



East Hampshire District Council

East Hampshire District Council has developed a method of involving local people through area committees which has been very useful in the Community strategy process

East Hampshire District Council has four area committees which have delegated powers from the authority's cabinet. Monthly meetings are held to take decisions affecting the particular area and to provide an opportunity for local people to raise and discuss issues of concern. The meetings are informal and include facilitated discussions with councillors sitting alongside members of the public. The area committees promote and fund local action planning initiatives such as village appraisals, village design statements, local travel plans and local conservation plans which are carried out by local people. The area committees then receive the resultant action plans and recommend project ideas for inclusion in the authority's business plans for the next year. This 'area action planning process' is carefully timed to fit with the authority's internal planning and budget-setting processes. It has taken some years and a shift in attitudes in both officers and members, for the authority to make this loop work properly. This structure will be the main link between the community and the authority in the community strategy process although the detailed mechanism will evolve further over time.

The current community strategy was accepted as a Local Agenda 21 strategy in April 1999 by the Government Office for the South East and revised in 2002. Many of the themes of the community strategy are those that have arisen through the area committees including the two main priorities for the authority, *transport* and *young people*. The authority has done a considerable amount of work on 'youth and democracy' as a result, developing a citizenship programme, run by both officers and councillors, which offers a five week course to Year 10 children in all secondary schools. Other sustainability themes have emerged from local initiatives: one village argued the case for social housing and the authority found that the planning application and subsequent building work has happened without challenge. Another village has applied to build a sustainable village hall.

The authority is keen that their approach to community involvement is spread across the local strategic partnership: they see it as something of a crusade to influence other partners to adopt a similar approach. Members held a workshop in 2002 which considered the best way to achieve this.

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