

# Neighbourhood Plan External Advice

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report will outline details about costs associated with securing external advice for the neighbourhood plan which is currently being developed.
- 1.2 This report outlines the various options open to the Parish Council and includes a recommendation made by the Neighbourhood Plan Committee for members to consider.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Last summer the Parish Council took the decision to start working towards setting up a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish. The decision was made following requests for residents at several meetings.
- 2.2 As part of the process to establish a neighbourhood plan it is necessary to take external advice from a consultant.
- 2.3 Earlier this year the Council secured grant funding of £4004 for the consultancy work element of the process. The funding needs to be spent before 31 March 2017. Council therefore needs to make a decision soon about how that funding is to be spent.
- 2.4 The Parish Council's Standing Orders make clear the desirability of securing three quotes for the purchase of any goods or services over £250.
- 2.5 In February 2016 the Clerk and Dan Evans, West Lindsey District Council officer, undertook a quote gathering exercise. Three quotes were sourced from reputable planning consultancies. The three quotes form the main body of this report.

## 3. Options and Recommendation

- 3.1 All three quotes, with some additional notes, have been listed alphabetically below for member's consideration. Supporting documentation can be found at appendix A, B and C.
- 3.2 Please note the following:
  - i. The Clerk understands that any VAT spent on this project could be reclaimed by the Council.
  - ii. The quotes make clear that there may be some fluctuation in the final costs due to VAT, inflation and the need to cover overheads (i.e. travel, printing, etc.).
  - iii. The decision being made relates only to the first tranche of work or

the £4,004 in funding the Parish Council has already secured. Any further work, and the associated funding, would have to be supported through additional grant funding.

### **Quote 1 – Helen Metcalfe (Planning with People)**

- 3.3 Helen Metcalfe (Planning with People) provided a quote of **£8,129**. Currently no VAT is payable; however, Helen makes clear in her quote that the situation might change.
- 3.4 Planning with People was set up by Helen Metcalfe in 2011 and operates from Nottingham. Helen is an experienced chartered town planner having worked as a planning professional for 20 years. She has worked in 4 local authorities (latterly at senior management level) and for Planning Aid (part of the Royal Town Planning Institute). She has been an independent consultant since 2011. She has been a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute since 1994.
- 3.5 Dan Evans has provided assurances that Helen can fulfil the role required at the external advice stage of the neighbourhood plan process.

### **Quote 2 – Kat Salter**

- 3.6 Kat Salter have provided a quote of **£7,980**. It is not clear if this figure is inclusive of VAT.
- 3.7 Kat has been providing advice about neighbourhood plans for a year and a half and is based in Reading. She provides support and advice to groups at all stages of the neighbourhood plan process, including the evidence base, conformity with the basic conditions, structuring the plan and drafting planning policies.
- 3.8 Dan Evans has provided assurances that Kat can fulfil the role required at the external advice stage of the neighbourhood plan process.

### **Quote 3 – Open Plan**

- 3.9 Open Plan has provided a quote of **£7,452** which does not include VAT. Inclusive of VAT the quote would be **£8942**.
- 3.10 Open Plan is based in Lincoln and is an urbanism, placemaking and plan-making studio. Combining practice with research and innovation, the studio considers all the components that contribute to making the places we live in work (or not), and how they can evolve to enable our communities to thrive for years to come.
- 3.11 Open Plan have already undertaken work in Hemswell Cliff having created the Master Plan last year on behalf of West Lindsey District

Council. They also met with Neighbourhood Plan Committee members and attended a recent consultation event.

- 3.12 On Monday 20 March 2017 the Neighbourhood Plan Committee recommended that Open Plan's quote be accepted by Council because:
- they have knowledge of the area;
  - they have already carried out considerable research;
  - the cost is within the total funding envelope available, and;
  - their quotation was well laid out and comprehensive.
- 3.13 Dan Evans has provided assurances that Open Plan can fulfil the role required at the external advice stage of the neighbourhood plan process.

#### **Option 4 - Do not approve any of the above**

- 3.14 The Parish Council could decide not to move ahead at this stage and ask for a re-evaluation of the quotes or for others to be sought.
- 3.15 However, it is recommended that the Parish Council approve spend for of the grant funding and select a consultant. If the money is not spent before 31 March 2017 it must be returned and reapplied for, a process which could lead to delays in what is already a lengthy process.
- 3.16 The Neighbourhood Plan Committee believe all the quotes are competitive and it is unlikely that further exploration and/or evaluation will find cheaper or better quality options.

#### **4. Standing Orders, Policy and Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report conform to Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
- 4.2 No new policies will be required because of the decision.
- 4.3 No new training needs will arise from the decision.

#### **5. Recommendation to the Council**

- 5.1 That the Parish Council agree to spend the amount necessary to secure external advice to support the work of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee and neighbourhood plan process, and;
- 5.2 In line with the recommendation made by the Neighbourhood Plan Committee (paragraph 3.12) Council approves the quote of **£7,452 plus VAT** by Open Plan and that they be instructed to carry out the external advice component of the neighbourhood plan process.

**Report compiled by Tom Clay, Clerk to the Parish Council on 21/03/2017.**

**Appendices A, B and C relating to this report can be found as separate attachments.**