

Wadhurst Parish Council

Neighbourhood Planning: Steering Group Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

Wadhurst Parish Council is the qualifying body for the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for their civil parish area. The Parish Council has agreed to establish separate project management arrangements to facilitate the delivery of this plan-making function. The Group will lead on project management and decision-making, and will lead the preparation of the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan. All decisions with regard to procedures, public relations and membership/roles, shall be made by the Qualifying Body. The Group will guide and agree the content of the plan and all associated evidence and analysis up to Preferred Option Consultation Draft Stage.

- a. The purpose of creating a Neighbourhood Plan will be:
 - to enable and facilitate sensitive and appropriate community, residential and commercial development
 - to help encourage residents to take an active part in their community, its activities and its future; and
 - to improve the environment of the community utilising the best of past, present and future design
- b. The main purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (The Group) is to oversee the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan (The Plan) for Wadhurst Parish in order that the Plan will then progress to full agreement through a successful referendum and then at an Independent Examination, before being adopted by Wealden District Council to become Planning Policy.
- c. The Group will engage the Wadhurst Parish community (the Community) to ensure the Plan is truly representative of the community ambitions. The Group will maximise support for the approach taken in the Plan by ensuring high levels of community engagement throughout the plan-making process.

2. Principles

- a. That the Group will undertake the process in a democratic, transparent and fair fashion, encouraging widespread participation and giving equal consideration to opinions and ideas from all members of the Community
- b. All decisions made shall be fully evidence based and supported through consultation with the Community.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

In order to achieve this, the Group will carry out the following roles:

- Be accountable for steering and providing strategic management of the Plan on behalf of the Wadhurst Parish Council;
- Produce, monitor and update the Plan project timetable;
- Produce a consultation/engagement and Community communication strategy, showing how the Community and interested parties will be involved and updated throughout the process;
- Regularly report back to the Parish Council and Community for endorsement of the decisions taken;
- Undertake analysis and evidence gathering to support the Plan production process;
- Actively support and promote the preparation of the Plan throughout the duration of the project;
- Identify sources of funding and resource requirements;

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- Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to make the Plan as effective as possible;
- Gather data from a wide range of sources to ensure that the conclusions reached are fully evidenced and that the aspirations and issues of the Community are understood;
- Consult as widely and thoroughly as is possible;
- Ensure that the draft and final Plans are representative of the views of residents;
- Keep under review the legislative requirements around Neighbourhood Planning to ensure the Plan meets all requirements
- Identify and assess options available for each Community issue or requirement
- Agree, subject to ratification by the Parish Council, a final submission version of the Plan.

4. Group Membership

- a. The Group will be made up of a cross-section of volunteers from the Community, including a minimum of 3 Parish Councillors. Efforts will be made to seek representation from under-represented sections of the Community.
- b. Membership of the Group will be open to residents of the Parish. Additional Community members and public will be co-opted onto working sub groups which are to be defined.

5. Decision Making

- a. The Group will report monthly to the Parish Council setting out progress on its work. The Parish Council will review and approve the Consultation Draft Plan and Submission Draft Plan prior to Community publication and Independent Examination.
- b. The Plan-making process remains the responsibility of the Parish Council as the qualifying body. All publications, consultations and Community engagement exercises will be undertaken by or on behalf of the Parish Council.

6. Meetings

- a. The Group meetings will take place regularly and at least monthly in order to maintain good Plan progress and momentum. A schedule of these meetings will be published in advance, on a quarterly basis, and any additional meetings of the Group or its Working Groups will be advertised as set out in paragraph 6.a..
- b. All meeting dates will be published (at least 5 days in advance) on the Parish Council website and noticeboard together with the resulting approved Minutes of each meeting.
- c. The Group will elect a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary from its membership, at least one of which will be a Member of the Parish Council.
- d. Decisions made by the Group should normally be by consensus. Where a vote is required each member will have one vote. A minimum of 6 members shall be present where matters are presented for decisions to be taken. The Chair shall have one casting vote.

7. Working Sub Groups

- a. The Group may establish Working Sub Groups made up of volunteers from the Community, members of the Parish Council, and those with suitable relevant expertise.
- b. Each Working Sub Group will have a lead member from the Group.

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8. Finance

- a. All grants and funding will be applied for and held by the Parish Council, who will ringfence the funds for the Plan work.
- b. The Group will be able to commit expenditure, within the budgets agreed within the Parish Council, up to the sum of E250 without prior approval. Sums in excess of €250 must be agreed by the Parish Council.

9. Conduct

- a. All Group members must abide by the principles and practice of the Parish Council Code of Conduct, including Declarations of Interest. (attached)
- b. The Group members will:
 - i. be clear and open when their individual roles or interests are in conflict
 - ii. treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect
 - iii. actively promote equality for contributions, access and opportunity

10. Disputes

In the case of any dispute arising with members of the Community in the course of developing this Plan, the Group shall in the first instance try to resolve these through discussion with the complainant. Should this not produce a resolution, the matter will be referred to the Chair and Vice Chair of Wadhurst Parish Council, acting in consultation with Wealden District Council.

11. Changes to these Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference may be amended by the Parish Council, or by a majority of the Group and with the approval of the Parish Council.

12. Dissolution

- a. The Group will be dissolved once the Parish Council consider its services are no longer required.
- b. At dissolution, any remaining funds will be used by the Parish Council for the best interest of the Community.