

Community Led Planning Cambridgeshire

Mepal Parish Plan

Introduction

Mepal, a small rural village six miles from the Cathedral city of Ely, took just 12 months to complete their plan. They were introduced to Community Led Plans through a presentation given by an officer from Cambridgeshire ACRE where advice on how to undertake a Community Led Plan and the benefits of completing a plan were explained. Advice on possible funding streams and costings for undertaking a plan were also provided so the community were fully aware of the process, advantages and costs associated with producing a Community Led Plan before they decided to proceed.

Mepal is an active community, with numerous clubs and local events, and undertaking a Community Led Plan enabled them to map out their existing services and facilities and identify any gaps. It also enabled them to set out how they wanted to develop over the coming years and served to increase community spirit through encouraging people to become more involved in community activities.

What is Community Led Planning?

Community Led Planning is a structured process, undertaken by local community members to create a vision for their community. The vision will encompass social, environmental, cultural and economic aspects of life, celebrating the positive and highlighting needs through the development of a detailed action plan.

The plan and its actions:

- Involves and includes everyone in the community.
- Maps out services and facilities currently available in the community.
- Discovers what issues and opportunities people feel need addressing.

Support provided

Valuable support, assistance and guidance on developing your Community Led Plan is available from your county Rural Community Council (RCC). For the East of England these are Beds RCC, Cambs ACRE, RCC of Essex, CDA for Herts, Norfolk RCC and Suffolk ACRE.

KEY FACTS Mepal

County: **Cambridgeshire**
 District: **East Cambridgeshire**
 District Council
 Households: **410**
 Plan completed: **June 2008**



Mepal



Welcome to Mepal



Mepal village hall



Mepal COMMUNITY LED PLAN

The process

Following the presentation by Cambridgeshire ACRE:

- All the village clubs were invited to send a member to the annual Parish Assembly and from the attendees they found 12 willing participants and a steering group was formed.
- The steering group was a good cross-section of the community, with some members having been born in Mepal and others being relatively new to the area.
- The questionnaire was hand delivered and hand collected from all households and a prize draw of £50 for respondents encouraged people to complete the questionnaire.
- The local newsletter 'Mepal People' highlighted the production of the Community Led Plan and drew attention to the need for people to complete the questionnaire. Using these methods the community achieved a response rate of approximately 54%.

Impact of the plan and its actions

The plan has improved communication throughout the village and the community has been brought closer together through the process. The opportunity to highlight the achievements of the village has been very beneficial, as has identifying weaknesses and areas needing more attention, such as difficulties communicating with new members of the community.

The resulting Action Plan was divided into sections and members of the Parish Plan group took the lead on various issues. Actions were prioritised according to how quickly they could be achieved. In this way the group ensured that the community action did not stop or falter with the production of the plan but the process continued.

The group will present their plan to East Cambridgeshire District Council for information and feedback purposes although no date has been confirmed.

In terms of wider influence, there has been agreement with East Cambridgeshire District Council to resurface some roads and footpaths, although the finances are yet to be confirmed.

Local Authority engagement

The community did not seek Local Authority involvement and made a conscious decision to ignore any strategic documents and instead to see what issues resulted from the process with no external influences.

Quote from Community

"Although there are some people who consider the process a waste of time, more positives than negatives have resulted from the plan; people in the village have been brought together resulting in a closer community and the opportunity to highlight the achievements of the village."

CHAIRMAN OF PARISH PLAN STEERING GROUP

Benefit to Local Authority

All the issues in Community Led Plans (health, young people, crime, transport and access) link to the Local Sustainable Community Strategy so there are strong relations between them.

Quote from Local Authority

"The process should only be influenced by people living and working in the community."

PARTNERSHIPS OFFICER EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Key learning for others

Seek the input and guidance of someone who has already been through the entire process. Also, don't get too bogged down in the finer points of the process.

Further information

This Case Study was produced by Rural Action East in collaboration with Cambridgeshire ACRE as part of research undertaken into CLP on behalf of the Regional Empowerment Partnership for the East of England. We would like to thank Mepal Parish Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council for making this Case Study possible.

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