Community Planning Guide
For Communities in West Berkshire
Jo Naylor

What is a Community Plan?

A 5-year vision or blueprint of what residents want to see delivered in their area; this could be anything from a better recreation ground, a new village hall or just more social activities.

Typically the types of issues covered include village services and shops, control of speeding traffic, flood prevention measures, aspirations for better broadband, youth activities, protection of the countryside, walking and cycling routes.

Whilst you can reference and survey local views on housing and development matters, if your overriding concerns relate to such matters these would be better tackled through a Neighbourhood Development Plan (Info on NDPs).

The community planning process involves the sampling of residents' views and much discussion and collecting of qualitative data – i.e. that which is descriptive and cannot be measured. This is then reinforced by quantitative data i.e. more robust numerical data against which local opinion can be objectively measured. This is done through distribution of a residents 'survey to provide the supporting evidence for any recommended actions.

With significant drive and adequate volunteer engagement this process realistically completed within a year or sooner if your parish group is really motivated!
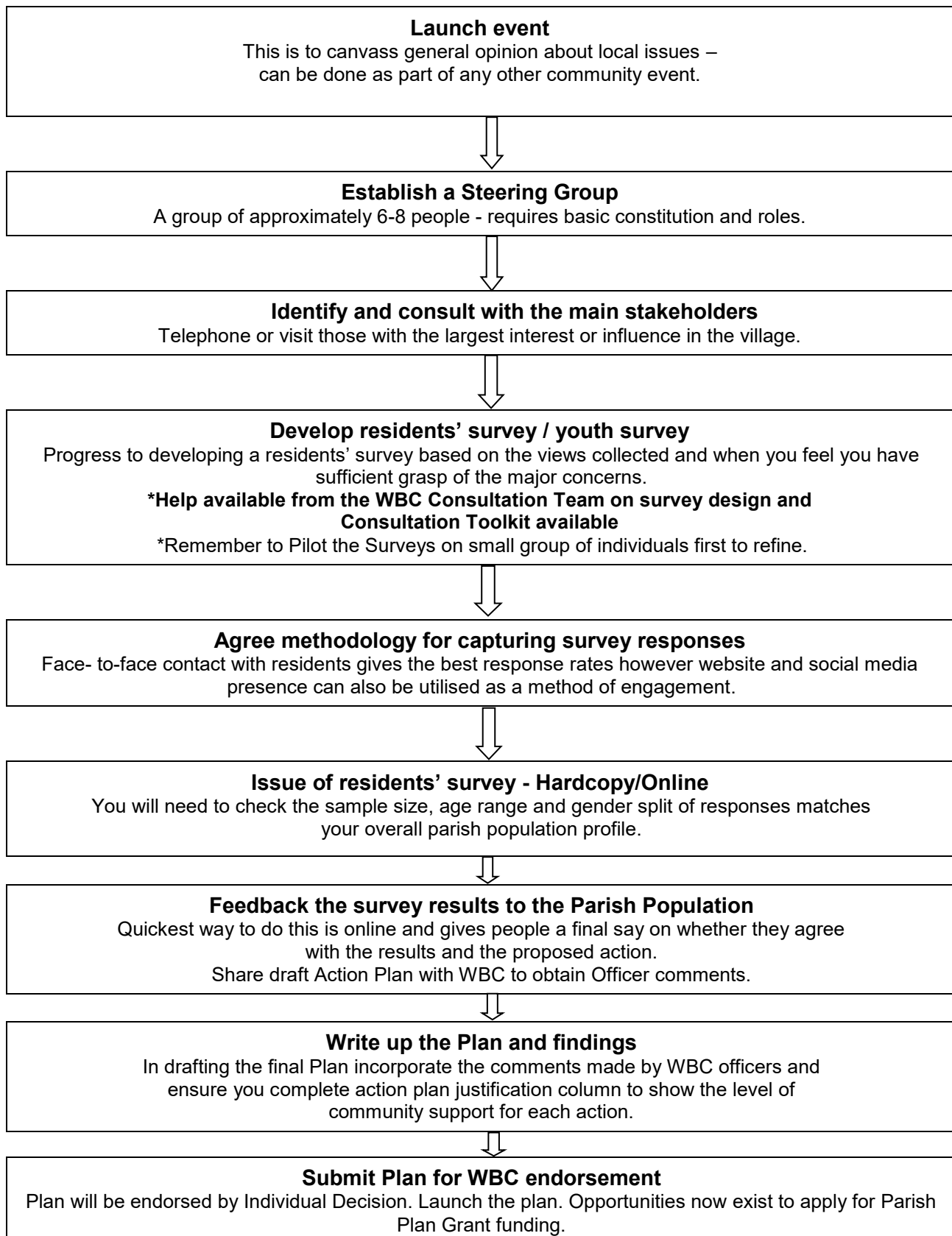
Benefits of a Community Plan

The benefits of being a community with a Community Plan include:

- Giving residents the opportunity to express their views and take control over how they want to see their community develop
- Providing clear published evidence of community needs and priorities which can be referred to as a formal record
- Creating a real sense of community spirit - increased volunteering is often observed following the adoption of a Community Plan
- Helping the WBC determine more accurately how local services are delivered in your area
- Giving a basis for consideration when WBC planning applications are received to understand the community's view
- Securing grant money both via our Parish Plan Grant Fund or for accessing other funding opportunities
- Better partnership working with local agencies on specified projects
- Stronger links between the community and the corresponding Town or Parish Council, encouraging cooperation and understanding.

West Berkshire
C O U N C I L

Quick steps to developing a Community Plan

Launch event This is to canvass general opinion about local issues – can be done as part of any other community event.

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Establish a Steering Group A group of approximately 6-8 people - requires basic constitution and roles.

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Identify and consult with the main stakeholders Telephone or visit those with the largest interest or influence in the village.

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Develop residents' survey / youth survey Progress to developing a residents' survey based on the views collected and when you feel you have sufficient grasp of the major concerns. ***Help available from the WBC Consultation Team on survey design and Consultation Toolkit available** *Remember to Pilot the Surveys on small group of individuals first to refine.

⇩

Agree methodology for capturing survey responses Face- to-face contact with residents gives the best response rates however website and social media presence can also be utilised as a method of engagement.

⇩

Issue of residents' survey - Hardcopy/Online You will need to check the sample size, age range and gender split of responses matches your overall parish population profile.

⇩

Feedback the survey results to the Parish Population Quickest way to do this is online and gives people a final say on whether they agree with the results and the proposed action. Share draft Action Plan with WBC to obtain Officer comments.

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Write up the Plan and findings In drafting the final Plan incorporate the comments made by WBC officers and ensure you complete action plan justification column to show the level of community support for each action.

⇩

Submit Plan for WBC endorsement Plan will be endorsed by Individual Decision. Launch the plan. Opportunities now exist to apply for Parish Plan Grant funding.

Further detail on each step

The Council will commit to helping your community produce a plan. There is a dedicated Officer at WBC to assist and support as well as advice from officers across all service areas depending on what type of help you need.

Step 1: Launch Event – Canvassing your Community's Views

- This is a way of gauging community interest and gathering volunteers (remember to capture names, contact details of those that might help).

- Create an event flyer – see example at Appendix A.

- If short of time/resources this need not be a separate event but can link to an existing community event e.g. summer fete, Christmas bizarre, school fete, Fun Day, etc.

- Feedback/conversations here will provide ideas and show the key areas of concern for your community.

Ideas from other communities

- *The **Hermitage** community found that offering free food is often a great draw for attracting residents and securing their attendance!*

- ***Thatcham Vision** used quick poll of 3 best/worst things collecting ideas on return slips in confidential ballot box. This run at an early launch event helped gather initial ideas.*

- *Parish Plan 'launch events' can also be well attended - 130 people attended the **Stratfield Mortimer Refresh** event – this was achieved by flyers to every home and prominent website and social media presence and focusing advertising on topics which are known to be of interest to the community.*

- *Use visual aids to capture ideas (e.g. a graffiti wall, or post-it notes, model or 'ideas tree')*

- *At any event a small prize draw might help provide the incentive for people to share their thoughts.*

Step 2: Establish a Steering Group

- Small steering group of 6-8 is ideal (include the main stakeholders, such a resident lead, parish council representatives or other organisations) and establish roles such as chairman, lead on communications, etc.

- It's advisable to set out brief Terms of Reference for your group which will help with its operation (e.g. frequency of meetings, specific roles and remit).

- Keep your Parish Council involved as they may help provide essential parts e.g. free venue hire for events and meetings or a small budget to help produce the plan.

- Volunteers involved in any Community Plan activity should be willing to undergo DBS checks – this is especially important if there is going to be any direct one-to-one contact with vulnerable individuals. WBC can assist with this.

- Sufficient volunteers is *critical* to the success of your plan – think about whether you have enough people and how you might publicise the Plan to a wider audience; e.g. posters in the village shop, the pub (e.g. slogans/details on beer mats have worked well elsewhere), notice boards, flyers, mobile display boards, Facebook page, parish website, Twitter feed, newsletters, etc.

Step 3: Identify and Consult with the Main Stakeholders

- Dialogue is key! Outside of this single launch event it's important to have key conversations with your key stakeholders e.g. local school, businesses, shop, church, village hall trustees to identify local concerns and get their early buy-in to producing a Community Plan.

> ### The Role of Focus Groups (Optional only)
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> - The benefit of focus groups is that they can draw out some more detailed understanding of the topics areas.
>
> - This can be helpful exploring issues with specific sections of your community e.g. older people, school age children, mothers' with young children, etc.
>
> - Guidance on how to run focus groups can be found in WBC Consultation Toolkit.

- Good information can be gleaned from Focus Group discussions however this is just option under the new guidelines. So if volunteer time is at a premium and you feel you have enough of an understanding of what's important to your community from the launch event and other discussions with stakeholders then progress directly to **Step 4.**

Step 4 - Develop a Residents' Survey (include young people's issues)

- Getting this step right is critical to gaining a representative sample and ensuring the right questions are asked.

- Unbiased questions are important but equally questions need to be constructed in a way that will generate meaningful conclusions from the results.

- Help is available on questionnaire design from the WBC Consultation Team – any draft will be critically reviewed to assist in obtaining the best survey results.

- We have examples of other community residents' surveys which have resulted in quality plans which can also be adapted for your use (Contact Jo Naylor, Email: jo.naylor@westberks.gov.uk).

- Think about 'future-proofing' the Plan what issues might be on the horizon? What are national issues that impact locally?

- Topic selection sheet is available to consider possible areas you might wish to consider as part of your plan (See Appendix B).

- Ideally it's best not to exceed 25-30 questions for best results and it should take no more than 10-15 minutes in total to complete.

- Remember to use this opportunity to gather more volunteer contact details on the survey form.

- Ensure you capture the views of the children and young people too – this could be done as a separate survey or as part of the main survey as you wish.

Pilot the Survey

- This is merely a reality check that the residents' survey is interpreted in the right way and there is no ambiguity for those expected to fill out the questionnaire. Test it out on individuals who have not been involved in its development to ensure there is no confusion, the sequence is logical and there are no areas which will produce meaningless data.

Step 5 – Agree Methodology for Capturing Survey Responses

- A successful response rate relies on hard graft! In small parishes you will need a team of volunteers, which between them will attempt to knock on the door of every household and encourage forms to be returned.

- Focus effort over a specific period (2-4 weeks is suggested) reminding residents of the returns date for completed questionnaires.

- You could go to the household and offer to answer questionnaire responses via tablet technology to enable a swifter return of the questionnaire data.

- Social media such as Facebook page for your community can equally generate interest and a way of drumming up additional responses to the residents' survey allowing online responding has the additional benefit that no further data entry is required.

Ideas from other communities

- *Hampstead Norreys achieved a 90% household response rate by delivering questionnaires by hand and agreeing appointment times to return and collect the completed questionnaires. Perseverance is the key - you may have to go back multiple times!*

- *Stratfield Mortimer advertised the 'countdown' to the deadline e.g. "X days to go!" boards - will help raise awareness in residents' minds about returning their responses.*

Step 6 - Issue of Residents' Survey/Online Survey

- You will need to source software such as Survey Monkey if you wish to consider encouraging online responding.

- All individuals living in the area should have the right to have their say and attempts should be made to capture the different views in a household.

- You could issue hardcopy questionnaires once to each household but encouraging additional household occupants to respond online.

- If you have opted for a separate young people's survey - think about local schools and considering request attendance to go into specific year group assemblies. This way you have the opportunity to ask how young people would like to see their community developed and get as many questionnaires completed as possible in one go.

6(a)   Check your Data is Representative

- Know your population profile – this can be accessed from WBC website.

- Age and gender categories will provide a simple check that the responses returned match the overall demographic.

- Historically we have had exceptionally good response rates of up to 90% of households being surveyed. This is possible in rural areas but often less

achievable in more urban areas and rare when producing a second 'refreshed' plan.

- A much *smaller sample can be representative* of the wider population providing everyone in the community *has the chance to respond* and where the data is checked to ensure it reflects the overall community make up.

- There are guidelines as to what return rate would provide a sample size which is sufficient to say the findings are representative. This is key as parish plan evidence needs to be robust to demonstrate adequate community backing for any action or funding decision (see Appendix C for a description of sample size for a representative sample).

- Allow for online responding – Online responding will save significant time on data entry but you will need to do checks on the returned data to ensure that there is no over representation of certain groups; e.g. the younger 24-30 age group may be over-represented if gathering returns via social media forums or online.

- If you feel you have missed a sub-section of your community the quickest way of obtaining results from this group would be to hold a separate Focus Group session to elicit their views and ensure that the overall actions/recommendations are generally applicable (see the WBC Consultation Toolkit for more advice on Focus Groups).

6(b)   Data Analysis and Development of Recommendations

- Identify topics which rise up to the fore as priorities or where there is strong sense of feeling towards.

- Work with local organisations and other individuals and groups to formulate possible actions that might flow from what the data tells you.

- Speak to Officers at WBC on areas where their involvement is necessary e.g. speeding, road improvements, countryside matters, waste and recycling etc.

- Meetings with WBC officers can be organised through Jo Naylor, Principal Policy Officer (Community Planning), telephone: (01635) 503019 or Email: jo.naylor@westberks.gov.uk)

- Make recommended actions both specific and achievable

- Send an early draft to WBC to check that the Plan is on track and will be approved without any hitches.

Step 7: Feedback of Survey Results

- Give people a final opportunity to have their say. This can be done online or via a public event or at a Parish Council meeting. Ensure people know they have a chance to comment.

- An event often provides a double check that you've captured the community's views correctly and offers a further way of generating more interest in volunteering to help deliver the actions.

- Publish your draft Action Plan on a website for 1-month for the community to absorb and respond with any final remarks.

Step 8: Finalise the Plan

- Opt for a concise approach.

- The format used in other plans varies but all West Berkshire Council endorsed plans and refreshes can be accessed on our website see: WBC Approved Parish Plans

Step 9: Submit Plan for WBC Endorsement

- Send your draft to Jo Naylor, Principal Policy Officer (Community Planning), Email: jo.naylor@westberks.gov.uk. A month is required to get officer and Elected Member checks of the draft document. Comments will be returned for you to incorporate and amend.

- Once any final changes have been made the plan is returned for WBC endorsement and full support in delivering actions.

Post-Endorsed Plan - Implementation of Actions

- Once a plan has been endorsed think about what mechanism and volunteers you have to deliver the actions. One option is to think about establishing a Community Action Partnership which provides a governance framework for community action and applying for funding.

- The next step is to apply for up grant funding to kick-start your projects - Parish Plan Grant is available, for more information please see the WBC website or contact Jo Naylor.

Contact details:

Jo Naylor, Principal Policy Officer
West Berkshire Council
Tel: 01635 503019
Email: jo.naylor@westberks.gov.uk

List of Appendices:

Appendix A – 'Have Your Say' flyer

Appendix B – Topics covered in a community plan

Appendix C – Sampling methods advice

Appendix D – WBC Action Plan template

Topics for Consideration when Developing Residents' Survey as part of a Community Plan

Whilst this is not an exhaustive list some ideas include:

Safer (e.g. Reducing crime including rural crime and anti-social behaviour, reducing speeding on roads, mitigating flood risk, etc.)
• Road Safety/identification of trouble spots/traffic issues
• Road maintenance
• Parking (including specific issues outside schools)
• Emergency plans and flood prevention schemes
• Neighbourhood watch groups/street wardens

Prosperous (e.g. Supporting the economy of villages, shops and services, Broadband, business, employment and skills.)
• Local markets/farmers markets/craft fairs
• Business clubs/home-workers support
• Local jobs
• Shops
• Post offices
• Local services
• Broadband
• Mobile phone reception
• Tourism
• Digital inclusion (including free WiFi in community buildings)

Healthy (e.g. Improving the general health and well-being of local people and considering ways to support the needs of the elderly and vulnerable.)
• Elderly luncheon clubs
• Befriending schemes
• Toddler groups and support for families with young children
• Public health concerns
• Adult social care and the needs of older people
• Defibrillator projects
• New playgrounds or playground improvements (including disabled access)
• Sports facilities including multi-use games areas
• Youth clubs and activities for the young/Duke of Edinburgh Award Schemes
• Transport
• Cycle paths/bicycle anchorage points
• Rights of way/footpaths

Greener (e.g. Reducing the carbon footprint, increasing the use of renewable energy sources, reducing waste and increasing recycling, encouraging consumption of local grown produce, increasing diversity of local wildlife).
• Greening campaigns
• Energy efficiency initiatives
• Alternative technology
• Conservation groups/talks/days of interest
• Allotment provision and improvements

- Gardening clubs/garden sharing
- Recycling (expanding existing recycling provision)
- Composting
- Open spaces
- Tree Surveys
- Hedge planting/tree planting
- Litter Picking
- Dog Fouling
- Electric vehicle charging points
- Solar panels and energy efficiency measures

Stronger (e.g. Building stronger communities, allowing for accessible services, village halls or other community hubs, recreation grounds, etc.)
- Community buildings and other venues for community activities (especially village halls as being the hub of the community)
- Community events
- Classes/interest groups/clubs/ social activities for adults
- Film Clubs
- Heritage/history projects
- Library Services
- School Breakfast Clubs
- Improved communication through Parish magazines, websites, welcome packs, local directory
- Local volunteering
- Youth Councils
- Planning and Development
- Design of the built environment – a Village Design Statement (VDS) or revising a VDS.

Surveying Methods and Representativeness

Whilst we strive for very high response rates to Parish Plan surveys it's possible that a smaller sample size can still be sufficient if it reflects the overall demographics of the population. The confidence level of the data would describe how sure you are that the data is applicable to the wider population.

Typically a 95% confidence level is sufficient in being able to say the findings represent the wider community.

Sampling all Residents

In order to work out the minimum number of responses you need to achieve a 95% confidence level (with a confidence interval of 5%) you can use the calculator shown here: http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm.

To give you to a worked example:

The parish of Stratfield Mortimer in West Berkshire has a population of **3,807 residents** (Census 2011) and therefore the minimum number of returned completed questionnaires should be **349 residents** in order to be able to say that you are sure that the results obtained reflect the views of the population (+/- 5%).

This sampling method relies on the fact every member of the community has the opportunity to respond and you would need to check the data returned has in fact captured enough from each section of the community (males, females, sufficient age range, etc.)

It's worth seeing how many responses you can capture electronically (i.e. online survey methods, use of tablets, etc.) in order to save on hardcopy survey costs and the time to complete the data entry.

Sampling Households

Historically parish plan questionnaires have sampled households. This is can be difficult to determine where responses have originated from unless you have also issued unique references numbers corresponding to each household. Therefore capturing responses from individuals is a more straightforward measure (see above).

However, if you wish to sample by household you can use the same calculator to know if you have obtained sufficient responses.

Using the Stratfield Mortimer scenario there are **1730 households** in this parish and a sample size of **315 households** would be sufficient to say data that this is representative of the overall number of households.

Given that it is relevant to analyse the results by gender, age etc. this should be two categories you should certainly include on your questionnaires. More advice on this and the other equality characteristics can be obtained from the WBC Consultation Team.

 Note: Far more detailed information on sample size, sampling methods and equality characteristics can be found in the WBC Consultation Toolkit.

Appendix D

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE (2015)								
Name of Parish							Date Plan Adopted	
Objective	Actions	Priority H/M/L	Start Date	Planned Finish Date	Project Manager/Lead Partner	Other Partners	Justification – Show % support in the community for the proposed actions.	Completed *(Give Date)*
Safer (e.g. Reducing crime including rural crime and anti-social behaviour, reducing speeding on roads, mitigating flood risk, etc.)								
Prosperous (e.g. Supporting the economy of villages, shops and services, Broadband, business, employment and skills.)								
Healthy (e.g. Improving the general health and well-being of local people and considering ways to support the needs of the elderly and vulnerable.)								
Greener (e.g. Reducing the carbon footprint, increasing the use of renewable energy sources, reducing waste and increasing recycling, encouraging consumption of local grown produce, increasing diversity of local wildlife).								
Stronger (e.g. Building stronger communities, allowing for accessible services, village halls or other community hubs, recreation grounds, etc.)								