



Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

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FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND DECISION MAKING

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

24 MAY 2018

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL WARDS

ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT TO SUPPORT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Report of Director (Environment and Planning)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the outcome of the annual review of performance against the Service Level Agreement the borough council has entered into with the Rural Community Council to support neighbourhood planning in the borough; and advise of any changes required to the terms of the Service Level Agreement and Service Specification.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Members:
- I. note the satisfactory performance against the Service Level Agreement;
 - II. and agree to further engage the Rural Community Council for 12 months in line with proposed changes to the Service Specification/ Direct Support Elements schedule set out in this report.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

- 3.1 On the 1 April 2017, the Council entered into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Rural Community Council (RCC) to provide a full neighbourhood planning support package to the borough's local communities for a 3 year term, subject to satisfactory annual review. The arrangement was in lieu of recruiting a Neighbourhood Planning Officer post as had been agreed by Council on 6 September 2016.
- 3.2 The new SLA was a combination of an existing SLA with the RCC to provide qualifying groups with support for the consultation and community engagement elements of the neighbourhood planning process. The new SLA significantly broadens the scope of this, enabling the RCC to provide communities with a wider range of neighbourhood planning services
- 3.3 The terms of the current SLA and Service Specification are that for a fee of £40,000 per year, the RCC would be able to:

- Provide help for communities to tap into a range of funding opportunities
- Ensure compliance with the HBBC Local Plan
- Act as a single point of contact for phone calls and face to face enquiries
- Share best practice and guidance, bespoke to each plan
- Provide regular feedback to HBBC about uptake and progress
- Work pro-actively with specific communities to bring forward their NDPs
- Ensure full transparency through setting out how much RCC officer time and resources being spent
- Provide the additional service of being able to help write plans for communities, subject to funding and provided there is no conflicts of interest.
- Support communities to identify and secure a range of grant funding to assist with NDP development
- Proactively target communities with information about the neighbourhood planning process and the opportunities it presents.
- Ensure all parish council leaders and community leaders within Hinckley are made aware of the benefits of NDPs
- Provide a list of 'approved' consultants through which communities could appoint and help ensure that appropriate consultants are appointed, and that the required quality standards are met.

To summarise, the RCC cover all neighbourhood planning work which otherwise would need to be undertaken by officers, with the exception of the key statutory stages of the neighbourhood planning process (such as formal area designation, the organisation of the examination and referendum), which remain within the remit of borough council's planning service.

3.4 At the outset of the SLA, the council charged the RCC with prioritising several parishes and/or Neighbourhood Planning Groups for support, either because progress had slowed, interest had been shown or to ascertain whether there was interest in developing. The initial groups prioritized were:

- Bagworth, Thornton and Stanton under Bardon
- Barlestone
- Barwell
- Burbage NDP group
- Desford
- Earl Shilton
- Groby
- Markfield
- Newbold Verdon
- Sheepy NDP group
- Stoke Golding NDP group
- West Clarendon NDP group
- Witherley

3.5 Throughout the term of the first year the RCC have kept in regular contact with officers and kept them informed and updated about progress. The SLA does require quarterly review meetings which for a variety of meetings have not been strictly adhered to. However, officers have access to the RCC's real time data in terms of support progress and are able to contact RCC officers for an update when required. It is however acknowledged that for future terms of an SLA the quarterly meetings need to be strictly adhered to. Officers from the RCC were also due to present an

update to Members at the December Planning Policy Member Working Group but unfortunately this needed to be cancelled due to severe weather.

- 3.6 An officer review of the current RCC SLA was carried out on 1 February 2018 between Sam Howlett, RCC Director of Operations, Edwina Grant, HBBC Strategic and Community Planning Manager, Kirstie Rea, HBBC Planning Manager (Policy) and Sam Hatfield, HBBC Planning Officer. The RCC presented a Performance Monitoring Report (Appendix 1 attached) which demonstrated their performance against six objectives and performance targets which are summarised as:

Objective/Target		Performance
a.	All communities made aware of and informed about neighbourhood planning	89%
b.	100% of enquiries followed up within 14 days	100%
c.	Provide 450 hrs direct support	111%
d.	Support a minimum of 6 active projects	183%
e.	At least £27,000 match funding and/or local investment secured	4%
f.	Database updated quarterly with community neighbourhood planning status	89%

It can be seen that predominantly, the RCC have performed above target. For those objectives where they fall short the explanation is as follows:

- For objectives a. and f. this is because the following three communities have not taken up the offer for the RCC to engage with and inform them about neighbourhood planning. Two of these communities are Higham on the Hill and Ratby. There has been an initial follow up meeting with representatives of West Clarendon but no further contact to date. However at the beginning of the SLA the council were only working directly with 13 communities but the RCC has had positive dialogue and supported 24 to date.
- For objective e. performance falls far short of target because the RCC are working with projects at advanced stages that have already secured appropriate funding and investment. Emerging projects will be supported to apply for funding/investment when they reach the appropriate stage of development.

- 3.7 During the review meeting discussion was had as to any new areas of support that were needed or whether there were aspects of the Service Specification that required change. A necessary area of neighbourhood plan production relates to the preparation of a Screening Report in relation to Strategic Environmental Appraisal regulations. Although there is no statutory obligation for local planning authorities to carry out this process on behalf of neighbourhood planning groups, it is usual to offer support. Therefore, it is proposed that the council will create a screening template which the RCC will support NDP groups to complete and then the council will check and submit to the statutory consultees for a response. The RCC have produced a updated version of the schedule of Direct Support Elements which is attached to this report at Appendix 4.
- 3.8 From the officer review and proposed Service Specification/ Direct Support Elements changes it is recommended that the SLA with the RCC continues for a further 12

months. However, should the council decide not to re-engage the RCC further there will still be the need to recruit at least 1 dedicated neighbourhood planning officer under the terms of the Council resolution from 6 September 2016.

4. EXEMPTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROCEDURE RULES

4.1 None

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 An amount of £26,760 has been set aside from existing resources towards the cost. This leaves a balance of £13,240 for which a supplementary budget is required

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (MR)

6.1 Planning Policy Guidance states that a local planning authority must provide advice and assistance as it considers appropriate for the purpose to a parish council neighbourhood forum or community organisation that is producing a neighbourhood plan or Order as required by paragraph 3 of Schedule 4B to the TCPA 1990 (as amended).

7. CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Corporate Plan (2017-2021) seeks to support rural communities through a range of measures, including taking forward Neighbourhood Planning. The provision of a full support service for local communities to develop NDPs would help achieve these aspirations.

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 None

9. RISK IMPLICATIONS

9.1 It is the Council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.

9.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.

9.3 The following significant risks associated with this report / decisions were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) Risks		
Risk Description	Mitigating actions	Owner
Failure to provide additional support for qualifying groups could result in groups not having sufficient support and assistance to take forward successful neighbourhood plans.	Ensure that support is provided.	Kirstie Rea

10. KNOWING YOUR COMMUNITY – EQUALITY AND RURAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The provision of additional support and assistance to qualifying groups to assist with development of neighbourhood plans will help communities more fully engage with planning and the future of their community more widely, and help encourage greater participation and community cohesion.

11. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community Safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset Management implications
- Procurement implications
- Human Resources implications
- Planning implications
- Data Protection implications
- Voluntary Sector

Background papers:

- Appendix 1 RCC Performance Monitoring report
- Appendix 2 Service Level Agreement between Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and the RCC
- Appendix 3 Neighbourhood Planning Support – Service Specification
- Appendix 4 Neighbourhood Planning Support – Direct Support Elements

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