

# Whitburn Neighbourhood Forum Constitution

## 1. Name & Area

- The Name of the Forum shall be the "Whitburn Neighbourhood Forum" hereinafter referred to as "the Forum"
- The Area of the Forum will be decided by the Forum, or as adjusted by South Tyneside Council under its statutory powers.

## 2. Scope & Purpose of the Forum

- The Forum shall be a non-political organisation
- The Forum will produce a Neighbourhood Plan for the area agreed by its members as identified in Appendix A of this constitution, hereby referred to as Whitburn.
- The purpose of the Forum is:
  - To prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for Whitburn and to secure its acceptance by the area and by South Tyneside Council. The Forum will take into consideration South Tyneside's Plans when preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.
  - To promote or improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of Whitburn for the benefit of the community of businesses, residents and visitors.
  - To seek to represent the prevailing views of the local population of Whitburn, collated through engagement with all parts of the community, and to see those views incorporated into the Neighbourhood plan to guide the development of the area in line with the wishes of local residents.
  - To develop the goodwill and involvement of the whole community, inclusive of all ages, gender, ethnicity, faith, political affiliation, health and sexual orientation, by encouraging community spirit and pride in Whitburn.
  - Promotion of sustainable development, environmental improvement and conservation by educating, encouraging and assisting the local population in environmental practice.

## 3. Membership

- Membership of the forum is open to:
  - Individuals who live in the Whitburn area.
  - Individuals who work in the Whitburn area whether for business carried on there or otherwise.
  - Elected members of South Tyneside Council for the ward in which the Whitburn area is located.
- The membership of the Forum will be made up of at least 21 individuals from the above 3 groups.
- The minimum age for membership is 16 years old.
- Applications for membership shall be made in writing to the Secretary of the Forum. Applicants shall:
  - State which of the above 3 groups the applicant belongs to.

- Declare any financial, party political, employment, land ownership or other interest that could have an impact on the work of the Forum
- Any member may resign his or her membership by notifying the Secretary in writing
- Once the initial membership has been established additional members may be admitted to the Forum at any time with the agreement of the Committee.
- Members have a duty and are required to declare in advance any financial, party political, employment, land ownership or other interest that has a bearing on the work of the Forum in general or on an agenda item in particular. Declarations of interest shall be made to the Secretary who shall maintain a register of member's interests.
- Members will not engage in any activities which bring the reputation of the Forum into disrepute. This includes, but not limited to:
  - posting inflammatory, extraneous or off-topic messages in an online community
  - disrupting committee or forum meetings
  - illegal acts
  - failure to declare any financial, party political, employment, land ownership or other interest that has a bearing on the work of the Forum.
- Where it is considered that the membership of a particular individual is detrimental to the aims and activities of the Forum, the Management Committee may decide to suspend or terminate a membership, subject to approval, at a General Meeting, of the Forum.

#### 4. Meetings

##### a) General Meetings

- The Forum will have general meetings of all forum members as and when necessary and in any case at least once per year.
- A Quorum for a general meeting of the Forum will consist of at least 20 members or 1/3 of the membership of the Forum (whichever is the fewest).
- Forum members must be notified at least seven days in advance of a meeting.

##### b) Committee

- A Committee will be elected at the first meeting of the Forum in each year.
- The Committee will elect a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer with roles as defined in section 9 below
- The Committee will comprise of between 4 and 9 members which will include the Chair, Vice-Chair Secretary and Treasurer and up to 5 other members.
- If there are less than 9 members on the Committee the committee may co-opt additional members from amongst the membership of the Forum.
- The committee will meet as and when necessary.

- The quorum for a Committee meeting will be at least 3 members which must include at least one of the officers.
- The majority of Committee members shall be residents of the area.
- The Committee will be responsible for the running of the forum and may prepare funding bids and take decisions about the use of any resources the forum has.
- The Committee may undertake work on the development of the Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Orders on behalf of the Forum – subject to item 7 below.
- Any member of the Forum may attend committee meetings to observe and may inspect any papers or minutes of committee meetings.
- The Committee will be responsible for opening and managing a bank account to handle any financial resources the Forum may have.

#### c) Working Groups

Either the Forum or the committee may set up working Groups as necessary to carry out specific pieces of work. The membership of working groups will be drawn from the membership of the Forum.

## 5. Decision Making

Decisions will be made by a simple majority of those present. Voting will be by show of hands and in the event of a tied vote the person chairing the meeting will have a second, casting vote. No decisions may be made unless the meeting is quorate.

## 6. Non-Members

Non-members may be invited to meetings of the Forum, committee or Working Groups and with the permission of the Chair may speak and take part in discussions. Non-members will not be eligible to vote on any decisions made at meetings they attend.

## 7. Neighbourhood Planning

The committee or a working group may carry out work on developing a Neighbourhood Plan or Development Order but any decision to undertake, consult on or submit a draft Neighbourhood Plan, or Development Order to the local authority for validation, examination, referendum or adoption must be taken at a general meeting of the Forum.

## 8. Complaints

Any complaint about the behaviour of a member of the Neighbourhood Forum shall be made in writing to the Chair. The Chair and Secretary will investigate the complaint and decide on action as appropriate. If the complaint concerns the Chair or Secretary then other members of the Forum will be appointed to investigate in their place by vote. If a member acts in a way that the Committee considers to be prejudicial to the best interests of the Forum or the residents/businesses of the area then the Committee may revoke their membership on the basis of a vote.

## 9. Officers

The Committee will elect the following officers from amongst the membership of the Committee:

### **Chair**

The Chair will:

- Call and chair meetings of the Forum and the Committee
- Be responsible for interpreting this constitution and ensuring that all meetings and business are conducted in accordance with the constitution
- Be a signatory for the Forum's bank account

### **Vice-Chair**

The Vice-Chair will:

- Assist the Chair in their duties
- Deputise for the chair in their absence
- Be a signatory for the Forum's bank account

### **Secretary**

The Secretary will:

- Make the necessary arrangements for meetings,
- Maintain copies of any papers and minutes and make them available for inspection by members on request
- Take minutes of Forum and Committee meetings
- Be a signatory for the Forum's bank account
- Maintain a list of members of the Forum and their contact details
- Maintain a register of Members Interests

### **Treasurer**

The Treasurer will:

- Manage the Forum's finances and bank account
- Keep accounts which will be presented to a General meeting of the Forum each year.
- Be a signatory for the Forum's bank account

## 10. Alteration of the Constitution

The constitution may be altered by resolution of the majority of members present and voting at a general meeting of the Forum.

## 11. Finances

- The Committee will make arrangements to open a bank account in order to deposit and draw on any funds that might be made available for the use of the Forum.
- Any cheques must be signed by at least two signatories who are not related and who do not reside at the same address.
- Any decisions to spend money belonging to the Forum must be made by formal agreement of the Committee and minuted.
- Accounts will be reported to a General meeting of the Forum each year.

## 12. Dissolution of the Forum

The Forum will exist for 5 years from the date of formation unless 2/3 of those present and voting at a quorate general meeting agree to dissolve the forum.

At its AGM at the start of the 5th year the Forum shall consider whether to dissolve itself or continue and if it decides to continue will consider what its objectives and role will be in the future.

If dissolved any monies left over will be gifted to the Barnes Institute.