



Community Planning

Newsheet 4 (June 2010)

Welcome to the fourth edition of our Briefing Newsheet on Community Planning. This edition provides an overview of the role of Community Planning at a local level, updates on Local Government Reform, an introduction to the Big Lottery Fund's Community Planning Pilot Projects and highlights key activities and events undertaken through our Supporting Communities in Community Planning Project.

Community Planning – The Future is Local

Community Planning is a crucial element in how local community and voluntary groups, statutory agencies and councils can work together to achieve improved services for all. At a time of increasing financial constraints and dwindling budgets, the role of Community Planning has never been more important.

We believe that the future of Community Planning lies at a local level. Local communities, voluntary organisations and statutory agencies now have an opportunity to both shape and implement Community Planning.

With the support of Community Places, local communities have already been active in developing Community Plans within their areas. The value of these Community Planning processes cannot be underestimated and progress achieved includes:

Scrabo (Newtownards):

- A new Community House which is the focus for all local activities and for joint working between the community, agencies and councils;
- Community Newsletter launched;

- Preparation of an Areas at Risk Programme to address training needs, personal development skills and improve access to services;
- Housing and environmental improvements completed including landscaping schemes and recycling opportunities;
- Youth and health improvement programmes; and
- Establishment of a Monday (Men's) Club.

Bushmills:

- Improved community infrastructure within the Village Forum and communications with statutory agencies, council and elected representatives;
- Proposals agreed for activities and services which will make important contributions to the quality of life of local residents;
- Improved communication with local residents, visitors and agencies.
- Agreement on improvements to Millennium Park and Hamill Park; and
- Plans for a new Tourist Information Centre and a sports pavilion.

Legahory and Burnside (Craigavon):

- Improved relationships between the Community Association, statutory agencies and the council;
- Environmental improvements through: the demolition of unsafe housing, landscaping and tree planning schemes and general clean ups; and
- Focus on long-term future for the area, as well as meeting the everyday needs of the local community.

Cherryvalley/De Wind (Comber):

- Newly established joint working links between the Residents' Association, statutory agencies and the council;

- Focus on the key issues which need addressed in the area including activities for local residents, dealing with anti-social behaviour and provision of transport; and
- Environmental improvements, landscaping, clean-ups, safety works and the development of a wildflower garden within the area.

The progress illustrated above reinforces the need for a Community Planning approach and how, regardless of the uncertainty at a NI Executive level, local communities together with local statutory agencies and councils can take the lead in implementing Community Planning and shaping it for the future.

Big Lottery Fund – Support for Pilot Projects and Learning

In recognition of the need to support the involvement of community and voluntary groups in Community Planning the Big Lottery Fund has decided to fund three pilot Community Plans and a learning project. This learning project will draw on the experiences of the pilots to develop a toolkit for Community Planning which would support the genuine engagement of the community and voluntary sector in future Community Planning processes.

Community Planning - Key Activities and Events

Ards and North Down Communities - Networking and Planning for Change

Over the past 12 months the local community networks of North Down, Ards and East Down have come together, facilitated by Community Places, in organising a series of events to highlight the changes within local government and the opportunities for the community and statutory sectors and councils to work together through Community Planning processes.

These events have built networking between groups and agencies across the council boundaries, developed participants' understanding of community planning and provide information on developments associated with Local Government Reform.

Community Planning - The New Council, Communities and Agencies Working Together – Causeway Coast and Glens District Council

A similar event to those held in North Down and Ards was organised by Ballymoney Community Resource Centre, Coleraine Rural and Urban Network, North Antrim Community Network and Limavady Community Development Agency in collaboration with Community Places.

The event provided participants with an opportunity to learn about the changes proposed for the new Causeway Coast and Glens Council from the Chief Executive of Limavady Borough Council, Mr Liam Flanagan. The participants also heard from the experiences of Mr Bryan Poole, Manager for Council of Voluntary Service, Fife in relation to the Community Planning process in Fife.

Towards 2011 and Beyond: 'communities, councils and agencies working together for our future'

This very successful regional conference was held in the Tullylagan Hotel, Cookstown. It explored how relationships between councils, statutory agencies and communities can best be developed and identified how Community Development and Engagement can contribute to the Community Planning process.

These discussions were supported through examples of good practice of communities, councils and agencies working together including:

- Coleraine Borough Council's relationship and service level agreements with Coleraine Rural and Urban Network;
- the Southern Health Trust and its role with Community Network Craigavon in co-chairing

the Craigavon and Banbridge Community Forum; and

- Ards Borough Council and the work been undertaken with Ards Community Network in developing a Local Community Planning process in the Ards Borough.

Update on Local Government Reform

The NI Executive has taken the decision not to progress with Local Government Reform in May 2011.

It is unclear at this stage what the alternative options are, however what is clear is that the council elections which will be held in May 2011 will be based on the existing 26 council model. The current provision of public services represents a labyrinth of district and sub regional bodies rather than a coherent delivery mechanism for public services. What we are left with, as one contributor to a regional newspaper outlines, are:

- 35 district offices (Housing)
- 11 regional offices (Agriculture)
- 10 veterinary offices (Agriculture)
- Eight divisional and sub divisional offices (Planning)
- Four regional divisions (Roads)
- One big board (in theory) and five smaller ones, at the same time (Education)
- Seven districts (PSNI)
- Four areas (Fire and Rescue)
- 12 A&E hospitals (Health)
- 26 district councils (Local Government)

Voluntary Transition Committees

The 11 voluntary Transition Committees continue to meet on a regular basis; however the delay in the approval of the Local Government Boundaries Order 2010 has prevented the establishment of statutory Transition Committees. A Transition Change Manager has been appointed by each of the Transition Committees to oversee the transition period in their area. The Transition Change Managers, outlined below can be contacted at the relevant council offices.

- Mr Stephen Finlay - Antrim and Newtownabbey Transition Committee
- Mr Eamonn Kelly - Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Transition Committee
- Mr Kevin Heaney - Belfast Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
- Mr David Jackson - Causeway Coast and Glens Transition Committee
- Ms Ellen Cavanagh - Derry City and Strabane Transition Committee
- Ms Kim McLaughlin - Fermanagh and Omagh Transition Committee
- Mr Richard Jackson - Lisburn City and Castlereagh Transition Committee
- Mrs J Fulton - Mid and East Antrim Transition Committee
- Mr Jim McKenzie - Mid Ulster Transition Committee
- Mr Jonathon McBride - Newry, Mourne and Down Transition Committee
- Mr Andrew Scott - North Down and Ards Transition Committee

Community Planning Information Pack

The Community Planning Information Pack continues to be a useful reference tool for agencies and community groups alike. The pack is updated on a regular basis and is available on our website (www.communityplaces.info)

Support Available from Us

Our Supporting Communities in Community Planning Project is providing information and capacity building on Community Planning, the new RPA structures and on developing Local Community Plans which focus on community issues and provide models for the future. If you want to know more about how we can work with your community, please contact **Annie Clarke on 90239444** or by email at annie@communityplaces.info