



What is a Parish and Community-Led plan?

A Parish & Community-Led Plan is a document which sets out a vision for a community's future based on sound local research, looking at social, environmental and economic life.

It celebrates positive features and activities, highlights community needs and contains a detailed action plan to help the community meet those needs. A Parish & Community-Led Plan is produced by and for the community, based on a detailed survey and consultation process which involves the whole community. It prompts action and influences others.

A robust Parish & Community-Led Plans is inclusive and can demonstrate a robust process that ensures its quality. It is steered by a group of people from within the community, including representation from the parish or town council and follows good practice and advice from a neutral independent body. In Gloucestershire, GRCC is the lead provider of advice and support for parish and community led planning.

Introduction

The parish of Minchinhampton covers a large area to the eastern end of Stroud District. Set in picturesque countryside, it is an idyllic place to live, with a population of almost 5,000. Minchinhampton encompasses many villages and hamlets including the villages of Amberley, Box, and part of Brimscombe.



Within the centre of the town of Minchinhampton stands the Market House which has become a landmark for all who live in, or visit the town. The youth club provides activities, sports and recreational needs for the young people. The community not only respects its past but is very mindful of the future.

Minchinhampton provides an excellent example of a small Cotswold town. Many of the buildings date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – the great days of the woollen cloth industry that saw the area assume considerable importance. The main town streets are in a cruciform pattern, relating to the crossing of two old roads – from Stroud to Tetbury and the spur from Stroud to Cirencester. In addition to the trade in wool, the local oolitic limestone was much sought after, and in the hamlets to the north of the parish, and around Amberley there is much evidence of quarrying. The local stone was used for both inhabitants' houses and important buildings like the churches and schools.

(Source: Minchinhampton Parish Council website – the History of Minchinhampton)

The Process

Minchinhampton Parish Council introduced and discussed the parish plan concept at the Parish Assembly held in 2003. Over 70 parishioners attended the meeting, many volunteering their names to form a steering group. Eight members signed up as the key group with many offering assistance as and when needed. The group attended a one day training session about the process which was run by the Countryside Agency and GRCC.

Through funding from the Parish Council and the Countryside Agency, a set amount was made available to employ an administrator for the group. The steering group regularly met to progress the plan and kept the parish informed through the parish newsletter and website. Consultation was through a variety of means: a succession of interactive road shows and workshops were held in Minchinhampton and the surrounding settlements, including the youth club, to establish the community's aspirations for the future of the parish and this was backed up with one-to-one visits to the housebound. Household, youth and business questionnaires were not as successful as the other consultation methods. The steering group gathered the information from the consultations to compile an interim report which was delivered to each household, inviting comments from the community before the main document was launched in 2005.

Community benefits

“Actions from our plan were wide ranging. Seeing the list of achievements makes us realise how far we have come in the last 5 years”

- The main change has been the importance of the parish offices. On a daily basis, people drop in to voice their concerns bringing the Parish Council to the people and we can gather grass roots information.
- The local newsletter is produced at the offices with up to date parish information. This is delivered to the community.
- The parish plan has made the community very aware of local needs making the settlements feel less isolated and the community work together as a whole parish.

Achievements resulting from Minchinhampton's parish plan

Young People

- Skate Park provided for young people. Evidence of need provided in the parish plan enabled over £3,000 of funding to be drawn in.
- Increased communication between adults and young people with the assistance of the Street Wardens and Youth Workers. Events and activities such as football matches have been organised which involve all members of the community

Community

- The Parish offices are now open every morning during term time. The offices are also used to hold surgeries by the police, National Trust and Dog Warden.
- Information events are held annually, where the community are invited to discuss issues regarding the environment, recycling, energy saving and concerns for the over 55s
- A Welcome Pack has been produced for new families and people moving into the parish

Crime and safety

- Increased police presence with regular patrols by the police and PCSOs as part of the partnership approach to crime and disorder
- The parish offices serve as a Police Information Point and weekly surgeries are held with the Neighbourhood Watch representative.
- There is now a Neighbourhood warden in place who assists with home safety, especially for vulnerable people
- Reflective markings introduced across the Commons for the safety of the livestock

Environment

- An annual “Spring clean” is held throughout the parish with volunteers coming from all sections of the community
- Local government has been lobbied and planners and local authorities liaised with to preserve the local environment and stop the erosion of the green belt

Community Transport

- Transport is available for older people who have difficulty getting to appointments

Housing

- An affordable housing survey, conducted through GRCC, showed a need for 20 affordable homes. Exception site identified.

Roads and traffic calming

- Speed limits reduced across Cirencester Road from 60mph to 40mph and in the village of Box from 30 to 20mph
- Weight limits introduced across the common for HGVs lorries
- Volunteers have set up a Road safety team which monitors speeds of vehicles within the parish
- Pavements have been widened for safety and security of the community

Local business

- Extra parking provided outside the local shops
- Goodwill evening to boost trade within the town and support local businesses



“We have linked the action plan to the parish council budgeting headings, and funds are set aside to implement projects. We have noticed that the ethos of the community has changed since the parish plan has been implemented and partnership work has been strengthened. People can see how their ideas fit into the bigger picture or plan for the parish.”

Working with partners

Key advice for others

“A paid person to do the administration work for the plan was a great help, leaving the decision group to concentrate on consulting with the community and giving them the flexibility to draw new people in as and when needed”

The District Council were involved throughout the process of the parish plan and links have been formed which has helped to move projects forward e.g. skate park. To show our Parish Council's commitment to the community and our partners we have become a Chartered Parish Council and a Quality Parish Council since the parish plan which has helped with the affordable housing and the skate park projects.



Youth Skate Park

“It's important to update the community on the actions from the plan and to do this we use our local newsletter, the website, a goodwill evening, local newspapers and radio”

“We have found the process very enjoyable – we met different sections of the parish and talked about their ideas for the future for the whole of the community. This brought the process alive”

Future projects

- Parish regeneration project with the use of a “planning for real” exercise is planned, focusing on recreational services; the rugby club is looking to expand.
- The local doctors would like to expand the surgery
- Further identify the needs and the aspirations of the community and build this into future plans

With thanks to Minchinhampton Parish Council members and clerk for their contributions to this case study

GRCC is the lead provider of support for **parish and community-led plans** in Gloucestershire and can offer support to communities dependent on the location of the parish. For further information please contact
GRCC



Community House
15 College Green
Gloucester
GL1 2LZ
Tel: 01452 528491
Fax: 01452 528493
glosrcc@grcc.org.uk

