

**Going Local – A Guide to Neighbourhood
Community Planning**



COMMUNITY PLANNING

Neighbourhood Action/Locality Planning

Going Local – A Guide to Neighbourhood Community Planning

Introduction

aberdeen futures contains a vision that: “ The needs of local communities will be addressed by planning at a local level ensuring that citizens are involved and supported as full partners in the planning process.” (**aberdeen futures** a social, economic and environmental design for our City. Published Nov 2001)

In order to meaningfully deliver on the Community Plan objectives is it important that there is a clear relationship between the specific needs of neighbourhoods and the overall needs of the City. Bringing planning and the delivery of services closer to local communities is essential if we are to be more responsive to the issues that effect peoples lives. This means setting up more participative planning processes at a local level, which place local people at the heart of decision making that impacts on their community.

aberdeen futures sets a clear target for delivering neighbourhood community planning and action: “We will complete neighbourhood plans for every neighbourhood in the City by 2006”

So what do we mean by neighbourhood?

“There is no exact definition of what makes a neighbourhood. Local perceptions of neighbourhoods may be defined by natural dividing lines such as roads and rivers, changes in housing design or tenure, or the sense of community generated around centres such as schools, shops or transport links. Neighbourhoods vary in size, but tend to be made of several thousand people. Many are dominated by local authority or housing association property, but others have a higher proportion of privately owned housing.” (“A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal, National

Strategy Action Plan.” Published by the Cabinet Office, January 2001 report by Social Exclusion Unit).

So what do we mean by neighbourhood community planning in Aberdeen?

Neighbourhood community planning reflects the same simple idea that community planning is based on i.e.

If all organisations in any neighbourhood in Aberdeen

- Listen to what local people say they want for their neighbourhood

and

- Agree on the priorities and targets for the next 10 years to address these needs

and

- Agree to tackle them together

Then

- Real and lasting improvements will be achieved for all the people who live there.

Justification

The Scottish Executive Social Justice Strategy contains the vision of a “Scotland in which every person both contributes to and benefits from the community in which they live.”

Long-term targets have been set to:

- “reduce any inequalities between communities”,
- “increase residents satisfaction with their neighbourhoods and communities”.

by

- “devoting dedicated resources to initiatives that drive up standards in priority areas and for particular groups facing disadvantage”
- “making sure that services are organised around the needs of individuals rather than for the convenience of the agencies that deliver them”
- “involving communities in the renewal of their own neighbourhoods”
- “ensuring that mainstream programmes are directed at reducing inequalities”.

The Scottish Executive have set 6 mile stones in relation to the “Every Community Matters” elements of the Social Justice Strategy.

- reducing the gap in unemployment rates between the worst areas and the average rate for Scotland
- reducing the incidence of drug misuse in general and of injections and sharing of needles in particular
- reducing crime rates in disadvantaged areas

- increasing the quality and variety of homes in our most disadvantaged communities
- increasing the number of people from across all communities taking part in voluntary activities
- accelerating the number of households in disadvantaged areas with access to the internet

Description of work in Aberdeen to date

Initial neighbourhood planning work has already been undertaken in the 12 regeneration areas where Neighbourhood Community Action Plans have been completed or are in the process of being developed. These cover parts of the City that form the Great Northern Partnership i.e. Middlefield, Printfield, Fersands and Tillydrone (currently in development) and the other regeneration areas of the city - Torry, Northfield, Mastrick, Cummings Park, Powis, Seaton, Froghall, and Rosemount Square (completed). These are being deliberately and specifically linked to the aberdeen *utures* City Wide Community Plan to achieve a consistency and help all concerned to understand how the processes fit together.

The approach taken to date has included:

- Research/area profiles, based on the available social economic and demographic information relating to each specific area, have been provided by the Policy and Research unit of the Office of Chief Executive and these processes will be enhanced as the Knowledge Management function is developed.
- Community based research, as part of enhancing statistical information and in order to identify current priority from the residents perspective, this has involved:
 - a) Consideration of all previous available survey information
 - b) Responses from community based forums and organisations
 - c) Conducting neighbourhood survey work, and;
 - d) Organising a series of planning for real events in each neighbourhood.

Using the initial information gained from the above, draft Neighbourhood Community Action Plans have been developed which essentially reflect the identified views and needs of residents.

Turning Plans to Action

From the outset the staff involved in the developing the Neighbourhood Community Action Plans have been based in the neighbourhoods they have a responsibility for and have been involved in supporting community capacity building activity (supporting residents to become more involved in their community through existing and new community organisations) and delivering directly on community priorities. Tangible improvements include the co-ordination of environmental improvement around Mastrick shops, the development of a Torry Neighbourhood Centre and ensuring the delivery of improved traffic calming as well as developing new community based organisations such as the Seaton Partnership and the Cummings Park Community Forum.

Budgeting

It is becoming clear that the Scottish Executive sees Community Budgeting as a key development in the drive to make services more responsive to local need and to ensure services are delivered at a more local level. To date the identification of a mechanism to determine spend in a local area has not been a priority, but with the Scottish Executive consultation document Community Budgeting – a consultation document on local services and community engagement this area of work will need to be developed. This development fits well with the Community Plan agreed aim; “to develop the discipline of local involvement in decision making which prioritises local need and target budgets accordingly”. (**aberdeen***futures*)

Joining Up Services

Delivering on improving services at a neighbourhood level will require the development of new approaches from all public service providers. The Community Plan and the development of Neighbourhood Community Action Plans will provide the opportunity to further bring services together to meet and respond to locally identified priorities and ensure real and lasting improvements will be achieved for the city and the people who live here.

STEP GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY ACTION PLANS

Step 1 Produce Neighbourhood Map. The Neighbourhood Map should clearly identify the Neighbourhood boundary and should identify main physical features such as schools, churches, community centres, shopping facilities etc.

Step 2 Produce Neighbourhood Profile from all available sources ie General Registry Office, population predictions and census information; Office of National Statistics; Scottish Executive Statistics Unit; data from Job Centre Plus; NHS Grampian; Grampian Police; Community Safety Audit Information; Grampian Fire Brigade; Scottish Enterprise Grampian; Grampian Careers Service; Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics; Communities Scotland and information from Aberdeen City Council Departments.

The Neighbourhood Profile would contain statistical information relating to:

- a) The population, age structure, gender structure and ethnicity.
- b) Housing and households ie house type, house size, voids, lone parent households, dwellings with adaptations.
- c) Economic characteristics ie economic activity, (ie rates for long-term unemployed, youth unemployment and lone parent employment rates), incapacity benefit, income support, family credit, disability living allowance, attendance allowance.
- d) Education ie schools attended, education attainment; free school meals and clothing grants; children with English as an additional language; non attendance at school; school leaver destination, pupil numbers, school role forecasts and trends, capacity figures for schools, placing requests, adult education users.
- e) Children with Special Needs ie children on the Child Protection Register; children with a record of need.
- f) Health ie mental health, births and abortions 16 to 19 year olds, low birth weight babies, admissions to hospital for injury, deaths from heart disease, incidence of lung cancer, incidence of stomach cancer, persons with long term limiting illness, information from lifestyle survey, community care needs.
- g) Safety ie full range of community safety audit information including damage to property, property theft, crimes against the person, drug offences and five related issues.
- h) Physical Environment ie information on roads and pavement condition, lighting, grassed and cultivated areas, streets, dog bins, age and style of housing, information relating to the condition of publicly owned and maintained buildings

For each of these the gap between performance in the neighbourhood and performance in the City and targets in the **aberdeen** futures City Wide Plan. This then becomes a measure of need and justifies targets/priorities for improvement and the division of resources.

Step 3

Resource Identification/Audit ie the identification of all community based facilities located in the neighbourhood and all staffing and budgets that directly contribute to the Neighbourhood. This audit should identify Local Authority presence in the neighbourhood in terms of offices, schools, community education centres and associated staff numbers based in the locality. The audit should provide information on funding in Local Authority areas including community learning and development, housing, social care, education and leisure services. Other information regarding health facilities eg GP practices, health centres and community health provision should be identified. Similarly information regarding level of local policing should be provided. Where there is housing, funded or provided, via Housing Associations or Communities Scotland this information should be identified. Information regarding voluntary projects involved in neighbourhoods and levels of volunteering should be sought. Input from other sources such as Job Plus, Scottish Enterprise Grampian, New Opportunities Fund and specific Central Government Funds for initiatives or areas should be gathered.

Step 4

Identification of Neighbourhood Priorities; this will include:

- a) Obtaining the views of local Council Elected members(s).
- b) Collecting the views of all key community groups operating in the neighbourhood eg Community Councils, Forums, Community Centre Management Committees, School Boards etc.
- c) Carrying out a comprehensive neighbourhood satisfaction survey.
- d) Organising a 'Planning For Real' event.
- e) Consideration of other methods to engage community eg Citizens Panel, Citizens Jury etc.
- f) Collating information from the key professionals working in neighbourhoods with regard to their service priorities and timescaled plans. This should include information from other existing plans, or profiles that have been developed eg Community Learning Plans
- g) Gathering information from city-wide voluntary organisations that experience issues relating to specific neighbourhoods and obtaining information from Communities of Interest representative organisations eg Disability Advisory Group and the Ethnic Minority Forum.
- h) Statistical information.

Step 5

Production of the Neighbourhood Community Action Plan, and an easily accessible summary linked to community plan challenge areas, which sets clear targets and priorities at the neighbourhood level, and processes for involving the community in progressing these. It will be

important that appropriate mechanisms are developed to ensure agreement of joint priorities and alignment of budgets; and that there are clear actions arising from Neighbourhood Community Action Plans. Consideration should be given to identifying early action, or 'quick wins'.

Step 6 Ensure all Neighbourhood Community Action Plans are considered by the appropriate Challenge Forums of The Aberdeen City Alliance and appropriate decision making processes for services eg Council Committees, Health Board, Grampian Police etc and most importantly the Community Groups and local residents involved. Consideration should be given to organising a Stakeholders Conference to agree prioritisation and implementation of specific actions.

Step 7 Maintaining the Neighbourhood Planning process, monitoring and evaluating progress and communicating this to residents. Consideration needs to be given to distributing regular neighbourhood bulletins, developing neighbourhood websites/information points and establishing partnerships with the community, or regular events, that bring service providers together with residents to ensure existing plans are implemented, and that new priorities are identified and responded to.

Produced by the
Locality/Neighbourhood Planning Challenge Forum

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