

Guide to employing consultants to aid you with your Neighbourhood Plan



Depending upon the skills and resources available to you for the preparation of your Neighbourhood Plan, there may be points within your Neighbourhood Plan process where you feel you need or want to employ a professional consultant to aid you in the process.

There are a number of things that need to be considered when employing a consultant:

- 1. Do you really need a consultant:** Most Neighbourhood Plans are being carried out on a tight budget and employing a consultant is a considerable financial commitment. First you should consider, are there people in the parish either already involved in the Neighbourhood Plan process or who could be involved who could carry out the work. You should also look to see if the District Council can help you carry out the work. There is separate guidance on the web page setting out the aid the District Council can provide. If you have any specific queries please contact the Council directly.
- 2. What do you want the consultant to do for you:** If you do decide you need to employ a consultant it is key that you are clear with yourself and the consultant about what work you want them to carry out for you and the timescale and milestones in which you wish them to carry out that work. This must be clearly set out in a formal brief before you approach the consultant. Open ended contracts have the potential to become very expensive very quickly.
- 3. Who is the best consultant for you:** When deciding who to employ to carry out a piece of work for you, you need to look at the speciality of the consultants in the context of the piece of work you are looking to commission. If you are looking to do consultation events then a technical planner may not be best for you, and vice versa a company specialising in publicity would not be best for the technical policy assessment of your plan. There is nothing stopping you employing different consultants for different stages of your plan. It is important to remember it is a competitive market place and you can ask multiple consultants to tender and then decide who is best for you. The District Council has been compiling feedback from parishes who have used consultants and can provide a steer on who to ask to tender.
- 4. Cost of consultants:** The cost of a consultant will vary considerably depending upon the extent of the work that you ask them to carry out for you. It is important to be clear on what you are trying to achieve before engaging a consultant. Consultants can regularly cost four figure sums sometimes even more so agreement on the fees and when they are paid needs to be reached before any work is carried out. Contracts can set payment to the achievement of particular milestones. The District Council can look at contracts for you if you are unsure.

For more advice or recommendations for consultants for specific pieces of work, please contact neighbourhoodplanning@chichester.gov.uk