

Milton Keynes Council

Community Liaison Parish Community Plans Guidance Document



March 2010

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/parishes

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Contents

	Page No
Introduction & Context	2
Potential Benefits	3
Glossary of Key Terms	4
Flow Chart of the Parish Community Plans Process	6
Key Stages of producing a Parish Community Plan	7
Contact Details	11
Appendices	
Specimen Constitution	12
Specimen Terms of Reference for Working Groups	15
Example Templates of Issues Identified by The Community	16

Introduction & Context

Central Government wants local communities to have more control over their own lives, to say what they want doing in their own community and to work with other organisations to get it done. Community and Parish Plans give an opportunity for everyone in the community to make themselves heard and identify priorities.

They provide a way for residents to say if they want more open spaces, improved public transport, affordable housing, better access to health care, a chance to buy local produce at local shops and to choose how to make the most of their social and leisure time. It is up to the community to define the issues to be tackled by a Parish or Community Plan.

The preparation of the Parish Community Plans Guidance Note was agreed by Milton Keynes Council's Cabinet on 24 November 2009. The guidance should outline the approach the Council should take in supporting parish and town councils to produce quality Parish Community Plans documents for their local area.

The finished document should result in recommendations on how to address issues identified by local residents. Parish Community Plans should cover everything relevant to the residents and should avoid focussing on single issues. A range of topics could include Housing, Transport, Local Services, Environment, Community Safety, Culture and Conservation.

This Guidance Note is to help parish councils to undertake a Parish or Community Plan or provide support to a community group to develop the plan and to:

- ensure that it is robust and inclusive
- ensure proper consideration is given to issues raised
- improve the lines of communication between parish plan groups and service providers

so that

- it is effective in identifying gaps and priorities and acts as an influence on the strategic policies of Milton Keynes Council and partner organisations.

You cannot prevent change, but what you can do is influence it. Parish or Community Plans help your community to make change happen. Parish Plans lay out a shared vision for the community over the next 3-5 years and contain a detailed action plan for achieving this vision.

The aim of the Guidance Note is to provide clear guidance on what to include and help to guide the preparation of the plans.

Parish and Community Plans should:-

- be comprehensive, considering all aspects of local life including social, economic and environmental issues of concern to the community.
- involve the whole community; everyone should have a chance to have their say and get involved in producing a Parish Community Plan.
- be based upon information provided by community participation, surveys and research.
- involve Milton Keynes Council as the Local Authority within the process
- be focused on creating an action plan with a clear statement of Who? What? Why? and How?

The community planning process can act as a lever to encourage the collaborative process guided by Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) to reduce the gap between the policies and perspectives of the bodies with power and the influence, and the aspirations of local communities themselves.

Parish Community Plan groups should be aware though 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.

Though there is no statutory requirement to produce Parish Community Plans, as explained above, they can provide a useful resource for Milton Keynes Council and partner organisations in carrying out their statutory functions e.g. the Local Development Framework.

Some Parish and Town Councils in Milton Keynes have already written a Parish Plan and others are just starting the process, if you would like copies of published plans please contact community.liaison@milton-keynes.gov.uk for further details.

Potential benefits

1. To have a shared understanding of Parish Community Plans and help develop and put in place the necessary mechanisms for meaningful and ongoing community engagement. For example: The relevance of community-level planning to inform the development of Milton Keynes strategies such as the Milton Keynes Sustainable Community Strategy, the Core Strategy, Transport Strategy, The Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the Local Development Framework. Details of all the Milton Keynes strategies in can be found on the MKC website:
<http://www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk/strategies>.
<http://www.miltonkeynespartnership.info>
2. To contribute to overarching Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) strategies for the area. The LSP is a single body that brings together different parts of the public sector as well as the business, community and voluntary sectors so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together. The LSP in Milton Keynes has 35 representatives on it that include an Urban Parish Council Representative, Rural Parish Council Representative, MKC, Milton Keynes Hospital NHS Trust, Thames Valley Police, MKCVO, Parks Trust, Business Link and many more (details at <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/partnership>)
3. Parish Councils/Councillors can use the results of their Parish Community Plan to bolster their influence in arguing for actions to take place. Proposals can then be looked at by the LSP who will make recommendations as to the level of support that can be provided. John Findlay, Chief Executive, NALC commented: "Councils should engage with the community in 'blue skies' thinking about what improvements the community would like to see, using Parish Plans where they exist. Community engagement should involve the community as a whole and direct involvement with stakeholders and voluntary and community organisations. We need to take a fresh look at what our councils can do, building on existing models and good practice and being imaginative in key areas of community concern".
4. To develop agreed methodologies which allow elected representatives to support the findings of a Parish Community Plan, using local examples and reflecting these in the wider context.
5. To develop local and sub regional agreements, or protocols for the facilitation of Parish Community Planning Partnerships with the key partners/ agencies. An example of this is the Milton Keynes Partnership which has refreshed the Milton Keynes Sustainable Community Strategy alongside the new Local Area Agreement (LAA).
6. To identify and establish mechanisms for the inclusion of Parish and Community Plans into other Strategies with local and sub regional partners and to report national best practice.

7. To develop mechanisms for Parish Community Plans and Design Statements, in whole or in part, to be included within Development Plan Documents (DPDs) using local examples where justified on planning grounds, e.g. Site Allocations DPD.
8. To define and agree channels of communication between community groups and the statutory partners; utilising the Voluntary and Community Sector to ensure the widest representational community voice.

Glossary of Key Terms

What are Parish Community Plans? - The term 'Parish Community Plans' refers to a number of different initiatives and includes Parish Plans:

Parish Community Plans - Parish Community Plans are "holistic" or comprehensive in scope. They should set out a vision for how the community wants to develop, and identify the action needed to achieve it. They can include everything that is relevant to the people who live and work in the community, from employment and playgrounds to the design of new buildings and protection of hedges and ponds. They can include any social, environmental or economic issues. It is up to you, the community, to decide what is important to you.

Village Design Statements – A Village Design Statement (VDS) describes the qualities and characteristics that people value in their village and its surroundings. It sets out clear and simple guidance for the design of all development in the village, based on character. It will not stop development and change from happening, but it will help to influence how new development fits into the village.

Place Check Survey - Placecheck is the Urban Design Alliance's method of assessing the qualities of a place, showing what improvements are needed, and focusing people on working together to achieve them.

A Placecheck can start small: just a few people or can involve larger numbers and interest groups. A Placecheck can cover a street (or part of one), a neighbourhood, a town centre, or a whole district or city. The setting might be urban, suburban or a village. The initiative can come from anyone, in any organisation or sector.

It starts by asking 3 simple questions:

- What do you like about...?
- What do you dislike about...?
- What do you want to see improved...?

What is a Local Development Framework? The Local Plan is being replaced by a Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF will comprise of a series of evidence-based 'local development documents'. In Milton Keynes, this is the Core Strategy which went to Council in January 2010.

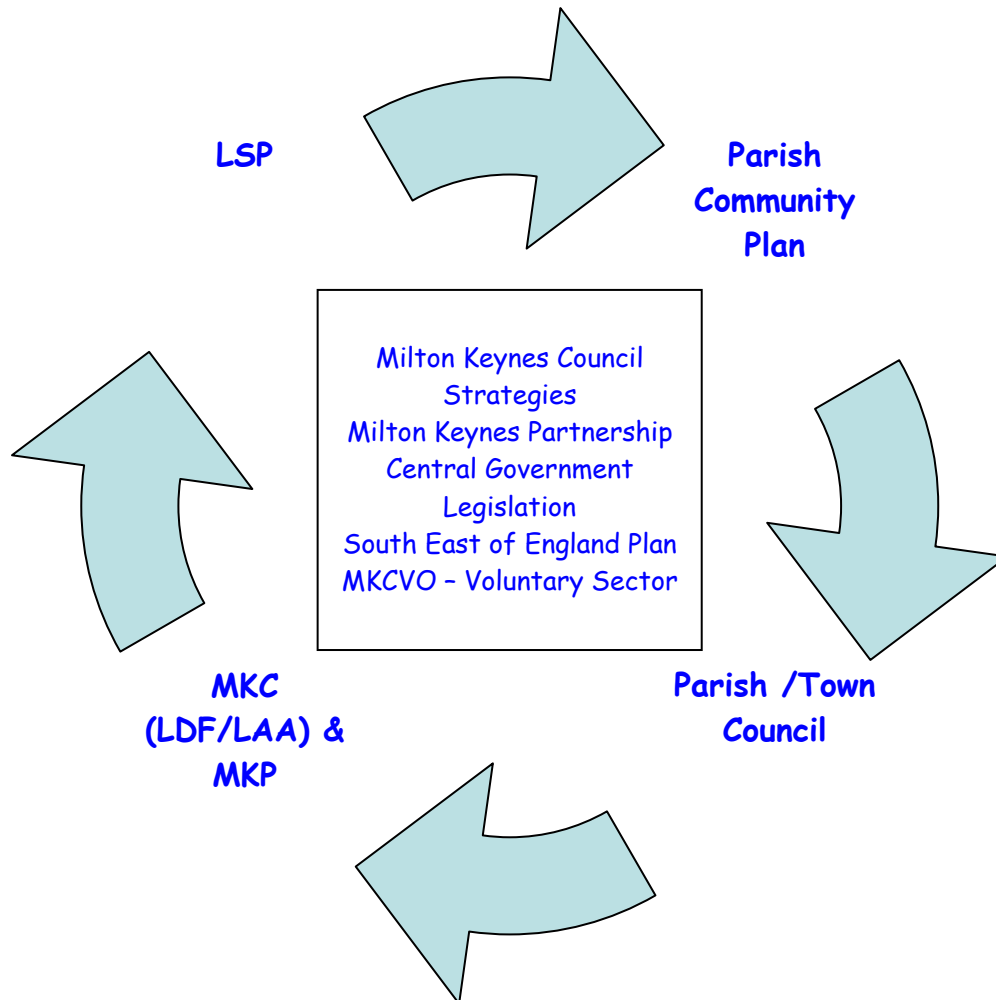
These include Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents, all of which must undergo full consultation and sustainability appraisal, prior to their adoption by The Council. The new planning system aims to:

- be more responsive to changing circumstances
- Increase community involvement throughout the plan making process
- project manage the work and ensure that targets are set and achieved

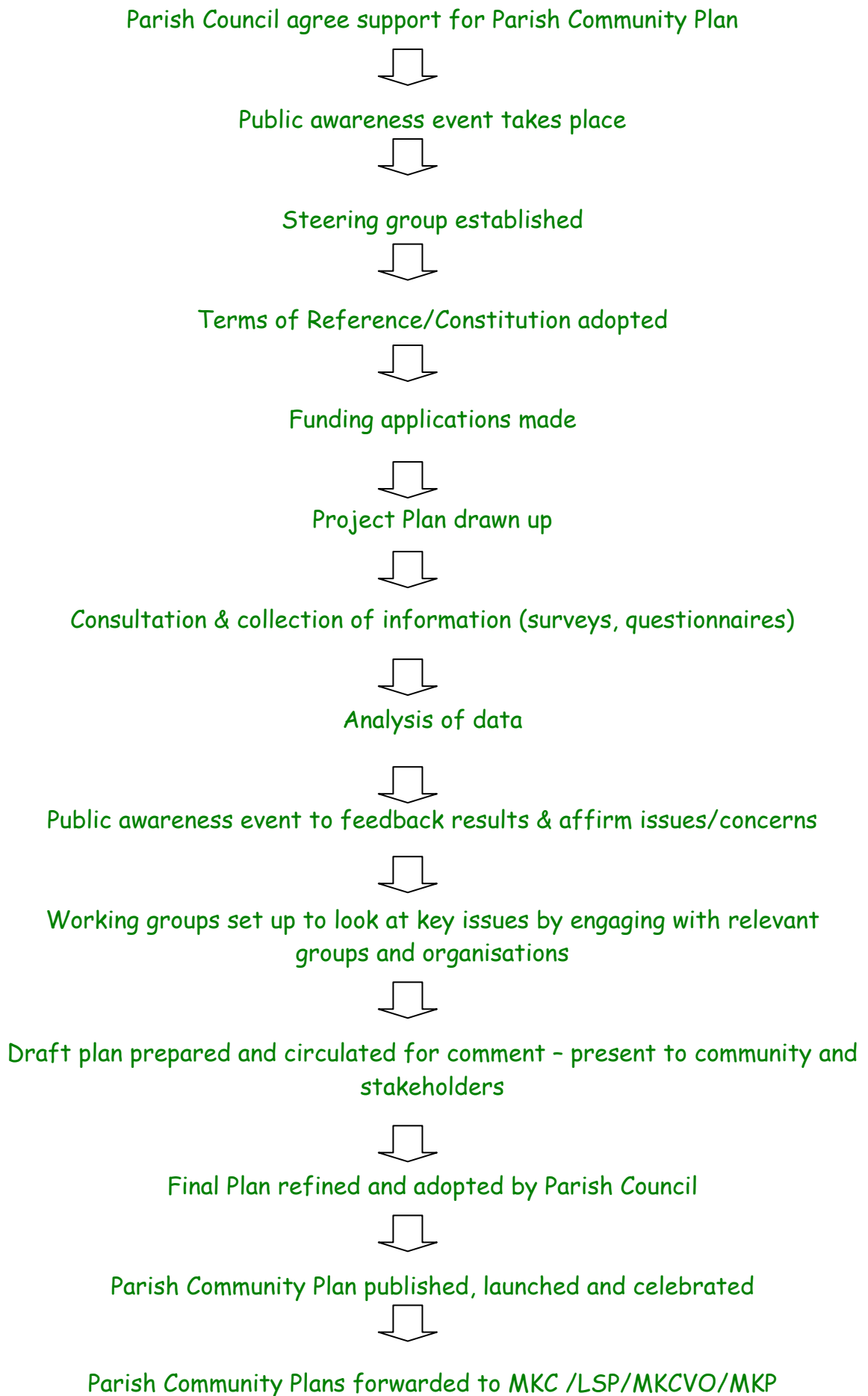
As part of the new scheme each planning authority must produce a 'Local Development Scheme'; in this document the preparation of all proposed 'local development documents' is outlined.

How can Parish Community Plans feed into the LDF? Parish Community Plans have roles to play within the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

They offer a very useful source of community led opinions and ideas for how their local village or local area should be in the future. Parish Community Plans and health check studies often identify the problems people perceive in their area, and then seek solutions. In many cases these issues will be common throughout the area, such as the need for affordable housing, but other more local issues may arise which would otherwise go unnoticed.



FLOW CHART OF THE PARISH COMMUNITY PLANS PROCESS



Key Stages of producing a Parish Community Plan

Contact Milton Keynes Council Strategy and Partnerships Directorate for support with taking the idea of a Parish Community Plan forward.

Read other recently completed local Parish Community Plans and talk to those who worked on them to get a feel of how they managed the process. Community Liaison at MKC has copies of these and can help you contact the people who wrote them - community.liaison@milton-keynes.gov.uk.

South East of England Rural Community Councils (SERCC) has developed a Parish Plan Toolkit http://www.acre.org.uk/communityengagement_parishplans.html for further information.

Public awareness event

Hold an open meeting with a presentation - explain to local residents and interest groups what you are trying to do and find out what they think. Discuss with your local Parish or Town council and Ward Members to find out how they can help you with the process. This could include an explanation of the Parish Community Plan in an article in the Parish Newsletter to encourage those interested to help set up a steering group.

Steering group established

Once you have agreed to produce a Parish Community Plan, a steering group should be set up. The public awareness event is an opportunity to recruit volunteers to the steering group who can represent a range of age groups, interests and organisations from within the Community. Community and Parish representation is important along with representation from other sectors including the voluntary sector. It is the responsibility of the volunteers to keep their respective groups informed of progress being made. The steering group should have a maximum of 12 members with no more than 2 representatives from any one group. People invited to join the steering group could include:

- Ward Councillors
- Parish Councillors
- Residents Association/Residents Involvement Team (MKC)
- Neighbourhood Action Group
- Local Schools
- Allotments Society
- Local Church
- Local Businesses and Shops

Check with Milton Keynes Council of Voluntary Organisations (MKCVO) for details of the community groups in your area.

Terms of Reference/Constitution adopted

A constitution is a set of agreed rules governing how the group will be run, how the members will work together and what they will be working towards. A specimen constitution and terms of reference can be found in Appendix 1.

Funding

Parish and Town Councils can provide financial support, other sources of funding include:

Community Foundation - information@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk

MKC Community & Third Sector [The Neighbourhood Initiative Fund](#) [Community Grants](#)

or nationally www.fundingcentral.org.uk

The People's Postcode Trust Grant - info@postcodetrust.org.uk

Develop a project plan

The project plan provides a statement of how and when the project's objectives are to be achieved by showing the major milestones, activities and resources required. Eighteen months to two years is a reasonable period to allow for preparing your plan, but it could be completed sooner and this may depend on the size of the Community, the level of resources and the capacity of the group. The plan should look at the next 5 years.

Consultation & collection of information (surveys, questionnaires)

This is probably the most important stage of developing your plan as it will help identify priorities in your area. You should aim to consult with as many individuals and groups as possible across all sectors. Make sure you include those harder to reach groups, such as young and older people, disabled people and other minority groups from within your community. Use a wide range of consultation methods including:

- Postal, door to door and/or passer-by questionnaires and surveys
- Community events, fairs, design fests and planning weekends

It is generally better to use a variety of methods to ensure you get a wide range of opinions and high levels of participation. Methods will vary and will depend on who you are consulting. Clarity is needed at the start to determine what information you are aiming to gather and how it will be used. This will also influence the analysis of data.

Look at the information and style from previous consultations and strategies

<http://www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk/strategies>.

<http://www.miltonkeynespartnership.info>

Residents Associations, Neighbourhood Action Group and other local groups often have information that could be of help. MKC Planning, Community Liaison, Residents Involvement are also a good source of information and can signpost.

Analyse the data and prioritise action

When you have collected all the information already available, the steering group can undertake the analysis of the survey or questionnaire data, or if funds are available, it could be done by paid professionals.

Hold an open meeting to present the results

To keep the community informed present the results of the consultation at a public meeting. This could either be a single event to focus solely on the Parish Community Plan or it could 'piggy back' on to another scheduled event.

Establish working groups, prioritise issues and plan action

You should use the event as an opportunity to identify people's interests and skills, to recruit new volunteers and gather like minded people together to establish working and project groups. They will then have the responsibility for liaising with the community and organisations to gain further information and advice, and to look at the feasibility of taking different projects forward prior to drawing up the draft action plan.

It may be that different issues identified at the consultation stage could be broken down into manageable chunks by different people or groups; e.g. The Neighbourhood Action Group may like to concentrate on parking issues and report back to the steering group.

List the issue using Appendix 2 "Example Template for Issues Identified by the Community" to keep on track. Various strategies available on the MKC website will help develop the priorities by establishing the work that has already been undertaken, the priorities and plans that MKC has. Examples of these are listed in the Template.

Produce a draft plan

Parish Community Plans are as individual as each Community or area, so there is no standard format. It is essential though to include a detailed action plan to show how the Community aims to address the identified issues. This can either be presented within the body of the plan, as an appendix or as a separate document. Most plans contain two clear sections:

The main body of the draft plan

This is usually subdivided into sections and could include background information on the Community, details of the process of producing the plan, the findings, the vision and any community action regarding the identified issue.

The Action Plan

This is probably the most important part of the draft plan as it shows how, when and by whom issues will be addressed. The actions need to be **SMART**.

Specific Well defined & clear to anyone that has a basic knowledge of the project

Measurable Know if the goal is obtainable and how far away completion is and know when it has been achieved

Agreed Agreement with all the stakeholders what the goals should be

Realistic Within the availability of resources, knowledge and time

Time Based Enough time to achieve the goal and not too much time, which can affect project performance – remember to check that your time periods are the same as those advised by others e.g. from MKC strategies

If sufficient information is not available at the point of publication then the action could be to undertake further research or conduct a feasibility study. It is important to engage with organisations and agencies that have been identified in your action plan to agree with them what is being proposed, also, get agreement from community volunteers who may be involved in implementing projects. Without this agreement the action plan may appear like a wish list. It is important to prioritise timescales and possible funding requirements and potential sources. Consideration should be given to how the action plan will be evaluated and monitored.

Consult on the draft plan

It's a good idea at this point to present the draft plan to the community. This could take place at a one off public event or by mounting displays in public buildings over the course of a week. You should also consult with organisations that will be involved in the implementation before the plan is finalised.

Endorsement from Parish Council and Milton Keynes Council

Obtain endorsement of the Parish Community Plan from local Ward Councillors, MKC Council and other stakeholders, and agree with them who will take responsibility for managing the Action Plan in the future. This is likely to be the Parish Council or the Parish Community Plan steering group.

Refine & Publish the Parish Community Plan and distribute

The final format of your plan will depend on the funds available. Some Parish Councils have provided a full printed version to all households; others have produced a summary version for wider distribution while making the full plan available on request, or at libraries, village halls or online. Each household should receive a copy of the Action Plan. It is important that a full copy is provided for Milton Keynes Council and all relevant stakeholders, particularly those that have responsibility for delivery in full or in part, the actions within the action plan.

Celebrate

The completion of a Parish Community Plan is a major achievement and should be celebrated. Organise a launch event to present the plan to the community and to thank all those who have worked so hard to produce it. This could be combined with another regular local event

Implement, Monitor and Review

The completion of the Parish Community Plan is just the beginning. The community will be looking for action and the plan will require managing, monitoring and reviewing. Reporting back to the community on progress will be essential to keep up the momentum. If the plan is to be managed by the Parish Council it should become a regular agenda item at Parish Council meetings

Helpful Websites & Contact Details:

<http://www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk/parishes>
<http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/housing-strategy/home.asp>
<http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/resident%2Dinvolvements/home.asp>
<http://www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk/strategies>
<http://www.miltonkeynespartnership.info>
<http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk>
<http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools>
<http://www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk/strategies - Core Strategy>

<http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/safermk>
[Milton Keynes Sustainable Community Strategy](#)

Local Area Agreement

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/miltonkeynesbusinesssupport

[Milton Keynes Council of Voluntary Organisations](#)
information@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk
info@postcodetrust.org.uk
www.fundingcentral.org.uk
http://www.acre.org.uk/communityengagement_parityplans.html

Strategic Planning

Development Plans Manager 01908 252480
<http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/environment-planning/home.asp>

Information Monitoring (Maps and area data)

<http://www.mkiobservatory.org.uk>

Research Officer Planning 01908 254257
& Transport, MKi Observatory

Housing

get.involved@milton-keynes.gov.uk 01908 679250

Community Liaison

community.liaison@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Community Liaison Manager 01908 252230
Senior Community Liaison Officer 01908 254271

Regeneration

Regeneration@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Corporate Manager Regeneration 01908 253022
Regeneration Coordinator 01908 252237

**SPECIMEN CONSTITUTION
For the Parish Community Plan Committee**

Many parishes have found it helpful to adopt a written constitution for the Parish Community Plan Steering Committee. It helps give direction and focus to the process and reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX Parish Community Plan Steering Committee

Name

The name of the organisation shall be the XXXXXXXXXXX Parish Community Plan Steering Committee, hereafter referred to as the Committee.

Purpose

The purpose of the Committee shall be to act on behalf of the Parish / Town Council and to carry out the following tasks:

1. Investigate and identify support for the Parish Community Plan.
2. Identify sources of funding for the Parish Community Plan.
3. Take responsibility for planning, budgeting and monitoring expenditure of the plan and report back to the parish/town council on these matters.
4. Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to make the plan as effective as possible.
5. Identify ways of involving the whole community and gather the views and opinions of as many groups and organisations as possible.
6. Determine the types of the survey and information gathering to be used.
7. Be responsible for the analysis of the survey, the production and distribution of the final report.
8. Identify priorities and timescales for local action in the action plan including lead organisations and potential sources of project funding,
9. Report back to the parish/town council on progress, issues arising and outcomes from the exercise.

Membership

1. The Committee will include up to 12 elected or nominated members.
2. No more than 2 of these members will be members of the parish/town council.
3. Election to the Committee will take place at a meeting open to the public. Any residents or person, particularly those representing a local group, may stand for election to the Committee. Residents may also nominate representatives for election to the Committee.
4. The Committee may co-opt additional members at its discretion, so long as the total number of co-opted members does not exceed the number of elected members.
5. A person shall cease to be a member of the Committee having notified the chair or secretary in writing of his/her wish to resign.

Officers

At the first meeting the Committee will elect:

- A Chairperson
- A Vice Chair
- A Secretary
- A Treasurer
- A Publicity Officer
- A Volunteer Coordinator

All other committee members should have a specific role, to be agreed by the Committee.

Meetings

The Committee shall meet every two months as a minimum or as maybe required. At least 5 clear days notice of meetings shall be given to members by written notices left at, or sent by post to the member's last known address. All notices of committee meetings must detail the matters to be discussed.

Every matter shall be determined by a majority of votes of the Committee members present and voting. In the case of equality of votes the Chair of the meeting shall have a casting vote.

The Committee may decide the quorum necessary to transact business – with a minimum of 5 members.

The secretary shall keep a record of meetings in a minute book, and circulate minutes to members of the Committee not more than 14 days after each meeting.

Working Groups

The Committee may appoint such working groups as it considers necessary to carry out functions specified by the Committee. Each working group should have a nominated Chair but this person does not have to be a member of the steering Committee.

Working groups do not have power to authorise expenditure on behalf of the committee. Working groups will be bound by the terms of reference set out for them by the steering group.

Finance

The Treasurer shall keep a clear record of expenditure, where necessary, supported by receipted invoices.

Members of the Committee who are involved as volunteers with any of the working groups may claim back any expenditure that was necessarily incurred during the process of producing the Parish Plan. This could include postage, stationery, telephone calls, travel costs and childcare costs.

The Treasurer will draw up and agree with the committee procedures for volunteers who wish to claim expenses and the rates they may claim.

The Treasurer will report back to the committee and the Parish/Town Council on planned and actual expenditure for the project, and liaise with the Parish/Town clerk to set up a petty cash system and enable cash withdrawals and payment of invoices to be made as required.

Changes to the Constitution

The constitution may be altered and additional clauses may be added with the consent of two-thirds of the Committee present.

Dissolution of the Committee

Upon dissolution of the Committee any remaining funds shall be disposed of by the Committee, in accordance with the decision reached at an Extraordinary Meeting open to the public in the area of benefit called for that purpose. No individual member of the Committee shall benefit from the dispersal.

SPECIMEN TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR WORKING GROUPS

If the steering committee decides to divide the work among smaller working groups, it may decide to agree 'terms of reference' for those groups. This will ensure participants understand what they are being asked to do and the limits to their powers. Set out below is an example model.

XXXXXXXXX PARISH PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference for Working Groups

Purpose

The purpose of each working group is to assist the Parish Plan Steering Committee (PPSC) to prepare an action plan for the community. Each working group will tackle a specific issue, or set of issues, or the needs and opportunities facing a specific group of people within the community. Each working group should:

1. Clearly set out its purpose e.g. "to help young people (under 18 years) in the community identify their needs, ideas and concerns and to develop an action plan to meet these needs."
2. Outline how it will gather information and carry out consultations.
3. Set out the timescale and estimated costs of gathering information and carrying out consultations.
4. Produce a short action plan setting out:
What is proposed?
Why the action is needed?
Who will be responsible for taking the action?
When will the action be taken forward?
How the action will be implemented and how much it will cost?
5. The working group must be able to demonstrate that projects it has identified have the support of the local community and show that they have, where relevant, discussed projects with other organisations that are able to assist in carrying out the action.
6. Each working group will appoint at least one, but preferably two members, to attend the regular Parish Plan Steering Committee (PPSC) meetings (those persons may already be members of the PPSC).
7. Each working group will be responsible for organising its own meetings and must provide a summary progress report to the PPSC meetings.
8. Financial expenditure in excess of £50 must be approved by the PPSC. Receipted expenses for reimbursement should be passed to the steering group treasurer on a monthly basis with reasons for the expenditure clearly given.

Safe Communities		
MKC Documents - Safer MK - http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/safermk/ Local Neighbourhood Action Group		
Levels of crime	Levels of anti-social behaviour	Street & environmental cleanliness

For further information please contact:

Community Liaison
Milton Keynes Council
Civic Offices
1 Saxon Gate East
Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3EJ

T 01908 254249

F 01908 252511

E community.liaison@milton-keynes.gov.uk

W www.milton-keynes.gov.uk



www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/parishes

