



Committee: Prosperous Communities
Date: 24 th October 2017

Neighbourhood Plans: Priorities and Work Programme

Report by:

Chief Operating Officer, Mark Sturgess

Contact Officer:

Nev Brown
Senior Neighbourhood Planning Policy Officer
01427 676653
nev.brown@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

The report reviews the Council's support to neighbourhood planning groups in helping them to prepare their plans and seeks Members' support to the revised arrangements and approval to the report's recommendations prioritising Council assistance including provision of 'top-up' funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Members:

- 1) note and support the revised arrangements for providing Council support to neighbourhood plan groups as outlined in this report.**
- 2) agree that the Council continues to support all neighbourhood planning groups in the preparation of their plans. The provision of such support is a corporate priority, embraces the requirements and aspirations of the Localism Act, contributes to good planning decision making in the district, and enhances community cohesion. Neighbourhood planning in the district enables local people to take a proactive role in shaping the future of the settlements they live in, and by providing them with support gives the Council a good reputation.**
- 3) agree that the level of support provided by the Council to neighbourhood planning groups should be made on an individual basis taking into account the needs of that settlement. Priority should be given to those neighbourhood planning groups that are positively**

planning for growth or facing significant development pressures in their areas. The Council should also prioritise support to those neighbourhood plans which have reached these key statutory stages :designation;draft publication: submission; examination; referendum; and the making of the plan.

- 4) agree, that in its partnership with the Council, Community Lincs support on neighbourhood plans should be directed towards the initial/pre-designation stages of plan preparation where the assistance it has available can be best utilised. This should be confirmed in an updated version of the service level/partnership agreement. Parish and town councils should be informed that there would be no charge for this support from Community Lincs.
- 5) recommend to Full Council that the decision, currently made by Prosperous Communities, to accept the examiner's report and hold a referendum on a neighbourhood plan should in future be made through delegated powers given to the Chief Operating Officer. This stage raises few issues and using delegated powers will save time at a critical stage in the neighbourhood plan process when statutory deadlines must be met.
- 6) agree that the Members' Champion for Neighbourhood Plans and the Neighbourhood Planning Team should meet on a quarterly basis to review the timetable of neighbourhood plans and consider those at planned referendums and forthcoming committees. The Neighbourhood Planning Team should also provide Members with monthly bulletins on neighbourhood plans progress in the District.
- 7) agree that for this financial year 2017/18 and 2018/19 the Council, subject to availability, should continue to provide 'top-up' funding to neighbourhood planning groups and this should be awarded where project costs are essential to the formal adoption of the neighbourhood plan such as but not limited to:
 - identified gaps in evidence for example towards specialist studies;
 - engaging a planning expert to help produce the submission document;
 - contribution to undertaking a strategic environmental assessment ;
 - support with collecting and analysing responses from the six week draft plan consultation and deciding how to modify the neighbourhood plan;
 - help with understanding whether the plan is ready for examination (meeting the basic conditions and other legal requirements);
 - provide training in the legal requirements which may be tested at the examination stage; and
 - costs associated with planning and undertaking public engagement and consulting on the plan at submission and referendum stages such as venue hire, publicity materials and printing costs.
- 8) agree that the Council should introduce a formal application process

to administer claims from neighbourhood planning groups for 'top-up' funding. Application forms and guidance notes for 'top-up' funding should be made available on the Council's website and submissions should be dealt with on a first come first served basis. Submissions should be overseen by the Council's Enterprising Communities team manager responsible for grant applications to the Council. This procedure should ensure that claims for limited 'top-up' funds have been scrutinised in a fair and reasonable way as possible.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: This work is a duty under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012 (amended).

Financial: FIN/87/18

Funding is received from DCLG at certain points in the neighbourhood plan process so there is no impact on Council budgets. Unused grant is moved to reserves for future use. The current estimated balance in the reserve for this year is £29,400 based on future claims that will be made before the end of the current financial year and also allows for the £25k 'top-up' funding. 2018/19 has also been estimated based on grant to be claimed and costs to be incurred and there will be sufficient grant to cover this 'top up' fund of £25k.

Staffing: There are no staffing implications.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

Mechanisms are in place to ensure fair and equal access to neighbourhood plan consultation.

Risk Assessment :

A further reason for the need to review the way that advice is provided to neighbourhood planning group (NPG) has become evident during the past few months and has led to significant financial pressures for some of the groups in West Lindsey. Officers have been made aware that a number of groups who have employed consultants to assist them with their plans have also been advised to commission additional studies to sit alongside their plans. In a number of cases officers have identified that these have either not been essential to their plan, or have simply been disproportionate to what the NPG were seeking to achieve. In some cases NPGs have gone on to commission this work before understanding the reason or need for the study, and without fully considering the cost implications on their grant funding.

Typically these kinds of professionally produced studies cost thousands of pounds, and potentially up to half of a NPG's total funding. In turn this has led directly to an expectation that this Council should provide additional funds to cover growing costs. It is precisely this kind of expectation that the revised approach and advice is now seeking to address and why it is crucial to ensure that NPGs consider carefully how to use the grant funding available to them. The need for such studies can only be assessed on a case by case basis and in consideration of the type of issues a plan is seeking to address. All existing NPGs have therefore been reminded that officers are best placed to advise them in respect of any additional technical planning documents that are needed to support their plan, and this advice also forms a key part of the initial contact advice given to every new NPG.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities : n/a

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

- Appendix A Neighbourhood Planning Grants and discretionary additional 'Top-Up' Funding – Application Form
- Appendix B Neighbourhood Planning Grants and discretionary additional 'Top-Up' Funding – Guidance Notes
- Appendix C Neighbourhood Planning Support SLA - Grant Funding Agreement WLDC/Community Lincs

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report reviews the Council's support to neighbourhood planning groups in helping them prepare their plans and recommends priorities to ensure future support meets statutory requirements and is cost effective.

1.2 Neighbourhood planning (NP) is a Council priority as stated in its Corporate Plan 2016 to 2020 which aims to establish neighbourhood plans (NPs) across the District and ensure they are supported and developed. The Council welcomes NP as a customer focussed approach fostering neighbourhood goodwill and bringing communities together. NP is seen as empowering and engaging residents and is something the Council wants to be successful.

1.3 Having NPs in place is vital to making good planning decisions in the District. With the recently adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, NPs help complete the development plan framework for settlements. The Local Plan provides strategic planning guidance while NPs set out policies and plans for settlements but on a very local scale. As part of the development plan, planning decisions have to be made in accordance with NPs unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is important that the District has NPs in place to ensure that appropriate development takes place at the local level.

2.0 Background

2.1 In West Lindsey NPs are produced at parish and town council levels and progress on them is given in Table 1. So far 8 NPs have been completed and there are as many as 34 which are currently in various stages of preparation requiring Council support. Moreover there remain as many as 46 parishes down to small village level and 1 town council that have yet to start their NPs as given in Table 2. There is also the prospect of some councils seeking a review of their adopted NPs after 5 years. Clearly this is a large NP workload for the Council to support at a time of having limited resources available and with the prospect of this workload increasing as NPs that have not yet started come forward. There is a need to look at how the Council currently supports NP and put forward priorities to ensure future support is there.

2.2 Whilst the take up of neighbourhood planning has been very successful, and there is clearly wide interest across the District it is also the case that outcomes from neighbourhood planning have been varied. For instance, whilst there are examples of very successful plans in the District many of those made to date have not for example contributed: to new sites to the District's land supply; led to additional growth that was not otherwise planned for in the Local Plan; or facilitated extra employment growth. This is not to say that plans have not been valuable in assisting in the determination of planning applications, however some of the wider benefits that can be achieved through effective neighbourhood planning have not materialised to their full potential. This has led officers to review the way that the service is delivered and ensure that an improved quality of information is available at the outset, as well as to seek to more closely align neighbourhood plan resources to the delivery of the Council's wider corporate objectives. In short, it is important to recognise that success in neighbourhood planning

cannot be measured simply by there being as many plans underway as possible, but by looking at the outcomes and quality of the plans being made. In some parts of the District this may mean that neighbourhood plans are not the most suitable option for a local community and this is an equally acceptable form of advice to provide.

Table 1 Neighbourhood Plans Progress

Neighbourhood Stage		Local Plan Settlement Category	Town or Parish Council
Made/Adopted		Market Town	Caistor
		Large Village	Dunholme, Nettleham, Saxilby, Welton
		Medium Village	Scothern
		Small Village	Riseholme, Brattleby
In Preparation	Submission or Examination or Referendum	Large Village	Scotter
		Medium Village	Lea
	Draft Published	Medium Village	Fiskerton
		Small Village	Osgodby, Great Limber, Willoughton
	Designation approved and Drafts Underway	Main Town	Gainsborough
		Large Village	Bardney, Cherry Willingham, Keelby
		Medium Village	Hemswell Cliff, Ingham, Morton, Reepham, Scotton, Sudbrooke, Waddingham
		Small Village (high/medium growth)	Corringham, Glentworth, Hemswell and Harpswell, Laughton, Normanby, South Kelsey, Spridlington,
		Small Village (low growth)	Bishop Norton, Langworth, Northorpe
	Initial Contact	Medium Village	Marton, Sturton by Stow
		Small Village (high/medium growth)	Newton on Trent, Torksey, Willingham by Stow
		Small Village (low growth)	North Carlton
		Hamlet or smaller	Broxholme

Table 2 Neighbourhood Plans Not Started

Local Plan Settlement Category	Town or Parish Council
Market Town	Market Rasen
Large Village	Middle Rasen
Medium Village	Blyton, Brookenby, Burton Waters, Marton, Nettleton, North Kelsey, Tealby, Torksey Lock
Small Village (high/medium growth)	Grasby, Burton, New Toft, East Stockwith, Kexby, Upton, Laughterton, Fillingham, Rothwell, Swinhope, North Owersby, Knaith Park, Swallow, Hackthorn, Moortown, Walesby, Wickenby, Holton le moor, Riby, Springthorpe, East Ferry, Legsby, Searby
Small Village (low growth)	Bigby, Cammeringham, Claxby, Snitterby, Thoresway, Holton cum Beckering, Lissington, North Greetwell, North Willingham, Stow, Fenton, Faldingworth, Glentham, Scampton
Hamlet or smaller	Not identified

2.4 Council support to local communities undertaking NPs primarily comes from these sources:

- Neighbourhood Planning Team;
- Community Lincs;
- Use of Delegated Powers and Members' Champion - Neighbourhood Plans; and
- Neighbourhood Planning Grants and discretionary additional 'Top-Up' Funding.

2.5 The report will now examine each area of assistance and propose future work priorities. The report concludes by bringing all recommended priorities together in Table 3 to show how future assistance will be coordinated to provide effective future support to NP groups preparing their plans. Table 3 also identifies the 8 individual stages in the NP preparation process and details the primary work involved at each stage.

3.0 Neighbourhood Planning Team (NPT)

3.1 Currently the NPT adopts a fairly flexible approach to helping NPs progress. It assists NPs on a first come first served basis irrespective of a settlement's size and needs. The NPT helps across all stages of NP preparation from initial contact to making the plan. This approach has embraced the aspirations of the Localism Act by enabling local people to take a proactive role in shaping the future of the settlements they live in, and by providing

these people with support they needed has given the Council a good reputation.

3.2 But we are now finding that a revised approach is required as NP workload grows and there is a need to continue to make best use of limited resources available. Another consequence of delivering the service using the current approach is that progress amongst some neighbourhood planning groups (NPGs) has slowed where it has become clear that they had become partially, or in some cases wholly, dependent on the NPT driving forward their plan. This is not the purpose of NPs and has been a key driver of the need to change the way NPT support is provided. The NPT needs to target its activities to key stages and settlements in most need and at present too much NPT time seems to be spent with local communities at the initial contact/pre designation stages.

3.3 As a result, the NPT needs to deliver the service differently and this will involve its activities being targeted to certain settlements and key stages of the NP process. The NPT will continue to support all neighbourhood planning groups throughout the district in the preparation of their plans. The amount of support provided to a group will be made on an individual basis taking into account the particular needs and potential growth of that settlement. This will mean that the NPT will give priority to those settlements having greater housing and/or economic growth and/or social needs. A good indicator of such needs is provided by the Local Plan which categorises settlements in respect of their growth and regeneration needs and ranks them in this order: main towns; large villages; medium villages; small villages (high/medium growth); small villages (low growth) , and hamlets.

3.4 NPs should support growth in sustainable locations and in line with the Council's corporate objectives. The NPT is now focussing more of its work on NPs for main towns and large villages some of which have areas of vulnerability and market failure and also small villages having high to medium growth levels or that have recently faced greater growth pressure from developers. The Local Plan expects these settlements' growth, regeneration, and social needs at the local level to be delivered by NPs. In areas that are not expected to deliver additional growth or where there is very low likelihood of significant development pressures, NPGs will still receive statutory support but are unlikely to receive significant additional officer time and this is now made clear at the outset. The NPT will still respond to NPGs individually and will be there to respond to small villages (low growth) and hamlets wanting to explore the need and viability of preparing NPs.

3.5 As for stages of NP preparation, given the significant interest in NPs it is appropriate that NPT must focus more on statutory stages that the Council is required to undertake which includes: designation; submission; examination; referendum; and the making of the plan (see Table 3). NPT should also continue to assist NPGs with advice on how they can develop their draft plans where its expertise and input is highly valued. This involves assisting with questionnaire design, providing advice to enable them to undertake a call for sites exercise (where officers agree it is advisable to do so) and

undertaking strategic environmental and sustainability appraisals of the draft plan. The repositioning of NPG assistance will provide opportunities for others to contribute such as Community Lincs who are experts at helping NPGs with early work on plans, as well as other skilled officers from within the Council.

4.0 Community Lincs

4.1 In partnership with this Council, Community Lincs (CL) helps local communities with their NPs at various stages of preparation. CL is a Lincolnshire charity whose mission is directed towards giving rural areas the skills, resources, connections and confidence to help them deliver a better future for themselves. The Council has a 3 year grant funding arrangement with CL as part of its voluntary sector core funding and this is set out in a service level agreement. The current agreement started on 1st April 2016 and runs until 31st March 2019. The total agreement value is £60,000 over 3 years (£20,000 per year) and funding activity is focussed on: community events; community buildings; and NP – although the latter has scarcely been used to its full value to date.

4.2 CL have extensive experience in NP and have developed their role in this regard significantly through working very successfully with a number of communities in North Kesteven to develop plans. It has been agreed with CL that their assistance would be far more effective and valuable to our communities if it were directed towards the initial/pre-designation stages of NP preparation where it could apply its expertise in NP training and consultation to best effect. This realigned role will be confirmed in an updated version of the existing service level agreement. Since this service and advice will be part of the SLA, parish and town councils will be informed that there would be no charge for this initial support from CL.

4.3 Under the updated SLA (see Appendix C), the NPT will arrange for CL to meet with NPG to explain how the NP process works and what the benefits of undertaking a NP are. CL would highlight the level of work and commitment required by the NPG and make a recommendation as to whether it should undertake a NP. CL would also support the NPG to engage with the community via an event to show the level of community support to undertake a NP and identify the key themes relating to land development that the community wish to address. From experience, this increased level of understanding at the outset is essential and will avoid a number of issues experienced during 2016/17 where groups have not consistently understood that responsibility to develop the plan rests with the group first, rather than with this Council. The initial stages of a NP can be resource intensive. Having experts such as CL available to undertake this work will free up the NPT to concentrate on the key later stages of NP preparation.

5.0 Delegated Powers and Members' Champion for Neighbourhood Plans

5.1 Over the course of a NP's preparation the Council has to make key decisions at the stages given in Tables 1 and 3. The majority are made under delegated powers given to the Chief Operating Officer. This procedure works well helping NPs to be completed quicker. NPs in West Lindsey raise few issues largely because they must conform to the recently adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. Currently the last two stages of NP

production require committee approval. Approval is needed from Prosperous Communities for the Council to accept the examiner's report and to agree the holding of a referendum. A decision from Full Council is required to make the NP.

5.2 It is considered that the decision to accept the examiner's report and hold a referendum can also be done through delegated powers. A report therefore no longer needs to go to Prosperous Communities for a decision. It has been found that this stage mostly involves fact checking the examiner's report and again raises few issues. This proposal will save time at a critical stage in the NP process when statutory deadlines need to be met.

5.3 The final decision, however, to make the NP must remain with Full Council. This is an occasion for both Members and the invited NPG to celebrate the completion of the plan and for the Council to thank the NPG for all its hard work.

5.4 Many Members are actively involved with NPs often for parishes within their own wards. Members also have their own neighbourhood plan champion who has been instrumental in making NP such a success in the District.

5.5 The support provided by the Members' Champion for NPs is vital for maintaining support for NPs when they are considered at Full Council. To assist with this it is proposed that the NPT and Champion meet on a quarterly basis to review the timetable of neighbourhood plans, including the prospect of completed plans being reviewed after 5 years, and consider those at forthcoming committees and planned referendums. It is also proposed that NPT provide Members with monthly bulletins on NP progress in the District.

6.0 Neighbourhood Planning Grants and discretionary additional 'Top-Up' Funding

6.1 In order to produce a NP, there are various bits of work incurring a cost that need to be undertaken by NP groups such as consultation, printing, venue hire, commissioning technical reports and consultancy work. External grant monies to fund this work are available to groups from Locality (Government grant) £9,000 (per plan area) with additional £6,000 for more complex plans and Big Lottery – grants of up to £10,000 (per plan area). All NPGs should set out with the intention to fund all of their NP and must plan their budgets accordingly. This includes carefully scoping the content of their plan at the outset and considering what can reasonably be produced within this grant 'envelope'.

6.2 In addition to this external funding, since 2015/ 2016 financial year, the Council has provided limited 'top-up' funding to NPGs to assist them moving forward. For 2016/17 the 'top-up' funding budget was £25,000 and individual 'top-up' grants were to a maximum of £5000 per group. This 'top-up' funding has assisted groups when all other grant funding has been exhausted. There has not previously been a consistent way of assessing how to allocate or prioritise this funding. However, given the growth of NP and likely demand, considered against the limited funding available, this clearly now

needs to be much more robustly controlled.

6.3 The 'top-up' fund itself is financed by a grant which DCLG provides local authorities with to assist with their own costs of NP such as the cost of the officers and statutory stages, independent examinations, and the public referendums. The DCLG grant is £20,000 per plan and is received on the successful examination of a NP.

6.4 Funding is received from DCLG at certain points in the NP process so there is no impact on Council budgets. Unused grant is moved to reserves for future use. The current estimated balance in the reserve for this year is £29,400 based on future claims that will be made before the end of the current financial year and also allows for the £25,000 'top-up' funding. 2018/19 has also been estimated based on grant to be claimed and costs to be incurred and there will be sufficient grant to cover this 'top up' fund of £25,000.

6.5 Any NPG that applies for 'top-up' funding has to supply evidence to show that they have attempted to access all available external funding for NPs and demonstrate where they have used the funding they have accessed and what the 'top-up' funding is to be used for. 'Top-up' funding is only made available where it is essential to the formal adoption of the NP.

6.6 In planning their budgets NPGs should allow plenty of time for grant funding bodies to process applications and make grant money available to them. It has been suggested that the Council should also use the 'top-up' fund to provide loans of up to £500 to NPGs for advance works with the guarantee that they would pay back the Council once their grant money came through. However it has been confirmed that such a scheme would not be possible as grant funding bodies like Locality do not permit their grants to be used for retrospective works.

6.7 For this financial year 2017/18 and 2018/19 it is proposed that the Council, subject to availability, continues to provide 'top-up' funding to NPGs. It is expected that examinations of NPs this year and next should generate sufficient Government grant monies to the Council to help cover the full cost of the 'top-up' fund over the next two years without affecting its base budget.

6.8 To help make the 'top-up' fund application process more easier going, manageable, and transparent it is also proposed that a formal application process be introduced to administer claims from NPGs. This process will draw heavily from Lottery and Big Lottery funding mechanisms and the Council's own operation for processing grant applications which has been highly commended. Application forms (Appendix A) and guidance notes (Appendix B) for 'top-up' funding will be available on our website and submissions will still be dealt with on a first come first serve basis, but with greater scrutiny of the reasons for their request and how essential the need for additional funding is. NP groups will need to provide evidence on forms as to how their project will contribute to the adoption of its plan and how it meets the Council's Corporate Plan priorities. The guidance notes will outline the type of projects that would be eligible for

the grant. Submissions will be scored against a set of key criteria overseen by the Council's Enterprising Communities team manager responsible for grant applications to the Council. This procedure will ensure that claims for limited 'top-up' funds have been administered in a fair and reasonable way as possible.

6.9 For financial years 2017/18 and 2018/19 it is recommended that 'top-up' funding should be awarded to NPGs where project costs are essential to the formal adoption of the NP such as but not limited to:

- identified gaps in evidence for example towards specialist studies;
- engaging a planning expert to help produce the submission document;
- contribution to undertaking a strategic environmental assessment (SEA);
- support with collecting and analysing responses from the six week draft plan consultation and deciding how to modify the NP;
- help with understanding whether the plan is ready for examination (meeting the basic conditions and other legal requirements);
- provide training in the legal requirements which may be tested at the examination stage; and
- costs associated with planning and undertaking public engagement and consulting on the plan at submission and referendum stages such as – venue hire, publicity materials and printing costs.

7.0 Summary of Recommended Priorities

7.1 Table 3 below brings revised arrangements and the report's recommended priorities together to show how Council support should be coordinated in future to provide legally compliant and cost effective assistance to NPGs preparing their plans in the District. Table 3 also highlights the 8 individual stages in the NP preparation process and details the primary work involved at each stage.

Table 3 Council priority support for neighbourhood plans

Neighbourhood Plan Stages 1 to 8 including main work items involved	<i>Local Plan Settlement Category</i>	Neighbourhood Planning Team (NPT)	Community Links (CL)	Delegated Power(DP) Full Council(FC) Members' Champion - NPs (NPC)	NP Grants and discretionary additional 'Top-Up' Funding (TF)
Stage 1 Initial contact from NPG - Presentation to NPG - Skills audit of NPG -Recommendation to NPG to do NP or not - Consultation event held	<i>Main Town</i>	NPT	CL	NPC	-
	<i>Large Village</i>	NPT	CL	NPC	-
	<i>Medium Village</i>	NPT	CL	NPC	-
	<i>Small Village (high/medium)</i>	NPT	CL	NPC	-

	<i>growth)</i>				
	<i>Small Village (low growth)</i>	-	CL	NPC	-
	<i>Hamlet</i>	-	CL	NPC	-
Stage 2 NP Designation -Statutory stage -Council processes/ consults and decides NPG application for NP designation.	<i>All categories</i>	NPT	-	DP	-
Stage 3 Draft NP in preparation -Resident survey -Community events -Site selections -Character appraisal -SEA/SA appraisals -Draft Plan written	<i>Main Town</i>	NPT	-	NPC	-
	<i>Large Village</i>	NPT	-	NPC	-
	<i>Medium Village</i>	NPT	-	NPC	-
	<i>Small Village (high/ medium growth)</i>	NPT	-	NPC	-
	<i>Small Village (low growth)</i>	-	-	NPC	-
	<i>Hamlet</i>	-	-	NPC	-
Stage 4 Draft NP Published -Statutory stage -NPG consult for 6 weeks -Council makes comment -Council consults on SEA screening report	<i>All categories</i>	NPT	-	DP	-
Stage 5 NP Submission -Statutory stage -Council consults on NP -Council makes formal comments	<i>All categories</i>	NPT	-	DP/NPC	TF
Stage 6 NP Examination -Statutory stage -Council appoints and manages examiner	<i>All categories</i>	NPT	-	DP	TF
Stage 7 NP Referendum -Statutory stage - Council arranges referendum	<i>All categories</i>	NPT	-	DP/NPC	TF
Stage 8 NP Made/Adopted -Statutory stage -Where NP supported by referendum vote Council makes NP	<i>All categories</i>	NPT	-	FC/NPC	TF

8.0 Recommendations

That Members:

- 1) note and support the revised arrangements for providing Council support to neighbourhood plan groups as outlined in this report.**

- 2) agree that the Council continues to support all neighbourhood planning groups in the preparation of their plans. The provision of such support is a corporate priority, embraces the requirements and aspirations of the Localism Act, contributes to good planning decision making in the district, and enhances community cohesion. Neighbourhood planning in the district enables local people to take a proactive role in shaping the future of the settlements they live in, and by providing them with support gives the Council a good reputation.**

- 3) agree that the level of support provided by the Council to neighbourhood planning groups should be made on an individual basis taking into account the needs of that settlement. Priority should be given to those neighbourhood planning groups that are positively planning for growth or facing significant development pressures in their areas. The Council should also prioritise support to those neighbourhood plans which have reached these key statutory stages :designation;draft publication: submission; examination; referendum; and the making of the plan.**

- 4) agree, that in its partnership with the Council, Community Lincs support on neighbourhood plans should be directed towards the initial/pre-designation stages of plan preparation where the assistance it has available can be best utilised. This should be confirmed in an updated version of the service level/partnership agreement. Parish and town councils should be informed that there would be no charge for this support from Community Lincs.**

- 5) recommend to Full Council that the decision, currently made by Prosperous Communities, to accept the examiner's report and hold a referendum on a neighbourhood plan should in future be made through delegated powers given to the Chief Operating Officer. This stage raises few issues and using delegated powers will save time at a critical stage in the neighbourhood plan process when statutory deadlines must be met.**

- 6) agree that the Members' Champion for Neighbourhood Plans and the Neighbourhood Planning Team should meet on a quarterly basis to review the timetable of neighbourhood plans and consider those at planned referendums and forthcoming committees. The Neighbourhood Planning Team should also provide Members with monthly bulletins on neighbourhood plans progress in the District.**

- 7) agree that for this financial year 2017/18 and 2018/19 the Council, subject to**

availability, should continue to provide 'top-up' funding to neighbourhood planning groups and this should be awarded where project costs are essential to the formal adoption of the neighbourhood plan such as but not limited to:

- identified gaps in evidence for example towards specialist studies;
- engaging a planning expert to help produce the submission document;
- contribution to undertaking a strategic environmental assessment ;
- support with collecting and analysing responses from the six week draft plan consultation and deciding how to modify the neighbourhood plan;
- help with understanding whether the plan is ready for examination (meeting the basic conditions and other legal requirements);
- provide training in the legal requirements which may be tested at the examination stage; and
- costs associated with planning and undertaking public engagement and consulting on the plan at submission and referendum stages such as venue hire, publicity materials and printing costs.

8) agree that the Council should introduce a formal application process to administer claims from neighbourhood planning groups for 'top-up' funding. Application forms and guidance notes for 'top-up' funding should be made available on the Council's website and submissions should be dealt with on a first come first served basis. Submissions should be overseen by the Council's Enterprising Communities team manager responsible for grant applications to the Council. This procedure should ensure that claims for limited 'top-up' funds have been scrutinised in a fair and reasonable way as possible.

Appendix A Neighbourhood Planning Grants and discretionary additional 'Top-Up' Funding – Application Form

Neighbourhood Planning Top-Up Fund (Up to £5,000)

Application Form

Closing Date for Applications

This top-up fund scheme is open to applications until 31st March 2019. The scheme has a limited budget and applications will be processed on a first come first served basis. Applications will be reviewed within a maximum of 4 weeks when received.

Completed application forms should be returned by e-mail or post.

E-mail: neighbourhoodplans@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Post: West Lindsey District Council
Neighbourhood Planning
The Guildhall
Marshall's Yard
Gainsborough
DN21 2NA

Checklist for Supporting Information

The following documents should be submitted with your completed application form. Please tick below to confirm you have included them.

Tick ✓	Supporting documents you MUST send with this form:
	Copy of your Town or Parish Council's bank statement – from within the last 3 months <i>(a print out from online banking can be used)</i>
	Evidence showing you have attempted to access all available external funding to deliver your neighbourhood plan <i>(e.g. Locality & Big Lottery Fund)</i>
	Evidence showing you have used funding that you have already accessed <i>(e.g. accounts, funding evaluation reports)</i>

Contact Details

Our Guidance Notes for the Neighbourhood Plan Top-Up Fund contain further detailed information and advice. You can view them on our website:

www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/funding

You can contact us via e-mail or telephone.

Telephone: 01427 676676 E-mail: neighbourhoodplans@west-lindsey.gov.uk

1. Your Council

The name of your Parish or Town Council should be the full name as stated on your constitution or similar governing document.

Include a registration or VAT number if you have one.

Please include your full address including postcode.

Please provide full contact details for yourself and another person we can contact in your Parish or Town Council.

Name of Parish or Town Council:

Registration Number:

VAT Number:

Postal Address including postcode:

Address where the Council is based (if different to above):

Website address or social media page:

Your full name:

Position in Council:

Daytime telephone number:

Mobile telephone number:

E-mail address:

Alternative contact name:

Position in Council:

Daytime telephone number:

Mobile telephone number:

E-mail address:

2. Your Project

Please give your project a title in under 10 words. It could be a description of what the project will do. This is the name we will use when referring to your project in any publicity.

Please describe your project. Explain what will happen if you receive a grant.

We may know nothing about your project so this is the main section to explain what you will do.

The explanation doesn't need to be complicated but should give a clear understanding of what you would do if you receive funding.

Please provide dates to show when your Neighbourhood Plan was published for consultation.

Please provide dates to show the project timescale.

Name of project:

Please describe your project and how it will contribute to the adoption of your neighbourhood plan and meet key criteria given in **Section 6** of the **Guidance Notes**?

Please Note:

Your draft Neighbourhood Plan must have been published for consultation before being able to apply to this funding scheme.

When was your draft Neighbourhood Plan published for consultation?

Has your Neighbourhood Plan been submitted for examination?

Yes No

When was your Neighbourhood Plan submitted or when do expect it to be submitted for examination?

When do you propose to start your project?

Project start date:

Anticipated completion date:

How will the project support the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan?

Tell us how your project will benefit the local community.

Explain what positive outcomes will be achieved by delivering your project.

3. Project Costs and Funding

Please show all costs relating to the project. This should include revenue and capital costs.

We will not fund costs that have already been incurred.

** You only need to enter the VAT for each item if you are able to reclaim it as a Parish or Town Council.*

Please only tick Yes if you wish to use this funding to contribute to a specific cost.

The **maximum** grant available is: **£5,000**
The **minimum** grant available is **£250**

Amount requested from this top-up fund:

3.1 Project Costs

Please enter all the project costs below:

Item - Please also list the provider who will be doing the work or supplying goods/services	Cost	VAT * See side note	Will you use this grant to contribute/cover this item?	
Example: Consultancy provided by John Smith Advisers & Co	£4,000	£800	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Total Costs: <i>(Including VAT)</i>				

3.2 Project Funding

Please provide details of any other funding sources to cover the above project costs:

If we are unable to offer top-up funding how would this impact on your Neighbourhood Plan?

Please explain any other plans you may have should top-up funding not be successful.

Could your project be delivered differently to reduce the need for top-up funding?

4. Declaration for Parish or Town Council

Please tick and sign to confirm you understand and agree to the declarations:

“I confirm that the details I have entered on this application form are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and that providing false or in-correct information may impact on the decision to offer top-up funding”

“I understand that West Lindsey District Council will contact other funding bodies involved with the project to discuss progress and share information”

You can view the Grant Funding Agreement for this funding scheme online at:
www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/funding

Please sign and date this application to confirm you have read and agree to the declaration.

Signature: Date:

Full Name:

Position within the Council:

If you are completing this form electronically you DO NOT have to sign this form, just ensure you have entered your e-mail address on the contact details page.

Appendix B Neighbourhood Planning Grants and discretionary additional 'Top-Up' Funding – Guidance Notes

Neighbourhood Planning Top-Up Fund (Up to £5,000) Guidance Notes

1. Introduction

Welcome to our guidance notes for the Neighbourhood Planning Top-Up Fund. We are committed to supporting Parish and Town Councils develop quality neighbourhood plans and recognise the role they can have in shaping future growth and development. We recognise that grant funding for neighbourhood plans using national and local sources may not always be sufficient as the plan reaches its final stages of preparation. For this reason, we have agreed to set aside a limited sum that can be used to 'top-up' a group's funding and assist in getting a plan completed through to adoption. Through this fund we aim to provide assistance in addition to funding available largely from national bodies to develop and enable the adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan during its final stages of preparation only. In these guidance notes you will find details of the criteria and eligibility for this Top-Up Fund. We have also provided information about the typical process an application will go through. Take the time to read these guidance notes carefully and please contact us if you have any queries.

2. Contact details

You can contact us via telephone or e-mail.

Telephone: 01427 676676 E-mail: neighbourhoodplans@west-lindsey.gov.uk

3. How to apply to this scheme

To apply to this scheme we ask that you complete an Application Form. This form is available to download from our website or contact us for a copy. The application form gives us details about your Parish or Town Council, project and other funding sources. We will review your request within 4 weeks of receiving it and contact you with any queries we have and to confirm a decision. We may request to meet with you to discuss your project in more detail or ask for further supporting information prior to making a final decision.

4. Closing Dates for this scheme

The deadline for application is 31st March 2019.

Applications will be reviewed within a maximum of 4 weeks when received.

Completed application forms should be returned by e-mail or post.

E-mail: neighbourhoodplans@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Post: West Lindsey District Council
Neighbourhood Planning
The Guildhall
Marshall's Yard
Gainsborough
DN21 2NA

5. Grant amount available

The expected maximum grant available is: £5,000

The expected minimum grant available is £250

6. Criteria for this scheme

Key Criteria

- You must supply evidence that your Council has attempted to access all available external funding for neighbourhood planning (e.g. Locality and Big Lottery Fund)
- You must demonstrate how you have used funding already accessed for your Neighbourhood Plan
- Top-up funding will only be made available where it is essential to the formal adoption of the neighbourhood plan (Officers will assess and advise whether the work that funding is being requested for is essential or not and whether the plan could reasonably continue without the additional work/costs applied for)
- Your project must not contravene any of our core policies and procedures
- Your project must be for a Neighbourhood Plan in West Lindsey

Our Corporate Plan Priorities

All projects that we fund must support one or more of our Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Open for Business
- People First
- Asset Management
- Partnerships/Devolution
- Central Lincolnshire Local Plan
- Excellent Value for Money Services

Organisational Requirements

Any organisation receiving a top-up funding grant must have the following:

- Bank account in the same name as the organisation
- Any additional supporting documents requested by us prior to making an offer
- Relevant policies/safeguards if the work involves children, young people or vulnerable adults

Grant Funding Agreement

If offered funding you must be able to sign our 'Grant Funding Agreement' used with this scheme. A copy is available to view online at: www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/funding

7. What this fund can be spent on

- ✓ Identified gaps in evidence for example towards specialist studies
- ✓ Engaging a planning expert to help you produce your submission document
- ✓ Contribution to undertaking a strategic environmental assessment (SEA)
- ✓ Support with collecting and analysing responses from the six week draft plan consultation and deciding how to modify the neighbourhood plan
- ✓ Help with understanding whether your plan is ready for examination (meeting the basic conditions and other legal requirements)
- ✓ Provide training in the legal requirements which may be tested at the examination stage
- ✓ Costs associated with planning and undertaking public engagement and consulting on the plan at submission and referendum stages (such as – venue hire, publicity materials and printing costs)

The above are examples and are not an exhaustive list of what the grant can cover

8. What this fund CANNOT be spent on

- ✗ Anything illegal
- ✗ Support to lobbying or campaign groups
- ✗ Salaried posts or paying for volunteer time
- ✗ Anything that will bring the Council into disrepute
- ✗ Anything party political, including supporting political organisations
- ✗ Any retrospective costs (costs already incurred) before we offer a grant
- ✗ General administration costs (e.g. arranging and note taking at meetings)
- ✗ Anything contrary to the Council's financial regulations or Council policies
- ✗ Match funding against other West Lindsey District Council funding or grants
- ✗ Anything that an organisation or local authority has a statutory obligation to deliver

The above are examples and are not an exhaustive list of what the grant cannot cover.

9. Eligible organisations

The following organisations can apply to this scheme:

- ✓ Parish Councils
- ✓ Town Councils

10. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is an important part of any grant funding scheme. It enables us as an organisation spending public funds to ensure a project is achieving best value and delivering results for the local community. Organisations that receive funding are expected to have appropriate systems in place for monitoring and evaluating their projects and activities including obtaining user's views.

Through our own monitoring we will ensure selective monitoring of grants will be undertaken to:

- Approve that the project has actually happened in the way described in the application form and other requested documentation
- Collect feedback, including publicity, user comments, survey information etc...
- Highlight work successes and identify the outcomes and impacts the grant and the project have made

11. How we make funding decisions

We will check your completed application against our eligibility criteria and review your request using the following process:

Phase A – Initial Checklist

We check eligibility and that the application has been completed correctly

Phase B – Scoring Matrix

We score your application against our set funding criteria for this grant scheme

Phase C – Panel Review

Our panel for this grant scheme make a final decision on whether to offer funding

12. Grant scheme process

Step 1 - Submit completed application form

Download and complete the application form from our website. This form provides us with details about your parish/town council, project and sources of funding secured or being applied for

Step 2 - Advanced information

We may contact you to obtain further information about your project. A meeting may be arranged to discuss your project in more detail.

Step 3 - Application Scoring and Review

Based on the information you have provided we will review your application and assess the benefits and risks of providing funding support.

Step 4 - Conditional offer

If we decide to provide funding we will make a conditional offer. This offer will detail the funding we are prepared to award along with any conditions attached.

Secure all sources of funding

Before we pay any grant awarded your project must have secured all the necessary funding to begin. We will continue to support your project and help liaise or negotiate with other funders if required

All sources of funding NOT secured

We will continue to offer advice and support and explore options to continue funding your project if your other funding sources are unsuccessful.

Step 5 - Funding secured and ready to go

Once you have secured the funding required to deliver the project we will complete a Grant Funding Agreement with yourself to begin paying the grant.

Project monitoring and evaluation

We will send you monitoring and evaluation forms to complete. We may also arrange to meet with you and discuss your project once completed.

The above is an example of a typical process. It may differ slightly depending on the nature of your project and any other impacting factors.

13. Updates to these Guidance Notes

These Guidance Notes were adopted on 24 October 2017. They will expire or be replaced with a new version on 1st April 2019 unless replaced sooner. Updated versions of Guidance Notes will not apply to grants already made. The document in use at the time of a grant being made will continue to be used.

Appendix C – Neighbourhood Planning Support SLA

Grant Funding Agreement WLDC/Community Lincs Reference: CVS16-19 02

Initial support for communities considering undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan

Under the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement with West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) Community Lincs will provide support to Parish and Town Councils covering the initial stages of the Neighbourhood Planning process. This will include:

Stage 1: Initial Contact

When a Parish or Town Council make an initial enquiry to WLDC regarding undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan they will be directed to Community Lincs for information and support with the Neighbourhood Planning process. The Parish or Town Council will be informed that there will be no charge for this initial support from Community Lincs which will mainly involve assistance during the pre-designation stage.

Stage 2: Pre-designation

Initial meeting

Community Lincs support will start with an initial meeting with the Parish/Town Council covering:

- Explaining what a Neighbourhood Plan is
- How the Neighbourhood Planning process works
- The benefits of undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan
- The level of work and commitment required by the group
- The pitfalls of undertaking the process
- Explain the role of WLDC in the process and the assistance provided by its neighbourhood planning team
- Explain likely charges/costs and the funding process
- Suitability for undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan

A further part of the initial meeting between Community Lincs and the Parish/Town Council will be to determine the need and suitability for the community to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan. Factors to be considered will include:

- The size of the community within the parish
- Identified community and stakeholder support for the process
- Review the existing Local Plan to assess how well it covers community concerns and aspirations.
- Identify the opportunities and benefits of producing a neighbourhood plan. - the community's motivation for undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan
- Skills and experience of the parish or town council
- Identify different potential routes to achieving the ambitions for the neighbourhood.
- Estimate the resource implications (time and money) of producing a neighbourhood plan.

Based on these above factors Community Lincs will, at the initial meeting, make a recommendation to the Parish/Town Council as to whether it should undertake a neighbourhood plan. Community Lincs will provide WLDC with a short report of the initial meeting.

Steering Group and Designation

On agreeing that a Neighbourhood Plan is appropriate Community Lincs will advise the Parish/Town council regarding setting up a steering group and terms of reference to manage the Neighbourhood Planning process and submitting an application to the WLDC for

designation of the area. It will further support the steering group with advice on developing the work plan for progressing the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Community Engagement Event

Community Lincs to support the steering group to engage with the community via an event to:

- Raise awareness of the intention to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan
 - Explain what a Neighbourhood Plan is
 - Explain the benefits of undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan
 - Explain the Neighbourhood Planning process
 - Identify the level of community support to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan
 - Identify the key themes relating to land development that the community wish to address
- Community Lincs to attend and support this event, provide relevant display boards, help engage with those attending and gather their comments and views. This work will be consolidated into a short report to be presented back to the steering group and also WLDC.

Stage 3: Post-Designation

Funding

Community Lincs will provide advice to steering groups for sourcing funding to support the Neighbourhood Planning process and review applications before submission if required.

Liase with WLDC

Community Lincs will liaise with WLDC Neighbourhood Planning officer throughout the period of support provided to a community. The aim will be to keep the Neighbourhood Planning officer informed of progress and identify support required from WLDC. Community Lincs will provide WLDC with short reports of the initial meeting and community engagement event. Community Lincs will ensure that there is a smooth transition from their role of providing initial support to a steering group at pre-designation stage to WLDC then assisting with the preparation of the neighbourhood plan post-designation.

Further support

At the conclusion of this initial support, under the terms of the SLA, Community Lincs will advise the steering group on the further support that is available post designation for community engagement, building the evidence base and draft plan writing. Community Lincs will highlight to steering groups where there are likely to be charges/costs for future support work. Steering groups should be made aware by Community Lincs that future support work provided by itself or in partnership with Open Plan Consultants Ltd will be charged.

In exceptional circumstances Community Lincs at the request of WLDC, will provide free support to steering groups by way of a one-off meeting to help them restart their plans which may have stalled for various reasons.