

COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY 11th DECEMBER 2018

ITEM NO: 10b – 5 Year Forward Planning for the Parish Council

This report is an adjunct to the 10a Budget and Precept Report to recommend creation of a Local Neighbourhood 5 Year Parish Plan to inform future budget forecasts and Parish Council activity.

Introduction

Following on from the 10a Report, setting out budget priorities for 2019-2020, this report sets out the proposal that Copythorne Parish Council prepares and implements a 5 Year Local Parish / Neighbourhood Plan. Copythorne Parish Council has, to date, never created and implemented such a Plan. Many Town and Parish Councils now have these Plans in various forms to aid them in longer term forward budget planning as well as setting out agreed priorities for their community development activities.

Rationale

Many Parish and Town Councils now have 5 Year Local Parish / Neighbourhood Plans. There is a wealth of information from Local Government support bodies including the Local Government Association and more parochial bodies such as HALC on such Plans. They all state clearly that such Plans are seen as best practice, to secure for Councils a clear 'direction of travel' for activities as well as defining the Councils objectives on behalf of their community, following consultation and agreement on priorities. The best plans also help inform decision making on matters related to Planning applications, providing, as they do, a narrative on the community environment and how it should develop.

A 5 Year Plan cycle is the default Plan length advised by all the bodies providing advice as it secures a look far enough ahead to enable change to take place and projects to be sourced and implemented. It is also the Plan length for those local government bodies with a requirement to create Plans of this type.

Plan Content

A number of different guidance documents exist in respect of Plan formation and design, but this also depends on the approach any individual Council may wish to adopt, with its community in formulating the Plan.

For Copythorne Parish Council, this would be focussed on the local needs and priorities for our community, as well as formulating the thinking about our local environment and how we believe it should develop and be cared for.

There are different constructs for Plans and various templates exist, but essentially they all have the same characteristics:

- Executive Summary - to include the summary of the vision, aims and objectives
- A Description of the Parish – type of community – its diversity and geography etc plus some demographics
- How the Plan has been Developed – with whom and how consulted
- A Clear Vision for the Parish – its community activity, environment and development
- The Aims for the Plan - with accompanying objectives for its deployment

- Sections - related to different areas of activity, setting out local priorities for developments within the Parish (could be divided into environment; facilities; services; etc, but these are for future decision)
- Alignment to Other Plans – District and County Plans
- Timescales – and forward plan milestones
- Monitoring and Evaluation – reporting to the Parish Council
- Outline financial considerations – forward budget setting

One of the key features for the use of Local Plans is the ability to forward plan items for agendas for Parish Council meetings, possibly, up to a year ahead, when matched to project timelines within the Plan. This would enable a very efficient use of the limited meeting time and prevent items being missed or delayed.

It is clear that the development of Local / Neighbourhood Plans for a Parish Council aids continuity and long-term project development for communities and also makes for greater clarity in the forward budget setting processes.

Community engagement and consultation is essential to arrive at agreed priorities and actions and any programme of development should build this in from the start.

Proposal

It is recommended that Copythorne Parish Council endorses this development and adopts the following resolutions:

1. That a suitable group is convened to commence initial work on a high level draft of a Local 5 year Plan;
2. That the Finance Working Party is the core of that group, but with any other Councillors joining if they so wish;
3. That an initial high level draft is brought to the March 2019 meeting of the Parish Council for consideration and interim approval;
4. That the document is then presented at the Annual Parish Meeting in later March for consideration by the community members attending and that a consultation then commences from that date on the ideas in the draft high level Plan with an invitation to the community to put forward any of their own ideas and priorities for consideration.
5. That the working group then continues on development of the Plan using and where appropriate incorporating community input with a view to a full draft Plan being prepared for the end of April 2019. This Plan can then be taken to the new incoming Parish Council after the May elections for final review.
6. Subject to the review, the expectation that the Plan can be in place to inform the future work of the new Parish Council from September 2019 – i.e. in time for the start of the new budget setting process for 2020-2021.

Simon Lucas

Report 01/12/18