



**COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

Committee Report

Public

Date of Meeting: Thursday 17th January 2008

Title: Community/Parish Planning Protocol

Report of: Director of Development Services

Report reference: DS 02/08

Summary:

To provide a report on the progress of the setting up of a Task and Finish Group to look into the development of an authority wide Parish Plan Protocol.

Questions for / input required from scrutiny:

Make any comments and observations on the process adopted by the Task and Finish Group.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the committee:

- Approve the Protocol as agreed by the Task and Finish Group.
- Forward the document to the Executive group of the council for official endorsement.

Contact Officer: Jeff Downham

Ext: 7355

Appendices:

Protocol

Information leaflet

1.0 Introduction:

- 1.1** This report is in response to a recommendation made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 29th March 2007, to establish a Task and Finish Group to develop a District wide Parish Plan Protocol, in line with a commitment made in the Parish Charter for Carlisle District.

2.0 Background and process development:

- 2.1** On March 29th 2007 a recommendation was made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that a Task and Finish Group be established in the new civic year to develop a Parish Plan Protocol. This group would work in partnership with Members of the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cumbria County Council, Voluntary Action Cumbria, Cumbria Association of Local Councils and Carlisle Parish Councils Association.
- 2.2** A Task and Finish Group was established and the first meeting took place on the 10th July led by Councillor Barry Earp. At that meeting the value of a Parish Plan Protocol was outlined to the group as a tool for managing the relationship between communities in the Plans. It was also highlighted at this first meeting that the title Parish Plan was now being referred to as a community led plan, or a community action plan. The change of terminology was designed to allow the emphasis on plans being representative of communities, but also with a focus on the importance of producing an evidence based, properly structured action plan. It is accepted that successful community action planning should be managed and driven by the community, should be evidence based appropriately inclusive, comprehensive, and produce realisable actions plans.

The group was informed that within the district just over 50% of parishes had produced a plan, with two of those groups now re-visiting those plans due to their having completed most of their actions. A draft Protocol based on a South Lakeland model was presented as a guide document for consideration by the group.

It was anticipated that a finished Protocol would be completed by December and three further meetings were scheduled to take place to review progress.

The following actions were agreed at this initial meeting: -

- That invites be extended to the City Council's Rural Champion, and to members of the Cumbria County Councils Local Committee, to attend future group meetings.

- That a consultation exercise takes place with the Carlisle Parish Councils Association (CPCA) and all parish councils on the draft Protocol, requesting a response by the 17th September, with the date of the next meeting fixed for 25th September.

2.3 An amended Protocol was presented to the group meeting on the 25th September, together with an update from the consultation exercise with the CPCA and Parish Councils. A response had been received with comments from the chair of the CPCA but unfortunately only two responses had been received from parish councils, Wetheral and Upper Denton, and they had largely been in agreement with the Protocol as circulated.

Concern was raised by the chair as to the low rate of response to the consultation request. The group discussed the amended Protocol at length, and a number of recommendations were made as to how it could be improved.

Discussion was had around the impact community plans currently had in influencing policy, as there was little evidence nationally that this was the case. The group was informed about a piece of work that had been commissioned by Carnegie UK to look into this locally. This work was being carried out by VAC and the findings of that work would be useful in future monitoring of the effectiveness of a Protocol for Carlisle District.

Also considered by the group was whether there was a need to review existing community plans using the Local Areas Agreement headings as a template. This would allow the translation of actions from plans into a format that would enable policy makers to make better use of the information contained within them. It was agreed that this was a useful tool that required further consultation to gauge the opinion of those who may consider this a useful exercise.

It was agreed that a guidance sheet should accompany the Protocol to inform community groups of the Protocols existence, and what level of support groups could expect from the authorities and agencies in completing plans, and the following actions were agreed: -

- Circulation of a draft information sheet for comments.
- Amend the second draft Protocol with the comments raised at the meeting, to be brought back to the next meeting on the 13th November.

2.4 A Protocol containing the amendments from the previous meeting, together with an information sheet were presented to the meeting on the 13th November and a

number of recommendations were suggested to both documents. These amendments were suggested to reflect changes that the County Council had made in relation to the production of their own Protocol. It was considered vital that both authorities ensured that what was to be adopted accurately reflected what each authority would be committed to doing. Further agency contact points were recommended to be included to ensure that community groups were as informed as possible as to sources of assistance and potential funding.

The group was informed of an initiative by the County Council and VAC to produce a database of actions from plans that could be analysed, and formatted in a way that was acceptable to organisations. This was felt to be the best way in which plans could be summarised to advise directors of departments within the council, as highlighted in the Protocol, and which should be available by April 2008.

- 2.5 The final meeting took place on the 13th December when the protocol and information sheet were agreed and signed off by the group.

Carlisle Community/Parish Plan Protocol

This Protocol is designed to promote good working practices and create an effective communication mechanism between Community/Parish Planning groups in Carlisle District, Local Authorities and other relevant partners. It has been developed through working relationships with:

- Carlisle City Council
- Carlisle Parish Councils Association (CPCA)
- Cumbria County Council
- Voluntary Action Cumbria (VAC)
- Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC)

It is intended as a guide for organisations at a local level in the preparation and implementation of their plans and to help ensure that local communities can have an influencing role in the development of strategies for the Carlisle District. It also guides Community/Parish planning groups who are revising/renewing an existing Community/Parish Plan.

The Protocol will be reviewed at a monitoring meeting on a 12-monthly basis, organised by Carlisle City Council, and representatives will attend from the City Council, CALC, CPCA, Cumbria County Council and VAC, to be known as the Community/Parish Planning Monitoring group.

There are five sections to the Protocol: -

- Initial contact with Community/Parish Planning groups
- Practical support during the process of drawing the plan together
- Information sharing within and between organisations
- How issues will be progressed once the plan is produced
- Financial support available

Initial contact with the Community/Parish Planning groups

Planning groups should contact the Rural Support Officer at Carlisle City Council as early as possible. They will provide initial support to set up the group and information on good practice and funding sources for developing or revising a Plan.

Carlisle City Council and Cumbria County Council have committed themselves to an introductory meeting with the group, at which officers from each relevant authority will be present. It will be informal in its structure and will convey information about roles, responsibilities and current priorities from each authority's strategic plan relating to the area. This meeting is intended to provide support for the planning group and enable them to feel confident about contacting authorities during the production and implementation of their plan.

Practical support during the process of drawing the plan together

Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council and VAC will provide a range of support and guidance on request to groups including:

- Provision of information on areas of responsibility and current plans in these areas
- Referring groups to relevant officers for specific information
- Commenting on a draft questionnaire and/or consultation process
- Commenting on a draft plan, including the action plan

Authorities will provide an initial response to an enquiry within 10 working days.

The key contact for each authority is: -

Carlisle City Council:

Rural Support Officers

Claire Rankin / Zoe Sutton

Tel: 01228 817355 e-mail: clairer@carlisle.gov.uk / zoes@carlisle.gov.uk

Cumbria County Council:

Neighbourhood Development Officer

Judith Gardner

Tel: 01228 606474 e-mail: judith.gardner@cumbriacc.gov.uk

Carlisle City Council and Cumbria County Council would prefer to receive correspondence through e-mail if possible, especially for comments on draft questionnaires and action plans. This allows documents to be shared throughout the relevant departments. Face-to-face meetings can be arranged at this stage if they will be useful.

Information, co-ordination and sharing within and between organisations

Information about Carlisle City Council and Cumbria County Council can be found on their website (www.carlisle.gov.uk, www.cumbriacc.gov.uk). When a request for information comes in to an authority the **key contact** will coordinate a response and will then follow it up if it has been referred to another officer within the authority.

Internal communication processes vary between authorities, but the **key contact** will communicate important information to departments and Members relating to Community/Parish Planning. Communication between authorities regarding plans will be through the key contacts.

A Community / Parish Plans issues and actions document is managed by the Rural Support Officers and is used to incorporate information gathered from action plans produced across Carlisle District. It is useful for identifying crosscutting issues.

How issues will be progressed once the plan is completed

Completed Community / Parish Plans should be sent to the **key contact** at each authority. Three copies should be sent to Carlisle City Council and two copies should be sent to Cumbria County Council. One copy should also be sent to CALC/CPCA's Parish Liaison Officer and two copies to be sent to VAC, wherever practicable each organisation should be provided with an electronic copy for ease of circulation.

When Carlisle City Council and Cumbria County Council receive a Community / Parish Plan they will: -

- Acknowledge they have received it and circulate it to relevant departments/teams.
- If requested, attend a local steering group meeting during the implementation process.
- Put local groups in touch with each other to share experience and good practice.

Carlisle City Council will: -

- Liaise closely with the community/parish to assist with action planning and engagement with the City Council at all levels.
- Send the plan to the relevant District Ward Councillor and the Carlisle Partnership.
- Engage officers for the Action areas detailed in the plan and co-ordinate an internal meeting to agree how to move issues forward.
- Summarise issues to advise the Directors of Departments.
- Follow up and feedback progression of actions through the key contact.

Cumbria County Council will through their own Community / Parish Plan Protocol provide a range of support and guidance including: -

- Provision of information on areas of responsibility and current plans in these areas
- Signposting of groups to relevant officers for specialist information
- Assistance in engaging with elected representatives
- Inputting/commenting on a draft community action plan via the neighbourhood development officer
- Identification of issues at commencement which may not have been involved in the plan but may be important for the community to consider
- Help to facilitate community engagement work including neighbourhood forums either as points of information or as discussion items
- Attend a local public meeting/launch event to raise awareness and initiate work on the action plan.
- Follow up and feedback progression of actions through the key contact.
- Send the plan to the relevant County Council Ward Councillor.

Carlisle Partnership will: -

- Take account of the Plan when reviewing the Carlisle Sustainable Community Plan.
- Work with appropriate groups to draw issues together and disseminate information to partners.
- Identify actions for Task Groups to work on.
- Liaise with the Carlisle Rural Support Group* on a regular basis and report back to the Community / Parish Planning Monitoring Group every 12 months.
- Input community/parish plans, or develop links to the Partnership website.

* The Carlisle Rural Support Group is an officer-led meeting championing rural issues across Carlisle District.

Financial support available

There is a range of funding sources available for community/parish planning. Access to this funding can be through the Neighbourhood Forums or the Rural Support Officer at Carlisle City Council.

Other useful contacts are: -

Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC)

Vicky Darrall is the Parish Liaison Officer for CALC and can help Parish Councils interested in pursuing Quality Parish status, which links closely to the Community / Parish Planning process.

Tel: 01228 817037 / 01768 242141 e-mail: vicky.darrall@calc.org.uk

Voluntary Action Cumbria (VAC)

Hellen Aitken is the Rural Community Development Officer for VAC and will support work through the planning process; including organising introduction and implementation workshops.

Tel: 01768 869520 e-mail: hellenaitken@ruralcumbria.org.uk

Cumbria Council for Voluntary Services (CCVS)

Mark Costello is the funding advisor for CCVS and can be contacted for advice in identifying suitable project funders.

Tel: 01228 512513 e-mail: markc@cumbriacvs.org.uk

Dec 2007

This Protocol has been agreed to by:

Name: _____

Authority: _____

Date: _____

Dec 2007

Key Contacts

Carlisle City Council

Claire Rankin/Zoe Sutton, Rural Support Officers:

Tel: 01228 817355/817312 e-mail: clairer@carlisle.gov.uk

zoes@carlisle.gov.uk

Cumbria County Council

Judith Gardner, Neighbourhood Development Officer

Tel: 01228 606474 e-mail: judith.gardner@cumbriacc.gov.uk

Cumbria Association of Local Councils

Vicky Darrall, Parish Liaison Officer:

Tel: 01228 817037 e-mail: vicky.darrall@calc.org.uk

CALC Office: Tel: 01768 242141 E-mail: office@calc.org.uk

Voluntary Action Cumbria

Hellen Aitken, Rural Community Liaison Officer -

Tel: 01768 869520 e-mail: hellenaitken@ruralcumbria.org.uk

Cumbria Council for Voluntary Services

Mark Costello, Funding advisor

Tel: 01228 512513 e-mail: markc@cumbriacvs.org.uk

Community and Parish Plans

Carlisle District

How Local Authorities and others can help

This leaflet sets out what groups working on Community Plans can expect from local authorities and other partners in Carlisle District, and how they can work with them to try and influence strategic plans in the area.

Carlisle City Council's Rural Support Officers can provide support and guidance on producing a Community or Parish Plan. Please contact them and they will help you in any way they can.



Dec 2007

Starting Out

When you start your Plan please let the key contacts at Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council and Voluntary Action Cumbria (VAC) know. Each of the authorities have chosen one key contact to liaise with all Community or Parish Plan groups so that you don't have to try and work out which department to contact.

All the authorities are committed to attending an introductory meeting with the Plan's Steering Group to find out more about your project and to let you know about their own responsibilities and priorities.

Funding to Produce your Plan

Voluntary Action Cumbria can provide information on funding specifically for the production of Community/Parish Plans. There may be other funding available for the production of your plan, through Neighbourhood Forums, or through the Rural Support Officers at Carlisle City Council.

While the Plan is Being Produced

While your plan is being drawn up the key contacts in all the authorities have agreed to provide groups with any information they may need about their work. Both Carlisle City Council and Cumbria County Council may also be able to provide you with maps and plans of your area.

Each of the Local Authorities will be particularly interested in commenting on your draft action plan, as they may need to help to deliver some of the projects in it. By seeing the draft they can let you know if any of the actions will be difficult to achieve or could be achieved in a different way. All the authorities will provide an initial response to your enquiry within 10 working days.

If possible please contact the Local Authorities by e-mail as this allows them to circulate the information or enquiry easily and quickly to the relevant department.

When the Plan is Finished

When you have finished your plan please send the appropriate number of copies to your key contacts at the Local Authorities:

- Carlisle City Council (Three)
- Cumbria County Council (Two)

Please also send copies to CALC and VAC

- CALC (One)
- VAC (Two)

Electronic copies of plans would be preferred for ease of circulation and the relevant support would be given to allow this.

VAC can also advise you of specialist organisations and agencies that might be interested in your plan.

All the authorities are happy to come along to meetings to initiate work on the action plan, and will help implement actions from that plan where possible. They will circulate the finished document within their organisations and Carlisle City Council will bring it to the attention of the Carlisle Partnership. This is a group which brings together voluntary, public and private sector organisations to work together to tackle the main problems facing the district.

Funding Projects when the Plan is Finished

Funding may be available through local authorities and other organisations, depending on current priorities. Involving the key contact from each authority as early as possible in the process will help to get your community's needs recognised by them. The local Funding Advice Service at Cumbria Council for Voluntary Services can also help you to identify suitable funders for your projects and is available on 01228 512513.