



Committee and Date

Cabinet

12<sup>th</sup> September 2012

12.30 pm

Item

**16**

Public

**Application by Much Wenlock to be considered as a Neighbourhood Area**

**Responsible Officer** Jake Berriman

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**1. Summary**

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval to the application by Much Wenlock Town Council for the Civil Parish of Much Wenlock to be considered an appropriate area for their neighbourhood development plan. Much Wenlock is one of five Front Runners in Shropshire piloting the work on neighbourhood planning and starting in advance of new legislation.
- 1.2 The application was made to Shropshire Council in June 2012 under the provisions of the Localism Act and advertised on the 27<sup>th</sup> of that month for a period of 6 weeks. It is the Council's role to decide whether or not the Civil Parish of Much Wenlock forms an appropriate area for their emerging neighbourhood plan. Various other reports will be brought before Cabinet for decision at other key stages of the process.
- 1.3 The views of any respondents must be taken into consideration in reaching a decision. There have been none.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that:

Cabinet agree that the Civil Parish of Much Wenlock forms an appropriate basis for the development of a neighbourhood development plan and notifies the Town Council accordingly.

## Report

### 3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 The Localism Act and Regulations covering the production of neighbourhood development plans is quite prescriptive and there is little risk for either Shropshire Council or Much Wenlock Town Council in following these carefully. There is a high degree of trust and cooperation between the Councils and this has been critical to reducing risk and ensuring an appropriate balance between local initiative and the statutory framework provided by the adopted Shropshire Core Strategy and emerging SAMDev DPD. The hard work and support of the Local Shropshire Council Member remains pivotal to this positive relationship. The emerging neighbourhood development plan will after passing a series of checks and balances become part of the Statutory planning framework applied in Shropshire.

### 4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Shropshire Council received an award of £20,000 to support the Much Wenlock project which by agreement it handed over to the Town Council to manage on the proviso that the costs of the external examination and the referendum would be covered by the Town Council and not by Shropshire Council, which would otherwise be the case following the Localism Act. The Council continues to provide significant support in kind from within existing planning policy budgets.

### 5. Background

- 5.1 Shropshire Council's LOCALised planning approach supports Neighbourhood Development Plans being brought forward under the Localism Act and the 2012 Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, indeed we are legally obliged to do so. However, we are also committed to promoting and supporting planning for neighbourhoods as a more cost effective and sustainable alternative based on sound community led planning principles established through a solid backdrop of parish planning, design guides etc. A cabinet decision was reached in July to invest NHB monies into supporting these more cost effective community led plans.
- 5.2 Interestingly, the three success criteria cited by the government in their Impact Assessment for neighbourhood planning are - increasing housing supply, reducing opposition to economic growth and increasing community

engagement and involvement in planning and development. All of which are key components of Shropshire's LOCALised Planning approach, which, through supporting locally produced plans within our own Place Plans we are committing to the joint delivery of local ambitions, not only in terms of locally defined policy guidance (such as design guidance) but also community endorsed prioritisation of infrastructure and other beneficial investment to help make more sustainable places.

- 5.3 Four of Shropshire's five Front Runners are currently developing plans based on this "informal" LOCALised route and at present up to 50 new or refreshed Parish Plans are currently being developed with support from both Shropshire Council through the New Grant Funding agreed by Cabinet on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, and organisations like the Community Council for Shropshire.
- 5.4 Much Wenlock are the exception to this rule and following the successful bid in February 2011 the Town Council agreed to work with Shropshire Council to pursue their ambition to develop a neighbourhood development plan under the emerging Act and Regulations which have now come into being.
- 5.5 The development of a Neighbourhood Plan for Much Wenlock is being facilitated by Much Wenlock Town Council with help from volunteers across the community. The Town Council believes that this is a real opportunity for the community to have some ownership on future planning policy for the parish. Shropshire Council has been supporting these proposals, being actively engaged at a political level and with officer time. The Neighbourhood Plan for Much Wenlock will cover the parish of Much Wenlock and, subject to passing the formal tests, a local referendum and external assessment; it will become part of the local planning framework. Its policies will apply until 2026, the same as Shropshire's Core Strategy.
- 5.6 Shropshire Council will go on to consider whether the Neighbourhood Plan for Much Wenlock conforms to its adopted strategic policies and, in agreement with Much Wenlock, will put it forward for independent assessment. It will be the responsibility of Shropshire Council to arrange a local referendum to assess local support for the plan proposals and subject to a successful referendum outcome, a "yes" vote, Shropshire Council will have a legal duty to 'make' the Neighbourhood Plan for Much Wenlock and bring it into force. This final decision will be a matter for Full Council as it makes planning policy.
- 5.7 By the close of the consultation in Much Wenlock no responses had been received into the question of the area to apply to the proposed Much Wenlock neighbourhood Plan. The Area which matches the Civil Parish is a sensible and appropriate one reflecting local choice and democratic control.

**List of Background Papers:** 2011 Localism Act, Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012, Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Area Application

**Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):** Cllr. Malcolm Price

**Local Member:** Cllr. P M Whiteman

**Appendices:** None