

STRATFIELD MORTIMER PARISH COUNCIL TERMS OF REFERENCE

STRATFIELD MORTIMER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP

Name

The name of the organisation is the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Purpose

Following on from the original Neighbourhood Development Plan, the purpose of the Steering Group is to develop and produce two further sequential editions of a Neighbourhood Plan (NP). As specified in SMPC Full Council minute 21/041 7 of 24th June 2021, edition 1) will concentrate on the review of policy SDB1 regarding the area of land for St John's School and the doctor's surgery and edition 2) will look at the longer term consideration of existing and other possible policies, for presentation to the Parish Council (who will ultimately sign the documents off and submit them to West Berkshire Council).

Membership and Secretary

The Steering Group will be made up from a cross-section of the community, including parish councillors nominated by SMPC and volunteers from the community. It is anticipated between 5 and 9 members will provide for effective operation, but, if required, the Steering Group may have additional members over time. All members of the Steering Group will be appointed by the Parish Council.

At the first meeting, the Steering Group will elect a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson; both should be elected annually thereafter except in a case of a vacancy.

The Steering Group may appoint and employ a Secretary to assist with administration and other specified tasks.

What will the Steering Group do?

The Steering Group will develop two editions of the NP that set the vision and supporting policies for the development of the Parish in the period to 2037 and will form part of the statutory development plan for the Parish.

The principal responsibilities of the Steering Group are to:

- Determine the range of relevant high-level themes that will be addressed in the NPs.
- Inform, consult with and involve the whole parish community (eg. individuals, organisations and groups) to achieve wide support for the emerging and final NPs.

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- Identify, initiate, and conclude research, surveys, studies etc. as are necessary to develop an evidence-based NP, engaging (through SMPC) professional help where necessary.
- Maintain a dedicated website of all information relevant to the NP. (“the Website”, which expression shall include any website utilised whilst the dedicated one is being established)
- Set up working groups to focus on particular tasks or themes that arise through the consultation process.
- Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to make the NPs as effective as possible ensuring they are in general conformity with the strategic policy of the WBC Local Plan and that they have had regards to national planning policy and guidance.
- Identify sources of funding and liaise with the Parish Clerk to apply for grants as appropriate.
- Oversee the planning, budgeting and monitoring expenditure on NPs and report back to the Parish Council on these matters.

Conduct and Interests

Members of the Steering Group and volunteers will be covered by SMPC insurance for Public Liability and Employer’s Liability while undertaking the activities listed in these Terms of Reference. The Chairman and Vice Chairman will liaise with the Parish Clerk to ensure that terms of the insurance are not breached.

The Steering Group via its Parish Council members will provide a regular written report to the Parish Council, for endorsement and the Parish Council will provide the opportunity for the endorsement of regular reports via its meeting agenda.

All Steering Group members shall abide by:

- the principles and practice of the Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council Code of Conduct including declarations of interest.
- the Service Level Agreement with West Berkshire Council.

Any conflict within the Steering Group shall be referred to the Parish Council for resolution.

Meetings

- The Steering Group will normally meet monthly (but every two months as a minimum), or more frequently as be required.
- Meetings may be held in person, or virtually, or as a combination of the two, as the Steering Group shall decide.
- At least three clear days’ notice of meetings will be emailed to members (cc to the Parish Clerk) and posted the Website.
- Notices of meetings should include an outline agenda but matters not on the agenda may also be discussed as required.
- The Secretary will keep a record of meetings, circulate notes to Steering Group members (cc Parish Clerk) and publish them on the website.
- Some meetings of the Steering Group will be open to the public; this may be via an online link.

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Working Groups

- The Steering Group may establish such working groups as it considers necessary to carry out functions specified by the Steering Group.
- Working groups do not need to meet in public.
- Each working group should have a lead person and at least one member of the Steering Group.
- Working groups will have their remit and makeup defined and regularly reviewed by the Steering Group.

Finance

- The Parish Council is responsible for setting the budget and is accountable for the expenditure of the Steering Group.
- The Steering Group will propose a 12 month budget of expenditure to be agreed by the Parish Council.
- The Steering Group cannot make any financial decisions on behalf of the Parish Council. The Clerk, in consultation with the Parish Council Chairman or Vice Chairman, has delegated authority to approve budgeted payments up to £1,000. These shall be clearly minuted. Large items (over £1000) shall be placed on the Parish Council Agenda for approval.
- All grants and funding will be applied for and held by the Parish Council, who will ring-fence the funds for Neighbourhood Plan purposes only.
- Substantial decisions, such as contracting a consultant, must have the prior approval of the full Parish Council. The full Parish Council will also need to approve the terms and conditions of any contract.
- The Responsible Financial Officer of the Parish Council shall keep a clear record of expenditure.
- Invoices will be made out in the name of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council who will pay them in accordance with the Council's procedures.

Dissolving the Steering Group

At the conclusion of the NP project the Parish Council and Steering Group should discuss any future working of the Steering Group. SMPC reserves the right to dissolve the Steering Group by a resolution of the full Parish Council.