

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Appendix 1

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	4 September 2013
Subject:	Support for Neighbourhood Planning and Community Planning
Report of:	Julie Wood, Development Services Group Manager
Corporate Lead:	Rachel North, Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Councillor D M M Davies: Built Environment Councillor Mrs S E Hillier-Richardson: Community Development
Number of Appendices:	None

Executive Summary:

Many Parishes in Tewkesbury Borough are currently undertaking, or are considering undertaking, either neighbourhood plans or less formal community plans. This report sets out proposals to support those Parishes, with financial and, or, professional/technical support.

The Borough Council wishes to encourage and support Parishes undertaking neighbourhood plans, especially as these will form part of the development plan beneath the emerging Joint Core Strategy and alongside the Tewkesbury Borough Plan. Work done at neighbourhood level could help support policy preparation for the Tewkesbury Borough Plan.

It is proposed that direct funding support is offered to Parishes to support them through the neighbourhood plan process as set out in the recommendation. The funding support will amount to a total of £2,000 per neighbourhood plan and will be based on the phased payments and allocation of funding to local planning authorities which is currently only confirmed for 2013/2014.

Not all Parishes, however, wish to undertake the formal neighbourhood planning process, as this can be quite demanding on time and resource; many of our Parishes are currently, therefore, opting to produce forms of community led plans. These can vary from Housing Needs Assessments, Visual Design Statements or more general community plans. In order to support all of our Parishes it is proposed that the Borough Council enter into a £5,000 one year Service Level Agreement with Gloucestershire Rural Community Council to enable them to support all Parishes.

Recommendation:

It is RECOMMENDED that:-

- 1) the Borough Council allocates funding for neighbourhood area designations in three stages as follows:-
Stage 1 - £500 on approval of a neighbourhood area designation
Stage 2 - £500 on publication of the neighbourhood plan for examination; and,
Stage 3 - £1,000 on successful completion of the neighbourhood plan examination.
- 2) these payments are subject to successful completion of each stage of the neighbourhood plan process and will be subject to the receipt of the government allocation by the local planning authority and on production of evidence of relevant expenditure by the neighbourhood area.
- 3) the payments apply to the lead Parish of the designated neighbourhood plan area.
- 4) this support is subject to funding being made available by the government as set out in the report.

It is further RECOMMENDED that:-

- 1) an annual Service Level Agreement is entered into with Gloucestershire Rural Community Council at a cost of £5,000 per annum. The Service Level Agreement will be reviewed on an annual basis and will be subject to monitoring of support delivery.
- 2) that monitoring of the annual Service Level Agreement be undertaken by the Development Services Group Manager in consultation with the Lead Member for Community Development.

Reasons for Recommendation:

To offer support to parishes to help deliver the localism agenda.

Resource Implications:

The Neighbourhood Plan funding will form part of the government allocation to local authorities and can be used to help offset costs incurred by Tewkesbury Borough Council in supporting Parishes. The Service Level Agreement will be funded through earmarked reserves for 2013/14 and through the MTFs in future should it be renewed.

Legal Implications:

The Service Level Agreement will need to be monitored for delivery.

Risk Management Implications:

The neighbourhood plan funding will only be made available whilst appropriate government funding is available.

Performance Management Follow-up:

The SLA will require performance monitoring.

Environmental Implications:

None.

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011 with specific legislation (the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (“the 2012 Regulations”) coming into effect in April 2012. A neighbourhood plan is a statutory community-led framework for guiding the future development and growth of an area. A neighbourhood plan can establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood, for example where new homes and offices should be built and what they should look like. The plan can be detailed or general, depending what local people want.

1.2 Tewkesbury Borough currently has two designated neighbourhood areas. These are as follows:-

- a) Churchdown and Innsworth.
- b) Winchcombe and Sudeley.

A third neighbourhood plan designation is subject to a separate report on this Executive Committee Agenda.

1.3 Many other areas within the Borough are currently considering the option of applying for neighbourhood area designation; equally, however, many areas are opting to undertake less formal community planning exercises. All of these positive approaches will also support the development of the Tewkesbury Borough Plan.

2.0 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS - EXISTING SUPPORT

2.1 Local Planning Authorities have a statutory duty to advise or assist communities in the preparation of neighbourhood development plans (NDP). The Localism Act 2011 (the Act) and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 set out the local planning authority’s (LPA) responsibilities including designating neighbourhood plan areas. Neighbourhood plans form the 3rd tier of statutory planning (in a non-unitary scenario) as follows:-

- 1) Strategic level plan – Joint Core Strategy.
- 2) District/Borough level plan - Tewkesbury Borough Plan.
- 3) Neighbourhood Plans.

2.2 Local authorities are not required to fund neighbourhoods that develop neighbourhood plans (formally known as Neighbourhood Development Plans/NDP) but are required to advise and assist. The Localism Act 2011 sets out the following local authority responsibilities:-

- Designating the area of the NDP.
- Advising or assisting communities in the preparation of a neighbourhood plan.
- Checking a submitted plan meets legal requirements.
- Arranging for the independent examination of the plan.

- Determining whether the neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions and other legal requirements.
- Arranging a referendum to ensure that the local community has the final say on whether an NDP comes into force in their area.
- Subject to the results of the referendum, bringing the plan into force.

2.3 Support to areas undertaking neighbourhood plans is currently offered in the form of officer support and advice.

2.4 The costs of producing neighbourhood plans cannot be underestimated with emerging evidence from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) suggesting that the average cost of producing neighbourhood plans ranges from between £17,000 to £63,000, depending on the size of the plan; although DCLG also expect that some larger neighbourhood plans could cost as much as £200,000. DCLG also recognise that there are significant resource costs placed upon local planning authorities; for example, the cost of running a local referendum is estimated by DCLG to be £1.50 per head.

2.5 Recognising these resource implications the government has provided some financial support to local planning authorities to support the neighbourhood plan process. This funding is currently available for 2013/14. In total, local planning authorities can claim up to £30,000 for each neighbourhood plan. The first payment of £5,000 can be claimed following designation of a neighbourhood area; a second payment of £5,000 can be claimed when the local authority publicises the neighbourhood plan prior to examination; and the third payment of £20,000 will be made on successful completion of the independent examination.

2.6 Neighbourhood areas are also able to apply directly for grants provided by DCLG for between £500 and £7,000. This grant fund, as well as other guidance and advice is being administered and provided through 'Locality' (a consortium of planning advice groups). This support is through the Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning Programme.

2.7 Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) has also been supporting Parishes with professional support through an externally funded 'Accelerator Project'. The funding for this project ceases in September 2013.

3.0 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – PROPOSAL FOR FUNDING SUPPORT

3.1 Whilst there is no statutory duty to financially support Parishes undertaking neighbourhood plans, some local authorities are using some of the neighbourhood plan funding provided by government to support neighbourhood areas; for example, Wychavon District has recently announced a funding support package for neighbourhood areas.

3.2 Recognising the commitment of areas within our Borough to enter into neighbourhood area designations it is proposed that some direct funding support is offered to designated areas to support them through the process; particularly to enable them to access professional support or to pay for expenses such as public consultations. The proposal is as follows:-

- 1) An funding allocation of a maximum of £2,000 per neighbourhood plan area for the year 2013/2014.
- 2) The funding will be available in 3 stages which will be based on the government allocation, and drawing down, of phased payments to local planning authorities as set out in paragraph 2.4 above. These are proposed as follows:-

Stage 1 – An allocation of £500 following designation of the neighbourhood area;

Stage 2 – An allocation of £500 when the local planning authority publicises the neighbourhood plan prior to designation; and

Stage 3 – An allocation of £1,000 following successful completion of the neighbourhood plan examination.

- 3) Payment will be based on the submission of invoices evidencing relevant expenditure.
- 4) The allocation of funding is subject to review, which will be linked to future funding announcements from government.

4.0 COMMUNITY PLANNING – EXISTING SUPPORT

4.1 Not all Parishes within the Borough wish to undertake the formal neighbourhood planning process and many of our parishes are currently opting to produce forms of community led plans. These can vary from Housing Needs Assessments, Visual Design Statements or more general community plans. Currently the Borough Council offers support to Parishes through officer time. This takes the form of providing information to Parishes, attending Parish meetings and offering advice. Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) also offers workshops to Parishes on community planning. As set out in Paragraph 2.7 above, until September 2013 GRCC were also able to offer some enhanced support through the externally funded 'Accelerator Project'. This will no longer be available.

5.0 COMMUNITY PLANNING – PROPOSAL FOR FUNDING SUPPORT

5.1 In order to support all of our Parishes undertaking community planning it is proposed that the Borough Council enter into an annual Service Level Agreement with Gloucestershire Rural Community Council to provide professional, consistent and independent advice and support to Parishes.

5.2 Following discussions with GRCC it is proposed that a sum of £5,000 be allocated to the Service Level Agreement. This will enable professional support from GRCC for approximately one day per week for 12 months. The funding will be matched by some in kind funding from GRCC. GRCC will be flexible in this approach.

5.3 In order to monitor GRCC delivery, GRCC will provide monthly spread sheets and a 6 month monitoring report and review of the Service Level Agreement will take place prior to end of the 12 month period.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 A range of options considered including an alternative of providing funding to GRCC for neighbourhood plan support; however, it was considered that Parishes would benefit more from receiving direct financial support.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 Consultation with GRCC. Several Parishes have also asked about the type of support available from the Borough Council.

8.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

8.1 Council Plan.

9.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

9.1 The Localism Act 2011 with specific legislation (the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (“the 2012 Regulations”)) coming into effect in April 2012.

10.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

10.1 Financial implications of £5,000 per annum.

11.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

11.1 Neighbourhood and community planning will deliver improvements to sustainability.

12.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

12.1 None.

13.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

13.1 Executive Committee - 3 July 2013

Designation of 2 Neighbourhood Plan Areas for : -

a) Churchdown Parish and Innsworth Parish.

b) Winchcombe Parish and Sudeley Parish.

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices: None.