

# East Suffolk Community Partnership Chairs, Vice Chairs and Communities Officer Development Sessions

## 2024/25 Action Plan

*Good quality thinking leads to good decision making, resulting in good outcomes*

1. **Shared Purpose, Vision, and Goals** – across all CPs and for individual CPs - start with the end in mind...if we are to be successful, what will we have achieved?
2. Finalise the Community Partnership definition - ***‘Local people, the Council and partners working together to find practical solutions to local issues; Bringing Ideas to Life’***
3. **Agree our Key Principles:**
  - a. Inclusive (grass roots engagement, include everyone, hear a diversity of perspectives)
  - b. Evidence-led (data and insight)
  - c. Impactful (deliver a positive, tangible difference and add value)
  - d. Solution focussed (find collaborative solutions to local needs and problems)
  - e. Clear communication – so that local people and partners know what CPs are and do
  - f. Make strong connections – we signpost and connect local people and groups
4. **Impact measurement** – so that we can prove that what we do is relevant, sustainable, impactful and meaningful
5. **Community Partnership Meeting Essentials**
  - a. Facilitated, not Chaired
  - b. Opening rounds to help people to arrive physically and mentally
  - c. Use names wherever possible
  - d. Apply the Thinking Pairs and Thinking Circles tools where relevant
  - e. Use Agendas in the form of questions
  - f. Clear concise reports that help answer the questions
  - g. Action Notes = the answers to the questions
  - h. Make room layouts as inclusive as possible – can people see each other?
  - i. Apply learning about managing conflict
6. Periodically **revisit the individual PEST and SWOT analyses and the Stakeholder Mapping** – thinking about ‘Offers’ and ‘Wants’ from each stakeholder
7. Ensure the right people are in the room and that they understand their roles/responsibilities – develop **Role Description for CP Members** (and revisit the Chair and Vice Chair Role Descriptions)
8. Regularly revisit and review the **Meeting Ground Rules**

9. **Widen the pool of people who are actively involved (particularly when priorities change)** – in CP meetings, project development and individual project delivery
10. **Maintain energy and be aware of Limiting Assumptions** (which sap energy in the room)
11. **Think Rural** (apply the Rural Proofing model and emerging Action Plan)
12. **Poverty Proof CP events and projects** to ensure that we are not excluding those on low income (even if events are free, transport can be an issue)
13. Develop a **Communications and Marketing Strategy** (to include photo/video bank, incentivise people to provide photo's, social media campaigns, Councillor role as Communication Champions, promote outcomes and how people can get involved)
14. **Secure the future of Community Partnerships** – take a report to the Board and to ESC Cabinet that makes a compelling case for retaining CPs (including evidence from funding beneficiaries)

## Development Session 1

### **Limiting Assumption (page 2/3, report 1)**

*Good quality thinking* ➡ *Good decision making* ➡ *Good outcomes*

To achieve good outcomes, we need to make good decisions and to make good decisions, we need the best quality thinking to go into them. All too often we tend to make negative assumptions about situations, ourselves, others, organisations etc.

Nancy Kline suggests there are three tests that can be applied to limiting assumptions – either they are not true in which case what is true or positive? Or they might have been true in the past but can be replaced by something more positive for the future, or they can be described in a more positive way.

We looked at what assumptions people might make about Community Partnerships that might limit their impact and identified more positive assumptions we want them to make instead. We also applied this to Community Partnership meetings.

### **How would we define our purpose?**

- Local people and partners alleviating local issues
- Including everyone in developing solutions to local problems and issues
- A local collaborative approach to achievable community need
- A forum for problem solving on a practical level, addressing issues and focussing on solutions
- Listen to local issues and take action

### **How we want to be seen by our communities (page 5, report 1)**

Local aims and priorities	Achievable	Impactful
Inclusive	Solution focussed	Problem solving
Skills-led	Facilitate to include all	Encourage involvement
Everyone encouraged to speak	Best funding outcomes	Mechanism to deliver
Grass roots engagement	Enabling budgets	Positive difference
Engage people who don't engage with other partners	Tell people what we are doing in meaningful language	

### **Our Communities and Ourselves – Offers and Wants (page 7/8, report 1)**

Looked at what Community Partnerships want from Communities and what Communities want from Community Partnerships.

Considered what we think our responsibilities are to our communities:

Listen and hear diversity of perspectives	Promote collaborative solutions to community need
Enable/facilitate discussions	Act as a conduit – signpost and connect
Connect with communities	Develop relationships with T and P Councils
Use evidence e.g. data packs	Be realistic
Deliver tangible improvements	Facilitate / manage expectations
Make connections – budgets/resources	Add value for locally grown initiatives e.g. marketing support for Warm Welcomes
Communicate well	Raise awareness of the CP

### **What External Factors could help or hinder us in East Suffolk (page 9, report 1)**

Developed a table identifying Political, Economic, Social and Technological factors.

Considered potential Opportunities and Challenges.

Identified the Strengths and Weaknesses of our collective of Community Partnerships.

### **Change and Transition (page 12, report 1)**

The difference between change and transition – change happens at a point in time, but transition is a psychological journey which people need to make to realise the full potential for change.

What do our priorities need to be – what needs to END, what works well that we could BUILD UPON, what NEW BEGINNINGS need to be introduced?

What do we want our Community Partnerships to have achieved collectively in the next 2-3 years (both external and internal)?

What do we need to do as a priority to ensure success? Developed a list of external and internal factors and then refined these into an overview of:

### **What we need to do as a priority to ensure success (page 13, report 1)**

- Transform negativity to positivity and ensure that people take responsibility and contribute in a practical way
- Assess the health of our Task and Finish groups to ensure that they are delivering our priorities

- Better measurement of the impact of Community Partnerships and projects so we know what we do is relevant, impactful and measurable
- Ensure people are still around the table and feel energised

## **Key Points from Workshop 1:**

Using Nancy Kline's 'Thinking Environment' methodology we looked at how Community Partnerships could use these techniques to move away from traditionally formal meetings to more facilitated workshops:

- Opening rounds where everyone is invited to introduce themselves and arrive physically and mentally
- Use people's names to keep attention
- Use of rounds to ensure everyone's voice is heard – Attention and Equality
- Thinking Pairs – another tool to give everyone the chance to speak
- Be still when you listen to create a sense of Ease
- Agendas in the form of questions – notes of the meeting are the answers to the questions
- Organise the room to enable everyone to see each other – reduce use of tables and PowerPoint as they can keep a sense of hierarchy
- Reports should provide the information necessary to answer the agenda questions
- Recognise the importance of acknowledging Feelings

## **Development Session 2**

Suggested definition: **Local people, the Council and partners working together to find practical solutions to local issues: 'Bringing Ideas to Life'**

Each individual partnership grouping had produced a PEST and SWOT analysis for their specific area.

Key Issues to work on:

- Local people and partners have a better understanding of what CPs are
- Communications is a key issue
- Relationships with Town and Parish Councils
- Overcome some of the challenges of rurality
- More local people and partners (and the right people from partner organisations) get actively involved
- Turning talk into action
- Identification of local assets in the community – physical and people

**Who we need to be members of our Community Partnerships in order to achieve our goals (page 3, report 2)**

Mind map produced...

- VCFSE – Age UK, Citizens Advice, Disability Forums
- Councillors – County / District / Parish / MP
- GP Surgeries, INTs, Social Prescribers
- Churches, Pastors, Faith Groups
- Police
- Leisure and Sport Services
- National Literacy Trust
- Men's Sheds
- Food Banks and projects
- Local Business
- Schools / Youth Groups
- Social Care
- Public Health
- Transport Providers

We then considered how Healthy are these relationships now in relation to the **4C's – Communication, Consultation, Co-operation and Co-Creation**. Each Community Partnership was asked to assess the level at which the relationship was operating now and then identify what level it needs to be operating at.

## **What roles do we want people to play (Offers and Wants)?**

Revisited the Offers and Wants exercise from Workshop 1 and opportunity to use this when engaging partners and use as the basis of a psychological contract.

## **Building Trust (page 5, report 2)**

1. Importance of Trust – each time partnership moves to a higher level it will require a higher level of trust
2. Trust has to be earned and is easily lost (and hard to regain)
3. Assess the relationship against the four central elements of competence, openness, reliability and equity/fairness to check which of these is where the problem lies.

Practical exercise – Reds and Blues

## **Collaborative Agreements (page 5, report 2)**

1. Shared purpose vision and goals
2. Clear roles and responsibilities for each member
3. Your plan – to achieve vision and inform meeting agendas
4. Ground Rules to guide the way we work together
5. Monitoring system to check still on track (1-4 above)

## Development Session 3

**What is going well in our Community Partnerships and what problems do we need to overcome (page 4, report 3)**

<b>What is going well?</b>	<b>What could be better?</b>
Projects that have made a big difference	Continuity and momentum if someone leaves
Projects being adopted in other CP areas	Reliance on Communities Officers/particular CP members
New, more focussed priorities	Lack of CP members taking on tasks
Poverty Proofing principle / lens	Need to make engagement sustainable
Use of Task and Finish Groups to work on priorities	Promotion of CPs and what they do
Flexibility to fill gaps	Communication with interested parties
Engagement beyond core group	Ensuring one part of the CP doesn't dominate
Passion and enthusiasm	Managing louder voices and problem solvers
People like CPs as a way of engaging with communities	Keeping politics out of CPs
Good use of Councillor time	Geographical equity within CP's
Great ideas and good debates	Ensuring core representatives buy into the ethos
Small grants – good/strong applications	Sharing CO expertise across CP areas
Funding Team support	Seeking/securing external funding
Themed meetings with relevant attendees	Sustaining the CP model outside ESC funding
Sustainability – long term impact	Demonstrating value for money
Parishes looking/working beyond boundary	Data to demonstrate the value of CPs
Attendance of rural areas	Encouraging external partners to engage with specific projects
Match funding	Empowering people to do things
Connections into other work e.g. transport, young people	Enhancing the use of technology to support CPs
People have grown in role – confidence of Chairs growing	Build our communication skills
Right people are engaging well	
CP Officers liaise and share practice	
Networking, relationships and how groups work together	
Increasing link between Board and CPs	
Better at communicating – surveys, newsletters and social media	
SALC contract and learning	
Neighbourly lab work	
Meetings in community locations	
External funding to help CPs to continue	
Project evaluation – outcomes are important	

## **Practical Problem Solving in Groups (page 7, report 3)**

Creativity techniques that can help when we get stuck

### **Do Bono's Six Thinking Hats – practical example focussed on Communications**

1. White Hat – Data
  2. Red Hat – Emotion
  3. Black Hat – Pessimism / Negativity
  4. Yellow Hat – Optimism – Possibility
  5. Green Hat – Anything Goes!
  6. Blue Hat – Processes (all)
- Develop an annual Communications and Marketing Strategy
  - Use Communications experts to support
  - Set up a bank of professional quality photographs and videos/animations for use in magazines, TV, screens etc.
  - Incentivise people to provide photographs e.g. make it a condition of funding awarded
  - Identify how we measure the return on and output of our projects
  - Identify risks and what we could do to mitigate these risks
  - Develop a social media campaign based on stories
  - Role for local Councillors – passionate, promote examples
  - Hold an informal networking event
  - Take report to the Board – SW to front
  - Promote CP outcomes but also how people can engage with us

## **How we can manage conflict effectively (page 10, report 3)**

In a conflict situation, behaviour can be described along two dimensions – Assertiveness (the extent to which the person attempts to satisfy their own concerns) and Cooperativeness (the extent to which the person attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns).

### **What can help?**

Creating Space – change location, listen well, give good attention and promote equality, no interruptions to help understand the core issue, Use 'what more do you think', take regular breaks, consider facilitation/mediation or bring in a trusted third party

Ensuring Balanced Evaluation – options to fix what's wrong, opinions/fact, differences, ensure people are respected and heard (including feelings and values), separate personalities, focus on people's interests and not their positions, brainstorm possible solutions

Seek Closure – agree decision principles – objective criteria for a successful outcome and test options against these, acknowledge where there is agreement, agree small steps and how progress will be reviewed, keep communication channels open.

## **Revision: How to Design and Run Meaningful Meetings (page 11, report 3)**

- Agenda in the form of questions encourages people to come to meetings better prepared
- Minutes of meetings = answers to the questions
- If energy drops it may mean that limiting assumptions have 'entered the room'
- Start with the end in mind...what are you trying to achieve
- Are the right people there to achieve the desired outcomes
- Ensure PowerPoint only used when really needed – more pictures than words...

## **How can Thinking Circles Help? (page 12, report 3)**

We applied Thinking Circles to two specific challenges – one of which was 'Where next for our Community Partnerships'

- Make a compelling case for retaining CPs (others will want to access remaining NHB funding)
- Have beneficiaries present to the Board/Cabinet
- Be clear about the benefits of investing in CPs e.g. match funding, improvements
- Do more on identifying social return on investment
- Identify what other sources of funding are out there
- Put in joint bids with VCFSE partners
- Could CPs exist without funding or with less funding?
- How could we use our inks with the County Council?

Explore alternative models (we did this, and Peer Review 2 years ago indicated nothing similar – but worth checking again)