



The Qualifying Body

Where there is a Town or Parish Council, they will always be the Qualifying Body that will take forward a Neighbourhood Plan (see Guide Note 'The Qualifying Body'). The Qualifying Body have formal responsibility for:

- submitting a proposal to Cornwall Council to initiate the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan;
- submitting the draft Neighbourhood Plan to Cornwall Council, together with the Basic Conditions Statement and Consultation Statement;
- agreeing with Cornwall Council on the appointment of an Independent Examiner (who will check the Neighbourhood Plan and recommend if it should proceed to a referendum).

The Qualifying Body is also responsible for submitting formal proposals to Cornwall Council to make Neighbourhood Development Orders and/or Community Right to Build Orders.

Most Town and Parish Councils will usually establish a Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group that will be responsible for leading the process and developing the plan.

The Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group

Membership of the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group will feature current local Town/Parish Councillors but it will also be important to include representatives of the wider local community who can bring value to the project. Selection of members should reflect different sectors of the community and the range of skills, knowledge and experience that will be required to develop the Neighbourhood Plan.

Typical membership and representation might therefore include:

- Parish councillors, representing the council's different interests, e.g. planning, environment, leisure, transport, finance and resources etc.
- Local residents
- Representatives of local community organisations
- Local business owners

The more representative the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group is of the local community, the better the plan is likely to be. However, it is important to recognise that too large a group may be difficult to manage effectively. An ideal size for the team is probably around 9 members. Additional members of the community with specific skills may be co-opted at a later date if they are likely to bring additional benefits to the project.



Terms of Reference

The Steering Group should have an agreed Terms of Reference which should be approved by a meeting of the Town/Parish Council. Example Terms of Reference for the Steering Group can be found online or you can contact your Community Regeneration Officer at Cornwall Council for assistance with developing your Terms of Reference.

The Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group Structure and Resources

If you are thinking about preparing a Neighbourhood Plan you will need to think about whether your group has people and skills necessary to prepare a plan.

If you follow the steps set out in the Neighbourhood Planning toolkit and ask for assistance from Cornwall Council, it is not necessary for your group to have special professional skills in order to be able to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. However, in order to prepare a plan your Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group needs to be able to fulfil some key functions to ensure that the work is done and decisions are made and recorded. There needs to be:

- someone responsible for coordinating and managing the process and who is willing to act as the main point of contact for the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group (chair/project manager);
- someone who makes records of the meetings you have, decisions that are made and actions to be taken (secretary);
- someone who keeps a track of any money that you receive and spend to make sure that the finances are in order and give confidence that money is not being wasted or mis-spent (treasurer).
- a group of people who the Town/Parish Council and/or the wider community have given the authority to make key decisions in the Neighbourhood Planning process on their behalf (Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group).

There may also be other people that you can call on to help in preparing the plan. There are lots of ways that you could organise people to do the work. However, it can work well if you create 'Task Groups' that are tasked with looking at certain themes. It makes sense to have task groups that cover the three roles of planning which are:

- an economic role – this means providing the land and infrastructure necessary to create jobs and contribute to a vibrant economy;
- a social role – this means ensuring the housing, services and facilities are in place to meet the needs of the community.
- an environmental role – this means protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment and ensuring that future generations can benefit from the same, or better, quality of environment as enjoyed by the current generation.



Each 'Task Group' might prepare information and develop recommendations of a particular theme, e.g. environment. To bring together the recommendations of the Task Groups and start to develop policies you may want to form another 'Policy Development' working group or alternatively this could be done by the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group.

Checklist of Useful Skills

Producing a Neighbourhood Plan can be a challenging prospect. The Plan can potentially cover a wide range of topics. It does not necessarily require expert or professional advice. The plan will be better if people in the community do as much of the work as possible. However, there will be people in your community that have skills and experience (see below) that will be useful and it can be valuable to try to involve them. In most relatively small communities Parish Councils tend to have a good idea of what skills people in their communities have and there is nothing to be lost is asking people to be involved directly.

A limited amount of help and advice is available free of charge (e.g. from Cornwall Council, Rural Community Councils or statutory bodies with a duty to provide some advice etc.) and if you have access to funding you may wish to buy-in expertise.

Relevant skills and experience that may be useful to your Steering Group:

- Project Management
- Planning e.g. general familiarity with the planning system, development plan documents, writing policies etc.
- Community engagement and communication e.g. understanding community engagement processes and methods, leadership, motivation and communication skills
- Marketing, promotion and consultation e.g. designing leaflets, promotional material, questionnaires and surveys
- Funding and delivery e.g. sources of funding, grant/funding applications, fund-raising
- Writing, editorial, graphic design e.g. report writing, editing/proofing, design of reports, maps, plans and other graphics
- Computers and Information Technology e.g. word-processing, spreadsheets, managing website, social media, web-based information
- Expertise in specific topic areas, e.g:
 - Population and demographics
 - Business and economic development
 - Housing needs
 - Land and property markets
 - Transport
 - Public services (health/care, education, crime, recycling etc.)
 - Community services „



Neighbourhood Planning Constitution and Structure for a Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group

- Landscape
- Wildlife and biodiversity
- Archaeology and local history
- Architecture and urban design
- Energy infrastructure
- Communications infrastructure
- Sustainability