



Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 9 December 2025

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Claire Penny Sustainable Economic Growth Portfolio Holder

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Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report / Key Decision
Report Title	Neighbourhood Plan Funding
Purpose of Report	To set out the current situation regarding neighbourhood plan funding for Parish and Town Councils and set out options for future funding
Recommendations	That: (a) Cabinet agree that the District Council and Locality work with interested NPBs to scope out what they aim to achieve and seek to establish potential costs; and (b) following the appraisal of potential resource implications, the District Council work with Neighbourhood Planning Bodies and Locality to identify potential funding sources.
Alternative Options Considered	None - supporting Town & Parish Council's in Neighbourhood Planning is a statutory responsibility.
Reason for Recommendations	To allow officers to consider alternative funding approaches for Neighbourhood Plans.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by the Localism Act 2010. It introduced a tier of development plans, called Neighbourhood Plans, which can be produced by Neighbourhood Planning Bodies (NPB). In places where Town and Parish Councils exist these are automatically considered to be NPBs. Elsewhere a Neighbourhood Planning Forum would need to be established to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.

- 1.2 Recognising the not inconsiderable costs associated with plan making, especially as they had to be backed by consultation and a suitable evidence base, the Government introduced funding which NPBs could access by the charity Locality. NPBs could access up to £10,000 to support development alongside additional free design and housing needs consultancy support.
- 1.3 Similarly, as Local Planning Authorities are required to assist throughout the process, arrange the independent examination and referendum a funding arrangement was put in place to support this work. The District Council claims a sum of £20,000 for each Neighbourhood Plan that is sent to referendum.
- 1.4 In Newark and Sherwood we have 8 'made' neighbourhood plans:
- Bulcote Neighbourhood Plan
 - Epperstone Neighbourhood Plan
 - Farnsfield Neighbourhood Plan
 - Fernwood Neighbourhood Plan
 - Fiskerton-Cum-Morton Neighbourhood Plan
 - Kings Clipstone Neighbourhood Plan
 - Southwell Neighbourhood Plan
 - Thurgarton Neighbourhood Plan

Currently we have two plans at late stage of production, the Southwell Neighbourhood Plan Review has been subject to pre-examination consultation and Winthorpe with Langford Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to Referendum early in the new year.

- 1.5 The plans are developed typically in a steering group overseen by the Parish/Town Council including Councillors and volunteers. They would typically use the Locality grants to access consultant support to assist with managing the consultation process and drafting the Neighbourhood Plan and accompanying supporting documentation. Over the past 10 years Parishes in Newark & Sherwood have accessed £102,324 worth of funding. There are large variances between parishes with obviously Southwell doing both the original Plan and a review for instance, however most parishes claimed between £8,000 and £10,000.
- 1.6 On 12th June 2025, Locality confirmed via their website that as a result of the spending review, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will not commission new neighbourhood planning support services from 2025 onwards.

2.0 Proposal/Options Considered

- 2.1 Given the loss of the government funding the District Council has been considering potential options for supporting NPBs going forward. We are aware that a number of communities are keen on pursuing plans, both towns and villages. A number are concerned they will not be able to pursue a plan now. As Neighbourhood Plans have previously enjoyed government funding, they have often not been eligible for other

forms of grant aid, nor have they often been sought. Some NPBs may be able to fund them from precepts but for smaller Parishes this may not be possible.

- 2.2 The Council does hold its own Neighbourhood Plan funding the current balance is £100,669 but this is specifically to pay for examination and referendum costs. Costs vary dependent on complexity of the plan and size of electorate within a neighbourhood plan area. An examiner will take much longer to review a plan with a significant number of policies and objections. A referendum held in a large parish will clearly cost more. However, the grant we get is a flat rate and therefore in order ensure the Council is not exposed to significant costs it is proposed not to use this money to support NPBs at this time. It should also be noted that the future of the government funding has at the time of writing not been confirmed.
- 2.3 The Council have engaged with Locality who have supported NPBs across England in developing plans. They are currently preparing proposals for a new support programme. As part of this they will be delivering a critical friend service to NPBs, which work with them to establish what they want to achieve in their Plan, what resources they have within the community and the potential cost of individual elements of funding.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the District Council and Locality work with interested NPBs to scope out what they aim to achieve and seek to establish potential costs. Once this work is done consideration can be given to how funding could be secured.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications- FIN25-26/5741

- 3.1 The District Council will be responsible for paying for the examination and referendum costs. As set out in Paragraph 2.2 the current balance of £100,668 is held in the Revenue Grants RIA Long Term Reserve for this specific purpose. Once, potential costs are established for supporting Neighbourhood Planning Bodies, the any request for funding will be subject to a future report at that time. At present there are no financial implications.

Legal Implications - LEG2526/856

- 3.2 Cabinet is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None