

ABINGDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP

Draft Terms of Reference

1. Purpose and preamble

1.1 The purpose of the Steering Group is to oversee the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan for Abingdon in order that it will then progress to Independent Examination, a successful community referendum and be adopted by the Vale of White Horse District Council to become planning policy.

1.2 Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council is the qualifying body for the purposes of preparing the plan. The ~~steering-Steering group-Group~~ has full delegated authority to manage the process of preparing the plan as set out below and within agreed budgets; up to and including the publication of the consultation draft plan.

1.3 Regular reports will be made to the Town Council's Planning, Highways and Consultations Committee to ensure effective progress. It will be ~~for~~ the responsibility of Town Council as qualifying body to approve the final draft Neighbourhood Plan.

1.4 The Steering Group will engage the local community to ensure that the Plan is ~~truly~~ inclusively representative of the ambitions of Abingdon. The Group will maximise support for the approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan by ensuring high levels of community engagement throughout the plan-making process.

1.5 The Plan must be compliant with the general provisions for Neighbourhood Plans – in particular not to contradict the Local Plan but must also to be aware of the criteria against which the examiner will assess it.

Commented [LB1]: This sentence is a suggested edition.

2. Principles

2.1 The Steering Group will undertake the process in a democratic, transparent and fair fashion, encouraging wide and diverse participation and giving equal consideration to opinions and ideas from all members of the community.

2.2 All decisions made shall be fully evidenced and supported through consultation with the local community.

3. Key Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. To act as adviser to the governing body (Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council) for the development and delivery of the Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan.

3.2 To provide strategic direction for the project and ensure all milestones are met for the production of the Neighbourhood Plan.

~~3.2.~~3 To produce the Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan in as timely fashion ~~as possible~~ to further the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of individuals living, or wanting to live in the area, as well as the business community.

~~3.34~~ After gathering views from the community, agree a position on specific issues to lead to an agreed policy approach.

Commented [LB2]: Added "After gathering views from the community..."

3.5. Encourage and strengthen links between key organisations within the community and ensure they are informed of the work and progress with the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.6. To commission specific areas of evidence and analysis as required.

3.7. To agree the final draft Neighbourhood Plan prior to submission to all relevant bodies for consideration.

3.7. To recommend the final draft plan to the Town Council prior to the local referendum.

3.9. To act as the public face and principal contacts with the local communities and public authorities for the Neighbourhood Plan .

4. Aims

4.1 To provide strategic guidance to working groups in the production of the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.2 To bring together appropriate local expertise and facilitate joint community working in developing the Neighbourhood Plan for Abingdon.

4.3 To assist and help facilitate discussions with relevant and interested groups in the community to promote active involvement in the Neighbourhood Planning process.

4.4 To produce a Plan with due regard to the Council's Vision and Key Objectives (see appendix 1 below).

5. Relationship to Other Groups

5.1 The Steering Group will provide regular updates to the Town Council on progress being made with the Plan.

5.2 Close working links will be maintained with the Vale of White Horse District Council to ensure compliance with planning policy.

5.3 Further links will be maintained with other statutory and voluntary groups to maximise community engagement opportunities and maintain positive working relationships.

5.4 Meetings of the Steering Group will also be attended by any other relevant person/s or community representatives who may be invited to speak.

5.6 Minutes of the meetings will be available for inspection.

6. Meetings

6.1 The Steering Group will meet as required.

7. Membership

7.1 As per listing agreed by Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council.

7.2 Amendments to the Steering Group's membership to be approved by Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council.

7.3 For the avoidance of doubt, the Steering Group is an advisory body of the Council. To ensure correct procedures are followed Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council will co-opt members of the public to the Group in accordance with s.102 Local Government Act 1972. Such co-optees, when acting in that capacity, are bound by the same Code of Conduct as for Members of the Council and by the Council's prevailing Standing Orders.

8. Delegated authority

8.1 Co-optees to bodies such as this have, in general, no voting rights and no rights or privileges not enjoyed by the general public (s.13 Local Govt. & Housing Act 1989), but at its meeting on 27th January 2021 the Council resolved that it will permit all members of the Steering Group to vote on issues within its remit, and to accept a non-Councillor as Chair of the Group.

8.2 Should a non-Councillor be elected to the role of Chair, the Council will extend to them the same rights to present reports to Council meetings and to speak and answer questions for that purpose in the same manner as would an elected Councillor, provided always that said Chair has signed a declaration, in the same manner as an elected Member, to accept that they are bound by the Code of Conduct for Members of the Council and by prevailing Standing Orders and policies of the Council.

8.3 The Chairperson is [authorised](#) to work in consultation with the Town Clerk, through their nominated contractor or officer, on any matter within the terms of reference of the Steering Group, in the same manner as would an elected Councillor.

APPENDIX 1: TOWN COUNCIL VISION AND KEY OBJECTIVES

To develop an inclusive community so that Abingdon is the place where everyone wants to live and where the wellbeing of residents is prioritised. In developing this community the town will be one which is environmentally sustainable, vibrant, resilient and safe.

Our key objectives

- 1 To respond effectively and speedily to the climate emergency.
- 2 To develop a resilient, sustainable town which will provide a home for residents now and in the future.
- 3 To manage the Council's assets efficiently and effectively to meet for the needs of the community now and in the future.
- 4 To work with community partners to support those who are vulnerable and in need and to create opportunities to increase social inclusivity.