

# **Barnwell Parish Council**

## **Neighbourhood Development Working Party - Terms of Reference**

### **1 Purpose and Role of the Working Party**

The purpose of the Working Party is to produce a sound Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for the civil Parish of Barnwell. The plan will define the planning policy priorities identified by the community taking into account all representations made during the plan-making process and having regard to all relevant existing plans and evidence.

Under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 (Schedule 9, Section 61F) Barnwell Parish Council is the qualifying body for the preparation of an NDP for the civil parish of Barnwell.

The Parish Council has agreed to establish the Working Party to facilitate the preparation of the NDP. Under Standing Order 14 of the Council, the Working Party will be formally constituted as an Advisory Committee to the Council. Its role will be to advise the Council on:

1. The content of the draft NDP to be submitted for consultation with residents;
2. The content final NDP that should be submitted for scrutiny by the planning authority.

As the qualifying body, the Parish Council remains ultimately responsible for the creation and submission of the NDP for scrutiny and approval.

### **2 Outputs of the Group**

The Working Party will:

1. Prepare a Draft NDP with underpinning evidence for consideration at the Parish Council Meeting in September 2014. Subject to any minor revisions, this would then be discussed at an extraordinary meeting and distributed for consultation with residents soon afterwards.
2. After consultation with residents, prepare the final version of the NDP for approval by the Parish Council and submission for scrutiny by the end of 2014.

### **3 Scope of the Plan**

The Working Party will:

1. Include the whole of the Parish within the plan
2. Consider the following issues:
  - a. Housing Development
  - b. Transport/Traffic
  - c. Community Safety
  - d. The Environment
  - e. Facilities and Organisations
  - f. Communication
  - g. The Local Business Economy
  - h. Quality of Life

### **4 Inputs to the Plan**

The Working Party will take into account the following sources/bodies of evidence in preparing the plan:

1. Core spatial strategy developed by North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit in 2008 and any revisions currently under discussion
2. The drafts of the Four Towns Plan under development by East Northamptonshire Council
3. Comments and submissions made at the open meeting held by the Parish Council
4. The results of the Neighbourhood Development Questionnaire conducted in March 2014
5. Submissions by residents, local businesses and local land owners, or comments from open meeting
6. Example NDPs that have already been approved elsewhere in England.

The Working Party must maintain a well ordered and referenced evidence base that can be subjected to scrutiny by the public and the planning authority.

## **5 Communication, Consultation and Engagement**

The NDP will ultimately be put to a referendum of residents and will need to secure a majority to become a statutory planning document. It is therefore essential that there is a high level of awareness and acceptance of the plan before it goes to referendum.

The Working Party will need to be seen to have consulted widely and engaged in depth with all stakeholders, and to have communicated effectively with residents at all points during the development of the plan.

The plan-making process remains the responsibility of the Parish Council as the local authority and qualifying body. All publications, consultation and community engagement exercises will be undertaken in the name of the Parish Council taking into account the standards, policies and styles under which the Council operates.

## **6 Working Party Code of Conduct**

### **6.1 Selflessness**

Members of the Working Party may find that there is an overlap with their personal or professional life and interests. However, in working on the NDP, Members shall serve only the public interest and shall never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person. At all times Members shall act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them as a co-opted Member of a Parish Council Advisory Committee.

### **6.2 Declarations of Interest**

All Members of the Working Party must declare any and all personal or professional interests that may be perceived as being relevant to any actions, conclusions or recommendations being made by the Working Party. This may include membership of an organisation, ownership of interest in land (directly or indirectly) or a business or indeed any other matter likely to be relevant to the work undertaken by the Working Party. Declared interests will be referred to the Clerk of the Parish Council for a determination on whether they constitute a conflict of interest or whether dispensation can be granted for the Member to continue as a Member of the Working Party.

### **6.3 Integrity, Honesty and Respect**

In working on the NDP, Members of the Working Party shall consider all their actions carefully to avoid placing themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned and shall on all occasions avoid improper behaviour or the appearance of improper behaviour.

Members of the Working Party will treat other Members with respect and dignity, allowing everyone to air their views without prejudice and interruption.

### **6.4 Objectivity (in decision making)**

Members will make all decisions and recommendations on merit, approaching each with an open mind, listening to the views of others and assessing the information presented carefully. They must then reach their own conclusions on issues and act accordingly. Failure to do so may expose the plan to challenge on the basis of flawed decision making processes.

### **6.5 Accountability**

Everything the Working Party does must be able to stand the test of scrutiny by the public, the media, other stakeholders, and the courts. Members of the Working Party are accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they develop the NDP. Members are therefore expected to co-operate fully and honestly with any appropriate scrutiny.

### **6.6 Openness**

Barnwell Parish Council strives to maintain an atmosphere of openness throughout the Council and its advisory committees to promote confidence of the public, stakeholders, staff and regulators. Members of the NDP Working Party will be as open as possible about their actions and recommendations, and should be prepared to give reasons for actions taken, conclusions drawn and recommendations made.

## **7 Working Party Operating Procedures**

### **7.1 Chairing the Working Party**

The first meeting of the Working Party will be chaired by the Parish Council Chairman. An item of business at that meeting will be to elect a Chair of the Working Party who will co-ordinate the project and chair subsequent meetings. In the event that the Chair of the Working Party is unable to attend any meeting, the Chair will nominate and thoroughly brief a Vice Chair for that meeting.

### **7.2 Meeting Frequency and Format**

The Working Party shall hold a formal meeting regularly in a public place, preferably before the Parish Council meeting. This will enable any recommendations or requests by the Working Party to be actioned quickly by the Council. The formal meetings of the Working Party will be open to the public. Formal meetings should not normally last more than 90 minutes.

Between formal meetings, the Working Party can hold working meetings as required in any location, either in full or in sub-groups to work on specific activities. Working meetings need not be advertised or held in public but details of such meetings (date, time, location attendees, activity or subject, outputs) should be noted at the next formal meeting.

At the discretion of the Chair, members of the public may be invited (through pre-arranged agenda items) to make an oral submission and presentation to the formal meeting of the Working Party. Presenters shall be open to questions from the Members and, at the discretion of the Chair, to questions from the public.

At the beginning of each formal meeting, members of the public may address the meeting without prior notice for a maximum of 3 minutes each covering items either on the agenda or requesting that other items be considered at a subsequent meetings.

### **7.3 Quorum for the Formal Meetings of the Working Party**

Four Members shall constitute a quorum at formal meetings.

If a quorum is not present or if during a meeting the number of Members present (not counting those debarred by reason of a declared interest) falls below the required quorum, the meeting shall be adjourned and business not transacted shall be transacted at the next meeting or on such other day as the Chairman may fix.

### **7.4 Working Party Decision Making**

Decisions made by the Working Party should normally be by consensus at full Working Party meetings. Where a vote is required each member shall have one vote. A simple majority will be required to support any motion. The Chair, or in their absence the Vice-Chair shall have one casting vote. Members shall vote by show of hands

If a Member so requires, the Clerk shall record the names of the Members who voted on any question so as to show whether they voted for or against it. Such a request must be made before moving on to the next business.

### **7.5 Working Party Administration**

The Clerk of the Parish Council will provide administrative support for the first meeting. Thereafter, the Working Party will need to nominate a Clerk who will minute the full Working Party meetings and maintain the documentation base for the Working Party. The documentation archive of the Working Party must be available for public scrutiny. Documents should be made available on request, and paper documents should be available for inspection on appointment.

For formal Working Party Meetings the meeting notice, agenda and associated papers shall normally be despatched three clear days before the date of the meeting by e-mail or hard copy. The agenda shall also be posted on the Parish notice. Meeting papers should be available for public scrutiny before the meeting.

The Clerk of the Working Party shall take minutes of all full Working Party meetings which must then be made available for public scrutiny in draft form within 7 days of the meeting.

All meetings with other stakeholders must be attended by at least two Members of the Working Party and be minuted and deposited in the archive for public scrutiny.

All submissions shall be available for public scrutiny.

All email communications from Members of the Working Party to members of the public or other stakeholders shall be copied to the Clerk of the Working Party so that they can be added to the public document archive.

## **7.6 Expenditure and Expenses**

As an Advisory Committee of the Parish Council, the Working Party has no power to commit expenditure itself but would refer items of expenditure to the Clerk of the Parish Council. These would be dealt with at the next Parish Council meeting or by Financial Regulation 6.6, which allows for exceptional expenditure between meetings of the Council. Reasonable pre-approved expenses incurred by Members in preparing the NDP will be refunded by the Council.

## **7.7 Resolution of Disputes**

In event that a Member of the Working Party or a member of the public is unhappy with any aspect of the Working Party's activity, then the first step in resolution should be to approach the Chair of the Working Party. In the event that the Chair is unable or unwilling to resolve the matter, then the issue will be considered by the next meeting of the Parish Council.

## **7.8 Distribution of Terms of Reference**

A copy of the Terms of Reference shall be given to each Member of the Working Party. The Clerk of the Parish Council shall ask each Member to sign a declaration that they have received the document and agree to abide by its terms.

## **7.9 Changing the Terms of Reference**

The Terms of Reference can only be changed by a majority resolution at a meeting of the Parish Council.

Terms of Reference issued for and on behalf of the Parish Council on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

Heather Hanlon  
Chairman of the Parish Council