

Hungerford 2036

“Guiding Mind” Support to the Project Team

Purpose of this Document

To gain authorisation from Hungerford Town Council (HTC) to appoint *Planet* as “guiding mind” consultants to support the Hungerford 2036 Project.

Background

The Project Risk Register (Appendix 1) identifies seven potential failure points along the road to achieving a successful Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). Of the nineteen mitigations, ten (highlighted yellow) require professional town planning input in general and expertise in the neighbourhood development planning process in particular.

Some free technical expertise is available through *Locality* who act as government agents for the NDP process, allocating grants and providing technical expertise (via AECOM) to support towns and parishes in their neighbourhood planning. Maximum use will be made of this free support which is in addition to the £17, 000 government grant available to cover NDP costs. However “guiding mind” professional support is not available from *Locality* and needs to be procured separately out of the grant funding.

Requirements on Consultants

As a “guiding mind” the consultant will need extensive experience of the whole NDP process from initiation through to Independent Examination and Referendum. A vital element of this will include the community engagement which forms the foundations of the Plan. This requires the interpersonal skills necessary to run successful workshops, drafting questionnaires and analysing the results so as to set them in a context that effectively supports our Plan. Whilst the Project aims to do most of this work itself, consultancy “steer” and backup if needed will be reassuring for both the Project Team and HTC. Established working relationships with West Berkshire Council Planning would be an advantage. A firm located near Hungerford would help reduce travelling expenses.

The consultant’s charge rate must not exceed £550/day if their costs are to be met solely out of government grant funding.

At a later stage conventional technical Town Planning and report writing support will also be necessary and will be the subject of a separate paper to the Council.

Market Investigation

The market was investigated through the Town Planning Institute web site, following-up direct approaches made by three consultancies to HTC, speaking to West Berkshire Council Planning, Compton Parish Council and searching the internet. The results are shown at Appendix 2.

The nature of this type of support work is not conducive to lump sum pricing. Hence comparisons have to be based upon daily rates, services offered, experience demonstrated and customer satisfaction.

Of the firms reviewed only one, *Planet*, offers the skills set and experience necessary to act as a guiding mind through all stages of the Project. They are a small niche consultancy specialising in neighbourhood planning. Their charge rate of £480/day is competitive and fully chargeable against grant funding. They currently don’t have a working relationship with West Berkshire Planning, but this is not seen as a major disadvantage.

Risk Management

Planet will only be commissioned once grant funding has been approved and received by HTC. The initial commission will run only until 31st March 2019, when 2018/19 grant funding ends and can be

terminated at any time before then. Time sheets against activities will be submitted weekly and countersigned by one of the Joint Chairs.

Documented commendations have been obtained from the Town Clerks of Shifnel and Grange-over-Sands, two of Planet's more recent customers. A verbal commendation was given by the Chair of the Angmering NDP steering group at the Chandlers Ford seminar.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Planet be appointed as consultants to guide the Hungerford 2036 Project to a maximum cost of £3,000 based on a time charge of £60/hour. Their role will include:

- a) Review of Project composition, skills, experience and processes.
- b) Short NDP awareness course for Project Team and Councillors.
- c) Review of scope and its implications.
- d) Helping to create first draft Vision and Objectives.
- e) Advising on:
 - i. Programme activities, inter-dependencies and time scales.
 - ii. Engagement with the community.
 - iii. Survey techniques and wording.
 - iv. Survey data analysis.
 - v. Evidence collection and management.

Geoff Greenland
Joint Chair

Tony Drewer-Trump
Joint Chair