

# LEICESTERSHIRE RURAL PARTNERSHIP

## PARISH PLAN PROTOCOL

### INTRODUCTION

This Protocol has been updated by a small working group consisting of representatives from the Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland), parish plan groups, the County Council, district councils, and other service providers, and ratified by the Leicestershire Rural Partnership.

Its aim is to provide clear guidance to both parish plan groups and service providers. It will help to guide the preparation of parish plans, ensure proper consideration is given to issues raised, and improve the lines of communication between parish plan groups and service providers.

However, parish plan groups should be aware that in developing a list of projects and issues, this may not result in projects being funded by service providers for a variety of reasons, including limited resources. Service providers should, however, help the community to meet its own needs, or explain why their need cannot be met.

Indeed, the parish plan should result in service providers changing their priorities in a way which may both improve conditions for the community and ease the burden on service providers. Service providers should therefore view the process as a positive aid to planning their services.

The Protocol is divided into three parts, to assist the Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland) Community Development Officer, the parish plan group, and the service provider and respective Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).

RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL (LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND)  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

The Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland) Community  
Development Officer will:

1. Identify, in collaboration with service providers and in line with agreed criteria, suitable communities for a parish plan or other engagement process.
2. Respond to requests, subject to workload capacity, from communities to initiate a parish plan or similar process.
3. Notify service providers of interest expressed by potential parish plan groups.
4. Assist the parish plan group in ensuring that all sectors and ages within the community (including the business community, the socially excluded disabled and ethnic minorities) are properly represented in the process.
5. Assist the parish plan group in identifying relevant service providers.
6. Notify relevant service providers of the setting up of the parish plan group, including contact details for the chairman and secretary.
7. Ensure liaison between the parish plan group and service providers regarding specific issues relating to the village, or issues suggested by service providers for consideration.
8. Support the parish plan group throughout the process, including assisting with identification of funding opportunities to support the consultation process and projects arising from it (including signposting to [www.fundingtoolkit.org](http://www.fundingtoolkit.org)), training and production of the action plan.
9. Assist the community in implementing the action plan, including identifying ownership of the whole plan or sections within it.
10. Assist the parish plan group / parish council in producing an annual report to report back to the community and service providers on implementation of the action plan

Guidance Notes

- a. The Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland) Community Development Officer encourages the setting up of parish plan groups (or structures necessary to support other engagement processes), provides support and advice to the group throughout the process and is an important link between the service provider and the parish plan group.
- b. The CDO will attend parish plan meetings and receive minutes as appropriate, bearing in mind the fact that each officer is providing support for a number of groups.
- c. The CDO will assist the group if necessary with identifying the appropriate service providers to whom the report should be sent.
- d. The CDO will liaise with the co-ordinating officer for each service provider as necessary. However, the aim will be to enhance communication between parish plan groups and service providers to ensure an effective two way process.
- e. The CDO will continue to support the community to ensure that the action plan is implemented.

## PARISH PLAN GROUP

### The Parish Plan Group will:

1. Ensure that all sectors and ages in the community (including the business community, the socially excluded, disabled and ethnic minorities) are properly represented in the process.
2. Include the agreed set of core questions in their questionnaire.
3. Send a draft of its survey questionnaire to appropriate service providers and allow reasonable time for them to provide comments or suggestions.
4. During parish plan process, contact service providers to seek guidance or clarification as appropriate on issues as they arise.
5. Provide service providers, the LSP, and relevant district and county councillors with copy of completed parish plan report and action plan in electronic and paper format not less than 4 weeks before the launch meeting.
6. Provide service providers and the LSP (in a separate letter) with details of key issues that the group wishes to be addressed.
7. Invite relevant service providers, the LSP and relevant district and county councillors to the parish plan launch meeting to enable them to answer questions and present their responses to the plan.
8. Send a copy of the parish plan report to the relevant Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) at County and District level, highlighting how the LSP can assist in delivery of the action plan
9. Prepare, in collaboration with the parish council and the community, adequate mechanisms to ensure the action plan is implemented.
10. 12 months following launch of the parish plan, hold a follow-up event, in the form of a Service Co-ordination Event to help pick up actions that have not been developed.
11. Prepare, in collaboration with the parish council and the RCC, an annual report which sets out progress on implementing the action plan, and ensure that this is made available.
12. Use the Leicestershire Villages website throughout the parish plan process to publicise the parish plan and encourage involvement from local residents.

### Guidance Notes

- a. Parish plan groups rely on voluntary effort and limited resources, so this protocol is intended to make the best use of these resources. Early contact with appropriate service providers is advisable because questions can then be drafted that will result in information that is genuinely useful to the service provider and thus to the community. This, and use of the core questions, in turn will help the service provider to improve its service for the community.
- b. It is also important that the appropriate service provider is made properly aware of issues arising from the parish plan. A short note accompanying the report will help to draw attention to the appropriate

issues, and removes doubt about which issues the service provider is expected to address.

- c. Launch meetings have proved to be an excellent way of feeding back the results of the parish plan to the community and making sure service providers are aware of the community's needs. It is important to ensure the appropriate service providers are invited; the Rural Community Council can provide guidance on this.
- d. The use of co-ordinating officers by service providers will help to reduce the number of letters and reports sent out by parish plan groups, and improve communication with service providers during the preparation stage. Following publication of the report and receipt of responses from the service providers, communication should be direct with the responsible officers identified, unless difficulties in communication are experienced, when these should be referred back to the coordinating officer.
- e. The relevant district LSP can have an important function in co-ordinating the actions of constituent agencies where issues are better tackled by a multi-agency approach. In some cases it may be relevant to refer these up to the County LSP, Leicestershire Together, to consider on a county-wide basis.
- f. County and District Councillors have a vital role in listening to their community and chasing up issues raised by the community. It is therefore important to send a copy of the report to them and invite them to the launch meeting. This will give them the information they require to act as an advocate on behalf of the community.
- g. It is vital that adequate measures are put in place to ensure the action plan is implemented and monitored. This may be done by the parish council and/or action groups recruited by the parish plan group. A Service Co-ordination Event should be considered as a means of co-ordinating the input of service providers, particularly to resolve difficult issues or those that involve a range of service providers.
- h. An annual report setting out progress on implementing the action plan will help to chart progress, help to ensure the action plan is implemented and provide valuable information for service providers.
- i. The County Council offers dedicated web space for each parish within Leicestershire to post news items and encourage involvement in community activities. Colleagues within the Community ICT team can offer training on the use of the site. The website can be accessed at [www.leicestershirevillages.com](http://www.leicestershirevillages.com).

## SERVICE PROVIDER AND LSP

### The Service Provider and LSP will:

1. Identify a Co-ordinating Officer to respond on all issues raised on behalf of the service provider and pass details on to the Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland) Community Development Officer.
2. Provide a representative (usually the Coordinating Officer) to attend parish plan launch to feed back their response and answer questions.
3. Feed the aggregated results of parish plans within its area into its strategies, policies and service plans.

### The Service Provider Co-ordinating Officer will:

4. Notify parish plan group of relevant issues or activities in their area.
5. Within 3 weeks, respond to parish plan draft questionnaire on behalf of their organisation.
6. Within 10 working days, acknowledge receipt of parish plan report and letter.
7. Identify officers within the organisation who can investigate the individual issues raised.
8. Copy letter to relevant officers, specifying a time limit for response.
9. Within 4 weeks following, respond to the parish plan group via the launch meeting, detailing responses received, and where issues are still being investigated, either by officers or through the committee process.
10. Within 2 months following, and no later than 3 months, complete investigation and provide parish plan group with full response on all issues, including:
  - issues which cannot be addressed and full reasons why;
  - possible sources of funding;
  - contacts for investigating lead officers to allow detailed follow-up if required.

### Guidance Notes

- a. Because parish plan groups rely on voluntary effort and limited resources, this protocol is intended to make the best use of these resources. In particular, groups will not want to send multiple letters and reports to one organisation. By working through a co-ordinating officer, the parish plan group will be able to be more effective. It will also help to ensure all the appropriate officers within the organisation are involved in the process through the coordinating officer.
- b. The protocol sets out a clear timetable for responding to parish plans. People in a community have expectations raised through the parish plan process, and will want to know in a reasonable time what improvements are going to be made, or why they will not be possible.

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