

# MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

## Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

### Terms of Reference

#### Purpose

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will take forward the production, through to examination and referendum, the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review, ensuring that relevant consultation takes place, so the plan accurately represents the views of the residents and other stakeholders.

#### Principle

The Steering Group will produce a sound Neighbourhood Plan that defines the planning policy priorities identified by the community considering all representations made during the plan-making process and having regard to all relevant existing plans and evidence.

#### Tasks and Activities

1. The Steering Group shall:
  - Determine the overall scope and objectives of the plan.
  - Manage the process of preparing the plan and prepare and monitor a project plan and report to the Town Council at its meeting monthly to ensure effective progress.
  - Keep under review the legislative requirements around Neighbourhood Planning to ensure the plan meets all requirements.
  - Make recommendations to the Town Council on resourcing the development of the plan.
  - Make recommendations to the Town Council on involving the wider community in the plan.
  - Manage the gathering of evidence necessary to inform each of the issues within the scope of the plan.
  - Identify and assess options available in respect of each issue and prepare a draft plan for wider consideration.
  - Produce minutes, reports and documents relating to the plan.
  - Produce engaging materials using all available media to encourage community engagement.
2. The Steering Group will oversee the identification of planned themes which will lead the development of the plan including consultation with the Town Council and the wider community.
3. Consultation and community engagement activities carried out by the Steering Group will be undertaken by or on behalf of Much Wenlock Town Council with appropriate recognition of the Town Council's position given in all communications associated with the project.
4. The Steering Group will provide the Town Council a copy of the Submission Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan prior to any publication for consultation and independent examination to obtain its approval for its release.

## Transparency

Agendas and minutes of meetings will be posted on the Much Wenlock Town Council website. Members of the public may attend meetings as observers. There will be an item enabling public questions on each agenda. Meetings will either take place in person or on Zoom. Zoom details will be published on the Town Council website.

Before each meeting, Steering Group members should identify any potential conflicts of interest that may affect discussions. Members must disclose any conflicts of interest that they may have, either in advance or at the start of the meeting. The Steering Group will assess the severity and impact of the conflicts, and decide how to address them.

## Group Membership

The group will be made up of 10 members, being a combination of town councillors and volunteers from the local community. As a minimum the Steering Group will have the following key members:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Secretary

Ideally at least one of these roles should be a Town Councillor and another be a member of the parish.

Additional roles may be considered, for instance:

- A Bridging Co-ordinator may be appointed to liaise between the Steering Group and the Town Council. Alternatively, Town Councillors who are also members of the Steering Group, will act as a liaison between the two bodies and provide a regular report to the Town Council, for endorsement.
- A Communications Co-ordinator
- A Finance Co-ordinator

All members of the Steering Group have equal voting rights and shall be a working group who will not only work on elements of the plan but will work to engage the community throughout the lifetime of its existence to ensure views of the whole community are heard and not just the views of group members.

A minimum of **four** members of the Steering Group shall be present (including on Zoom) where matters are presented for decisions to be taken. A simple majority will be required to support any motion. The Chair (or Vice Chair depending on who is presiding at the meeting) shall have one casting vote.

The Steering Group shall be responsible for ensuring that suitable qualified technical support is obtained at relevant points of the plan's development in order that the Neighbourhood Plan is fit for purpose.

Should group membership need to change this will be dealt with as follows:

- Additional members - This will be agreed through a vote of Steering Group members at the next meeting and be minuted accordingly.
- Departing members - Should there be a need for a group member to depart this will be dealt with by the Chair/Vice Chair and Secretary. The departing member should agree to a suitable handover of the Steering Group work they have been dealing with before their formal departure.

## **Working Groups**

The Steering Group may establish such Working Groups as it considers necessary to carry out the functions specified by the Steering Group.

Each Working Group should have a lead person from the Steering Group.

## **Conduct and Interests**

The Steering Group (and any Working Groups) will follow the Code of Conduct adopted by Much Wenlock Town Council. The Steering Group is accountable to the wider community for ensuring that the Plan reflects their collective expectations. The Steering Group will achieve this through applying the following principles:

- Work with mutual trust and respect and combine their expertise.
- Be clear when their individual roles or interests are in conflict.
- Provide feedback from Steering Group meetings to the Town Council.
- Bring appropriate ideas and concerns to the attention of the Steering Group.
- Inform the Steering Group when they are unable to deliver agreed actions.
- Treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability, or religion and belief.
- Actively promote equality of access and opportunity.

In situations where interests and roles are in conflict they must be declared before the business is discussed. The steering group member will have no voting rights. Depending on the conflict of interest, it will be agreed before the item is discussed whether they will be allowed to participate in any discussion on the item.

Town Council insurance will cover the previously agreed activities of the Steering Group and volunteers, but Steering Group members, in liaison with the Town Clerk, need to ensure that terms of the insurance are not breached.

## **Meeting Arrangements**

Meetings will be held at least every other month either face-to-face or virtually at a time agreed by a majority of Steering Group members. As a minimum the Chair or Vice Chair must be in attendance. If the Secretary is not in attendance a suitable delegate should attend for appropriate minutes to be taken.

## **Decision Making**

Much Wenlock Town Council is the qualifying body for the purposes of preparing the plan. The Steering Group has full delegated authority, under the guidance of the Neighbourhood Plan Consultant, to manage the process of preparing the plan as set out in the Tasks and Activities within agreed budgets; up to and including the publication of the consultation draft plan.

Much Wenlock Town Council will approve the final draft Neighbourhood Plan prior to submission to the local planning authority.

## **Finance**

All grants and funding will be applied for and held by the Town Council, who will ring-fence the funds for Neighbourhood Development Plan purposes only.

Version: v0.3

Approved by Much Wenlock Town Council 11.04.2024

Approval for planned expenditure must be obtained from the Town Council before actual costs are incurred, in accordance with the Town Council's Financial Regulations.

The Steering Group (which could be via the Finance Co-ordinator if identified) shall keep a clear record of expenditure supported by receipted invoices and will regularly review and update the budget in liaison with the Town Clerk/RFO.

A regular report on finances will be provided to the Town Council.

Invoices and purchase orders will be made out in the name of the Town Council who will pay them on an ongoing basis, so long as expenditure has been approved in advance.

### **Dissolution of the Group**

The Steering Group will be established for a time-limited period. The project is intended to run until a Plan has been presented for referendum. The Steering Group will remain active until at least the independent examiners report is published, modifications have been made and the referendum is complete.

### **Review of this Document**

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed and agreed by the Town Council, in accordance with its Standing Orders. The Terms of Reference will be made available on the Town Council website.