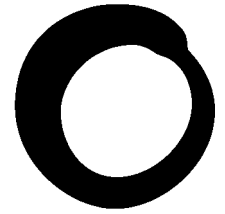


June 2011



**Friends of
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Sustainable Community Strategies & Local Strategic Partnerships

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About this guide

All local Councils are bound to prepare Community Strategies (both England and Wales). A community strategy sets out a long term vision for an area which matches the council's boundaries, backed up by action plans to achieve it. Every local authority should prepare a community strategy 'for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom'. This is a requirement of the Local Government Act 2000.

This guide explains how they are set up within your locality, how they are run, what they intend to achieve and how you - the campaigner - can use them to your best advantage. A separate guide is published for Community Strategies in Wales.

'Changes to local government'

Community Strategies were introduced by the Labour Government in 2007. This was part of the drive to ensure that the delivery of public services were more co-ordinated. The Community strategy is also supposed to be a way of consulting and involving local people in the prioritisation, planning and delivery of services.

The new coalition Government has since 2010 introduced a range of measures for local government and changes at regional level. These are aimed at removing national standards and assessment – such as the comprehensive area assessment, and promoting economic growth through reducing planning regulation e.g. in 'enterprise zones'. These zones will be agreed between local enterprise partnerships and the Government. Local Enterprise partnerships are partnerships between local authorities and businesses that are initiated locally.

Further changes to local government are expected through the Localism Bill.

Local Strategic Partnerships

LSP's now exist in all areas of England, and while some are limited companies others are governed by partnership protocols.

The Local Area Agreements ceased in March 2011. There is scope for local authorities to continue to use locally-defined targets and with their current medium term Sustainable Community Strategies.

Alongside substantial cuts in public spending, councils and their partners have been responding to changes to the public sector, and the abolition of regional development agencies.

Community (Place-based) budgets are being piloted across 16 local areas, as announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review.

In response to these changes, LSPs and other local partnership bodies have been rethinking their roles, functions, and governance arrangements.

Sustainable Community Strategy

Most local authorities have a sustainable community strategy. This has taken varied forms with varied partnerships and priorities. The end product does not have to be submitted to Government.

The SCS does provide a policy framework for other planning processes:

- strategies at a higher geographic level, such as sub-regional plans or plans for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)
- setting the 'core strategy' priorities for the local development framework (LDF) – the spatial and land use plan for the area.

The Community Strategy is usually developed around several themes. Typically, these could be:

- Economic Regeneration
- Climate Change
- Community Safety
- Homes and Neighbourhood
- Leisure and Culture
- Lifelong Learning
- Healthy Communities
- Environment
- Transport

The Sustainable Community Strategy should provide a framework for the application of funding from Government.

The recent changes give Local Enterprise Partnerships a greater role in the development of areas, but it is not clear how this fits with the Community Strategy framework.

Local Enterprise Partnerships

Local enterprise partnerships are led by local authorities and businesses and are formed to drive forward economic growth. This means that they aim to work together to identify e.g. ways in which businesses could expand or new businesses could be generated.

It is not the aim of the enterprise partnership to deliver services or to take on other local government roles. However, planning is one area which is under threat from LEPs. This is because planning is seen as a 'barrier' to growth, as is most regulation. The coalition Government's policies are strongly pro-business led, and despite 'Big Society' rhetoric, essentially means removing community involvement in planning and decision-making and prioritising business influence.

CHECK!

Local Strategic Partnership = A body led by the council but including other key local partners who come together to make services better

Sustainable Community Strategy = The plan the local strategic partnership draws up to help prioritise and guide their work based on close involvement with the community

Local Enterprise Partnership = Local authority and business partnership to identify and act on business interests

How to get involved

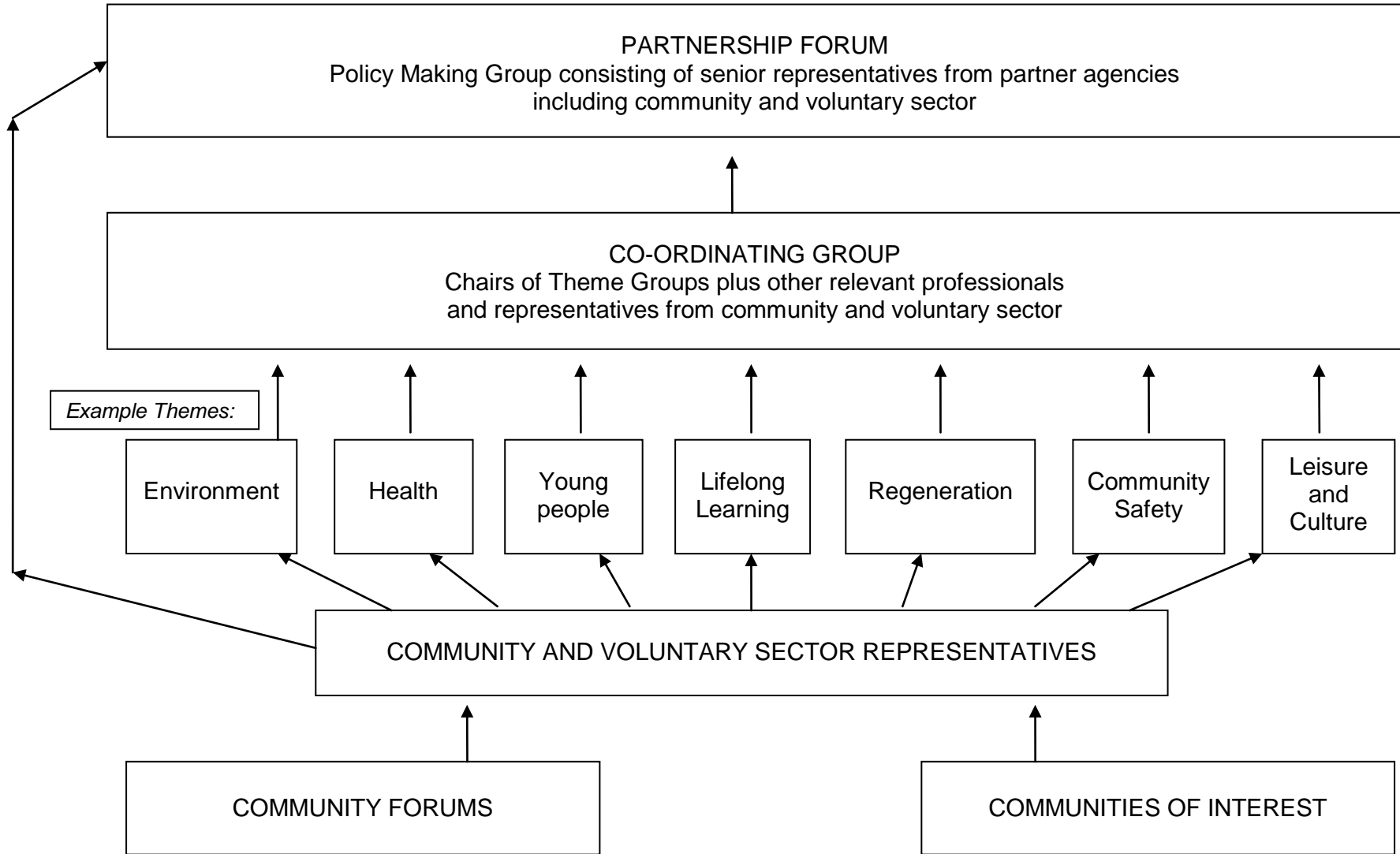
A good starting point is when the Local Strategic Partnership consults on its draft Sustainable Community Strategy. This will usually be through written responses and/or at a public meeting. These are often poorly attended so it is a good chance to have your say and get yourself known. It is also a good opportunity to meet staff and members of the LSP to find out how yours works.

Sustainable Community Strategies are also often based on more local community consultation. This could be in the form of public meetings or more innovative events such as 'Planning for Real'. The intention will be to find out what the concerns and priorities for local people are, so that a local action plan and/or the Community Strategy can reflect them. Again, this is a useful place to get involved.

LSPs and Sustainable Community Strategies are not just concerned about communities of place. They are also concerned about communities of interest. One way to get your interests registered with them is through the local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), who often have a place in their own right at all levels of the LSP. It is often the CVS who organise representation of the voluntary sector within the LSP, so this is another useful point of contact. In some LSPs it may well be possible to be nominated from the CVS direct to a theme group of the LSP. In other LSPs, it may be possible to be represented directly.

Finally, it is well worth remembering that the paid officers of the LSP are often lonely! While in theory their role is central to the function of local government and the delivery of services, in practice they are often marginalised, because their role has been inadequately defined by Government and they have no statutory place. Therefore, it is well worth arranging to meet your LSP officers to simply discuss with them how you, as a member of the public, can get involved.

Participation in Local Strategic Partnerships



Further information:

Further information and guidance:

Friends of the Earth – Tel: 020 7490 1555
26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ
Website: www.foe.co.uk

Rights and Justice Centre

Email: legal@foe.co.uk

Useful web sites

Government

Department for Communities and Local Government
www.communities.gov.uk/

The Planning Inspectorate
www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk/

Environment Agency
www.environment-agency.gov.uk/

Environment Agency Public Registers
www2.environment-agency.gov.uk/epr/

Information Commissioners Office
www.ico.gov.uk

Neighbourhood Statistics
www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/20040005.htm

Planning Portal
www.planningportal.gov.uk

Non Governmental Organisations (NGO)

Air Quality – UK National Air Quality site
www.airquality.co.uk

Campaign to Protect Rural England planning site
www.planninghelp.org.uk

Environmental Law Foundation
www.elflaw.org/

Liberty
www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/

Wildlife and Countryside Link.
www.wcl.org.uk

Specific recommendations

Local Government Association

Local Government House

Smith Square

London SW1P 3HZ

Tel: 020 7664 3000

www.lga.gov.uk/

'Strong, safe and prosperous communities'

Statutory governmental guidance

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongsafeprosperous

Local Government Act 2000

www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/20000022.htm

Community Development Foundation

Publish a useful guide "Green Up!" which explains how community groups can use Local Area Agreements and Sustainable Community Strategies to get their work supported. The guide also explains all the words and vocabulary commonly used by councils, so local groups can clearly understand 'council speak'.

www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/publication?id=142955