

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**2ND APRIL 2008**

**INTEGRATING AND ADOPTING PARISH PLANS WITHIN SUSTAINABLE  
COMMUNITY STRATEGY & LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: A  
PROPOSED METHODOLOGY**

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Roger Hollingworth
Responsible Head of Service	Hugh Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive

**1. SUMMARY**

1.1 This report sets out a proposed methodology for the integration and adoption of Parish Plans within the district-wide Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and the Local Development Framework (LDF), the latter prepared by the Council as local planning authority. The benefits of formally recognising Parish Plans will mean that the content can assist in giving many services provided by the District Council and partners community focus. In turn, many of the services provided by the Council and partners within the LSP can, and do feed into the Parish Plan process, creating more informed Action Plans.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 It is recommended that:

1. the proposed methodology for integration of Parish Plans within the LSP and LDF is ratified; subject to
2. a 12-week period of consultation be undertaken within the Council, members of the LSP, Community First/CALC and the County Council.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Parish Plans are an established part of the local governance structure, since their launch in the 2000 Rural White Paper 'Our Countryside, the Future' and promoted through the Countryside Agency's 'Vital Villages' initiative. Parish (or Town) Plans are led, prepared and owned by the local community, usually with the support of the parish/town council. The content will reflect local circumstances and issues, but broadly they will address social, economic and environmental issues identified by the local community through a rigorous process of public participation.

3.2 In addition, communities may also choose to prepare a Village Design Statement (VDS). In many ways the forerunner to Parish Plans set our design guidance for new development based on distinctive local

character. It is prepared by the local community and demonstrates a commitment to good design and identifies what the community value in their local environment. Design statements can be prepared as stand-alone documents or be incorporated within the broader Parish Plan.

- 3.3 An effective Parish Plan will pull all these issues together into an Action Plan (AP) which, under specific topic headings, will prioritise issues and identify opportunities to address problems and seek support from a range of partners and key stakeholders. As such, they provide a valuable source of local information that can inform the work of the LSP and integrate or supplement the local planning authority's LDF.
- 3.4 Within the LSP, the Parish Plan can inform key partners and stakeholders of issues and needs, helping to direct resources and support to where it is needed. By adopting the Parish Plan contents as a local information source, the LSP can ensure that the Parish Plan can help key organisations deliver practical projects locally that can improve the quality of life in line with the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS).
- 3.5 Parish Plans (or VDS) can add value to planning at a local level by expressing a greater level of detail than the LSP or local authority might be able to include in the SCS or Development Plan Documents (DPD). The planning benefits and opportunities of Parish Plans for both local authorities and parish/town councils have been detailed in 'Parish Plans and the Planning System', published by the Countryside Agency (2003). The contents or Action Points (AP) can inform planning policies, influence planning proposals, and set out locally based criteria against which planning applications can be judged if adopted as SPD.

#### **4. PARISH PLANS IN BROMSGROVE**

- 4.1 Parish Plan work in the District is principally supported by Community First and CALC, with both organisations having a remit to work across Worcestershire with local rural communities on Parish Plans.
- 4.2 At December 2007, there were 7 communities which had completed a Parish Plan, and one in production to be completed during 2008.

#### **5. ADOPTING PARISH PLANS AS A LOCAL INFORMATION SOURCE FOR THE LSP**

- 5.1 It is proposed to put in place a framework within the Council and LSP to allow the Action Points in Parish Plans to be adopted as a 'Local Information Source'. This will essentially seek to formalise the existing approach to circulating and implementing specific Action Points but provide greater weight as the Parish Plan would be 'adopted' by both the Council and LSP.
- 5.2 This will allow a Parish Plan to be taken into account in the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy, the aims and objectives of which will feed into the Development Plan Documents which form part of the Council's Local Development Framework. In addition, each Action Point will be given a 'commitment' to support implementation or

an undertaking to bring it to the attention of the relevant Council department, or LSP stakeholder etc. (Appendix 1).

### 5.3 **Proposed approach for dealing with Parish Plans:**

- **Parish Council** adopts or endorses the final version of the Parish Plan and copies sent to the relevant Officer in the Planning Policy Team/LSP Manager at the District Council. Copies are also provided to Community First and CALC.
- **Bromsgrove District Council/LSP** to circulate a copy of summary of each Parish Plan and Action Point to LSP Members via the LSP Manager. LSP Manager and Planning Policy Officer to prepare a joint 'Action Point Report' to Executive Cabinet of the Council via the Scrutiny Board to seek formal adoption as 'Local Information Source'.
- **Bromsgrove District Council** to circulate Parish Plan, Action Point Report (if adopted) to the appropriate officers within the Council to deliver the appropriate level of support. Planning Policy Officer to inform Parish Clerk of the Committee decision in writing and attach copy of minute.
- **LSP** to discuss the Parish Plan at its next available meeting and consider the following:
  - Whether to adopt it as a 'local information source' based on the criteria in Appendix 1 and having regard to the decision of the Council.
  - What support the LSP can offer, if any, e.g. funding advice, influencing ability, contacts, invitation to bid for funds (if available).
  - Identify whether the Parish Plan has any common themes that are shared across a number of parishes and take appropriate action, e.g. encouraging joint working, influencing at a more strategic level.
- **Area Committees** – Where an Area Committee exists, the Committee could perform the role of the LSP described above, feeding back to the LSP Board about the decisions taken and to discuss any further support the Area Committee or LSP can offer etc.
- **LSP Chairman** to write a letter of congratulations to Parish Plan Steering Group, setting out whether the LSP is adopting the Plan as a local information source and if appropriate, offering advice and support.
- **LSP Manager** to keep the Board informed of progress with Parish Plans and raise any common themes arising from Parish Plans across a number of parishes.
- **Individual LSP Members** may also wish to take Parish Plans back to their own organisations and if appropriate, respond directly to the Parish Plan Group.

- 5.4 The Council and the LSP will monitor the process to ensure the range and level of support provided is appropriate to the original 'commitment' in the Action Point Report.
6. **Adopting Parish Plans/VDS as Supplementary Planning Documents**
- 6.1 The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new planning framework, replacing the district-wide Local Plan with Local Development Frameworks (LDF). Within the new system, local planning authorities are required to prepare both a range of planning policy documents as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).
- 6.2 Although the local planning authority does not prepare Parish Plans or VDS, where the content relates to land use planning they may be adopted as SPD. When a Parish Plan/VDS has been adopted as SPD, the content of the Action Plan that relates to land use planning issues can be used as material planning considerations. The Parish Plan/VDS may also provide 'pointers' to topic areas, from which the local authority planning may choose to prepare further SPD.
- 6.3 Adoption of extracts from the Parish Plan/VDS as SPD is dependent on a range of criteria being met:
- The Parish Plan, which the local authority intends to adopt, have to be named in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) which forms part of the LDF.
  - The Action Points need to broadly conform to the adopted policies of the Development Plan Documents (DPD) within the LDF, i.e. policies of the saved Local Plan Review or Core Strategy etc.
  - The Parish Plan content has to have been based on extensive public participation with the local community and evidence provided to support this.
  - The Parish Plan content needs to have undergone a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) undertaken either by the Parish Plan Steering Group, parish council, or local authority.
  - Subject to a six-week consultation period in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- 6.4 It should be noted that it is not possible to adopt an element of a Parish Plan unless it is identified in the current LDS, and that adoption can not be done retrospectively, i.e. Parish Plans that have already been published (however, published plans can still follow the process set out in 5.3 and 5.4).
- 6.5 On submission of the completed Parish Plan/VDS, an assessment of the preparation process and extent of the community involvement will be undertaken by the Council (Section 3). At this stage, an initial appraisal of the relevant sections the Action Plan will determine if the

content is appropriate for adoption as SPD.

- 6.6 If the Council is satisfied part of the content of the Parish Plan/VDS can be adopted as SPD, then the adoption process will follow the statutory SPD adoption process, in parallel with the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) under the regulations of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Having completed the technical work on the SA, agreement from Members to publish a draft SPD and SA report for the statutory 4-6 week period of public consultation will be sought. Following consideration of representations on the draft SPD will be resubmitted for adoption by the Council and published as SPD.
- 6.7 Start-up guidance for new Parish Plans should clearly set out the hurdles for adoption as SPD so the Steering Group can make a judgement as to whether they want to seek SPD status and therefore develop the land use/spatial planning element of the final document accordingly.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 No financial implications.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 None.

## **7. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

- 7.1 This issue links to all corporate objectives.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 Working in partnership is a key risk which is identified in the Corporate Risk Register. The Council and the LSP will not be able to deliver its priorities without working in partnership. The Bromsgrove Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2010 (ratified by Cabinet in November 2007) considered the Parish Plans published to date whilst gathering evidence to ensure local issues were reflected appropriately.

## **9. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Working in partnership delivers joined up outcomes, which is what customers expect and adoption of Parish Plans would ensure linking to customers at a very local level.

## **10. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 If Parish Plans are produced, there is opportunity for all residents of any age, sex, ethnicity, disability etc to be involved in the consultation, and if the proposed methodology is accepted, the Parish Plans may inform future plans and strategies.

**11. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 By integrating Parish Plans within the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Development Framework, it demonstrates that Bromsgrove is addressing the needs of residents of the district and ensuring that future plans and resources are included in the strategic plans.

**12. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Please include the following table and spell out any particular implications in the relevant box. If there are no implications under a particular heading, please state 'None':-

Procurement Issues - None
Personnel Issues - None
Governance/Performance Management- The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new planning framework, replacing the district-wide Local Plan with Local Development Frameworks (LDF).
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act 1988 - None
Policy - The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 illustrates that partnerships are central to building on achievements of recent years to embed them into lasting reform.
Environmental - None

**13. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Please include the following table and indicate 'Yes' or 'No' as appropriate. Delete the words in italics.

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director (Partnerships & Projects)	Yes
Executive Director (Services)	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	No

**14. WARDS AFFECTED**

All wards with parish councils.

**15. APPENDICES**

Please list the appendices attached to the report as shown in the example below.

Appendix 1: Guidance for the Assessment of Parish/Town Plans for Adoption as a Local Information Source for the LSP

**16. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

16.1 None.

**Contact officer**

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