



supporting people & sustaining communities

www.ruralcc.org.uk

Neighbourhood Planning Support – Service Specification

1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1. Formed in 1924, the Rural Community Council (RCC) is a registered charity (no.1077645) and company limited by guarantee (no.3665974). The RCC provides a range of training, advice, and support services to communities as well as a range of professional consultancy services.
- 1.2. The RCC has provided a package of expert advice and professional support services to assist with the development of over 20 Neighbourhood Plans since the process was born in 2011. The organisation has led the way on developing and refining the plan development process across Leicestershire & Rutland and has been recognised nationally for its innovative approach to partnership and community led working.
- 1.3. For the past 3 financial years Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) has contracted the RCC to provide advice and support services to support communities with defined elements of the process to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.4. The support provided by the RCC has been funded by HBBC through a small Service Level Agreement with a total value of just under nine thousand pounds per year.
- 1.5. Despite the relative low value of this contract, the RCC has provided practical support to four communities in the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan and direct advice to a further four communities considering and/or initiating the process. The RCC has also been available to provide information at local events, seminars, and through HBBC networks.
- 1.6. The RCC's work to date has included providing advice and support with the development of the Market Bosworth Neighbourhood Plan, the first to be officially made within the Borough.
- 1.7. By engaging the RCC, HBBC has also bought into a wider network of knowledge, skills, and experience of other community led projects and initiatives which has benefitted both the local authority and the communities engaged in the RCC's work.
- 1.8. In December 2016 HBBC and the RCC entered discussions with regards to expanding the professional advice and support for Neighbourhood Planning provided by the RCC.

1.9. The overall aims of the expanded RCC service are to:

- a) Ensure all communities across the Borough are aware of the Neighbourhood Planning process and are enabled to make informed decisions whether to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for their area.
- b) Increase the number of active Neighbourhood Plan projects across the Borough.
- c) Provide an enhanced support offer to communities undertaking the process to develop a Neighbourhood Plan which is flexible and responsive to the needs, priorities and resources within and available to each community.
- d) Maximise and make best use of the capacity and resources HBBC has available to support the Neighbourhood Planning process within communities across the Borough.

2. Costs

2.1. This service specification is based on a three-year program valued at a total of £120,000.

2.2. The service will be delivered by the RCC from 01/04/2017 until 31/03/2020 inclusive.

2.3. The annual cost breakdown of the service is as follows:

| Year 1 (April 17 – March 18) | |
|---|------------|
| 1. Advice & Brokerage Service (Full Time Cover) | £22,480.00 |
| 2. Direct Support (450 hours) | £17,520.00 |
| Total Cost | £40,000.00 |

| Year 2 (April 18 – March 19) | |
|---|------------|
| 1. Advice & Brokerage Service (Full Time Cover) | £22,480.00 |
| 2. Direct Support (450 hours) | £17,520.00 |
| Total Cost | £40,000.00 |

| Year 3 (April 19 – March 20) | |
|---|------------|
| 3. Advice & Brokerage Service (Full Time Cover) | £22,480.00 |
| 4. Direct Support (450 hours) | £17,520.00 |
| Total Cost | £40,000.00 |

3. Service Specification

3.1. The RCC service for Neighbourhood Planning support within the Hinckley & Bosworth Borough is broken down into two core blocks of activity.

3.2. Block 1 – Advice & Brokerage

This block of activity is focused on the RCC managing a blanket advice and brokerage service covering all Neighbourhood Planning activity across the Borough.

The service will be accessible via telephone and e-mail Monday to Friday between 9:00am and 4:30pm and include capacity for officer attendance at daytime and evening meetings and events from Monday to Saturday. The service will also be accessible online and via dedicated social media platforms (e.g. Facebook).

Outputs & Outcomes

Across the three years' delivery of this block of activity the RCC will:

- a. Field, investigate, respond to, and follow up all Neighbourhood Plan related enquiries on behalf of HBBC.
- b. Proactively target communities with information about the Neighbourhood Planning process and the opportunities it presents.
- c. Ensure all Parish Councils and community leaders within the town of Hinckley are made aware of the process and are adequately informed to decide whether it is appropriate and/or beneficial to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for their area.
- d. Maintain an up to date and accurate database on behalf of HBBC detailing the Neighbourhood Planning status of all communities across the Borough (e.g. plan in progress, plan pending, decided not to progress, no contact).
- e. Collect and provide HBBC with data around the reasons that communities cite for deciding to go ahead or not with the production of a Neighbourhood Plan.
- f. Advise communities deciding to go ahead with the process how to apply to HBBC to designate a Neighbourhood Area and where appropriate a Neighbourhood Forum.
- g. Provide access to information and professional advice on the procedural steps to produce a plan including statutory requirements and best practice guidance.
- h. Assess the local skills, resources, capacity and commitment available to develop a Neighbourhood Plan and what (if any) specialist support is needed for each project.
- i. Help to ensure that the need to employ specialist consultants is adequately assessed, that appropriately qualified professionals are engaged, and that required quality standards and value for money are achieved.
- j. Support communities to identify and secure grant funding and investment of local resource to cover plan development costs (i.e. Locality Grants).
- k. Check that emerging plans are developing in general conformity with all relevant planning policy (including reviewing all final draft plans).
- l. Broker the relationship between active Neighbourhood Plan projects and HBBC (i.e. fielding enquiries and facilitating links with Planning Officers).
- m. Manage a pipeline and timetable of active Neighbourhood Plan projects across the Borough to enable both the RCC and HBBC to plan capacity and resource allocation accordingly.

3.3. [Block 2 – Neighbourhood Plan Development – Direct Support](#)

This block of activity is based on the RCC providing direct support to practically assist communities within the Borough with the Neighbourhood Plan development process.

Direct support will be allocated to active Neighbourhood Plan projects across the Borough using a set of clear criteria agreed with HBBC. These criteria will include:

- a. The project being led by a Parish Council (for Parished areas) or a HBBC approved Neighbourhood Forum (in the town of Hinckley).
- b. The Neighbourhood Plan Area being formally designated by HBBC.
- c. Match funding for the project being identified from other sources (e.g. Locality Grants) or available directly from the community (e.g. precept or local investment).

A detailed overview of the RCC's current support package which will be made available to projects is provided in [Appendix 2 – Direct Support Elements](#).

A set number of hours will be allocated to each supported community/project (in agreement with HBBC). Hours will be allocated flexibly between projects depending on demand, local need, and HBBC priorities.

The RCC may provide additional support to each project outside this service subject to additional funding/finance being obtained by the community (e.g. Locality Grants).

[Outputs & Outcomes](#)

Across the three years' delivery of this block of activity the RCC will:

- a. Provide 1,350 hours' direct support to active Neighbourhood Plan projects.
- b. Benefit a minimum of 6 active Neighbourhood Plan projects each year.
- c. Lever in at least £81,000.00 in match funding and/or local investment.

4. [The RCC Approach](#)

4.1. The RCC has a community development focussed approach to Neighbourhood Planning which would underpin delivery of this service. This approach is based upon:

- a) [Professionalism](#) – Providing advice and support based on best practice guidance and in line with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
- b) [Flexibility](#) – Tailoring support around the unique needs and priorities of each community
- c) [Honesty & Impartiality](#) – Acting as an honest and impartial advisor, facilitator, broker, and critical friend to all parties engaged in the plan development process.
- d) [Accountability](#) – Managing the process to ensure accountability, control, and that high-quality standards are maintained.
- e) [Simplicity & Accessibility](#) – Keeping the process simple, understandable, and accessible.
- f) [Efficiency & Collaboration](#) – Maximising available skills and resources (within the community and HBBC) and enabling communities to share information, experiences, and resources.
- g) [Sustainability](#) – Building capacity within the community and leaving lasting benefit.

5. [Added Value](#)

5.1. By contracting the RCC to manage and lead delivery of this service, HBBC benefit from several areas of added value.

1. [Receive high calibre delivery resource for low salary equivalent investment](#)

- a. Access a broad bank of skills, knowledge, and experience from across the RCC which will be constantly developing and expanding without any additional cost or resource implications.
- b. Avoid human resource (HR) management costs and liability as this will sit within the RCC.
- c. Ensure a constant full time service with little or no down time due to employee working hours, leave & absence, training, and other internal activity.

2. [Maintain impartiality, integrity, & continuity of the service](#)

- a. Build on investment and progress achieved over last three years of delivery.
- b. Capitalise on the RCC's existing relationships and reputation across the Borough.
- c. Avoid the need invest resource in building trust in the service and its delivery provider.

3. [Tap into local & national networks of intelligence, expertise, & collaborative working](#)

- a. Draw from the RCC's extensive network of Neighbourhood Plans, Parish Councils, and specialist support providers.
- b. Benefit from RCC's strategic and operational partnerships with Locality, Leicestershire & Rutland Association of Local Councils and the wider VCS.
- c. Benefit from the RCC's membership of national networks managed by Locality and ACRE.

4. [Benefit from broader RCC activity generating additional investment & impact](#)

- a. Lever in external funding and support outside RCC support arrangement
- b. Generate and lever in funding for broader activity and community benefit stimulated by the Neighbourhood Planning process (e.g. Good Neighbour Schemes, Community Owned Assets, Community Buildings & Village Halls).

Associated Documents:

- [Appendix 2 – RCC Direct Support Elements](#)