

The Regional Empowerment Partnership for the East of England

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A local officer's guide to understanding the role and impact of Community Led Planning

Community led planning: all members of a community coming together to say what's good and distinctive about where they live; how they will work to protect and improve where they live; and how they wish public bodies to help them.



People creating their vision for their community

Community led planning (CLP) takes several forms, including Parish Plans (rural), Neighbourhood Plans (urban), Market Town Healthchecks and Planning for Real. These lead to a vision and action plan for the future, embracing social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the community and all those who live and work there.

Another form of CLP is a Town or Village Design Statement (VDS), which relates to the physical appearance and character of the local built environment and links to the planning system.

Neighbourhood Plan, Kempston, Bedfordshire

Working with the Town Council and other organisations, the residents produced a plan covering many issues including health, crime and retail. The neighbourhood plan has informed community strategy and service planning for the borough at Local Authority level. A community action group was set up to oversee implementation of the actions. Key successes for the group include purchase of mobile security cameras, drafting of a borough wide by-law to prevent the selling of cars from Southfields Road and increased partnership working between Bedford Borough Council and the local community.

"It's wonderful! I think that this is the way forward and I would like to use it more."

Community Safety Manager, Bedford Borough Council

Parish Plan, Stowupland, Suffolk

The impact of the Parish Plan has had a very positive impact on the village. From being told four years earlier that the village lacked community spirit, it went on to win the Suffolk Village of the Year in 2006. Even before the completion of the Parish Plan, the community were reaping the benefits such as holding a village 'Fun Day' and starting a 'Good Neighbour Scheme'. Working with the Parish Council, the community has achieved nearly all the actions including facilities for young people, improvements to footpaths, better travel routes to school and increased police presence in the area.

"A Parish Plan encourages self-help and diversification, as volunteers from the parish become more active in village matters."

Community Development Officer,
Mid Suffolk District Council

Community led planning can help public bodies to improve their services by using the results to focus attention on the right problems and at the right level and, by working with a community, increase understanding of and satisfaction with its services.

The results can inform the development of Sustainable Community Strategies by Local Strategic Partnerships, the priorities and targets of Local Area Agreement business plans and the selection of National Indicators and targets. The process and consideration of the results by public bodies provides evidence for Comprehensive Area Assessments. Village Design Statements can inform the Local Delivery Framework.

OFFICER PARTICIPATION and ROLE:

Early and on-going involvement, support and advice by officers from public bodies brings significant benefits to community led planning process and its results. For public bodies, involvement gives opportunities to explain their priorities and ask for specific information as part of the process.

Information

- Provides quantitative data to community
- Collects information, data and evidence to reshape service business and delivery plans
- Improves sustainable community strategies through greater knowledge.

Communication

- Enables meaningful dialogue with communities
- Informs communities about service delivery planning and opportunity to influence it
- Provides route to inform community of response by public body to action plan.

Understanding

- Increases understanding of local people's needs and concerns
- Helps identify potential improvements to service provision
- Improved forward planning by early knowledge of potential requests or service delivery problems
- Appreciation of checks and balances, constraints and barriers on public bodies
- Improved understanding of planning system and decisions.

Quality

- Makes links to mainstream policy and priorities, resulting in more realistic action plans
- Relates process and output with planning system, particularly for Village Design Statements
- Leads to informed decisions by community
- An aspirational plan but with realistic conclusions and actions
- Improved quality and robustness of final plan and actions
- Increased reputation for community led planning.

References:

- Guide to Community Led Planning (www.communityledplanning.com)
- Comprehensive Area Assessment (www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/index.asp)
- Guide to Duty to Involve (www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/publication?id=20497)
- IDEa support for local government (www.idea.gov.uk)
- Overview of Parish Plans and links to local Rural Community Councils (www.ruralactioneast.org.uk)
- Communities and Local Government policy (www.communities.gov.uk/communities/communityempowerment)
- Police Citizen Focus and Neighbourhood Policing Teams (www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk)
- Comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy (www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/9639939)
- Department of Health policy of involvement (www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_089787)
- Neighbourhood Initiative Foundation Planning for Real (www.nif.co.uk/planningforreal)

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This paper has been produced by Rural Action East for the Regional Empowerment Partnership for the East of England.