

Terms of Reference for the Hurst Green Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG)

Relationship between the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Hurst Green Parish Council

1. Hurst Green Parish Council ('the parish council') is the qualifying body for the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish.
2. The Hurst Green Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group ('the NPSG') is a working group of the Parish Council; it will be accountable for progress of the Neighbourhood Plan and will report regularly to the Parish Council.

Purpose

1. The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) is to oversee the preparation of a sound Neighbourhood Plan for Hurst Green Parish on behalf of the parish council and the community, to ensure that relevant issues are addressed, with as high a level as possible of public participation and engagement during the process.

Key Tasks

The NPSG will:

1. determine the overall scope and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan
2. provide strategic management of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, ensuring that key milestones are achieved, and that an appropriate delivery plan to implement an appropriate Neighbourhood Plan is produced
3. Set a target date for referendum and delivery of the final Neighbourhood Plan
4. determine a communication and engagement strategy so that as many members of the community as possible may be involved, including seeking representation from under-represented sections of the community
5. determine appropriate thematic task groups and also consider whether any sub working groups need to be formed to address specific activities
6. appoint roles that will be necessary to successfully deliver the plan, for example communications officer, street representatives, Swiftsden representative, Silver Hill representative etc. and decide which of these should be part of the NPSG
7. build links with Rother District Council and all other relevant authorities and organisations to maximise their assistance and commitment to the Neighbourhood Plan

8. agree a programme of wide consultation with relevant statutory bodies as required
9. gather all necessary evidence, including commissioning such work to support the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan
10. be accountable to the Parish Council for budgeting and controlling expenditure necessitated by the preparation and delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan
11. agree, subject to approval by the Parish Council a final submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan
12. keep under review the legislative requirements around Neighbourhood Planning to ensure the plan meets all requirements
13. set goals for the interim and final reports
14. seek an Independent Examination of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan
15. revise the draft of the Neighbourhood Plan following the internal and external review
16. facilitate the timing and process for the Referendum
17. do such other tasks as are necessary to facilitate the rapid preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan

Key documents - the following will be presented to the full Parish Council for approval / ratification:

1. Steering Group membership list
2. Terms of Reference
3. Project timetable
4. Draft and amended budgets
5. Proposed scope of the Plan
6. Drafts of the Plan and the final submission version

NPSG Membership

1. Membership of the NPSG will consist of no fewer than nine and up to fifteen energetic volunteers who are committed to the task of producing the Neighbourhood Plan.
2. Such membership will include no fewer than three members of the Parish Council, including the incumbent Parish Council Chairperson.
3. Such membership will include the Chairperson of each task group.

4. Where the Chairperson role of a Task Group is shared, each Co-Chairperson shall be a member of the NPSG and shall have full voting rights.
5. Other members should include District Councillors, and people who are able to represent other key parish-wide organisations, as well as residents and/or people who work in the Parish.
6. The Steering Group will be supported by the Parish Clerk (advisory - non-voting).

Meetings

1. The NPSG will meet at least monthly in public prior to the pre-submission consultation (regulation 14), or when members determine that a meeting is needed.
2. For the purpose of its meetings at its first meeting the Steering Group will elect a Chairperson by means of a secret ballot conducted by the Parish Clerk. The ballot shall consist of the names of all members present.
3. Should the member with the most votes proposed be unwilling to serve as the Chairperson, the member with the next number of votes, and who is willing to stand, shall be duly elected.
4. The NPSG will receive and review regular reports from each of the neighbourhood plan's task groups and will provide recommendations to assist with delivering the neighbourhood plan successfully according to the objectives, scope, time, quality and cost in accordance with the plan.
5. A minimum of four NPSG members must be present to effect decisions.
6. The NPSG will aim to make decisions by consensus. However, should a vote be required, each member will have one vote and a simple majority, by show of hands, will be required.
7. The Chairperson may give an original vote on any matter put to a vote, and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise a further casting vote whether or not they gave an original vote.
8. The Steering Group will be attended by the Parish Council's Clerk who will capture actions and ensure that appropriate minutes are kept and are sent to members and the Parish Council (in draft form, until confirmed at the next meeting of the NPSG) in a timely manner and no later than 14 working days after the meeting.
9. Minutes and actions of the NPSG will be published on the Parish Council website no later than 14 working days after each meeting, this will include the draft minutes not yet approved, which will be clearly marked as such.

10. As much use as possible is to be made of electronic communications.
11. Members of task groups who are not members of the NPSG shall be encouraged to attend NPSG meetings, as shall residents and the general public.
12. Steering Group meetings will be suitably promoted and be open to the public and held in either in the Village Hall, or at another suitable public location and will be subject to same rules and Adopted Standing Orders as Parish Council Meetings.
13. The NPSG will at each meeting, at an item dedicated to the purpose, review the expenditure against the allocated and agreed budget to ensure the neighbourhood plan stays within the agreed funding envelope.

Task Groups

The Steering Group will oversee the setting up of thematic task groups whose task will be to prepare and feed into the Steering Group the evidence necessary for the sound preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and to draft the proposed approaches to be taken for each area. It is however recognised that the NPSG has the authority to decide on both the scope and number of task groups.

The thematic task groups will initially include:

- Housing (including matters such as site allocation, design, affordability)
 - Economy, Business & Tourism
 - Education & Training
 - Environment (including green spaces, air quality, conservation, energy)
 - Leisure facilities (including recreation, footpaths, bridleways, sports facilities)
 - Infrastructure (including rail, roads, parking, broadband)
1. Residents of Hurst Green Parish will be encouraged to volunteer to join and participate in the thematic task groups related to areas that they are interested.
 2. It is anticipated that each task group should consist of between three and twelve members.
 3. It is anticipated that a Hurst Green Parish Councillor would be a member of each task group to ensure strong links to the Parish Council, but there is no expectation that they be the Chairperson.
 4. Meetings of thematic task groups will not need to be open to the public, and can be held

at any location deemed mutually acceptable to the group.

5. Task groups will meet ideally at least monthly prior to the pre-submission consultation (regulation 14) or when members determine that a meeting is needed.
6. For the purpose of its meetings at its first meeting a task group will elect a Chairperson by means of a secret ballot. The ballot shall consist of the names of all members present.
7. Should the member with the most votes proposed be unwilling to serve as the Chairperson, the member with the next number of votes, and who is willing to stand, shall be duly elected.
8. The Chairperson of each task group should be willing to serve on the NPSG to represent the task group.
9. In the event that a task group's Chairperson is unable to make a meeting of the NPSG, they have the authority to send a delegate to any meeting. The delegate shall have the same voting power as the Chairperson. The delegate must however be a recognised member of the task group (as determined by the NPSG) that they are representing.
10. In the interests of good governance and to share progress, task group's should appoint a member, if not the Chairperson to capture notes and agreements of their decisions which should be sent to the task group members and copied to the Steering Group in a timely manner following any meeting.
11. Task group's should aim to make decisions by consensus. However, should a vote on any proposed action or recommendation be required, each member will have one vote and a simple majority, by show of hands, will be required.
12. The Chairperson may give an original vote on any matter put to a vote, and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise a further casting vote whether or not they gave an original vote.
13. Should a task group consider that a particular meeting of the task group would likely be of interest to Hurst Green residents and the general public, the Chairperson should give consideration to notifying the Chairperson of the NPSG who will make the necessary arrangements for such as meeting.
14. As much use as possible is to be made of electronic communications.

Standards and Declaration of Interests

1. All members of the NPSG and Task Groups must recognise that their role is to move forward the Neighbourhood Plan in a way that benefits the whole community.
2. Members of the NPSG must agree to follow the Seven Principles of Public Life upheld by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (see Appendix 1)
3. Members of the NPSG and those of the Task Groups will be strongly encouraged to complete a Declaration of Interests form, similar to that of the Parish Council.
4. Members of the NPSG and those of the Task Groups will recognise and declare any conflicts of interest; in situations where interests and roles are in conflict they must be declared before the business is discussed and the member should leave the room for that item.

Finance

The accountable body for the purpose of producing a Neighbourhood Plan will be the Parish Council.

1. To aid with proper accounting, each task group will be responsible for producing a planned budget and submitting this to the NPSG within two months of the first meeting of the NPSG for ratification and approval.
2. The NPSG will provide the parish council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) with budgetary information within three months of their first meeting, so that all proposed spending on the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan is dealt with in an open and transparent manner. Budgets and amended budgets will be presented to the Parish Council for approval.
3. All expenses over £50 will be approved prior to their actual expenditure; this approval shall consist of two stages, firstly the expense must be approved by a majority vote of the NPSG members during their monthly meeting and finally if the expense is greater than £150 it must be approved in writing by the parish council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).
4. No requests for expense approval shall be submitted for approval to the NPSG unless the budget area the item relates to is clearly identified with the request and an approved budget exists to cover the planned expense.
5. Chairperson's of the Neighbourhood Plan's task groups shall ensure they maintain visibility and good control over their task group's budget and any associated expenses.
6. All receipts and payments associated with the production of the Plan will be processed through the parish council's accounting system.

7. Invoices will be made out in the name of the parish council who will pay them in accordance with their Financial Regulations.
8. All grants and funding will be held by the parish council, who will ring-fence the funds for Neighbourhood Plan purposes only.

Changes to these Terms of Reference

1. Proposed changes to these terms of reference may be amended with the support of at least (two-thirds) of the current membership of the NPSG at a NPSG meeting.
2. Any proposed changes to these terms of reference, once voted in favour of doing so by the NPSG must then be presented to the parish council for ratification.

Dissolution

1. The NPSG will be dissolved once its objectives have been attained and when the parish council consider its services are no longer required.
2. The parish council will then dispose of any remaining funds held in accordance with any conditions imposed by the grant funders and in the best interests of the parish.

Appendix 1 - Seven Principles of Public Life

1. Selflessness - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
2. Integrity - Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
3. Objectivity - Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
4. Accountability - Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
5. Openness - Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
6. Honesty - Holders of public office should be truthful.
7. Leadership - Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Version Control Sheet(s)

Version	Date	Author	Comments
Draft for comment - v0.1	3 Dec 2017	Cllr. Andrew Brown	First draft based on Salehurst and Robertsbridge Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan ToR.
Draft for comment - v0.2	3 Mar 2018	Cllr. Andrew Brown	Minor updates and incorporated comments from local residents given to Cllr. Andrew Brown at public events held on the 23/24th February.
Draft for comment - v0.3	5 Mar 2018	Cllr. Andrew Brown	Reviewed and approved for submission to the Parish Council by Cllr. Steve Wright
Draft for comment - v0.4	5 Mar 2018	Cllr. Andrew Brown	Following feedback from Cllr. Susan Prochak: 1) amended meetings item 6 to give the chairperson a casting vote. 2) amended reference to monthly meetings to more clearly state that this would likely be prior to the pre-submission consultation stage (regulation 14).
	6 Mar 2018	Cllr. Andrew Brown	Reviewed and approved for submission to the Parish Council by Cllr. John Duddridge
	6 Mar 2018	Cllr. Andrew Brown	Reviewed and approved for submission to the Parish Council by Cllr. Graham Browne
Draft for comment - v0.5	7 Mar 2018	Cllr. Andrew Brown	Minor updates following consultation with David Hilbourne (Hurst Green Parish Council Responsible Financial Officer): 1) clarification on the phrase 'timely manner' in meetings, point 7, now point 8. 2) Added clarifications on the finance and expenditure process, including budgets, within the finance section of the terms of reference.
Draft for comment - v0.6	7 Mar 2018	Cllr. Andrew Brown	Minor updates: a grammatical update on Chairperson's at para 3, adding an item at meetings point 4 and also meetings point 14.
			Reviewed and approved for submission to the Parish Council by Cllr. Derek Johnson
Draft for comment - v0.7	9 Mar 2018	Cllr. Andrew Brown	Provisionally ratified by the Hurst Green Parish Council at its meeting of 9th Mar 2018 and sent for approval by the NPSG at its first meeting
			Reviewed by Marilyn Stolworthy
Draft for comment - v0.8	26 Mar 2018	Cllr. Andrew Brown	Following a review by Frank Smith (Chairman of Etchingham Neighbourhood Plan) added a provision for sub working groups and added the following key tasks:

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Set a target date for referendum and delivery of the final Neighbourhood Plan” • “Agree a programme of wide consultation with relevant statutory bodies as required” • “Set goals for the interim and final reports” • “Facilitate the timing and process for the Referendum”
Draft for comment - v0.9	24 Apr 2018	Cllr. Andrew Brown	Following comments from Richard Eastham from Fera Urbanism, reduced the maximum number of steering group members from 17 to 15 and increased the minimum number from 8 to 9.
Draft for comment - v0.10	14 May 2018	Cllr. Andrew Brown	Amended following a suggestion from Blair Drummond, that clarifies that a nominated task group lead could send a deputy [who is also a member of the same task group] to a meeting of the steering group if they were themselves unable to attend. Minor updates to financial aspects.
Draft for comment - v0.11	13 Jun 2018	Cllr. Andrew Brown	Minor update to reflect a Task Group Co-Chairperson situation.
First version	18 Jul 2018	Cllr. Andrew Brown	Terms of Reference approved by Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on the 17th July 2018 Document status changed to reflect this and published on neighbourhood plan website.