Milton-under-Wychwood Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group (NPSG)

Terms of Reference

Updated for membership as at 31/05/2023

Approved and Accepted at PC on 20/05/2026

PURPOSE OF THE GROUP

The Milton-under-Wychwood Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) brings together Parish Councillors of Milton-under-Wychwood and stakeholders and members of the local community. Officers from the district council may be able to assist the group but will not be full members. The role of the Steering Group is to manage the production of a Neighbourhood Plan for Milton-under-Wychwood.

ROLE OF THE GROUP

The role of the group is to:

- work within the neighbourhood area comprising the entire Parish as defined by West Oxfordshire District Council on 01 March 2017
- agree a budget, how this will be funded and managed including appointment of specialist consultants or advisers
- agree the governance structure for the project e.g. any working groups and what their specific responsibilities will be
- prepare and agree a project plan which complies with the legislative requirements for producing a neighbourhood plan
- manage working groups
- ensure working groups have clear terms of reference related to their responsibilities and the project plan.

Membership of the group

Initial membership of the Steering Group was defined in the first meeting held on 18/09/2017 at The Paddocks, as Minuted, and consists of parish councillors and residents.

Additionally the Neighbourhood Plan service provider Community First Oxfordshire (CFO; to be contracted by the Parish Council) will, when available, field its respective officer as a non-voting advisor to NPSG meetings. The first CFO person designated for this function is Tom Mc Culloch, Director – Community Development.

The Steering Group may be supplemented by representatives of business, any local economic partnerships, local voluntary or community organisations or schools. It may also include representatives from specific local businesses or landowners in the area, and it should include a number of local residents.

The group may form sub-committees or working groups to undertake various aspects of the work involved in producing the Neighbourhood Plan if this is appropriate.

The Steering Group can also co-opt additional members to discuss particular issues where necessary or to join the Steering Group if required. These may be voting or non-voting members e.g. a district council officer could be identified as an advisor to the group and could become an informal non-voting member of the Steering Group.

Individual Members' responsibilities

The decisions made by the group require compromise and consensus building; consequently members should ensure they are:

- able and willing to make decisions and recommendations on behalf of their body/organisation
- committed to helping to guide the preparation of the neighbourhood plan
- supportive and committed to the process and its implementation
- willing to work with the group, accommodating views that are different from their own, seeking consensus and accepting compromise to reach agreement on the issues before the group
- open minded and able to consider the whole picture, not seeking simply to promote sectional interests
- able to represent the group and its work in a positive light to the wider community
- prepared to work with other groups/agencies in a constructive way to achieve the best outcomes for the area
- assess existing evidence about the needs and aspirations of the Parish, commission any technical evidence, e.g. housing and infrastructure needs to support the development of a neighbourhood plan, and identify gaps
- consider progress reports and work undertaken and agree appropriate course of action.
- agree a programme of community engagement and public consultation at appropriate stages to ensure that the information gathered is representative of those living within the Parish.
- undertake analysis, interpretation and reporting of the results from community engagement and public consultation activities and ensuring that they inform decision-making (either directly, or within the aid of consultants).

- ensure that any planning related documentation complies with the district council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and is appropriate for adoption.
- ensure consultation with and co-operation from key stakeholders to ensure the deliverability of the project and of proposals included in the final plan
- promote the appropriate development of Milton-under-Wychwood in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan.
- work positively with the district council to ensure the plan is in conformity with the adopted local development plan.
- work positively with the district council in auditing the project plan or the use of any grant funding from the district council.

CHAIRMAN AND OTHER OFFICERS

The Steering Group will appoint/elect a Chairman and Deputy Chairman from the Group members.

Both the Chairman and Deputy shall remain in that position following their election.

The Chairman or in his absence the Deputy will be responsible for dealing with any media enquiries and for keeping the parish council up to date with progress of the group's work.

SUBSTITUTES

If a member of the group is unable to attend a meeting they should arrange for a substitute from the organisation they are representing to attend in their place.

Where no suitable substitute is available then representations or comments will be accepted via email. This should be submitted to the group no less than 3 days prior to the date of a meeting.

COMMITMENT FROM DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICERS

District Council Officers, when available, will be performing an advisory role and should seek to ensure that all recommendations or outcomes of this process are in compliance with current policies and/or strategies, and are used to inform the future development of policies, strategies or direct implementation of work. Other responsibilities include:

- initial advice and an introductory meeting to explain the process
- advice on an appropriate consultation strategy and how consultation should be recorded

- advice on the evidence needed to prepare the plan and details of statutory consultees
- a ‘critical friend’ role throughout the drafting of the plan, attending steering group meetings where necessary to provide advice and support
- reviewing draft documents to ensure they meet the basic conditions
- support for publicity that MuW PC may wish to carry out
- funding for towns, larger villages and smaller villages
- advice and support dealing with the media and publicising NPSG work.
- bring in resources as required from other teams across the District Council to provide additional specialist advice.
- facilitate discussion where the Steering Group has conflicting views
- identify best practice from elsewhere.

MEETINGS

The group will meet at key stages in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. The dates and regularity of meetings will be set by the group depending on the stage of the process and workload.

The Steering Group members will receive an agenda paper for meetings at least 5 days prior to the meeting.

Any documents which are to be considered prior to a meeting should be circulated at least 5 working days prior to a meeting.

Minutes of all meetings will be recorded and kept on file for reference, draft minutes of meetings will be circulated following each meeting after clearance by the Chair.

Dates of meetings are, where possible, aligned with the Parish Council calendar.

DECISION MAKING

All members of the Steering Group, with the exception of co-opted members e.g. district council employees, will have an equal vote in decision making.

However, it is likely that some decisions will be in the form of a recommendation to the parish council, for their consideration.

Decisions made by the Group should normally be by consensus at group meetings. If this is not possible then decisions will be taken by vote, with each member present having one vote, and a simple majority will be required to support a decision.

A minimum of four members must be present to enable decisions to be taken. The Chair, or in their absence the Deputy Chair shall have the casting vote.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Steering Group members should declare an interest where there is a potential financial or pecuniary benefit to themselves, or their company / organisation arising from the decisions or recommendations of the group.

REVIEW OF THE GROUP

The Steering group will be disbanded upon completion of the project at a time to be agreed by the Parish Council.

NPSG membership at 31/05/2023:

John Pratt, Chairman (Parish Councillor)
Patrick Ward, Deputy Chairman (Parish Councillor)
Elaine Brittan, Secretary (resident)
John Bennett (resident)
Brian Watson (resident)
Steve Whiting (resident)