

30 NOVEMBER 2023

NPJCC GOVERNANCE FROM 1 APRIL 2024

REPORT OF THE CLERK TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the governance arrangements for the NPJCC from 1 April 2024, following changes arising from the Community Governance Review.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Dorset Council carried out a community governance review of parishes in the Bridport area in 2021 and 2022. Boundary changes set out in the resultant legal orders will take effect on 1 April 2024. The first elections under the new community governance arrangements will take place on 2 May 2024. As a consequence of the review, the governance arrangements for the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2036 (BANP) will need to be changed.
- 2.2 Changes to governance arrangement for the Neighbourhood Plan require the approval of all participating Councils. This paper sets out proposed amendments to the governance arrangements for the BANP and offers draft terms of reference for the Joint Councils Committee (JCC) that can be taken to each participating Council for approval prior to April 2024.
- 2.3 The current governance arrangements are set out in the adopted BANP – see Appendix 1.

3.0 PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS

- 3.1 From April 2024 the designated area for the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2036 will comprise two Parishes – Bridport and Symondsbury. It is proposed that the overall governance structure for the BANP should remain the same, with decisions taken at two levels:
- 1) Parish and Town Councils:** The following “key” decisions shall be reserved for Bridport and Symondsbury Councils:
- Basis for cooperation with the other council in the neighbourhood plan area;
 - Agree decision-making powers to be delegated to the Joint Councils Committee;
 - Allocating any funding and resources from each Council;
 - Appointment of a representative(s) (and reserve(s)) for the Joint Councils Committee;
 - Approval of BANP review documents for public consultation; and
 - Approval of BANP review for submission to Dorset Council for examination and referendum.

2) Joint Councils Committee Membership: One representative (and one reserve) from each of Bridport Town Councils Wards, and one representative (and one reserve) from Symondsburry Parish Council.

- 3.2 The functions of the JCC, updated to reflect the new governance arrangements, are proposed to be to:
- Have overall responsibility for the delivery, monitoring and review of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan;
 - Appoint members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and agree its terms of reference, and any subsequent changes;
 - Provide a forum for discussion of key issues affecting the BANP, and propose reviews of BANP for consideration by Bridport and Symondsburry Councils;
 - Provide a forum for discussion of consultation responses, and propose modifications for consideration by Bridport and Symondsburry Councils;
 - In the event of disagreement on key decisions, to provide a forum for debate and mediation between the councils.
- 3.3 It is proposed that the frequency of meetings be quarterly, unless otherwise agreed by the JCC.
- 3.4 Revised draft terms of reference for the JCC, reflecting the above proposals, are shown at Appendix 2.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 The JCC is asked to consider this report and approve the proposed governance arrangements therein.

22 November 2023

**Will Austin
Clerk to the NPJCC**

Appendix 1 Current Governance Arrangements

The delivery, monitoring and review of the Neighbourhood Plan will be overseen by a Joint Councils Committee (JCC), supported by a Steering Group reporting to the JCC. The JCC will, as at present, be the formal decision-making body with a particular role in securing funding for and supporting projects that deliver the objectives and policies set out in the neighbourhood plan.

Any changes to the Plan, or to the governance arrangements, would be subject to the agreement of all participating councils. The JCC will comprise one main member and one 'reserve' member from each of the five participating councils. The quorum for JCC meetings will be four. The Steering Group will be appointed by the JCC, and will be the body that carries out the work involved in the delivery, monitoring and review of the neighbourhood plan. It will comprise no more than nine members drawn from the community who are deemed to possess the appropriate range of skills and experience needed.

Other ad hoc 'task and finish' groups may be created for specific purposes as required, to be appointed by the Steering Group. Support for the JCC and other meetings will be provided by the Bridport Town Clerk (as clerk to the JCC) and the Bridport Town Council Project Manager (providing project support).

For governance 'rules', the JCC will adopt the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations of Bridport Town Council. The Standing Orders will provide for the conduct of meetings, public participation, election of Chair, casting vote, co-option, and other governance matters. The Financial Regulations will ensure proper control and management of neighbourhood plan expenditure. JCC members will need to be mindful of any rules from their own councils' Standing Orders, and any local Code of Conduct stipulations, that may be of relevance whilst carrying out their duties in respect of the neighbourhood plan. Advice on these matters will be available from the Clerks to each of the participating councils. Terms of reference for the JCC and the Steering Group have been produced, reflecting these arrangements in more detail.

Appendix 2 – JCC Terms of Reference post April 2024 (DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION)

1. Name

1.1. Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan Joint Councils Committee (NPJCC).

2. Purpose

2.1. The NPJCC shall have overall responsibility for the delivery, monitoring and review of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan.

2.2. All decisions of the NPJCC that:

- seek to change the NP or NP projects; or
- seek to change these terms of reference

shall require the approval of Bridport and Symondsburys Councils.

3. Membership

3.1. Membership shall comprise six primary members, one appointed by Symondsburys Parish Council and one from each of the five Bridport Town Council wards.

3.2. Each participating council shall also appoint a reserve member for each of the primary members from amongst its membership, who may carry out the role of the primary members in their absence.

3.3. Each council's nominated primary and reserve members shall serve for the term of the participating council, except where changed by a decision of that council.

4. Roles

4.1. To agree and maintain the membership of a Steering Group that will support the work of the NPJCC, and to consider recommendations of the Steering Group.

4.2. To monitor the overall effectiveness of the Plan over the preceding 12 months, and the likely implications and impact of the Plan for the subsequent year. An annual monitoring report will be prepared by Bridport Town Council, in accordance with agreed criteria, in liaison with the BANP & parishes, and the Steering Group.

4.3. This monitoring report will be presented to the NPJCC for consideration and will include:

- 4.3.1. The effectiveness of the policies in the BANP when assessing and determining planning applications.
- 4.3.2. Any changes in national planning policy that could supersede the policies in the BANP.
- 4.3.3. The implications of any emerging Local Plan and/or Review thereof.
- 4.3.4. The latest statistical information, such as the most recent Housing Needs Assessment.
- 4.3.5. A report on funding of the remaining BANP project list items that do not qualify for CIL funding.
- 4.3.6. Any changing circumstances in the Plan area.

4.3.7. Annual updating of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) project list from each of the contributing parishes.

4.4. The NPJCC will consider the annual monitoring report and publish the outcome in the public domain.

4.5. To recommend any additions, amendments or updates to policies or action points, for consideration in any future review of the BANP.

4.6. The NPJCC will, if appropriate, arrange for a review of the BANP to be undertaken.

4.7. In the absence of a review of the BANP in the interim period, a review will be carried out every 5 years. Upon a review being instigated, the JCC will engage the support of the Steering Group to assist in preparing the review. The views of the local planning authority will be sought on these matters.

4.8. Any such review, or any action that would materially change the BANP or the delivery thereof, shall be referred for approval by Symondsburry and Bridport Councils.

5. Administration

5.1. The NPJCC shall act in accordance with the standing orders and financial regulations of Bridport Town Council.

5.2. The administration and clerking of meetings shall be carried out by Bridport Town Council.

5.3. At the first meeting, and annually thereafter, the NPJCC will elect a Chair and, optionally, a Vice-Chair.

5.4. The NPJCC may also allocate other roles and responsibilities amongst the Group.

5.5. Insurance cover will be provided by the participating councils.

6. Meetings

6.1. The NPJCC shall meet quarterly and the Chair (in conjunction with the Clerk), or any two members of the NPJCC may call additional meetings as necessary.

6.2. Notice of meetings shall follow the requirements of town and parish councils, as prescribed by the Local Government Act 1972.

6.3. Bridport Town Council shall keep a record of meetings, and circulate notes to NPJCC members in a timely fashion.

6.4. All meetings shall be held in public.

6.5. The quorum for any meeting of the NPJCC shall be four.

6.6. A simple majority of NPJCC members is required for recommendations or resolutions to be valid. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chair may, at her/his discretion, exercise a casting vote.

7. Finance

- 7.1. All funding shall be held by Bridport Town Council, who shall be the accountable body for the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan.