii. Actively promote equality of access and opportunity.

10. Data Protection

- a. Requirements of the Data Protection Act are to be met having regard to both the relationship with the Parish Council and also the need to provide Wiltshire Council with a list of consultees at the Submission stage of the process. It should be clear who is responsible for overall data control for the neighbourhood plan process.

11. Freedom of Information Act/Environmental Information Regulations

- a. Transparency in decision making at all stages of the neighbourhood plan processes is essential. To be made absolutely clear that there is an expectation that any material that is used (either positively or negatively) or collected to inform the neighbourhood plan (in particular consultation material) must be available for public inspection in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act/Environmental Information Regulations.

12. Changes to the terms of reference

- a. This constitution may be amended with the support of at least two thirds of the current membership at the Steering Group meeting and with the approval of the Parish Council.

13. Dissolution

- a. The Steering Group will be dissolved once its objective has been attained and/or when at least two thirds of its members and the parish council consider its services are no longer required.
- b. The Steering Group in conjunction with the Parish Council will then dispose of any remaining funds held in accordance with any conditions imposed by the grant funder and in the best interests of [REDACTED] Parish.



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