

Highnam Parish Council
Parish Plan Briefing Note
April 2024

Introduction: The first Parish Plan was produced in 2007. This was updated in April 2018 (copies available at the meeting) following extensive public engagement and consultation in 2017. It was built around three key themes: Environment, Leisure, and Community. It complements the Neighbourhood Development Plan by determining the deployment of Sec 106 monies arising from development, most specifically Lassington Reach. Its purpose, as summarised in the original document, was to: *“convey the aspirations of residents in a formalised way to relevant authorities and to provide guidance on priorities to Highnam Parish Council.”*

Current Plan Update: The attached schedule provides an update on progress with individual projects. Some involved expenditure. In the main these have now been completed other than a number of minor items of uncommitted expenditure or project retention sums which has been accounted for in the sums shown. This has been validated by TBC, the purse holders of the Sec 106 budget. This reveals an uncommitted sum of **£ 3,217.69** which remains available for deployment on new projects. The schedule also includes, for the sake of completeness, a number of projects which were, for reasons set out, never pursued or which did not involve incurring actual expenditure. We may wish to review the need to continue to pursue these.

Way Forward: It is now some seven years since the last substantive work on the Plan was undertaken. In the intervening time a further 88 houses have been built adding @ 250 people to our population. Residents have moved on, moved in, matured, and some may have changed their priorities and aspirations. The purpose of this section is to consider whether it would now be timely to refresh the latest Plan. In this respect the following considerations should be taken into account:

- **Passage of Time:** As above, circumstances and aspirations change. A refreshed Plan would reflect these.
- **Deployment of balance of funding from original Plan:** - see above.
- **Deployment of new Sec 106 Monies:** - We will shortly be invited to submit proposals for deployment of monies arising from the M7 Planning development once Reserved Matters applications are made. It is anticipated that @ **£60,000** will be secured. The initial Sec 106 Agreement allocates this to improvements to the Community Complex and the Lassington Wood Playing Field, but, as before, we will have the chance to renegotiate the details of this if we wish to do so. Funds will come on stream once a significant proportion (@50%) of the new houses are built which could be as soon as mid-2026. A refreshed Plan would provide a transparent vehicle for determining the deployment of these funds.
- **Other Grant Funding Opportunities:** It is becoming increasingly apparent that a whole variety of funding streams are available, and will continue to become available, from a range of sources usually at very short notice, often on a

competitive bidding basis. If we wish to take advantage of any of these opportunities we need to become much fleet of foot and have “oven ready” projects available to top and tail for submission. HCCT will be looking at a number of projects to enhance the Community Centre Complex and, in the spirit of partnership working, the Parish Council should work closely alongside them, possibly pursuing joint initiatives. Examples of current funding opportunities include: Coronation Community Orchards Initiative (£23k); Energy Efficiency for Community Buildings Programme; Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Fund; Govt Levelling Up Programme; TBC Community Grants Budget; DEFRA Community Green Spaces Fund (£7m). Doubtless there are others, including private charities, e.g. Barnwood Trust; Bernard Sunley Fund etc. which could be pursued as well. Additionally, sporting organisations, e.g. F.A. ; Football Foundation; MCC; Glos Playing Fields Association etc. provide funding, often on a matched basis , for well-developed schemes. It is outside the scope of this Paper to look at these in detail, but they provide illustrations of opportunities we may wish to consider.

- **Progressing Identified New Projects:** Over the past year we have agreed in principle to undertake initial feasibility work on the following projects:

Provision of a network of Grit Bins around the village;

Construction of new Bus Shelter off Oakridge opposite FC Highnam’s Changing Rooms;

Landscaping of Green Spaces either side of the Gambier Parry Hall to enable them to provide outdoor overspill facilities for all three halls;

Improvements to Kitchen/Toilet Block extension to Parish Room.

Despite good intentions, no work on progressing any of these projects has yet been undertaken. Doubtless there are other schemes which residents might wish to see pursued. Additionally, FC Highnam have very recently inquired about grant funding support to enable them to purchase new equipment totalling @ £750.

If the Council were minded in principle to refresh the 2018 Plan it would be appropriate to establish a new standing Working Group, which could include volunteer members of the community as well as councillors, to determine its terms of reference, scope, working timeframe etc. and report back to Council on its work. This could provide a transparent, cohesive vehicle which could take a comprehensive approach to the provision of new facilities across the village, fully engage with residents to identify their priorities and aspirations, and provide business cases/project briefs to enable future sources of grant funding to be pursued at speed if necessary.

Charlie Coats April 2024.