

Neighbourhood Planning Advice Note

Referendums and Publicity

Once your Neighbourhood Plan has been recommended to proceed to a public referendum by an Independent Examiner and a date has been set for the referendum, Parish and Town Councils will want to communicate this good news to the local community. This advice note is designed to help Parish and Town Councils ensure they have sufficient regard to the contents of the [Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity \(March 2011\)](#) ('the Code') and to avoid breaching these requirements in any publicity before the referendum takes place.

“Publicity is any communication in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or a section of the public.”

Section 6 of the Local Government Act 1986

1. What are the types of publicity Parish and Town Councils can undertake?

1.1 Produce a poster, flyer, or leaflet

Producing a flyer, poster or leaflet before the referendum will help the community become more informed and come out to use their vote on the day of the referendum. Information given in these forms of communication can help in notifying or reminding people of the date, time and location of the referendum, information about the question that will be asked at referendum and explaining that the community's votes determine the outcome on the future use of the plan. Posters, flyers, and leaflets must not encourage the community to vote in a particular way.

1.2 An example poster is shown. This is a good example of a poster that is factual and simple and could be used as the basis for producing your own version.

Parish or Town Council Name / Logo

Referendum

We are at the final stage of the Neighbourhood Plan process, and it is now up to everyone who lives in the Parish to vote on whether you would like the Plan to come into force.

If you choose to vote, you will be asked the following question:

Do you want Northumberland County Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Broomhaugh & Riding to help decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?

You will be able to vote 'yes' or 'no'. If a majority of people vote 'yes', the Plan will come into force. This would mean that from that point, any planning decisions within our Parish will be made in accordance with policies in the Plan.

Please come along and use your vote!

Day / Date

Venue, 7am – 10pm



1.2 Use your local press or parish newsletter

If you have a local news publication or a parish newsletter, include information about the neighbourhood plan referendum. Again, like the publicity poster stick to the facts and focus on where, when, and how the community can vote. Any paid-for advertising must comply with the [Advertising Standards Authority's Advertising Codes](#).

1.3 Use available websites, social media channels and blogs

Using the internet to inform the community about the referendum is a valuable tool to utilise in the run up to the referendum. Information that is factual and simple is the best form of on-line publicity. Avoid the opportunity for public comments and debate on such posts as this may generate opinionated commentary on which way people should vote.

2. Other important points to remember about publicity

- 2.1 Parish and Town Councils and even those members who form part of a neighbourhood plan steering group should not use public funds to mount publicity campaigns whose primary purpose is to persuade the public to vote “Yes” in the neighbourhood plan referendum. There is a restriction on Parish and Town Councils incurring expenditure to publish material which is or appears to be designed to influence people.
- 2.2 It is acceptable for Parish and Town Councils to correct erroneous material which has been published by other parties, even though the material being corrected may have been published with the intention of influencing the public’s opinions about the neighbourhood plan. Such publicity should seek to explain the facts in an objective manner.
- 2.3 All publicity from the Parish or Town Council should clearly and unambiguously identify itself as a product of the Parish or Town Council. Printed material, including any newsletters or similar material published by the Parish or Town Council, should do this on the front page of the publication.

3. Appropriate expenditure for publicity

- 3.1 Maximum expenditure allowed for publicity by any party or individual is calculated based on the number of people on the register of electors for the neighbourhood area. The exact amount allowed for each referendum will be published in the Information Statement, published by Northumberland County Council before the referendum.
- 3.2 Expenditure for publicity purposes means the costs incurred by or on behalf of any individual or body during the referendum period in relation to:
 - Advertising of any nature
 - Unsolicited material addressed to voters
 - Information about the referendum, the question being asked or arguments for and against the question
 - Market research or canvassing
 - Provision of any property, services, or facilities in connection with press conferences or dealings with the media
 - Transport (by any means) of persons to anywhere with a view to obtaining publicity in connection with a referendum campaign
 - Rallies and other events, including public meetings.
- 3.3 It is an offence for a campaign organiser to exceed the referendum expenses limits and if found guilty would be liable to a fine of up to £5000 and/or imprisonment of up to 12 months.