

Record of Cabinet portfolio holder decision

Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Decision made by	Councillor Roger Cox
Key decision?	Yes, it is a significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the council.
Date of decision (same as date form signed)	
Name and job title of officer requesting the decision	William Sparling, Senior Planning Policy Officer (neighbourhood)
Officer contact details	Tel: 07717150693 Email: william.sparling@southandvale.gov.uk
Decision	To provide a £2,500 grant to a parish council or lead parish council who have a constituted neighbourhood planning group following the receipt of a draft costed project plan. To take effect from 1 April 2017.
Reasons for decision	<p>Vale of White Horse District Council supports neighbourhood planning. Our aim is to prepare good quality, robust neighbourhood plans. To do so, we provide direct officer support for all aspects of neighbourhood planning and direct grant funding.</p> <p>We need to change our grant funding approach because the income to the council from Government is reducing and alternative funding sources exist to support neighbourhood plan groups. There remains a need to support neighbourhood planning groups in preparing or reviewing their neighbourhood plan. The proposal is the most pragmatic way to change our grant approach.</p> <p><u>Background</u> The District Council currently provides grants to parish councils preparing neighbourhood plans depending on the size of the community. The grants are for: Market Towns £15,000; Larger Villages £10,000 and Smaller Villages £5,000.</p> <p>The district council is required to carry out the following formal stages of making a neighbourhood plan; area designation consultation, submission consultation,</p>

examination and referendum. See Appendix A; key stages of a neighbourhood plan process. There is also a 'duty to support' placed upon the district council by legislation and as a minimum we provide: informal guidance on community engagement; gathering the required evidence and; further feedback throughout a plan's preparation.

Until April 2016 the district council received £30,000 in grant funding from Government for each neighbourhood plan. Government payments of £5,000 were made at the area designation stage and again when the plan proposal was submitted to the district council. The remaining £20,000 was paid after successful examination. This income supported the grant given to communities by the district council and the formal neighbourhood plan making stages.

For 2016/17, a grant of £20,000 is available directly to the district council from Government, following the successful examination of a neighbourhood plan and when a referendum date is agreed.

This is a reduction from the previous financial year by £10,000. How this funding will change for the next financial year, 2017/18, is unknown, but it is probable that there will be further reductions in grant funding to the local planning authorities. Emphasis is likely to be on direct payments to neighbourhood planning groups, which is explained further below.

On average the cost to the district council for running submission consultation, examination and referendum is £12,000-£18,000, of which a large part is the fee paid to the Examiner. The fee has increased over the last year, partly due to greater scrutiny and the evidence submitted (and thus examiner's time) in neighbourhood plans.

Taking into account the changes to Government grant funding available to the district council, the current district grant payment to neighbourhood plan groups (parishes), and the cost of the required formal stages, it is necessary to change the level of district grant in order to balance cost v income.

Government grants and technical support is available directly to neighbourhood planning groups immediately following area designation, through a consortium led by Locality. The current financial year is the second of a three year programme. The grant available is for up to £9,000. A further grant of £6,000 and free technical support from consultants is available directly to groups where there are, for example, further complex issues; clusters of parishes, or business Neighbourhood Plans.

Two examples of neighbourhood plan costs published by the

Locality consortium are; the Strumpshaw Plan costing £4,220, which planned for low impact employment, ten dwellings and a community hall in a rural area of Norfolk with 600 residents and covered by several environmental designations. The second example; the Broughton Astley Plan, Leicestershire cost £14,312 and planned for a new supermarket, new infrastructure and creating employment for a town of 10,000 people. In our district, of our five made neighbourhood plans, Great Coxwell neighbourhood plan cost £4,700 and Longworth cost £11,000.

Grant Funding from 1 April 2017

We will offer a grant of £2,500 to all parishes or lead parishes (where parishes are working together) with constituted neighbourhood planning groups, subject to receiving a costed project plan. As part of an initial scoping exercise, groups will be encouraged to submit a draft project plan when they apply for neighbourhood area designation, alongside a supporting statement outlining the key issues they wish to cover.

The submission of a costed project plan will trigger the £2,500 payment and kick start the neighbourhood planning process. As part of the payment process we require the neighbourhood planning group to sign a pro-forma that if the neighbourhood plan does not progress, the district council can claim back the grant, subject to reasonably incurred expenditure.

Once their area is designated, neighbourhood planning groups will be encouraged and supported to apply for the full £9,000 of funding directly available to them from Government through Locality, including the additional £6,000 of funding for complexity, and the technical support package. A total of £15,000 plus technical support is available to the most complex areas.

Groups will be encouraged and supported to apply for other sources of funding for the preparation of their neighbourhood plan, such as lottery funding.

The grant funding available directly to neighbourhood planning groups is significant, and with a district grant fund of £2,500 this covers making or reviewing a neighbourhood plan for the largest and most complex of settlements in our district.

Officers will communicate these changes to towns and parishes through a letter before the changes take effect.

Details of the district council grant available will be posted on our website and in the online neighbourhood planning toolkit as part of an update.

Scrutiny Committee considered these changes and their recommended changes have been noted and taken on

board. A letter to parishes will communicate the changes in February and will include a table of when funding is available. This ICMD also includes an extract from the Vale of White Horse District Council Statement of Community Involvement showing the neighbourhood planning process as background paper.

Table one: support packages available to support neighbourhood planning

Stage of neighbourhood planning funding is available	District council grant available from April 1 2017	Government support package available now	Total
A new neighbourhood area is formally designated by the district council.	£2,500	£9,000 is available to each neighbourhood planning group. + £6,000 and direct support from consultants for extra complexity.	£11,500 £17,500
There is an agreed need to review a neighbourhood plan and that funding is required. <i>Where the policies have become out of date for example.</i>	£2,500	£9,000 is available to each neighbourhood planning group. + £6,000 and direct support from consultants for certain groups.	£11,500 £17,500


Alternative options rejected


Option A

The alternative option to do nothing was considered and rejected. This is because if Vale of White Horse District Council does not change the level of grant it provides to Neighbourhood Planning groups, there is an increased possibility that the Neighbourhood Planning service will not 'break even'. Furthermore, if an examination is not successful or a referendum date is not agreed, the government grant of £20,000 cannot be claimed and therefore there is a risk that costs already incurred for examination and grant would remain to be funded. Any funding for this would need to come from any unused grant received in respect of other neighbourhood plans.

Option B

The alternative option to provide no funding to neighbourhood planning groups was considered and rejected. There are initial costs, especially in bringing people

	together and undertaking community engagement; some funding helps to kick start the process. No funding would make this more difficult and hinder progress of neighbourhood planning.																																				
Legal implications	There are no legal implications.																																				
Financial implications	If Vale of White Horse District Council does not change the level of grant it provides neighbourhood planning groups, there is an increased possibility that the Neighbourhood Planning service will not 'break even'. Furthermore, if an examination is not successful or a referendum date is not agreed, the government grant of £20,000 cannot be claimed and therefore there is a risk that costs already incurred for examination and grant would remain to be funded. Any funding for this would need to come from any unused grant received in respect of other neighbourhood plans or could incur a budget overspend.																																				
Other implications	None.																																				
Background papers considered	Appendix A; flow diagram of key stages of neighbourhood planning.																																				
Declarations/conflict of interest? Declaration of other councillor/officer consulted by the Cabinet member?																																					
List consultees	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Name</th> <th>Outcome</th> <th>Date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Ward councillors</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Legal</td> <td>Ian Price</td> <td>Agreed</td> <td>14/2/2017</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Finance</td> <td>Paul Sheppard</td> <td>Agreed</td> <td>9/2/2017</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Human resources</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sustainability</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Diversity and equality</td> <td>Cheryl Reeves</td> <td>Agreed</td> <td>14/2/2017</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Communications</td> <td>Patsy Cusworth</td> <td>Agreed</td> <td>8/2/2017</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chief Executive</td> <td>David Hill</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Name	Outcome	Date	Ward councillors	N/A	N/A	N/A	Legal	Ian Price	Agreed	14/2/2017	Finance	Paul Sheppard	Agreed	9/2/2017	Human resources	N/A	N/A	N/A	Sustainability	N/A	N/A	N/A	Diversity and equality	Cheryl Reeves	Agreed	14/2/2017	Communications	Patsy Cusworth	Agreed	8/2/2017	Chief Executive	David Hill		
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Confidential decision? If so, under which exempt category?	No																																				
Call-in waived by Scrutiny Committee chairman?	No																																				
Has this been discussed	Yes																																				

by Cabinet members?	
Cabinet portfolio holder's signature To confirm the decision as set out in this notice.	Councillor Roger Cox Signature <u></u> Date <u>24 February 2017</u>

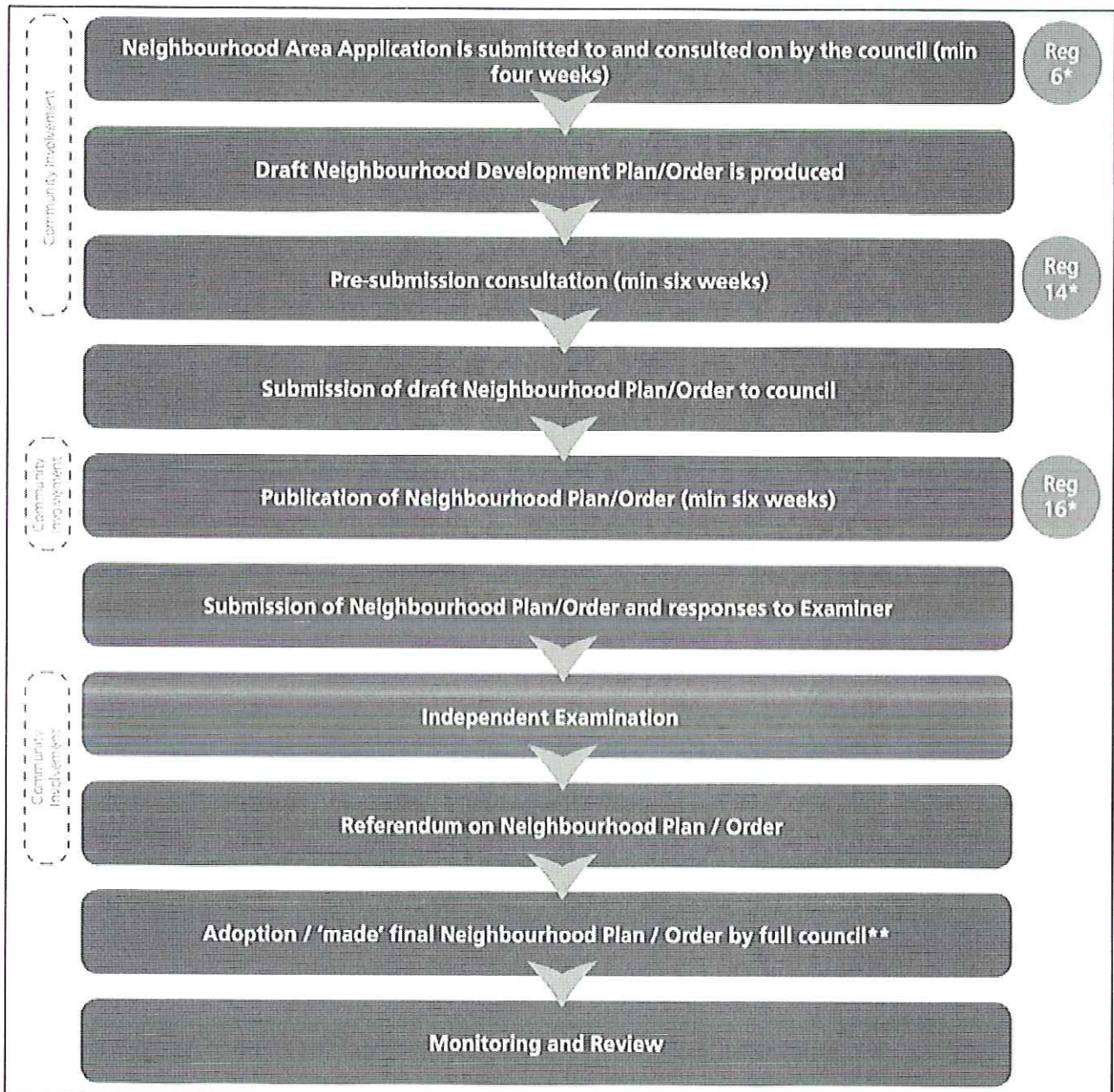
ONCE SIGNED, THIS FORM MUST BE HANDED TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES IMMEDIATELY.

For Democratic Services office use only		
Form received	Date: <u>24-2-17</u>	Time: <u>13:50</u>
Date published to all councillors	Date: <u>24-2-17</u>	
Call-in deadline	Date: <u>3-3-17</u>	Time: <u>17:00</u>

Extract from draft Vale of White Horse Statement of Community Involvement:

Key Stages of Neighbourhood Planning

The key stages of neighbourhood planning are set out below. The process for making a Neighbourhood Plan is different to preparing a Local Plan or a Development Plan Document. The diagram below shows the key stages when preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan.



The full draft Vale of White Horse District Council Statement of Community Involvement can be found on our website:

http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2016_07_20%20VWHDC%20SCI%20Part%202%20DIGITAL.pdf

