

## SLEAFORD TOWN COUNCIL

### NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN - SELECTION OF CONSULTANTS

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 Most Neighbourhood Plans (NDP) have been produced with the assistance of specialist consultants. This paper recommends that Sleaford Town Council (STC) appoints OpenPlan with Community Lincs to assist the production of the Sleaford Neighbourhood Plan.

#### 2. Background

2.1 Following the Sleaford Neighbourhood Plan Working Group meeting in November 2019, the Deputy Town Clerk was asked to research potential consultants to assist with the Sleaford NDP. This is a specialist area of work and the search struggled to find consultants who knew our area, could do the work, were affordable, were experienced, had a good track record and could work within the coronavirus restrictions.

2.2 From the research OpenPlan were identified as the best consultants to use. The Covid-19 restrictions then came into force and delayed progress. However, the attached proposal from OpenPlan with Community Lincs has now been carefully considered by the NP Working Group and our recommendations on it are below. The coronavirus restrictions make it difficult to identify and interview any other consultants. However, we believe it is not necessary to spend further time on the search as OpenPlan/Community Lincs meet our requirements. Every month of further delay would mean missing out on the additional Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies that a NDP will bring.

#### 3. OpenPlan proposal

3.1 The OpenPlan proposal attached covers:

- All of the tasks needed to develop a good NDP
- A timetable for producing an NDP Submission to North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) as the planning authority by July (now August) 2021
- Detailed costings, within the funding available to us (see below)
- Addition technical support via a further government grant

3.2 The OpenPlan proposal includes a partnership with Community Lincs to deliver the NDP engagement work with the public and stakeholders including:

- Developing an NP website to house all documents and explain the NDP process to the community
- Developing the means to engage key stakeholders and groups via Zoom meetings initially until the Covid-19 restrictions are relaxed
- Leading the development of a draft Vision and Objectives for the NDP

#### 4. Assessment

4.1 The OpenPlan proposal comes from consultants with an excellent track record of helping communities to produce NDPs. Their proposal includes a long list of places in Lincolnshire where they are currently working on NDPs or have helped groups to produce them in recent years. Being based in Lincoln, OpenPlan know the Sleaford area well and are very accessible to us.

4.2 Community Lincs is a Sleaford based community development charity. In 2017/18 alone they assisted the development of fifteen NDPs in West Lindsey and North Kesteven.

4.3 The proposal sets out a staged approach to deliver the tasks required within a practical timetable to produce a quality NDP for Sleaford by the end of 2021.

#### 5. Budget

5.1 The proposal sets out detailed costings for the work by OpenPlan and Community Lincs. The Grand Total is £12,650. The funds to pay the cost of the Proposal would come from the following sources:

- 1 A government grant of £10k available through Locality
- 2 An STC grant of up to £5k (already agreed)

This would leave £2,350 as a contingency if needed. An additional £8k government grant is available through Locality for the preparation of a Design Code/Design Plan

#### 6. Request

6.1 Sleaford Town Council is requested to appoint a consultant to deliver the Proposal attached under the guidance of the NP Working Group and the Town Clerk.

#### 7. Recommendations

- 1 Consultants are appointed on the basis of the attached proposal and costings be accepted.
- 2 The terms and conditions of the appointment to be negotiated and agreed by the Town Clerk and the NP Working Group, with the Full Council informed.

Cllr Robert Oates

Chairman, Sleaford Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, July 2020