

Community-led or Parish Planning

Overview and Terms of Service
provided by Cambridgeshire ACRE



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1. An Introduction to Community-led or Parish Planning

Communities everywhere are constantly changing. The government wants local communities to take more control of their own lives, to say what they want doing in their own neighbourhoods and to engage with other organisations to get it done. You cannot prevent change, but what you can do is influence it. Community-led or Parish Plans help your community to make change happen. They mean an opportunity for everyone in your community to make themselves heard.

Community-led or Parish Plans lay out a shared vision for the community over the next 10+ years and contain a detailed action plan for achieving this vision. It is up to the community to define the issues to be tackled by a Community-led or Parish Plan.

A Community-led or Parish Plan sets out how community action can meet local needs, can help to prioritise resources and can provide important information to help influence the policies, decisions and actions of others. Community-led or Parish Plans belong to the community, to be delivered by that community or in partnership with other agencies.

It is a process by which the whole community can voice their opinions on what actions they wish to see taken in their local area in the future. The plan when completed may highlight actions that can be taken by community members, be used to influence service providers such as your local authority, and act as evidence of need when applying for funding.

Community-led or Parish Plans should:

- be comprehensive, considering all aspects of local life including social, economic and environmental issues of concern to the community.
- involve the whole community; everyone should have a chance to have their say and get involved in producing a Parish Plan.
- be based upon information provided by community participation, surveys and research.
- involve Local Authorities with the process
- be focused on creating an action plan with a clear statement of Who? What? Why? and How?

Community-led or Parish Plans can be produced by any size of community and neighbourhood including those in urban areas, but work best in communities of under 3,000 residents.

2. Why produce a Community-led or Parish Plan?

'If you do not know where you are going, how will you know when you have got there?'

As part of its policy of 'active citizenship' the Government wants to give more power to local people to decide what's best for their own communities. If you as a community can show that you are taking your future seriously, a Community-led or Parish Plan might increase your chances of getting local authority support to enhance your community's economic, social and environmental well-being. It will give you the evidence to help inform policymaking by a range of organisations, from the local planning authority to police and health services. It will also help you to develop and maintain effective working relationships with all those outside bodies that provide services to your community, now or in the future.

Community-led or Parish Plans, with your enthusiasm and determination, can make things happen in your community. The benefits of producing an Action Plan within the Community-led or Parish Plans are many. They:

- Give all local people, not just the confident, the chance to develop a vision for their community, identifying positive and negative issues
- Influence and inform others including Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks
- Provide clear evidence of community needs and priorities for Town and Parish Councils to plan their resources and effort
- Strengthen the Town or Parish Councils relationship with all sections of the community
- Help the community enhance its status
- Develop increased local voluntary action
- Create a real sense of community spirit, getting people involved and talking to each other
- Reinvigorate local democracy by stimulating interest in community affairs
- Gain funding for local initiatives by demonstrating you have been through a needs assessment with full community participation
- Highlight projects which need involvement from other agencies
- Encourage partnership working

3. What support is available?

Carrying out a Community-led or Parish Plan is fun and rewarding for a community. It can also be hard work.....but help is at hand!

Cambridgeshire ACRE will provide support throughout the process of producing a Community-led or Parish Plan.

This includes:

- Support in planning the process.
- Advice on the project
- Support to establish a steering group - advising on inclusiveness and representation on the steering group or town partnership
- Advice on funding sources, including budget and timetable preparation for production and implementation of the action plan within the Community-led or Parish Plan
- Provision of sample documents such as constitutions, draft questionnaires, action plans etc
- Attendance at some steering group meetings to pass on information and advice from other communities
- Providing direct contact with other Community-led or Parish Plan groups
- Guidance on community involvement and consultation - making the process fully inclusive
- Linking into other relevant County, District / Local Authority initiatives, and support services where appropriate
- Advice on which statutory agencies, service providers and other bodies should be approached to achieve maximum results from the Community-led or Parish Plan
- Advice on linking the action plan to other local strategies such as the County or District / Local Authority Sustainable Community Strategy
- Practical help in implementing the action plan
- A library of community development tools.

Cambridgeshire ACRE's staff have specialist skills in community development and local community planning. We help rural communities, to both develop Community-led or Parish Plans which consult and include the views of the whole community and to broker engagement between service providers and local communities at all stages. We have skills in helping communities identify their own needs and in developing a community's ability to take action for themselves across social, economic and environmental issues. Our ethos is to reach out to local communities and to help rural people to help themselves, by providing support and advice and by making them aware of the help that is available from other bodies - both statutory and voluntary.

Apart from Community-led or Parish Planning we can also offer specialist advice about community development and empowerment, rural housing, rural social enterprise, village and community buildings and environmental issues.

4. The 9 Step Process

Communities undertaking a Community-led or Parish Plan are advised to follow our tried and tested 9 step process.

The steps are shown briefly below but Cambridgeshire ACRE's staff work with the community every step of way to ensure a good quality plan is delivered.

STEP 1: GETTING STARTED

To start the process you need to get people interested with publicity and hold an open event to gather support to undertake the process.

STEP 2: ESTABLISHING THE STEERING GROUP

Set up a steering group with wide representation from the community.

STEP 3: DEVELOPING A PROJECT PLAN

Over a series of meetings put together a strategy, budget and programme on how you are going to undertake the plan, ensuring you consult with everyone in the community.

STEP 4: COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

This is a time to undertake a variety of interesting and fun consultation exercises involving as many people as possible both in taking part and in expressing their views.

STEP 5: PRIORITISING AND PLANNING ACTION

Sort and prioritise the issues and begin to form focus groups to take forward actions.

STEP 6: DRAFTING THE PLAN

Put together the first draft to share with the community and partner organisations.

STEP 7: FINALISING THE PLAN

Consult with the community and partner organisations and produce and publish the final document. Celebrate your community's achievements.

STEP 8: IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Consolidate any actions started and begin to implement others. Present the action plan to the Local Strategic Partnership to help inform the District's Sustainable Community Strategy – a strategic plan for promoting and improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of all people in an area.

STEP 9: MONITOR AND REVIEW

Once you have completed a plan a regular review and update will ensure continuous progress on the needs and requirements of your community.

5. What next?

If the parish council / community agree to move forward with a parish plan, their first move should be to contact Cambridgeshire ACRE for advice on what to do next.

Please contact:



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