

Choosing a Community Plan



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East Suffolk Council provides support for Community Led Planning. We would like to encourage communities to help shape the future of their community and improve their local area and there are various ways of doing that. Community led Planning involves consulting everyone in the community to gather issues and assets and look at possibilities and actions together.

This document looks at the different sorts of community plans that you may wish to produce. It gives a rough guide to help you think about which sort of plan would be best when you consider your needs and resources and if you would like to know more there is a list of contacts at the end of the guide.

1. Parish/Town Review (2.5 – 3 hours)

This is a one day/evening consultation where people can meet to look at the assets and issues, discuss them and agree on actions producing in effect a mini plan in one meeting. It can be used as a starting point from which the parish might want to go onto doing a Parish/Neighbourhood Plan, form groups for particular projects and so on. It is relaxed with time to meet neighbours or meet new people.

The Process

- Rough age, length of residence, location, community involvement collected from those attending as they arrive
- People are invited to go around themed sheets to note down good points and issues
- A refreshment area gives people a chance to meet, take a break and chat (and volunteer)
- People are encouraged to also complete action sheets to not only note issues but what sort of actions they feel should be take to resolve them
- A full report and action plan is drawn up from the event and sent to the Parish/Town Council or meeting Chair
- The format is flexible and can be tailored to fit anything the tow or parish would like to do

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quick• Flexible format and adaptable• People can meet and discuss assets and issues• Ability to offer their opinion• They can volunteer for future involvement• Action plan created• Acts as a starting point	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dependent on the people in attendance• May not represent the entire community• Requires significant publicity•

2. Parish Plan (12 - 18 months)

A Parish Plan is a comprehensive holistic plan that can encompass all aspects of the community. They don't have any statutory weight but they are taken into consideration by local councils. They can be useful in deciding community priorities, building community spirit, providing evidence when dealing with other agencies, to obtain funding, start new groups, lead to further actions, plans and so on.

The Process

- Evens to identify issues, needs, aspirations and the good things people want to enhance
- A steering group formed from volunteers from the community is responsible for the process
- Full community consultation to gain more information and ideas of action people would like to take to move things on
- Data from consultations is analysed
- Actions are prioritised and partners identified
- A report and action plan are produced and the action plan can be updated as necessary

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages with all of the community • It can throw up new ideas and revitalise a community • Produces an action plan and prioritises actions • Increases community action and volunteering • Steering Group members can gain new skills • Helps the Council to engage with residents and gives them a mandate to lobby for funding bids • Although not a statutory document, it still carries weight with service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a quick fix – takes between 12 and 18 months • Not a planning document – has no weight over planning applications • Can be difficult to keep momentum going • Takes considerable time and effort

3. Neighbourhood Plans (3+ years)

These are planning documents dealing primarily with land use and development. Once complete they form part of the District Local Plan, have statutory weight and become part of the planning legislation for the District. They were introduced to give communities more control over development in their area and are pro growth. They can be used to shape where and what developments will look like and propose additional development. The plan is led by the Parish/Town Council who can involve other members of the community to help them.

The Process:

- Getting started
- Identifying the issues – full community consultation
- Develop a vision and objectives (what do you want to achieve)
- Generate options – looking at the positive and negative effects of any development
- Draft your Neighbourhood Plan
- Consultation with the community and submission to the Local Authority
- Independent examination and possible revisions
- Community referendum and adoption by the Local Authority

The Neighbourhood (Development) Plan focuses primarily on planning related issues, other issues can be looked at but they don't form a part of the finished plan.

There are a set of steps which need to be gone through so that the plan meets all the necessary planning regulations, it is then examined by an independent examiner, and needs to have the support of the community via a local referendum before being adopted by the local planning authority.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It carries statutory weight as a planning document• It gives local people more control over development in their local area• Can be used to build in more green spaces• Provides an opportunity for people to get involved in the planning process• There is a thorough consultation process• The plan is produced with help from the	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It takes time due to the various consultation periods required and depending on the complexity of the plan• It's a large time commitment for volunteers over a long period of time• There are other avenues you can use

4. Town Action Plan including surrounding parishes (1 - 2 Years)

This consultation includes not only the Town but also the surrounding parishes that access services from there and bring in trade. This sort of plan is similar to a Parish Plan but with greater emphasis on the economic aspects of development and wider issues such as infrastructure development, education, health, transport as well as housing.

The process:

- A coordinator is employed to oversee the project and establish a leadership structure.
- Factual data is gathered about the area by consulting members of the community and the surrounding communities using a number of engagement methods.
- Their needs and aspirations are recorded, which are used to tease out actions required to address issues.
- Priorities are agreed and a detailed action plan is produced.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brings people together and can be the start of new groups and projects to improve the town• Community consultation gives the Town a clearer mandate and helps bring in funding• It involves neighbouring communities for whom the town is important• It looks at the overall picture of the town and possible routes forward• Aids collaborative working with statutory authorities and agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expensive• Needs a coordinator• Needs a team of volunteers to work with the coordinator• Depending on consultation methods it may need lots of volunteers• Impetus may be lost afterwards when the coordinator leaves• Its not a quick fix

There are also other possibilities such as doing consultation and setting up a Town partnership for instance.

This is a very brief look at the sort of possible plans you may wish to undertake so for further information and to discuss your needs and ideas please contact:

Communities Team: Communities@eastsoffolk.gov.uk