**Yetminster & Ryme Intrinseca Parish Council**

**Introduction**

With the completion and implementation of the Parish Plan there is the opportunity for the Parish Council to proceed to the next stage and produce a Neighbourhood Plan.

**For Decision**

**Summary:**

This paper briefly outlines the background to neighbourhood planning and summarises the discussion with Leigh Parish Council regarding the possibility of co-operating with other parishes to create a joint Wriggle Valley Neighbourhood Plan. Members are asked to decide on one of the three options available.

David Torrance; 4 October 2015

**Backgound:**

A Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision for an area and must address the development and use of land although wider community aspirations can be included in the plan. However, actions dealing with non land use matters should be set out in a companion document or annex.

It must be prepared in accordance with procedures laid down in the guidance and must conform to the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) and the District Council’s Local Plan. Once adopted it will be a part of the development plan process and will be used as a material consideration in determining planning applications - it carries legal weight as part of the Local Plan. It is different to a Parish Plan which covers much wider issues but has no legal standing and is, in effect, a wish list which the Parish Council will endeavour to implement.

The Minister for Planning says in the foreword of the NPPF ‘a presumption in favour of sustainable development ... is the basis for every plan (application), and every decision’. With this caveat it is important to remember that a Neighbourhood Plan must address the development and use of land and is not a way to prevent this. The idea is therefore to guide development for an area and policies might include protecting important green spaces or perhaps the types of new housing that are needed in a village - importantly it is more about getting development right for an area than stopping it.

Once completed a Neighbourhood Plan can only be adopted after a referendum involving the community and requires a majority in favour of it for this to happen.

The production of a Neighbourhood Plan should help the community to come together and be stronger and more united for having gone through the process. It should be a positive force for change and will give the community more control over what happens in its neighbourhood.

**Discussion:**

Developing the plan can take a lot of time and resources. It will need proper community engagement and understanding of the issues otherwise it may not be supported at the referendum stage. It will need to be supported by evidence, to show that it has understood the constraints on development in the designated area and the local issues that need to be addressed.

Experience with producing the Parish Plan shows that considerable commitment will be required from those involved and that there must be a clear vision of what is being produced.

Discussion with the Chair of Leigh Parish Council has confirmed that they are actively considering the development of their own Neighbourhood Plan. They too have concerns at the effort needed and see the possibility of a joint plan with neighbouring parishes as an advantage as it will potentially enable access to more resources i.e. available pool of local experience / skills necessary for plan preparation. It is also recognised that there is considerable benefit in working collaboratively thus ensuring that local issues are understood and dealt with uniformly within the larger area.

It is envisaged that there will be a central steering committee with two representatives from each area responsible for the various individual parish / settlement working groups.

**Attachment:** Developing a Neighbourhood Plan - General Guidance

**Options for Decision:**

**Option 1**

The YRIPC does not wish to produce a Neighbourhood Plan and will instead rely on the using its Parish Plan as a basis to influence Planning Decisions on the understanding that this has no legal standing -

*" The Council, having considered the options open to it will not develop a Neighbourhood Plan "*

**Option 2**

The YRIPC wishes to produce a Neighbourhood Plan and whilst it will consult as necessary with adjoining parishes the plan will relate solely to the Yetminster & Ryme Intrinseca Parish.

*" The Council, having considered the options open to will develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the Yetminster & Ryme Intrinseca Parish "*

**Option 3**

The YRIPC recognises the benefits in terms of resources and of working collaboratively and wishes to produce a joint Neighbourhood Plan (a Wriggle Valley Neighbourhood Plan) in conjunction with neighbouring parishes and settlements.

*" The YRIPC having considered the options open to it will produce a joint Neighbourhood Plan (a Wriggle Valley Neighbourhood Plan) in conjunction with neighbouring parishes and settlements "*

**Yetminster & Ryme Intrinseca Parish Council**

**Developing a Neighbourhood Plan - General Guidance**

There are seven basic steps to preparing a Neighbourhood Plan:-

**1. Initiation of the process**

The parish council (as the "qualifying body") will need to identify the area that they want to be designated as a neighbourhood area and apply to the WDDC to have this agreed. It is important to involve the community in this process and several meetings may be necessary to achieve agreement. The parish boundary is an obvious area to cover but there is an advantage to sharing resources and of producing local consistency across a greater area if adjoining parishes produce a joint plan together and the YRIPC are minded to do this. Obviously, where the proposed area covers more than one parish council, the parishes will need to agree to work together and to formulate procedures for doing this. Once a submission has been made to the district council they will consult and decide the area to be covered by the plan.

**2. Development of the plan**

Developing the plan sounds simple but can take a lot of time and resources. It will need proper community engagement and understanding of the issues otherwise it may not be supported at the referendum stage. The plan will also need to be in general conformity with the national planning policy and the strategic policies of the Local Plan. It will need to be supported by evidence, to show that it has understood the constraints on development in that designated area and the local issues that need to addressed. The WDDC has a duty to support the local community in preparing their plans and it is likely that a link officer will be appointed to attend working group meetings and be a first point of contact with the council.

**3. Consultation the proposals**

Once the plan has been drafted (or the proposals that it will contain are sufficiently clear), the parish council will need to consult with the local community and certain key organisations for a minimum of 6 weeks (8 weeks is the accepted time period). The main issues can then summarised and an explanation given as to what changes are going to be made to overcome people's concerns.

**4. Submission of the final draft to the district council**

Once the plan has been finalised, it will need to be submitted to the WDDC, along with any relevant evidence about the issues and the consultation that has taken place.

**5. Independent public examination of the plan**

The next step is for the WDDC to organise an independent examination. This means that the neighbourhood plan will be publicised for people to make comments. They will also, with the agreement of the parish council, appoint an examiner who will consider whether the draft plan:-

1. Has been properly prepared, following the necessary steps
2. Has had regard to national policies, and is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area
3. Has had regard to preserving or enhancing any conservation areas, listed buildings and other features of special architectural or historic interest (in those cases where planning permission is effectively being granted)
4. Will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, and
5. Does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations, such as the Conservation Regulations and Human Rights

A hearing will only take place if deemed necessary by the examiner to ensure adequate examination of the issue or to ensure that a person has a fair chance to put forward their case. The examiner will issue a report saying whether the plan should now be submitted to a referendum, and whether any modifications need to be made to it beforehand. The examiner will also say what geographical area the referendum should cover (if it needs to extend beyond the plan area)

**6. Local Referendum**

If the examiner has said the plan should go to referendum, this is organised by the district council. If a clear majority of those that vote say yes, the plan is adopted. The referendum will be conducted in pretty much the same way as a conventional election, with polling stations, ballot papers, postal votes, poll cards, counting of votes, etc. The main difference being that voters would be asked whether they want the neighbourhood plan to be used to help decide planning applications in the area, rather than selecting a preferred candidate.

**7. Adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan**

If the majority of people voting agree, then the plan will be adopted by the WDDC.

David Torrance

YRIPC 3/10/2015