

SOUTHBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL

SOUTHBOROUGH AND HIGH BROOMS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Name

Southborough and High Brooms Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (SHNWG).

Status

A non-statutory body established by Southborough Town Council. It will operate as an arms-length organization, with delegated decision-making powers. The SHNWG will report to the Town Council on at least a monthly basis. Final sign-off for the Neighbourhood Plan will be the responsibility of the Town Council.

Purpose

To act on behalf of the Town Council, to secure the development of a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for the Town, from its inception through to a successful referendum, and adoption by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The completed NP will set out the desires, aspirations, and key policy priorities of the community, for the period up to 2033. The NP will also consider the emerging Local Plan for the Tunbridge Wells district, having regard to its relevant aspirations, policies, and objectives.

The Working Group will have responsibility for the following:

- (a) overseeing and implementing the project plan designed in collaboration with the consultants if required.
- (b) ensuring meaningful engagement with residents, community organizations, and local businesses, on which the success of the project rests; and
- (c) liaising with the relevant non-resident stakeholders, such as the neighbouring local councils, the principal local authorities, public-sector organizations, and property developers (or their agents), as appropriate. Their support and involvement will be crucial to the effectiveness of the Plan.

Operating Principles

1. Openness, transparency, and probity

- a. The Working group will seek to observe the well-established principles of democratic participation in the conduct of its meetings, and in its dealings with residents and stakeholders. Its members will adhere to the General Principles of Public Life, and those aspects of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct that apply.
- b. As appropriate, members will declare an interest, in relation to any aspect of the work of the SHNWG. This should be done at formal meetings, where Declarations of Interest will be a standing item on the agenda.
- c. In formal engagement with stakeholders, where appropriate, at least two members must be present. In all instances a file-note of such activities must be made and reported to the next formal meeting of the working group.
- d. Any e-mail communication with landowners and developers (and their agents/representatives), must include the Chair, the Town Clerk, and the Working group Administrator. Where contact is by telephone, the substance of such conversations must be reported, by e-mail, to the Chair and the Clerk.

- e. Engagement with residents, community organizations, and local businesses should aim to encourage and promote participation in the process to develop the NP. Everyone will have something of value to contribute.

2. Membership and Principal Roles

- a. The Working Group will comprise a maximum of **Ten Members**, at least two of whom should be Town Councillors.
- b. As a minimum, the following officers shall be elected from amongst the members:
 - i. a Chair, who shall preside at all meetings, where she or he is present. If the Chair is not present, the members shall appoint a Temporary Chair. The Chair shall be responsible for managing the business of the Group, including ensuring the implementation of agreed actions.
 - ii. A Working group Administrator, who will take the minutes of meetings, and be responsible for the preparation and distribution of agendas, minutes, and other documents, in consultation with the Chair. He or she must also secure the documents produced in connection with the NP, in consultation with the Town Clerk, to meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1988, and the General Data Processing Regulations, which will apply from May 2018.
 - iii. a Finance Co-ordinator, who, in liaison with the Town Clerk, shall be responsible for tracking the use of the budget approved by the Council.
 - iv. a Town Council Liaison Officer, who shall make a report to the Council, following each meeting of the Working group This must be one of the Town councillors.
- c. The Chair shall be appointed by the Working Group and endorsed by the Town Council; all other posts shall be elected by the Working Group, at one of its formal meetings.
- d. In general, it is anticipated that the post-holders will retain their roles for the duration of the enterprise. However, a member may at any time resign from the Group.
 - i. Where a member resigns, she or he must surrender to the Administrator all material held relating to the work of the Working Group, within seven days of resigning. She or he must also undertake to maintain the confidentiality of any information connected with the development of the NP to which they have been party.
 - ii. The Working Group may use whatever means it thinks fit to recruit replacements, but all appointments must be ratified by the Working Group, at a formal meeting.

3. Meetings and Workflow

- a. Meetings shall take place as required – but, as a minimum, monthly.
- b. Five days’ notice of meetings shall be given to members. The agendas, minutes, and papers shall be circulated to members by e-mail, at least three common working days prior to meetings.
- c. A quorum shall be **Four** members.
- d. Every effort should be made for decisions to be reached by consensus. However, where necessary a vote may be taken to attain agreement. In this situation the usual rules will apply – a motion is moved and seconded, and a vote is taken by a show of hands. If the result is inconclusive the Chair may exercise his or her casting vote.
- e. Councillors voting at meetings must be understood to be acting as members of the Working Group– and not exercising a mandate from the Council.
- f. At the conclusion of each meeting the Chair will clarify which decisions are to be reported to the Town Council, as recommendations from the Working group.
- g. Including the roles specified in Section 2.b., the Working group may assign to any of its members responsibility for undertaking specific aspect of its activities, confirming the brief, timescale, and method of reporting. It may also appoint sub-committees, etc., as may be deemed necessary; such groups may determine their own terms of reference, to be ratified by the Working Group.

4. Financial Arrangements

- a. As the relevant body under Section 61(G) of the Localism Act 2011, the Town Council undertakes to finance the preparation of the NP, using its own resources. However, the working group is charged with seeking additional sources of funding, including grants made available by central government, to minimise the impact on the Council's budget.
- b. The Finance Co-ordinator shall liaise with the Town Clerk, to make arrangements for management of the funds allocated to the preparation of the NP, having regard to the Town Council's Financial Regulations, and the timescale for the payment of accounts.

5. Review and Dissolution

- a. These terms of reference may be reviewed and amended, as deemed necessary.
- b. The Working group may at any time be dissolved, by mutual agreement between the Group and the Town Council. However, should the NP be taken to referendum and adoption by TWBC, there will be the opportunity for the Group to consider whether it might serve the community in another capacity, utilizing the skills, knowledge and expertise developed during the process of preparing the Plan.