HOW CAN COMMUNITIES RECEIVE THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TO CREATE A MORE ENGAGING CITY?
WHAT IS THIS TOPIC PAPER ABOUT?

This topic paper has been published as part of Plymouth Plan Connections. It is one of a series of topic papers that are being published to provide information and support ongoing discussions with local people and organisations about the future of the city.

This topic paper looks at how the Plymouth Plan can help communities receive the support they need to create a more engaging city.

To view all the topic papers and find out more about the Plymouth Plan go to www.plymouth.gov.uk/pptopicpapers

A local community means different things to different people, while for some it could reference a local area, for others it could be based on a specific identity, interest or lifestyle. Local community is a widely used phrase which can have different meanings depending on the context. This paper looks at ‘community’ in its broadest sense considering communities of geography, communities of interest and communities of identity.

Make your comments on this document as part of the Plymouth Plan Connections before 25 October 2014.

www.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouthplan
WHY DO WE NEED TO SUPPORT LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO HELP THEMSELVES?

Local community and voluntary groups play a key role in British life in general and in the life of the city. The value of voluntary activity in the UK for 2012 was estimated to be £23.9 billion, approximately 1.5 per cent Gross Domestic Product (GDP).1

In December 2013 the Centre for Social Justice published a report “Something’s Got To Give”2 highlighting the possible new role Britain’s Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) could play in creating alternative ways of providing community support and social enterprise. Recognising the importance of ‘social action’ in all communities, the Government created new initiatives to push for the expansion of the VCS, including the National Citizen Service3, the Community Organisers programme4 and the Communities First programme5.

What do you think are the best ways to engage with local people?

There is a strong VCS in Plymouth, and while findings from the Plymouth Fairness Commission6 suggest that the sector is “disjointed and insular”, steps are being taken to learn more about the structure of the VCS and how it operates in Plymouth in order to support its continued growth. A planned programme of commissioning will support the sector in areas including volunteering, support for small community groups, timebanking and funding advice.

The Plymouth Plan will need to acknowledge the potential role of the VCS in supporting the delivery of the City Vision7, and meeting the needs of communities in an era where severe resource constraints on the public sector are likely to continue. By working smarter together with the VCS, private sector and local businesses, Plymouth can understand its citizens and fully engage with them on matters which are most important to them.

---


3 The NCS (National Citizen Service) is a new voluntary programme for 16- and 17-year-olds in their post-GCSE summer holiday which has been designed to support the transition into adulthood as well as to combat social segregation.

4 The Community Organisers programme: This £15 million initiative trains and funds organisers to be placed with host organisations across the country and go out into neighbourhoods to ‘ignite the impulse to act’. Organisers are to ‘stay’ away from working with established groups’ and instead build up new networks of people from scratch. This is because it aims to create new community action and to engage more citizens in communities.

5 Community First is a programme which has two components to it, both of which involve match funding, where the Government matches donations from philanthropic giving in identified deprived communities. This encourages philanthropic activity and also helps channel additional resource into communities.


7 Plymouth’s City Vision is to become one of Europe’s most vibrant waterfront cities where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone.
The future role of the VCS in Plymouth:

“The roles of VCS agencies tend to focus on communities of interest, and there is scope to support this further to build social value. They are rooted within communities and therefore have a lot to offer. Volunteering and the work that has started with cities of service could be built on. A framework for commissioning and supporting this area is essential and further research around models is needed to strengthen and support the development of a resilient voluntary sector”.

Plymouth City Council (2014) Engagement Framework

A strong voluntary and community sector is good for a healthy society; but within the context of the current demographic and economic climate, its role will become even more crucial by helping to reduce the need for adult social care and children’s services by having an active community which supports its most vulnerable citizens.

Plymouth, like other cities in the UK has an ageing population. Whilst South Hams and West Devon has an even higher proportion of elderly people, Plymouth still has a growing elderly population (aged 65+ years) and is following the national trend8. This needs to be seen against a back-drop of public sector spending restrictions. Plymouth City Council has seen a £30 million reduction in government funding over the past three years with further reductions to come with a funding gap of £64.5 million over the next three years, this ‘gap’ can be seen in the funding gap graph below. Even if improvements in health and well-being are achieved through working more collaboratively with health partners, there is likely to be a significant increase in demand for adult social care and health care in the city. This will put an even greater pressure on the availability of public resources for other services which play a large part in sustaining a local community such as children’s services, libraries, parks and leisure centres.

In this context it can be seen that communities of geography and of interest have an even more significant role to play in making Plymouth a fairer place to live. Delivery of the City Vision will, to a significant degree, be dependent upon strong partnership working across all sectors.

The report of the Plymouth Fairness Commission highlights that indices of unfairness in the city include the way people live together and relate to each other. Similar to other cities, Plymouth experiences unfairness and inequalities, which are issues that need to be tackled, and evidence indicates that social inequality is a driver of social breakdown.

“During the Summer of Listening, the Fairness Commission heard just how wide discrimination is in Plymouth. We heard of young asylum seekers being shouted at by neighbours two or three times a day, discrimination of those living with HIV, and systematic discrimination on the basis of age, religion, gender, people with disabilities and sexual orientation.”


Within Plymouth, there are communities that have experienced consistently higher rates of economic inactivity and unemployment – including youth and long-term – alongside many other deep-rooted socio-economic issues including health; this evidence is reflected in the Plymouth Plan Area Assessments. Despite positive and targeted interventions, fundamental issues affecting the city’s most deprived communities remain. This has a knock-on-effect on other issues within a local community such as education and health and well-being which can limit a community’s ability to work together and help themselves.

What do you think will help communities integrate better?

By supporting local communities to help themselves, the Plymouth Plan will support a range of outcomes which will contribute to the Plymouth’s city wide strategic priorities, including the growth of the city and raising Plymouth’s aspirations. Outcomes to achieve include an:

- increase in the number of local citizens putting themselves forward as local community champions or leaders
- improved satisfaction with neighbourhoods as a place to live
- increased number of citizens influencing decision making
- increased number of people from different backgrounds getting on well together

To ensure local communities are supported to help themselves, the Plymouth Plan will need to promote a more engaging city with more supportive communities.

---

9 The Plymouth Plan Area Assessments have split the City into eight different areas: Central; North; North West; Plympton; Plymstock; South; South West and West. They cover a wide range of issues including education, proximity to local services and school provision and are available for comment on our website or at your local library until 25 October 2014: www.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouthplan

A MORE ENGAGING CITY WITH MORE SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

A more engaging city means that local people feel well informed and able to influence change that takes place in their local communities. A more supportive community means that citizens feel fully engaged and empowered and they are better able to support one another.

The Fairness Commission emphasises the need to work together, specifically highlighting that a “... joined-up approach between agencies, with many partners working together in new ways, building trust and working relationships around a common goal,” this ‘joined-up’ approach will help Plymouth move from a situation where communities are ‘done to’ to one where everyone works collaboratively to ‘do with’ communities to prioritise and deliver solutions themselves. It sets out the importance for organisations and agencies to help communities shape their future and find innovative solutions. A citywide framework for how the Council and its partners will approach engaging and working with communities has evolved. There is now an opportunity for citizens and communities to shape how this is delivered.

A survey held in 2012 by the Council showed that on average, only 19 per cent of the city’s population felt they could influence decisions with levels varying significantly between the least and most affluent neighbourhoods; the lowest score recorded being 9 per cent. There was also a sense from many that, while frequent consultations were held, the end results didn’t reflect what people wanted.

If local citizens are provided the opportunity and can understand how they are able to influence change in their local community this will encourage increased levels of active involvement, and use of tools such as neighbourhood planning will help people to feel more in control of their area and have a greater sense of ownership for it. Additionally, the understanding that the Council and its partners has of local issues can only be enhanced through increasing levels of engagement at a community level.

11 PCC (proposed August 2014) Engagement Framework
12 PCC (2012) Listening Plymouth – A view from you
13 For further information regarding neighbourhood planning and the tools a local community can use to influence change, please look at the How do we create local neighbourhoods where people want to live? Topic paper published on our website: http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/environmentandplanning/planning/planningpolicy/idf/plumployplar/pptopicpapers.htm
Communities of interest and geography should be integral to helping shape the city, enabling it to be a more welcoming city, to grow in a sustainable way and improve health and well-being. There are many tools which can be used to create more engaging and supportive communities to tackle a range of issues from unemployment and disconnection to diversity and acceptance; these include volunteering; developing community leaders; capacity building and creating social movement. They also include initiatives such as:

- **Timebanking** – currently commissioned by the Council for use by the VCS, current ways are being explored to replicate the concept of timebanking within other communities across the city and within Plymouth City Council services.

- **Plymouth Octopus Project (POP)** – which is part of the Zebra Collective and is commissioned by the Council as part of a range of measures taken to increase the voice of the citizens of Plymouth by supporting, identifying and mapping where the VCS sector operates across the city.

- **Welcoming City** – which is a programme of initiatives designed to help Plymouth achieve its ambition to become a welcoming city that is diverse and inclusive.

- **Plymouth’s Local Economic Strategy (LES) review 2013 to 2014** - which places local communities at the centre of a key objective to delivering sustainable economic growth.

### Case Study: Timebanking in Plymouth

The Zebra Collective is commissioned by Plymouth City Council to facilitate Timebanking in Plymouth. It is about making things happen and bringing people in the community together. It is a flexible tool to help create opportunities for community and personal development, community cohesion, equality and diversity, participation, networking and co-production. The ethos is that people are assets where everyone’s time and skill is equal and everyone has something to offer. It is where individuals, community groups and organisations can get involved in their community by exchanging time, skills and know-how to help each other. The more people who join the more time, skills and knowhow citizens have to share around. Timebanking uses time as a currency and for every hour of help someone gives they receive an hour Time Credit back to ask for something they want or need, from any Time Bank member. It works because people only exchange what they want to exchange when they want to. In Plymouth, timebanking is set-up/being established in numerous different communities including: Barne Barton and St. Budeaux, Stonehouse, and Whitleigh.


---

14 For more information on POP please visit [http://www.pop.coop/](http://www.pop.coop/)
15 For more information on the Welcoming City initiatives please visit [http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/welcomingcity](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/welcomingcity)
16 PCC (2013) Local Economic Strategy
Case Study: Plymouth’s Local Economic Strategy (LES) review 2013 to 2014

Plymouth’s Local Economic Strategy review 2013 to 2014 is part of the new approach to help tackle issues of unemployment and disconnection between communities. The review puts local communities at the centre of a key objective to deliver sustainable growth. Under the chapter ‘People, Communities and Institutions’ it states how the council wishes to harness the economic potential of the city by connecting local people and local communities to local assets, resources and support.

The LES continually highlights the importance of making sure the opportunities created by economic growth and development are shared fairly among Plymouth’s resident population. It emphasises a commitment to sustainable development and it states that the Council will actively respond to the work of the Fairness Commission to ensure justice and equality.

PCC (2013) Local Economic Strategy

Other key initiatives which are available for the public to generate support and money for projects include the National Lottery funding service and Crowdfunding. These will need to be explored by community groups of the future and to do this they may need support; key agencies in the city are currently looking at how they will be able to resource this type of support in the future.
POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

The Plymouth Plan can help deliver a more engaging city with more supportive communities in a number of ways, the main solutions being,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plymouth Plan Solutions</th>
<th>Related Theme</th>
<th>Why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the development and use of a new framework for working with citizens and communities, together with a wide range of tools to implement an engagement process that involves everyone which is clear, concise and transparent in its implementation.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Studies/policies relating to the local community highlight the need for increased community empowerment and as a council we hope to facilitate, where possible, power to local people. The emerging framework will ensure that a consistent and recognised approach is taken throughout the city so that citizens and communities know what to expect when they take part in consultations and engagement activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create the conditions within which the VCS and other sectors can operate and work in, to support the delivery of change in local communities</td>
<td></td>
<td>The VCS and private sector can play a vital role in helping to deliver change in local communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set out a flexible policy framework that supports the development of social enterprise and enables local communities to use neighbourhood planning and other tools to affect change in their areas</td>
<td></td>
<td>As a plan for people as well as place it is important that the Plymouth Plan sets an appropriate framework to enable the suite of neighbourhood planning tools to be used effectively, making sure that development and change works to meet the needs of the people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure the opportunities created by economic growth and development are shared fairly among Plymouth’s resident population</td>
<td></td>
<td>For fairness and equality and for Plymouth to grow as a single unit where no one is left behind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Any comments received on this topic paper will be considered in the preparation of the Plymouth Plan. You can make comments at www.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouthplan or by email plymouthplan@plymouth.gov.uk. Alternatively, please post your comments to:

Strategic Planning and Infrastructure
Plymouth City Council
Ballard House
West Hoe Road
Plymouth
PL1 3BJ

The closing date for consultation responses is 25 October 2014.

List of key Plymouth Plan evidence base documents

- Plymouth City Council (2014) Engagement Framework
- Plymouth City Council (2014) Plymouth Plan Area Assessments
- Plymouth City Council (2014) Topic Papers
- Plymouth City Council (2013) Local Economic Strategy
- Plymouth City Council (2007) Local Development Framework visit www.plymouth.gov.uk/ldf