

# COMMUNITY LED (TOWN OR PARISH) PLANS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is a community led plan?

It is a document setting out a vision for the future of a town or parish over the next 5-10 years. As it contains issues, priorities and an action plan, it is useful to think of it as a town or parish strategy or business plan.

## What does a community led plan cover?

A community led plan can be very wide in scope, covering **ALL** issues of concern to the community.

## Who does a community led plan?

A community led steering group leads the preparation of a plan with the support of the Town or Parish Council. Many other people may get involved by offering time and skills to specific tasks. Some may wish to work on a single topic that interests them.

## Who is on the steering group?

Ideally the steering group should be composed of about 8 (or up to 15 in a large parish) people of whom a maximum of 2 should be Town or Parish Councillors. Aim for a representative mix of people - gender, age, skills, social grouping, and areas of the parish.

## Why do a community led plan?

Many Town or Parish Councils want a plan because they want to be more proactive in planning for the future of their community and want to be able know and provide evidence to show what residents **REALLY** want. Here are some other reasons for doing a community led plan:

- Help influence the future of your community
- Demonstrate what your community needs over about 5-10 years
- Provide evidence to back this up
- Influence development issues
- Provide robust evidence to support funding applications
- Manage change and consider future challenges before they become urgent
- Develop community spirit

## What influence does it have?

It has no formal status but it does have **influence** with local service providers, local councils and other agencies. It can link in with the Community Area Plan which provides information about community priorities to the Area Boards.

***“Where town or parish plans exist, or are being developed, they will be a valuable tool to highlight local priorities, alongside the community area plan, and to gauge progression in addressing those issues.”***

*Area Board Handbook*

## How long does it take?

15-18 months is average. Few plans take less time than this and some take longer.

## Why does it take so long?

Breaks in activity are needed for holidays and Christmas etc, so the time soon passes! Also good community consultation is an important part of producing a community led plan, and involving people and keeping them informed of progress does take time.

## How is it produced?

Once the steering group has formed and secured funding there is a programme of community consultation and feedback over several months so that everyone within the community has a chance to have their say. Once the issues are known the community are involved again in deciding how they can be addressed. This is all brought together into a final document and action plan.

## What methods are used for consultation?

Many communities use questionnaires as they are a familiar technique, but they do have several drawbacks and are not the best method to reach everyone. EnAct can advise about the many other methods that can be used that can tie in with other events happening in the community.

It is a useful first step to consider the structure of the community and what methods might best be used to reach each section. This might mean that different approaches could be used for the young people, elderly, businesses, and many other sections of the community. EnAct can advise about a range of techniques and provide training in their use.

## What funding is available?

It is generally expected that some funding will be provided by the Town or Parish Council in whose area the plan is being developed. Contact EnAct for advice on other possible sources of funding.

## What is the funding needed for?

Typically some funding is needed for publicity, room hire, refreshments, consultation, and printing costs. Printing costs are less now that electronic files of community led plans are in wider use

### What types of actions are included in community led plans?

There is usually a mix of actions covering a wide range of topics such as transport, traffic, community facilities, the environment, housing, communication, the local economy, community safety etc. Many of the actions will be for the community to implement without external help, but there will also be some that will need to be done with help from local partners such as statutory agencies. Many of the actions may fall within the scope of the Town or Parish Council.

### How often should a community led plan be reviewed?

An update on progress might be made at the annual Town or Parish meeting but a full review might not be needed for 5-10 years. If there is rapid change in the community such as large building developments or loss of local services, then an earlier review might be needed. Reviewing a plan does not take so long as producing it in the first place.

### How does a community led plan fit with Localism and neighbourhood plans?

Unlike town or parish plans which cover all issues of concern to the community, neighbourhood plans focus primarily on issues relating to spatial planning and land use. Whilst town or parish plans are evidencing and influencing documents, neighbourhood plans have more formal, statutory status. However, evidence of local needs and aspirations relating to land use planning, gathered in the development of your parish or town plan, can be extracted and used in support of a neighbourhood plan. For further information on neighbourhood planning in Wiltshire, see: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/neighbourhoodplanning.htm>

### How does a community led plan differ from a village design statement?

Unlike a town or parish plan a village design statement does not cover community and social issues but focuses on issues relating to spatial planning and village character. It can have a more formal status so must be prepared with the guidance and with support from the local planning authority.

### How many parishes have done a community led plan?

About 25% of parishes in Wiltshire & Swindon have done, or are doing, a parish plan. Contact EnAct for up to date information about parish plans in your area.

### What have parish plans achieved?

Mere	£44,500 funding for leisure and recreation facilities
Hilmarton	new community hall shared with school
Chiseldon	new community hall
Urchfont	games surface and youth shelter
Edington	allotments
Ashton Keynes	village hall access for wheelchair users
Minety	youth shelter
Kington St Michael	business breakfasts and local business information widely available improvements to crossing by school
Lyneham & Bradenstoke	new business buddies network and bus service to local supermarket following closure of village shop

Many Parish Councils also report:

- Improved communication - newsletters and websites
- New people involved in community activity or standing for Parish Council
- Increased support for village businesses
- Better understanding of the role of Parish Council, Local Authority etc
- Better networking between groups
- More able to influence external agencies e.g. planning

### Further information

For further information, contact us at:

01380 732826 or 732801  
enact@communityfirst.org.uk

EnAct is a service provided by:

