

HORSTED KEYNES PARISH COUNCIL

To: Council

Agenda Item No. 7.1

Date: 14th June 2016

Contact for this report: Acting Clerk

Subject: Neighbourhood Plan and Complaints. The Way Forward

The purpose of this report is to up-date members of the current situation regarding the above items and to suggest a way forward for consideration at the Council meeting on 14th June 2016.

1. In the past Horsted Keynes Parish Council has not behaved in an open and transparent way. This cannot be allowed to continue and must change now if the Neighbourhood Plan is to have any chance of success.
2. All Members are aware of the complaints against the Council and individual Councillors, however, the Council has been given a second chance by Mid Sussex District Council's Standards Committee.
3. The principal authority will not spend further public money to take these complaints any further and you are invited to improve your performance so the process cannot be challenged. In order to ensure the Council's governance procedures are fit for purpose several actions need to be implemented and these are detailed below.
4. Having met with the three Members of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee, two of whom have been the subject of individual complaints and accusations, it is considered more appropriate for the Council as a whole to now take over the next stage of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Matters that now need to be agreed include:

- Implement Council's previous decision to include a broader range of people (non - councillors) onto the Neighbourhood Plan item for the Council if it is decided that future work on the Neighbourhood Plan should be conducted by the whole council.
- All meeting agendas must be published to give the public an opportunity to attend. It could be considered beneficial to hold an additional Council meeting just for the Neighbourhood Plan item.
- All meetings must be clerked by an officer of the Council.
- All minutes must be available for the public.
- As recommended by the Head of Legal at Mid Sussex District Council, engage an external independent expert to review the responses received as a result of the consultation.
- The detail of the above appointment to be agreed but it is recommended that this person should review the responses and submit a report for the Council to consider.
- The Council to review this report and agree changes and update the Plan if only small changes recommended.
- Publish a revised Neighbourhood Plan and if the changes are **significant**, undertake a further consultation period.

- Review any further representations and if these are significant the Neighbourhood Plan may need a second revision by Council.
- Council to agree the final Plan prior to submission to Mid Sussex District Council.

5. The Council has a choice of expert advice available. The original consultant could be approached although it may be felt that he is possibly too close to the original process to be seen as independent.

AiRS (Action in Rural Sussex) has been involved in some Neighbourhood Plans in Sussex, including Hurstpierpoint in West Sussex.

Lindsey Frost, former Head of Planning at Lewes District Council) has been recommended by SALC as he now works alongside this organisation and his c.v. is available to all Members. Mr Frost charges £450 per day and it has been suggested he would need to spend 5 days to review the representations and prepare a report.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (a) Council to endorse the decision of the Mid Sussex District Council's Standards Committee concerning individual Councillors and to acknowledge all the hard work that has gone into the Neighbourhood Plan preparation and to resolve for all Councillors to work together in a more cohesive manner.**
- (b) Council to endorse the recommendation of the Mid Sussex District Council Head of Legal to engage the services of an independent specialist to review all the representations received.**
- (c) Council to take over responsibility for the Neighbourhood Plan and not delegate to a Committee.**
- (d) Council to give notice of invitation to residents to sit on the Council for the purpose of taking the Neighbourhood Plan to the next stage.**
- (e) Engage the services of Lindsey Frost initially for five days to review all the representations that have been received and to prepare a report for Council so the Neighbourhood Plan can proceed to the next stage.**

