

Guide to producing Town & Parish Plans



This guide gives the basic steps to producing this sort of plan and information to help you with the process but every community is unique, so there may be other ways of doing things that will work for you which are not included here.

The process

Prepare	Get people interested – gather support
	Form a steering group – the people to lead the process
	Agree a timetable for the next 12 months and a budget
Consult	Use a variety of ways to engage and consult people so that you gather lots of ideas and different views
Write the plan	Pull together the needs and concerns
	Produce an action plan and a report
	Share the results with everyone and encourage people to help with the actions – launch it with a celebration
Use it	Use it to influence others and carry forward your actions
	Regularly review, update and feedback progress to the community
Keep updating it	Keep it a living document that you can update, add to, and consult further on – build on it

Unlike a Neighbourhood Plan a Town/Parish Plan has no statutory weight in terms of planning. So, what are the benefits of doing one?

- These plans are holistic, looking at all aspects of the community and encouraging community action
- They are flexible. You can use a wide range of consultation techniques to consult the entire community
- You can bring in partners to co-deliver aims of the Plan sooner
- It provides quantifiable evidence of local need and issues. This data can be used to support funding bids and draw attention to local issues
- It identifies specific concerns for action, along with positive aspects to build on. It provides Town/Parish Councils with a clear plan of action that benefits the entire community.

They encourage:

- Community action
- Participation in local affairs
- Volunteering
- Setting up of new groups and services
- Community spirit

A detailed guide to producing the plan

Step One – Prepare

1 – Agenda item at a Parish/Town Council meeting

- The Parish/Town Council decides whether it should ask parishoners about doing a plan and forming a steering groups (you may end up doing a one day consultation or a neighbourhood plan instead.

2 – Parish/Town Council holds a public meeting

Things to consider:

- Date and venue – consider avoiding other events and time of year
- Advertising – promote to the entire community
- Type of event – informal, formal? Whats going to encourage people to volunteer?
- Agenda – make it relevant and engaging for attendees

3 – Form the Steering Group

A good relationship with the Steering Group is essential as the Parish/Town Council will be involved in moving forward a number of the resulting. With this in mind, it would be recommended to have at least one representative from the Parish/Town Council on the Steering Group.

Points to consider when starting a Steering Group:

- Elect key officers such as Chair, Secretary, Treasurer
- Write a constitution/terms of reference
- Carry out a 'skills audit' to find out where the groups strengths and weaknesses are
- Do you need to identify volunteers with specific skills?
- Produce a project plan and budget
- What funding is available at present?

4 – Consult

There are several worksheets and advice documents available on the East Suffolk Council website.

The Communities team will also be able to provide guidance about community consultation, and what might be best suited for your community.

5 – Write the Plan

Now you need to write the plan. Consider:

- Look and length of plan – is it user friendly?
- Decide on the content, perhaps a brief history of the community, amenities and of course your consultation, results and points for action

- Draft the action plan looking further at the priorities and possible ways of taking the points forward
- Make each issue and action clear and specific so that anyone trying to help with an issue knows what action needs to be taken
- Consult the Parish/Town Council and other members of the community on the draft and amend as necessary

Once finalised, it will need to be presented to the Town/Parish Council for publication – paper and electronic versions are preferred.

Then, finalise the action plan and either publish with the report or separately.

It might be useful to announce the completion of the Plan through a celebration event. Invite the entire community and encourage people to engage further with the plan, particularly the actions and opportunities to arise from them.

6 – Use it

Implementing the actions is the next step. Keep everyone up to date with the progress of actions on a regular basis. Ensuring that people's contributions are valued will encourage further engagement.

7 – Keep updating it

A Town/Parish Plan is a live document. It must be reviewed and updated as things change and actions are completed.

It is recommended that after five years, a one day consultation takes place as a refresh and update opportunity.

Further support

If you would like further support with a Parish/Town Plan, please contact communities@Eastsuffolk.gov.uk