

Community Planning Resource Sheet



Monitoring & Reviewing Your Community-led Plan



Produced by CRCC in partnership with Cornwall Council

Resource Ref: CP003

April 2011

This resource sheet is intended to help those communities who have already produced a Plan and want to know what the process is for monitoring and reviewing this document. It is envisaged that these resources will be used in conjunction with the support and advice available from CRCC and Cornwall Council officers. This sheet is part of a series on community-led planning which have been produced to strengthen the process. As part of the process it is important to forge mutually beneficial relationships with key organisations, to result in a more robust and effective Community Plan.

It is important to recognise that the Plan is a document that should guide action within the parish, be used to influence the work of other organisations, be used to provide evidence for funding etc and, as such, the Plan needs to be actively monitored and updated. The creation of the plan should act as a tool to instigate action and activity!

Monitoring and Progressing Your Plan Upon Completion

When the Plan has been created, adopted by the local council (i.e. parish or town council) and launched (see resource sheet CP001) there is a need to set out a process by which it will be monitored and reviewed and this might well be included in the Plan itself. At this early stage there are a number of ways that monitoring the plan can be taken forward and, in fact, more than one of these may be used.

1. The Plan becomes a regular item on the local council agenda - regular enough that serious debate and update can occur but not too frequently that it just becomes a brief mention and no real discussion takes place. Alternatively sections of the plan can be scheduled for each meeting (e.g. the actions for an individual theme within the plan) so that there is a focus and the council are not trying to discuss the whole plan within a limited time slot.
2. Parish/Town Councillors may want to take responsibility for collating information on an individual theme liaising with community groups and others that have some involvement in taking the action forward, and where appropriate working with them to update the local council and take the actions forward.
3. Encouraging the community or partners to take the lead on specific projects/actions and asking them to report back to the local council. It is likely that the local council will also have a number of actions that they will also be taking forward.
4. Publicising to the community and partners what is happening. This should help maintain motivation and interest, as well as encouraging involvement and action in progressing actions - particularly when some of these are likely to need local volunteers!
5. An annual summary of progress which lists the achievements (projects completed or in progress) so that the community (and partners) have a clear idea of the benefits of the plan and the work that has gone into this.
6. Conversely, if there are problems with aspects of the taking the plan forward the monitoring process will identify this and might prompt approaches to the community for their help (if this is applicable); instigate a direct approach to a partner organisation to encourage them to either commit to the project or clarify the extent of their involvement; or necessitate attempts to research and apply for funding.

Formal Review of the Community-led Plan

- 1. When to do a Formal Review.** Circumstances vary, and the monitoring process will give you an insight into how far the original plan has come and how relevant it still is. However, as a rough guide, many plans are 'refreshed' or updated between year 3 and year 5 - although there are always exceptions!
- 2. Identifying Volunteers.** Ideally, as with the original process, it is a good idea to have a group of people to take this forward both from the community and from the local council. Ideally the group should be as representative of the community as possible (sometimes individual approaches to people can bring positive results) and it should be made clear that anyone can get involved. Some of the original community plan group might be interested in being involved again. Usually the review process is less intensive and this might encourage more people to come forward.
- 3. Costs.** It is important to identify the budget for carrying out the review at an early stage and what money (if any) is available e.g. does the local council have funds available or will funds need to be sought and if so how much. Costs of this process will depend on what skills and time is available (e.g. local council or county council assistance, local volunteers, local groups and other interested bodies) and the potential costs that the group are considering (e.g. printing, venue hire, advertising, refreshments, activities etc). If outside funding is required it is important that this is secured before you begin the process as otherwise there is a greater chance that funders will not consider the project as eligible. Ultimately, the group may well have to reconsider some of their ideas to fit with the budget without compromising the review's effectiveness.
- 4. Checking the Existing Plan.** Once you have a group and funding in place then the work can begin. You will need to look objectively at your plan, particularly the action plan/grid that it contains, to assess (a) What has been achieved - this can be publicised and celebrated in the update; (b) What is outstanding and is it still relevant (if in doubt do not discount) in which case it will need to be taken forward into the review process. There may well be some ongoing actions that require long term work and effort, or which may need to be recategorised as a 'lobbying activity'. However there may be some actions whereby events have effectively made it obsolete; (c) What new things need to be considered - perhaps new local developments; countywide or national issues e.g. emergency planning (coping with flooding etc), energy and sustainability, health strategies including preventative initiatives; (d) What issues have come up through parish/town council meetings, local forum/network meetings, local groups (e.g. WI, sports, village hall) or through less formal contact with residents; (e) have the demographics, infrastructure or size of the area changed e.g. new housing estates might have radically impacted on these since the original plan was produced.
- 5. How to Consult/Involve the Community.** This should already have been broadly considered as part of the funding element. Ideas for this process include: re-doing the original consultation (often a detailed survey and/or other consultation methods using the ideas in stage four above as its basis); producing a less onerous survey (as topic questions likely to be reduced on this second stage) with an introduction and achievements page; holding an event or events, public meeting, fun day etc; putting the information from stage four above into a newsletter and asking for comments and feedback or requesting residents top priorities/concerns; speaking to local community groups, businesses and others (e.g. local school, residents within local sheltered housing via meetings etc). This is not an exhaustive list of ideas but some prompts which might be useful to you. This stage will also help publicise and remind people of what is taking place and why.
- 6. Refresh or Update the Plan.** Once the information from stage five has been collated it will form the basis for the updated plan. The document can take many forms and does not have to be overly expensive to produce - the priority is that it has taken the original plan into account but also looked at the more recent issues as well as looking to the future. Like the original plan process, the document should have come about through the involvement of the parish/town council and the community and once complete it is then adopted by the parish/town council, and the information disseminated to the residents and partners.

It is important that you keep the community informed and engage with partners as you work through the process - to strengthen relationships, maintain interest and move things on.