

Notes of a meeting held on 6th August at Bettiscombe Village Hall

The purpose of this meeting was to examine the benefits of having a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) in more detail and to see which other parishes, if any, would be willing to join forces with Upper Marshwood Vale PC to instigate a NP.

It would seem that Broadwindsor PC had decided to go it alone, although that decision would be examined in more detail at their next council meeting. It would seem that Netherbury would like to work in conjunction with Upper Marshwood Vale. Thorncombe had not yet decided, and it would be an agenda item for their September meeting. Char Valley did not seem to wish to become involved. There was also a possibility that Hawkchurch, which although being in Devon was a neighbouring parish, would also be interested in joining us.

The point was made that once the NP boundary was set it had to be agreed by the district council, and that there was at that stage a six week consultation stage, therefore it would be more difficult to add a parish or area once the boundary area had been submitted.

Whilst there would be a steering group there would also be interest groups to which other people could join. The point was made that it was important to involve the community and not just elected members.

The meeting discussed the possible benefits of having a NP, the greatest one being that once the NP has been set it becomes a statutory document and has to be considered by the principle authority when looking at any planning application within the defined area. The NP has no influence on any planning applications outside of its area.

At present funding is available to the tune of £7k, however, under the terms of that grant it needs to have been spent by the end of December 2014. It is understood that due to the high amount of take up for NP's that this funding is drying up. There is no information at present as to whether funding will be available in 2015.

Post Note

Since the above meeting it has been clarified that nominations have now been closed for 2014, however it is anticipated that grants will be available from April 2015. This therefore means that the urgency of appointing consultants and spending the grant funding has gone, and we have some more breathing space.

Thorncombe PC has agreed to join the NP scheme in principle, but are concerned about providing people to assist with it. I think this stems from their parish plan; which is really a different process.