

Creating A Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan

What is a Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan (PIIP)?

A Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan is a document that sets out the priorities for maintaining and improving the buildings, places and facilities that are important to a community.

The term Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan is used by Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils because they are normally plans drawn up by Parish or Town Councils of projects and spending on 'social infrastructure' or assets in their area – those buildings, places and facilities that support community activity.

You may have seen other documents doing the same job with names like a Community Development Plan, Village Asset Development Plan. The content is what matters. Some other documents with a wider purpose, such as Neighbourhood Plans and People & Place Plans can address social infrastructure too.

Why create a PIIP?

Creating a PIIP or similar has a few important benefits. Firstly, it will help to understand and describe what assets there are in the area. There are likely to be more than just those buildings and facilities that the Parish Council own. This can identify opportunities and help explain the context of projects to people unfamiliar with the area.

Secondly, it will help find out and evidence what is important about those assets and what improvements people want. This is useful to gauge support for project ideas, to prioritise work and to demonstrate to funders that projects have community backing (often a hurdle to grant funding).

Step by step

Take stock

Work out what you already know about the facilities in your area and how they are used. This will help decide what you need to find out from your community. For instance, if the buildings or open spaces are not used much for exercise is there a particular activity or kind of equipment that would interest people? Are

people travelling outside the area for an activity that could be provided in the village?

Think about the places people meet & socialise, exercise, access nature, worship, access services and how they travel. Note them down with what you know about who owns them and the pros and cons of using them. It is also worth thinking about some of the facilities that help inform and protect your community too - for example notice boards, websites, defibrillators, extreme weather mitigation measures, emergency plans or recycling points.

With luck, this will suggest topics to talk to people about and project ideas to get their feedback on.

Talk to your community

Think about the best way to talk to your community and get their feedback. You might want to run an online survey or drop-in event or you may choose to go out to people and survey them face-to-face, for instance at the coffee morning, after a sports match or at the village shop/pub.

To reach a broad range of people, it's probably best to try a few different approaches – just be consistent with any questions you want to use to create an overall picture of your community's views.

There is plenty of advice online and we have some guides to help you plan your engagement.

Pull it together

Once you have run your engagement, go through the responses you gathered and the ideas people shared. There should be a host of information about what problems need addressing, what people appreciate and enjoy that should be protected and grown.

You may have enough to know what projects are most needed. You might need to go back to people with new project ideas that respond to what they told you.

You can use our PIIP template to show your plan or make your own so long as it includes

- What is the area that defines your community?
- How did you find out your community's views?

- What were their views?
- What projects are therefore a priority?
- It is best to include what you know about
- Which ones will be done and when?
- Who will do them?
- How will/could they be funded?

Share what you found out and what you will do next

When you have found out all this information and made a plan, tell your community! They should be interested to know the outcome and it will help explain why you are working on the projects you have chosen.

Tell the Council and put your plan on your website. To guide the work of the Communities Team and Planners it is useful to understand the aims of your community.

Use the PIIP and your consultation responses to tell project funders about your community's views. Grant funding organisations such as The National Lottery are much more likely to give money to projects where they can see the community have been involved in designing the solution.

Check back and review

It's a good idea to check progress against your plan throughout the year and share that with your community. Set a date to review the plan too. It might take a few years to make the improvements your community want. As people make use of the improved facilities it may prompt new activities and different needs - things always change so don't just leave your new plan on a shelf!