

## BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Report of:** Michael Wassell, Leader of the Council

**To:** Cabinet: 24<sup>th</sup> March

**(Author:** Phil Mileham - Deputy Planning Manager)

**Subject:** Neighbourhood Plan resource – role and scope

**Purpose:** To advise Members of the role and scope of the Neighbourhood Planning resource.

### **Recommendation(s):**

- 1) That Members consider the report and endorse Option 1 to:  
  
Agree the role and scope of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan coordinator role which will provide a single point of contact for communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans.

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Supporting Neighbourhood Plans is a priority of Breckland Council. At the Cabinet meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> February, to further demonstrate the Council's commitment to Neighbourhood Planning Members agreed to recommend to Council that top-up funding is provided to Town and Parish Councils that have committed to producing a Neighbourhood Plan and successfully gained funding from DCLG under their new arrangements. To recap, this top-up would provide an additional up to 50% of any DCLG funding that is awarded (to a maximum of £4,000).
- 1.2 Members recognised that the announcement of additional funding to support NPs was likely to increase demand for plans to be prepared with a consequential impact on resources. Therefore, in addition to this top-up funding, Members agreed to release a sum of £50,000 from the Organisational Development Reserve to provide a fixed term resource to enable capacity within the Council's retained Planning function to support the development of Neighbourhood Plans.
- 1.3 Currently, Neighbourhood Plans are supported by the Deputy Planning Manager as part of the retained planning function and operationally, by Capita's Planning Policy Team.
- 1.4 Role and scope**
- 1.5 It is proposed that in order to best utilise the resource agreed by Cabinet, that a new 1 year fixed term post (full time equivalent) be created for a Neighbourhood Plan coordinator to meet with anticipated demand. On this basis, a further report will be prepared and submitted to the Council's General Purposes Committee for consideration at their earliest opportunity.
- 1.6 In terms of objectives for this role, the overriding objective can be summarised as providing a single point of contact in the Council for Neighbourhood Plan enquiries and enabling coordination of the Council's wider support role. The role will provide initial advice on Neighbourhood Planning, help explain the process as well as give advice on other matters such as governance arrangements and community engagement.

- 1.7 Another key objective for the role will be communication. The post will liaise with other internal Council departments (particularly Communications), but also as plans develop, help to make arrangements for the independent examination and engage with Electoral Services Team regarding referendums. The post will also, in consultation with relevant Breckland Ward Members, oversee communication between the Council and Town and Parishes, but having regard to the fact that communication on the content of the Plan with the community will be the responsibility of the Town or Parish Council.
- 1.8 The new post will also be able to provide an interface between Neighbourhood Plans and the Council's own emerging Local Plan process and provide guidance on how the two processes can work together. The role will help bring together agreements between the Council and Town and Parish Councils producing Neighbourhood Plans regarding their respective content which will help ensure a conjoined and cohesive approach to local policy development. This will also help Neighbourhood Plans to be robust and deliverable, but also to genuinely add value where these supplement existing local policies.
- 1.9 In terms of financial support, the role will help to signpost communities to DCLG funding applications. The role will then facilitate applications from communities to access the Council's top up funding arrangements, working with the finance team.
- 1.10 In terms of organisational structure, the post will report to the Deputy Planning Manager under the wider umbrella of the Place Directorate. There is an ambition for this role to be filled and operational as soon as practicable.
- 1.11 However, it should be noted that detailed technical support and assessments of conformity of Neighbourhood Plans with the Local Plan and the NPPF would still be carried out by the Planning Policy Team and it will be important for this role to retain an overview of the wider process and interface with the overall planning function.
- 1.12 **Benefits**
- 1.13 The above role, combined with changes to the delegations for designating the plan Areas (see report on Cabinet agenda) will help speed up the early stages of the Neighbourhood Plan process.
- 1.14 The changes to delegations plus the support identified by Cabinet will help support those communities who wish to bring forward a Neighbourhood Plan to do so in a timely manner, and with a successful outcome (i.e. endorsement via referendum, and formal adoption).

## 2.0 **OPTIONS**

- 2.1 There are two options available to Members:
- 2.2 **Option 1** – consider the report and agree the role and scope of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan coordinator role which will provide a single point of contact for communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans.
- 2.3 **Option 2** – 'do nothing'.

## 3.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 3.1 Option 1 provides a framework for the scope of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan resource

and its duration. It provides an indication of the key objectives for the role and tasks.

#### 4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

4.1 The expected benefits are set out in the body of the report but can be summarised as ensuring that Town and Parish Councils have a single point of contact between themselves and the Council, and that the Council has in place adequate resource to deal with new enquiries and fulfil its duties under the Localism Act as it relates to Neighbourhood Plans.

#### 5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

##### 5.1 **Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues**

5.1.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

##### 5.2 **Constitution & Legal**

5.2.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

##### 5.3 **Contracts**

5.3.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

##### 5.4 **Corporate Priorities**

5.4.1 The contents of this report support the following corporate priorities:

- To Develop Stronger Communities
- To Support Our Local Economy

##### 5.5 **Crime and Disorder**

5.5.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

##### 5.6 **Equality and Diversity / Human Rights**

5.6.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

##### 5.7 **Financial**

5.7.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no direct financial implications as the funding for the role has been agreed by Cabinet.

##### 5.8 **Health & Wellbeing**

5.8.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

##### 5.9 **Risk Management**

5.9.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

##### 5.10 **Staffing**

5.10.1 This report deals with the role and scope of a proposed new fixed term post to meet with anticipated demand for Neighbourhood Plans, and as such, there is an implication on

staffing. A separate report will be prepared and submitted to the Council's General Purposes Committee to consider the post at the earliest opportunity.

#### 5.11 Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales

5.11.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

#### 6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

6.1 The report refers to the resource available to support Neighbourhood Planning. This has the potential to affect any Ward within which a Neighbourhood Plan might be brought forward.

#### 7.0 ACRONYMS

7.1 [NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework](#)

7.2 [NP – Neighbourhood Plan](#)

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Background papers:- [See The Committee Report Guide](#)

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#### Lead Contact Officer

Name and Post: Phil Mileham (Deputy Planning Manager)  
Telephone Number: x6803  
Email: [Phil.mileham@breckland-sholland.gov.uk](mailto:Phil.mileham@breckland-sholland.gov.uk)

#### Director / Officer who will be attending the Meeting

Name and Post: Phil Mileham (Deputy Planning Manager)

**Key Decision:** Yes

**Exempt Decision:** No

**This report refers to a Mandatory Service**

**Appendices attached to this report:**

N/A