

Neighbourhood Planning

Full Council 6th June 2016

1. Introduction

For a number of months, we as a Parish Council have considered our approach to planning as a result of the early stage work being carried out by Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council of their Local Plan.

At public meetings, such as Annual Parish Meeting there has been a number of calls from the local community for us to consider doing our own Neighbourhood Plan.

This paper is designed to summarise the key facts to allow Parish Councillors to have an informed discussion and reach a decision.

2. Background

A Neighbourhood Plan provision was introduced in 2012 as part of the Localism Act. It enables a local community to influence the planning of the area in which they live and work.

As a Parish Council we are a 'Qualifying Body' that is entitled to apply to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.

For West Malling it can be used to:

- Develop a shared vision for our neighbourhood (In our case the Parish boundary);
- Choose where new homes, shops, offices and other development should be built;
- Identify and protect important local green spaces; and
- Influence what new buildings should look like.

It offers our local community a powerful new opportunity to plan for the future of our area. A Neighbourhood Plan has statutory weight and must be included in any Local Plan.

There are a number of steps to preparing and getting a Neighbourhood Plan in place.

1. Getting Started
2. Identifying the issues to address in our Neighbourhood Plan
3. Develop a vision and objectives
4. Generating options for our draft Neighbourhood Plan
5. Prepare our draft Neighbourhood Plan

6. Consultation and submission
7. Independent Examination
8. Referendum
9. Adoption

This paper represents the first part of 'Getting Started'.

The Parish Council has a key role to play in leading the local community through the process. All of the Parish Councillors would be expected to be involved in this, supported by the Parish Clerk.

However, the key to a successful Neighbourhood Plan is community engagement and it is vital that we engage with all areas of the local community & work collectively. This will help spread the workload and pressure on us as a small Parish Council.

Day to Day responsibility for management of the Neighbourhood Plan will reside with the Planning Committee, with strategic overview and monitoring being held by the Full Council.

3. Action Required

West Malling Parish Council is asked to

- Approve the application to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council for West Malling Parish Council to be considered as the 'Qualifying Body' for designation of a Neighbourhood Area;
- Approve the application to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council to designate the whole of the Parish of West Malling as a Neighbourhood Area as detailed in the Localism Act;
- Approve holding a public meeting on a Saturday during June 2016 at West Malling Church Of England Primary School to begin the process of engaging with the local community; and
- Approve setting up a group with our neighbouring Parish Council (Leybourne, East Malling & Larkfield, Ryarsh, Offham and Kings Hill) to monitor & co-ordinate our respective Neighbourhood Plans as well as the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Local Plan.

4. Financial Implications

There are costs associated with the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Based on what we have seen from other Parish Council, these range from £3,000 to £6,000 over the duration of the plan preparation.

It should be noted that there are grants etc available from a number of sources.

There are additional costs such as those relating to the Independent Assessment and Referendum process and these are the responsibility of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.

5. Risks

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is currently at the Technical Assessment of the Call for Sites element of the Local Plan. There are a large number of sites put forward in our Parish & neighbouring areas that would have a very large impact on our community.

Failure to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan by West Malling Parish Council would mean we have little or no control over the future development within these areas. There is an additional risk that West Malling Parish Council does not have the Parish Councillor and Parish Clerk resource to lead and support the production of a Neighbourhood Plan.

However, based on the fact that there is a high level of community involvement we can achieve it.

6. Recommendation

I would recommend that we APPROVE ALL of the recommendations in this paper.

Councillor Richard Selkirk
Vice Chairman
West Malling Parish Council