

	REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TO BE HELD ON 25 MARCH 2013	
	Topic	Neighbourhood Planning
Corporate Quality Environments Aim	Task Group (if applicable)	Neighbourhood Planning
	Cabinet Portfolio Holder	Cllr Derek Bastiman Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Regeneration

**FINAL REPORT OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING TASK
GROUP
SCR/13/02**

WARDS AFFECTED: All

REASON REPORT REQUESTED: The Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee commissioned a Task Group to assess the pros and cons of Neighbourhood Planning - a new approach to land-use planning introduced through the Localism Act - to help the Local Planning Authority offer well-informed advice to interested parish councils and community groups.

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To present the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee with the findings and recommendations of the Neighbourhood Planning Task Group.

STATUS OF REPORT: This report is the work of the Neighbourhood Planning Task Group, on behalf of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee, and where opinions are expressed it should be pointed out that they are not necessarily those of Scarborough Borough Council.

While we have sought to draw on this review to make recommendations and suggestions that are helpful to the Council and its partners, our work has been designed solely for the purpose of discharging our terms of reference agreed by the parent committee. Accordingly, our work cannot be relied upon to identify every area of strength, weakness or opportunity for improvement.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 seeks to reform the planning system to give local people new rights to shape the development of the communities in which they live.
- 1.2 The Act provides for a new type of community-led initiative known as a Neighbourhood Plan which sets out the policies on the development and use of land in a parish or 'neighbourhood area'.
- 1.3 In a parished area, the parish or town council has to initiate and lead the process. In a non-parished area, a neighbourhood forum has to be established for this purpose.
- 1.4 Neighbourhood planning offers communities a direct route for including their own local planning priorities and aspirations within the broader planning system.
- 1.5 The Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee had originally established a Task Group of Members in January 2012 with a view to helping the Council meet the challenges of planning reform, including the increasing democratisation of the planning system. This scope was subsequently refined to examine neighbourhood planning in particular. The Task Group comprises Councillors John Ritchie (Chair), Godfrey Allanson and Simon Green with officer support from Forward Planning Manager, David Walker and Overview and Scrutiny Manager, St John Harris.
- 1.6 The following scope was agreed for the review:

Objectives of the review

- To assess the benefits and disbenefits of neighbourhood planning for parish councils, community groups and the local planning authority
- To identify criteria/ a checklist which can be used by the local planning authority to assess the potential of neighbourhood planning proposals and so offer advice to interested parish councils/community groups

Outcomes of the review

- Guidance on neighbourhood planning for use by parish councils and community groups in the Borough of Scarborough

Questions to be addressed

- What should the Council's stance be towards neighbourhood plans?
- What are the benefits and disbenefits of neighbourhood planning?
- Are there more cost-effective ways of reflecting local communities' views in the planning process?
- Are there alternative ways of realising local communities' aspirations for the areas in which they live?
- Neighbourhood planning is one of a range of approaches to realise an agreed vision for an area – in what circumstances and based on what criteria can it

be recommended by the Council to an interested parish council/community group?

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In light of the evidence obtained from the Neighbourhood Planning Frontrunner Schemes, and the growing amount of guidance on the web, the Task Group is recommending that the Local Planning Authority adopts an impartial stance towards neighbourhood planning underpinned by four key principles and with close reference to Locality's 'Neighbourhood Planning Roadmap Guide' and worksheets. This we believe should form the basis of a predominantly web based guide on the Council's website.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The architecture of the planning system has changed considerably under the Coalition Government, with the loss of detailed national planning guidance (replaced by the 'National Planning Policy Framework'), the revocation of regional plans, and the introduction of 'Neighbourhood Plans'.
- 3.2 The Government is committed to implementing a leaner, purportedly less bureaucratic planning system which is better equipped to deliver sustainable economic growth.
- 3.3 The Localism Act 2011 strives to make community-led planning a powerful mechanism for achieving change at the neighbourhood level. Community-led planning has been going on for a while in some areas. It involves residents taking a stronger lead in identifying local issues that they want to address. What is new about Neighbourhood Plans and related mechanisms is that they can be a way in which land use planning decisions can be **taken outside of the direct control of the traditional local planning authority (LPA)**.
- 3.4 **Neighbourhood Plans** (sometimes called a Neighbourhood Development Plan), written by a Neighbourhood Forum or Parish/Town Council, have legal status. Once they are passed through what has been described as a 'light touch' examination and a local referendum, they will be part of the planning framework. This means they are the basis for making decisions on planning applications in that neighbourhood.
- 3.5 There are constraints about what neighbourhoods can include in their plans. The Neighbourhood Plan must generally conform with an adopted Local Plan, national policies, and EU regulations. The LPA would also advise if a Sustainability Appraisal and a Habitat Regulations Assessment are required. Neighbourhood Plans cannot be restrictive of development and must support growth. There are two main goals from neighbourhood planning. One is that neighbourhoods will have influence over where development, such as housing, can go and what it might look like. The other is that neighbourhoods will be more welcoming of development because of financial incentives such as the New Homes Bonus and Community Infrastructure Levy.

- 3.6 The **New Homes Bonus** matches council tax funding for new homes and existing homes brought into use for a fixed period (six years) and is already available. The **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** is a set charge (based on the floorspace of new development), paid by developers to the authority to use, to deliver required infrastructure in an area. The levy process gives authorities greater flexibility in how they use the money raised from developers. The Localism Act includes provisions to allow a meaningful proportion of these funds to be passed to neighbourhoods where the development has taken place. In January 2013, the Government suggested that communities with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan could receive 25% of revenues from the CIL arising from the development in their area - 10% higher than in communities without a Neighbourhood Plan. Whether to introduce a CIL in the Borough will be considered as part of the ongoing review of the Borough Local Plan in the coming months.
- 3.7 A Neighbourhood Plan can:
- Decide where and what type of development should happen in the neighbourhood.
 - Promote more (but, crucially, not less) development than is set out in the Local Plan.
 - Include policies, for example regarding design standards that take precedence over existing policies in the Local Plan for the neighbourhood – provided the Neighbourhood Plan policies do not conflict with the strategic policies in the Local Plan.
- 3.8 A Neighbourhood Plan cannot:
- Conflict with the strategic policies in the Local Plan prepared by the local planning authority.
 - Be used to prevent development that is included in the Local Plan.
 - Be prepared by a body other than a Parish or Town Council or a Neighbourhood Forum.
- 3.9 Typical things a Neighbourhood Plan might include are:
- The development of housing, including affordable dwellings.
 - Provision for businesses to set up or expand their premises.
 - Transport and access (including issues around roads, cycling, walking and access for disabled people).
 - The development of schools, places of worship, health facilities, leisure and entertainment facilities, community and youth centres and village halls.
 - The restriction of certain types of development and change of use, for example to avoid too much of one type of use.
 - The design of buildings.
 - Protection and creation of open space, nature reserves, allotments, sports pitches, play areas, parks and gardens, and the planting of trees.
 - Protection of important buildings and historic assets such as archaeological remains.

- 3.10 Neighbourhoods and parishes are also able to develop a **Neighbourhood Development Order**. This order is passed through a local referendum. It sets out specific developments or types of development that would automatically have planning permission in that neighbourhood, so a developer does not need to submit a planning application.
- 3.11 The **Community Right to Build** process allows residents to come together and develop a proposal for new homes, shops or businesses. They would consult with their community and the local authority to work through the opportunities and constraints. The local authority would hold a referendum on the proposal. If passed, the development would not require planning permission. The community would be allowed to keep the profits or lettings income arising from the development.
- 3.12 Local people can choose to draw up either a Neighbourhood Plan, a Neighbourhood Development Order, or a Community Right to Build Order or both a Plan and an Order. Neighbourhood Plans are optional. There is no legal requirement for a community to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. The policies in the Borough-wide Local Plan will still apply to a neighbourhood, whether a Neighbourhood Plan is prepared or not.
- 3.13 Since early 2011, there have been five waves of communities and local planning authorities which have trialled community led planning policy ahead of the legal framework coming into place. Not all of the Frontrunners have progressed with Neighbourhood Plans; some have decided another planning tool is more appropriate for them to deliver their vision for the area. The first Neighbourhood Planning referendum was held in the Eden Valley in Cumbria on 7 March 2013. Voters in the area around the town of Brough supported a plan for housing and infrastructure drawn up by a group representing 17 parish councils. Further referendums are expected to be held jointly with the local Council elections in May 2013.
- 3.14 Neighbourhood planning legislation contained in the Localism Act came into effect in April 2012. Further legislation covering the referendum stage of neighbourhood planning came into force in August 2012, and amended Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations in November 2012.
- 3.15 There is no doubt that preparing a Plan will require much time and effort, principally by the responsible parish council or neighbourhood forum. Although how much time will vary, depending on the complexity of the Plan, the issues it covers, and the size of the community. Typical estimates are between one and two years.
- 3.16 Neighbourhood planning is subject to a prescribed process and the LPA has a duty to support throughout. A summary of the process and the LPA's role is represented diagrammatically in Appendices A and B. For the Frontrunner Schemes, the Government invited LPAs to apply for £20K for each pilot. In addition, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) awarded £3.1M grant agreements to the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment, The Building Communities Consortium, The Royal Town

Planning Institute and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England to give independent advice to communities. Further support has been provided by such organisations as Planning Aid, the Planning Advisory Service, and Locality.

- 3.17 Beyond the Frontrunner pilots, the Government has committed to providing up to £50M until March 2015 to support local councils in making neighbourhood planning a success. Grants of up to £30K will be made available to councils in two separate payments, under the terms of the funding. Up to £5K will be made available when a neighbourhood area has been designated and a second payment of up to £25K will be made available on successful completion of the neighbourhood planning independent examination. Moreover, at the end of November 2012 DCLG announced that it was seeking to contract with a single body or consortium to provide neighbourhood planning support and to administer funding as part of a two year programme to 2015.
- 3.18 Given this new opportunity for parish councils and community groups in non-parished areas to develop their own Neighbourhood Plans, and the potential financial and practical support available both to the LPA and to neighbourhoods, the Task Group has set out to assess the pros and cons of neighbourhood planning so the LPA and ward councillors can adopt a clear and consistent approach in their dealings with interested groups.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 In addition to an introductory briefing given to the Task Group by Adam Dodgshon, Principal Consultant at the Planning Advisory Service, and the growing amount of evidence available on the web including the documents listed at the end of this report, the main source of evidence for this investigation was a public half day review which took place on 27 September 2012 in the Town Hall. The session took the form of two presentations by John Romanski, Senior Neighbourhood Planning Adviser at Planning Aid England, followed by a roundtable discussion chaired by Councillor Ritchie, involving Members of the Task Group and the following participants: Sarah Housden (Policy Manager, North York Moors National Park Authority) and from Scarborough Borough Council, Jo Ireland (Community Partnerships Manager), Jill Low (Planning Manager), and David Walker (Forward Planning Manager).
- 4.2 Mr Romanski's first presentation examined the Neighbourhood Planning process in some detail, whilst the second comprised a series of 'postcards' from Neighbourhood Frontrunner Schemes across the country, highlighting successes, failures and learning points.

5. FINDINGS

- 5.1 A recurring theme in our investigation has been that the Borough Council needs to be clear about what support the LPA is and is not prepared to offer

neighbourhood planning, and why, so this can be articulated to local parish councils and community groups. In the legislation, the minimum duty to support is not well defined, but covers such aspects as sharing evidence and information on strategic policies and statutory consultees, as well as checking proposals, appointing the independent examiner and holding the community referendum. One reason the duty to support is not defined is because different councils have different capacity and resources, and much also depends on DCLG funding, support from other bodies, and crucially on how much capacity the neighbourhood group itself possesses.

- 5.2 In his introductory briefing to the Task Group, Adam Dodgshon advised that a good way for the Council to develop its approach in respect of neighbourhood planning is through learning from the Frontrunner schemes, and this was the primary purpose of the half day review held on 27 September. On that day, we heard from a wide variety of schemes, all of which had evolved in different ways, with varying levels of LPA support. Below are key lessons we learned from the Frontrunner postcards.

1. The parish council or neighbourhood group requires time, commitment and its own range of skills - the broader the better - for the long haul. This is irrespective of the vital support also required from the LPA and other organisations.

- 5.3 Despite the Government's commitment of financial and other resources to support neighbourhood planning, and the funding and practical support made available through the Frontrunners, the parish council or neighbourhood group clearly needs considerable capacity, skills and resilience to make its Neighbourhood Plan a reality. An organised and sustained approach to community engagement is required from the outset, just to come through the referendum. Bookham village in Surrey described 'months of constant publicity and then you will be lucky to have 50% of your community that know that you exist. It took Bookham Vision nearly 9 months to reach that degree of penetration.' Another of the more promising Frontrunners, the market town of Caistor in Lincolnshire, reported the major challenge of maintaining enthusiasm. Planning Aid got involved through a Planning for Real event held for them. John Romanski commented: 'People lead busy lives and have many other commitments. Neighbourhood planning is a long process, so we have to be upfront with interested community groups. One applicant compared the process to walking down this long, long corridor for miles and miles and finally getting to the end and opening the door just to find another long corridor that he's got to walk down.'
- 5.4 Neighbourhood planning does not just demand planning expertise, but also skills in leadership, project management, community engagement and perhaps specialist skills. Bookham advises that 'there is no point in community groups trying to be the planners and trying to be those technical experts, because they simply aren't going to be. It's about knowing where to go and find the information, where to get advice, where to get the skills from. What skills are needed is actually going to depend on what the Plan is proposing. You might not need a massive task force or consultants - it all

depends on what you are trying to put forward. As a community group you must go with your vision.'

- 5.5 In the Exeter St James area, one member visited all the shops to talk about the project and get them involved in a raffle. In another neighbourhood area, a website designer set up a website for the Neighbourhood Plan which they are using as an engagement tool to reach out to the wider community, particularly younger people.
- 5.6 The Task Group received a very impressive presentation about a vibrant and dynamic Neighbourhood Forum in the Chatsworth Road area in Hackney, East London. Although Hackney is very deprived, there are some very skilled and articulate people who are driving forward the Neighbourhood Plan, reaching out to the wider community.

2. The LPA should avoid a top down, deterministic approach. Neighbourhood Planning should be characterised by localism, embodying an organic, bottom up approach, supported by the LPA and others, but originating in the local community

- 5.7 This second message relates to the first insofar as there needs to be a genuine kernel of support for neighbourhood planning in the local community for the Plan to come to fruition. Frontrunner schemes encountered problems when the process was initiated by the LPA. City of Lincoln Council successfully applied for £20K under the Frontrunner scheme to establish a Neighbourhood Forum in the deprived Lincoln Park ward of the city. However, despite training sessions given by Planning Aid, the project is struggling to get off the ground. It seems there is insufficient community cohesion, commitment and wherewithal from the grass roots to deliver the Neighbourhood Plan. The area has proved too large with disparate communities and levels of interest. By contrast, Chatsworth Road enjoys a strong community lead and covers a smaller geographical area which appears to correspond to a genuine neighbourhood. We also share Mr Romanski's hesitancy about the top down approach of the London Borough of Croydon which has proposed neighbourhood development areas in its Local Development Plan.

3. The starting point for LPA's discussion with the neighbourhood group should be the group's issues, not how to contrive a Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.8 Although neighbourhood planning has been much vaunted by the Government, it is not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end. Mr Romanski advises the prospective neighbourhood group to focus on the issues first with the LPA, rather than the intention to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan and then fit the issues around it. Localism is about allowing communities to have a say in their area, through whatever tool is most appropriate and that might be through submitting a planning application or through getting involved in a Supplementary Planning Document or commenting on the draft Local Plan. Such an opportunity will arise when Scarborough Borough Council commences its consultation on the draft Local Plan later this year (see

paragraph 6.11 below). Mr Romanski adds that a number of Frontrunners decided that neighbourhood planning was not for them, and opted for another avenue instead. This should not be viewed as failure per se, in that there is a tangible, beneficial outcome, but it does highlight the need for clarity from the outset as to the best tool for the job, and for flexibility in the process to ensure it.

- 5.9 One Frontrunner which abandoned its Neighbourhood Plan was Fish Quay in North Shields. Although the community was pro-growth, there was no consensus, which was why the LPA had to step in as arbitrator. In the end, the Council had to make the difficult decisions, come down on one side of the argument and take the Plan forward as a Supplementary Planning Document. It seems not only a kernel, but also the expectation of a broad base of support is required to embark on a process which will be decided by popular referendum. Therefore it is vital for the community group to identify any issues of contention early on in the process and to seek assistance from the LPA and other bodies as appropriate.

4. If the community group's issues and aspirations can in theory be progressed by a Neighbourhood Plan, then it is important to identify what is distinctive in land use planning terms about their proposals – how can it add value to what the LPA is already doing and is it the most effective way of realising their aspirations?

- 5.10 The community group's discussion with the LPA will not just revolve around planning issues. Another important factor will be developing their relationship with the LPA. Neighbourhood planning is not about the parish council or community group acting autonomously from the LPA; any Plan will need to conform with local and national planning policy. Rather neighbourhood planning is more about a partnership between the community group and the LPA. Mr Romanski cites again the example of Chatsworth Road: 'there was a meeting at which both planners and the community agreed that it was the perfect opportunity to do a Neighbourhood Plan: they knew their area was changing, there was a policy vacuum, the Council didn't have an Area Action Plan for the area but was just using generic policies.' Mr Romanski goes on: 'There is no point in regurgitating the Council's existing policies. The community group will have its issues, and the first question to ask is: how does the Council currently deal with these issues in terms of planning policy. How would a planning application currently be assessed on that issue? The Neighbourhood Plan should not repeat what the LPA would already say.'
- 5.11 To undertake the onerous task of a Neighbourhood Plan, there needs to be some recognition of how the Plan can add value to local planning policy. It needs to be distinctive but also tightly defined. Mr Romanski warns of the dangers of groups overstressing themselves and the resulting Plan becoming too ambitious in scope. He commends the Devonshire Park Neighbourhood Plan on the Wirral which has just two policies. Over the years family sized housing had been subdivided into flats. To address this shortage of family sized dwellings, the Neighbourhood Plan places a presumption in favour of larger dwellings and against the conversion of these dwellings into flats. They

have the evidence base that shows there is a distinct need for family size housing in the area and the policy is worded as such. The Chapel-en-le-Frith Frontrunner offers the advice that ‘the content of your Neighbourhood Plan must reflect your ambition and the time and skills available to you. There is no point in trying to re-invent work. The danger is that by lacking focus, the group gets stuck in this eternal loop leading to lots of talking and not enough doing.’ The more complex the Plan, the longer it is going to take to prepare, and the more risk there is of plan fatigue as highlighted above.

6 ASSESSMENT

6.1 We therefore suggest that these four points be adopted as four key principles to underpin the Council’s position on neighbourhood planning:

1. The parish council or neighbourhood group requires time, commitment and its own range of skills - the broader the better - for the long haul. This is irrespective of the vital support also required from the LPA and other organisations.

2. The LPA should avoid a top down, deterministic approach. Neighbourhood Planning should be characterised by localism, embodying an organic, bottom up approach, supported by the LPA and others, but originating in the local community

3. The starting point for the LPA’s discussion with the neighbourhood group should be the group’s issues, not how to contrive a Neighbourhood Plan

4. If the community group’s issues and aspirations can in theory be progressed by a Neighbourhood Plan, then it is important to identify what is distinctive in land use planning terms about their proposals – how can it add value to what the LPA is already doing and is it the most effective way of realising their aspirations?

6.2 The Frontrunner schemes, by their very nature, saw LPAs applying for Government funding to pilot Neighbourhood Plans, and so promote neighbourhood planning in their local communities. We argue instead that the LPA has a role to play in raising awareness about the suite of planning tools available to local communities, including Neighbourhood Plans, but prefer a more **impartial** stance towards neighbourhood planning, setting out its benefits but also emphasising its challenges, especially since the community group must bear ultimate responsibility for bringing the Plan to fruition.

6.3 That said, the LPA has a duty to support Neighbourhood Plans. In accordance with the LPA’s impartiality, we recommend that the Council complies with the minimum statutory requirements of this duty – for example, advising on planning policies, statutory consultees (e.g. Highway Authority, Yorkshire Water, Environment Agency as appropriate) signposting to organisations which can offer advice – whilst also seeking financial aid from the DCLG to support the process.

- 6.4 Resourcing remains a key issue for neighbourhood planning, and some planning experts have questioned where post 2015, longer term sources of funding are going to come from.
- 6.5 Given the uncertainties around funding, and that the LPA's duties to provide advice and assistance do not extend to financial assistance, chasing the money cannot be the prime motivation for developing a Neighbourhood Plan. We believe there must be a strong initial ambition for the group to lead on an initiative, take the community with them, and to add value to what the LPA is already doing. There will be support available, and the LPA can help signpost this, but there must be that motivation and commitment to the project to sustain the community group in the longer term. The more complex the Plan, the more commitment, energy, and expertise are required.
- 6.6 Localism is not about LPAs contriving Neighbourhood Plans as part of the machinery of planning policy making. It is genuinely the communities' call, but by providing clear information and adopting a clear and consistent approach, the LPA can ensure that any interested bodies embark on the process with their eyes open.
- 6.7 Neighbourhood planning is a developing subject and since the review session was held at the end of September 2012, Locality has published a Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide and a series of worksheets (attached at Appendices C and D) to assist interested groups. The Guide and worksheets marry well with the Council's recommended stance and key principles outlined above. We believe the Locality material, our findings and recommended key principles should form the basis of a predominantly web based guide on the Council's website following the following broad structure:

Introduction

- Localism – what is it?
- What is Neighbourhood Plan?
- What is a Neighbourhood Development Order?
- Opportunities/potential challenges
- Other community planning tools – parish plans, village design statements etc

Things to consider

- What local issues does your area face?
- What tool is best placed to address these?
- Resources: what are the resource implications of neighbourhood planning weighed against its benefits?

Getting Started

- Who to speak to – contacts officers/members
- Qualifying bodies
- Neighbourhood Forums

- SBC – form for applying to do a Neighbourhood Plan – plus notes on issues to consider, and how SBC will assess applications
- SBC – form for seeking to establish a neighbourhood forum – plus notes on issues to consider, and how SBC will assess applications

Duty to Support

- What to expect from the Borough Council
- Evidence/Resource centre – key local statistics and links to local plan evidence

Preparing the Plan

- Engagement – good practice
- The Process
- Resources
- Examination
- Referenda

Links

- Sources of assistance and advice – internal and external

Role of ward councillors

- 6.8 Ward councillors potentially have a key role in the neighbourhood planning process. They may be a community group's first 'council' contact, and as such there is a need to ensure that all ward councillors have at least a basic understanding of the Neighbourhood Plan process, and can signpost groups to key contacts within the Council. Ward councillors also have a role in the actual process of a Neighbourhood Plan being drawn up; best practice appears to suggest this can help the Neighbourhood Plan both maintain momentum and take account of wider strategic considerations.

Two planning authorities

- 6.9 The Borough contains two planning authorities – that covered by the Borough Council itself, and that of the North York Moors National Park Authority. This presents issues in that it is the Borough Council that is expected to fund and facilitate referenda (even for communities within the National Park), and there are parishes/settlements that are 'split' by the National Park boundary. Discussions are underway between Scarborough Borough Council and the National Park Authority officers to determine efficient working practices in terms of the mechanics of Neighbourhood Plans which include who will lead, the protocol for ensuring both authorities are aware of emerging Neighbourhood Plan activities, and an agreed approach towards examiners.

Decision making process for designating a neighbourhood area and forum

- 6.10 According to the prescribed process, the Council advertises the proposed neighbourhood area (and proposed forum if in an unparished area) for a period of six weeks to allow those who live, work or carry out business in the

area to make comments. After considering any representations made and the coherence, consistency and appropriateness of the proposed boundaries, the Council must then decide whether to designate the neighbourhood area/forum, to enable the parish council or neighbourhood forum to begin the process of preparing its Neighbourhood Plan. We suggest that the Planning and Development Committee be asked to comment on the proposed neighbourhood area, before a final decision to designate is made by the Portfolio Holder or the Cabinet, depending on the strategic importance of the proposed area/forum.

Forthcoming consultation on the Scarborough Borough Local Plan

- 6.11 As already mentioned, the draft Local Plan is scheduled to be issued for public consultation later in the year. This presents a timely opportunity for the Borough Council to put some of the overarching principles of localism into practice by reaching out to local communities and engaging with them as part of the process, and by doing all that is possible to identify the issues that matter to communities, and where appropriate, providing a robust policy and/or land use response within this hugely important strategy.
- 6.12 We readily recognise that it will be impossible to reach full consensus within a document as challenging and diverse as the Local Plan, but it nevertheless seems to us that putting in extra time and effort at the key 'draft' plan stage of the process could go some way to ensuring that the Council is able to produce a truly robust and responsive Local Plan that will stand the test of time. If executed effectively this could have the added benefit of reducing the perceived need for communities to go down the lengthy and resource-intensive route of producing a Neighbourhood Plan, for the simple reason that the Borough-wide Local Plan has adequately reflected their aspirations and addressed their concerns. We acknowledge that this will require both time and resources, but consider that the benefits to both the Council and local communities will make the effort worthwhile.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1

To the Planning and Development Committee and to the Cabinet

- (i) that the Local Planning Authority adopts an impartial stance towards neighbourhood planning underpinned by the four key principles in the report and with close reference to Locality's 'Neighbourhood Planning Roadmap Guide' and worksheets, as the basis of a predominantly web based guide on the Council's website;
- (ii) that all councillors receive some basic training on neighbourhood planning and associated activities, to ensure they are clear on the Council's overall approach to neighbourhood plans, and that this training be incorporated in the induction process for new councillors;

- (iii) that the proposed decision-making process for designating a neighbourhood area or forum set out in paragraph 6.10 of the report be incorporated in the next raft of changes to the Council's Constitution to be considered by the Cabinet and full Council in due course; and
- (iv) that the Local Planning Authority place significant emphasis on engaging with local communities as part of the ongoing review of the Local Plan, and that when the draft Local Plan is released for consultation later this year, efforts be made to secure effective and meaningful engagement with local communities with a view to gaining a greater understanding of issues of local concern and responding accordingly as the Local Plan is subsequently refined.

8 IMPLICATIONS

Policy and Legal

- 8.1 Neighbourhood Plans must conform with local and national planning policies.

Financial

- 8.2 In the event of any Neighbourhood Plan proposals coming forward, the Council will apply to the DCLG for financial assistance.

Equalities and diversity

- 8.3 No significant implications

Planning and environment

- 8.4 Neighbourhood planning and its related mechanisms involve land use planning decisions being taken outside of the direct control of the LPA, but in partnership with the LPA, in conformity with local and national planning policies and EU regulations, and adding value to the LPA's activities.

Staffing, health and safety, and crime and disorder

- 8.5 No significant implications



Councillor John Ritchie
Chair of the Neighbourhood Planning Task Group

Background papers:

Neighbourhood planning – a simple guide for ward councillors (LGA & PAS, June 2012)

Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide (and worksheets) (Locality, October 2012)

Neighbourhood Planning FAQs (Planning Advisory Service website
<http://www.pas.gov.uk>)

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES ABOUT THIS REPORT, PLEASE CONTACT DAVID WALKER, FORWARD PLANNING MANAGER ON 01723 383504

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