

**Localism Briefing Paper**

**Community Led Planning**

**November 2011**

**About this Briefing Paper**

The Localism Act is one of the key pieces of legislation proposed by the Government. It proposes a radical shift of power from central government to local communities. If you don't know about these powers and how they can be used you might be missing out on opportunities to help your community.

This paper is one of a series produced by Cambridgeshire ACRE informing people about Localism and what it means for Cambridgeshire communities.

**What this Briefing covers**

The paper explains the role of Community-Led Plans (CLPs) in relation to the new Localism proposals contained in the Localism Act.

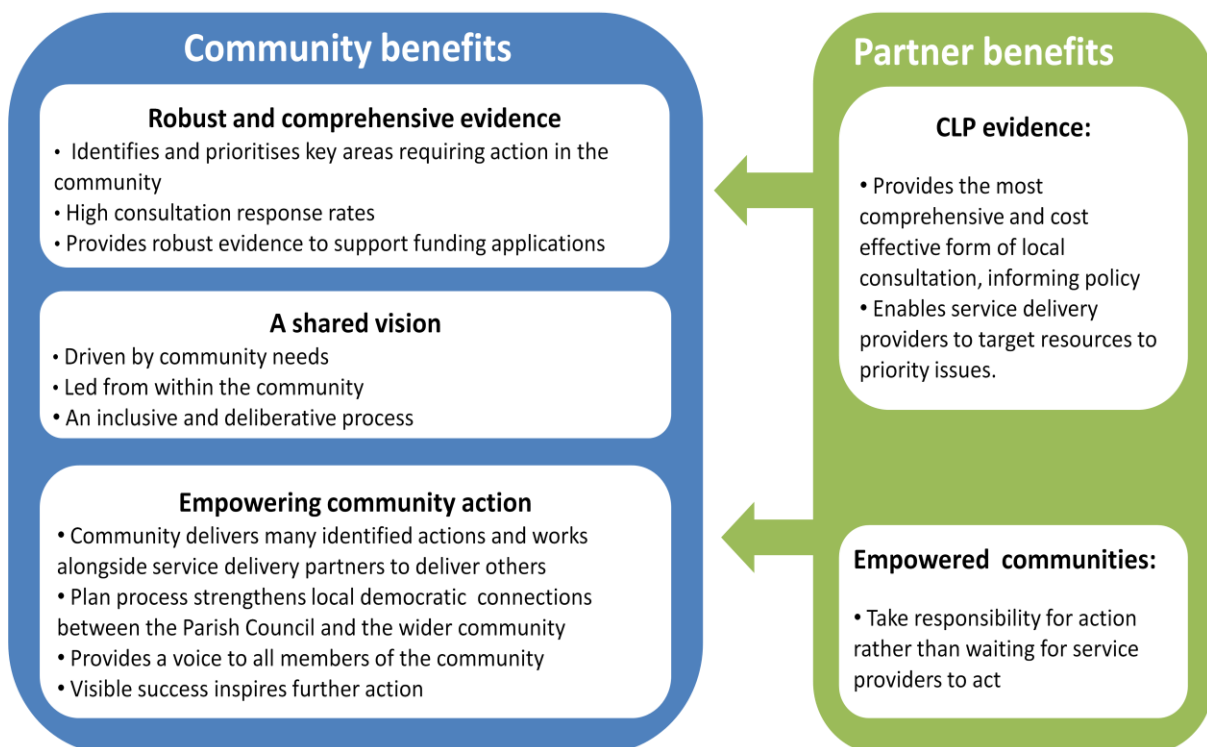
**COMMUNITY-LED PLANNING**

**What is Community-Led Planning?**

Community Led (or Parish) Plans create a shared vision for how the community wants to develop and identify the action needed to achieve it. They provide a way for you to say if you want more open spaces, more effective public transport, affordable housing, better access to health care, a chance to buy local produce at local shops, and to choose how your community helps everyone in it to relax and make the most of their leisure time.

**Why is Community-Led Planning important?**

Community-led plans (CLPs) provide vital benefits to the communities which undertake them, and also support the work of service delivery partners:



## How does Community-Led Planning work in Cambridgeshire?

Cambridgeshire ACRE has a long history of working with individual communities to deliver CLPs, and working with local authority officers to help deliver CLP actions. Over 70 rural communities have so far created their own action plans as a result of the community-led parish plan process with Cambridgeshire ACRE's support.

Creating an action plan empowers communities, since they deliver around 60% of the actions themselves. This visible action also inspires increased volunteering within a community.

The evidence within CLP action plans is useful to service providers in helping them target future service planning. Cambridgeshire ACRE maintains a database of all actions in Cambridgeshire parishes identified through CLPs. This information enables local authorities to understand community issues at a parish level. When considered in clusters, actions which occur repeatedly in several CLPs can improve understanding of community priorities at a district and county level. In recent years, CLP action plans have been used by the local authorities to shape their District-wide Sustainable Community Strategies.

Cambridgeshire County Council and the four rural District Councils currently fund Cambridgeshire ACRE to facilitate CLPs across Cambridgeshire, recognising the benefits that they provide.

## COMMUNITY-LED PLANNING AND THE BIG SOCIETY

The Big Society is the Government's vision of a society where individuals and communities have more power and responsibility, and use it to create better neighbourhoods and local services. The primary way in which the Government is seeking to facilitate the Big Society is via the Localism Act, which was given Royal Assent on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Most of the provisions in the Act will be implemented by around April 2012.

### The Localism Act

Under the Localism Act, communities will be given a number of new powers that they will be able to exercise to determine how their community develops. These powers include:

- Neighbourhood Plans
- Community Right to Build
- Community Right to Buy – 'Assets of community value'
- Community Right to Challenge
- Community Infrastructure Levy

(Explanations of these proposed powers are available on the Cambridgeshire ACRE website.)

### ***A key consideration regarding Localism Act powers***

The proposed Localism Act powers provide an increased range of tools for achieving community needs and aspirations. In order for communities to deliver their aspirations, the focus in making use of these powers must be on selecting the best tool for the job, rather than on the tools themselves. Supporting organisations such as councils and third sector agencies must therefore help individual communities to make informed choices.

### A comparison of Community-Led Plans and Neighbourhood Plans

The Localism Act proposals have raised questions about whether CLPs are still a valuable tool, since there has been understandable confusion about the overlap between CLPs and Neighbourhood Plans. While there are similarities between CLPs and Neighbourhood Plans, there are some key differences between them, as shown in the table below.

The two types of plan, although they have confusingly similar names, perform a different role. CLPs are a tool for identifying and prioritising all the needs and aspirations of the community. Neighbourhood Plans are a tool for shaping the built environment based upon the needs of the community.

While Neighbourhood Plans will have statutory power to shape the built environment, this power comes with a duty to follow statutory procedure, complicating the plan-making process, increasing both the expert input required and the amount of funding needed to complete it.

By preparing a Neighbourhood Plan without first having prepared a CLP, a community might therefore expend great energy in creating the plan, without first considering whether a Neighbourhood Plan is the best tool for achieving what the community wants.

#### Differences between CLPs and Neighbourhood Plans

	Community-Led Plans	Neighbourhood Plans
<b>Focus</b>	All issues (e.g. from a youth club to renewable energies)	The built environment
<b>Powers</b>	No statutory powers	Statutory powers
<b>Action responsibility</b>	Community itself, service delivery partners	Local Planning Authority adopts and enforces the Neighbourhood Plan
<b>Requirements</b>	No requirements as to what is in the plan; just what the community is concerned about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be aligned with 'strategic' local plan documents</li> <li>• Independent examination required</li> </ul>
<b>Expertise required</b>	No technical expertise required	Planning expertise/advice required
<b>Process</b>	Deliberative process to create action plan	Deliberative process to create action plan; referendum at the end
<b>Cost</b>	Roughly £800-£3,000	Up to £17,000

### Using CLPs to inform the choice of localism powers

Since CLPs are a tried and tested method of consulting a community about all aspects of quality of life to create a common vision for the community, they can therefore act as the starting point for delivering real localism, by enabling communities to take informed decisions about how to deliver the three types of actions a CLP will identify. These three types include:

- Actions which can be completed by the community itself (e.g. setting up a children's holiday club, or creating a local business directory)
- Actions relating to service delivery (e.g. issues relating to traffic management, bus services, policing or recycling)
- Actions relating to the built environment (e.g. develop plans for affordable housing, improve children's play facilities, renovate or build a new village hall)

For actions relating to service delivery and the built environment, the community needs to be informed as to the range of ways available to deliver this action, so that it can take an informed decision upon the best way. This may be through one of the new localism powers, such as a Community Right to Challenge or Neighbourhood Plan, or through another method.

The flow-chart on page 6 shows how CLPs can identify the needs and aspirations of the community, and how this leads to a choice of delivery tools, which include the proposed Localism powers.

### Caveat

This briefing represents the views of Cambridgeshire ACRE alone.

### Document Information

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### Delivering community-led actions and localism powers

