Rapid

Community

Consultation

and

Action Planning

TOOLKIT

ORCC

OXFORDSHIRE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Rapid Community Consultation & Action Planning **TOOLKIT**

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council 2009

Rapid Community Consultation & Action Planning **TOOLKIT**

CONTENTS

The *Rapid* Toolkit

WHY

- This Toolkit has been developed to equip local groups with a collection of easy to use tools to consult across the spectrum of a community on a wide range of topics.

- Community consultation is a vital part of local project and planning initiatives, but traditional methods of consultation may fail to reach people who are unwilling or unable to attend public meetings or fill in questionnaires.

- More informal, interesting, quick and fun ways of finding out what the community wants can help to include local people who may feel marginalised or excluded from the decision making process, such as the young, elderly, disabled, housebound, those with low literacy skills etc

- A local group working on a single issue or project or smaller communities wanting to develop a village action plan, may feel disheartened and overwhelmed by the amount of work and time involved in consultation and action planning. Using these tools can make the project less daunting.

- By using participative consultation methods it is possible to find out what local people want and at the same time bring the community together in a sociable and positive way. It has the potential to engage more

people and stimulate greater interest and commitment from community members.
- The ultimate aim is to encourage as many people as possible to be involved in decision making, resulting in greater community participation, inclusiveness, commitment and sustainability.

WHERE and **WHEN**

Consultations can be carried out at a wide variety of venues in the community and at different times of the day. Always consider the different sectors of the community and what venue and time will suit them best to encourage a wider range of people to participate. Those living in remoter areas of the community, the housebound and their carers, or those who are socially excluded may require more creative, specialised methods of consultation.

Drop In Events

Informal and sociable events that allow people to spend whatever time they can afford.

Can give participants the opportunity to express their views without confrontation or intimidation.

Link to a photographic/art exhibition or another point of interest that will draw the crowds in.

Informal meetings held at the weekend which allow people to drop in over a period of time tend to be better attended than formal evening meetings, by a wider range of people.

Parish Open Days | Another kind of drop in event, where local groups, clubs or societies promote their interests and hope to attract new members. Again, run a consultation alongside the main event.

Community Events | Village Fetes, Church or School Fairs, Jumble sales – all are classic events that bring the many areas of the community together. 'Piggy back' the consultation on to one of these and benefit from all the crowds being together in one place!

Village shop, post office, pub, church, village hall | Buildings around the community that are used by different groups of people at different times of the day are ideal for consultations, but be aware of any accessibility issues for disabled people or parents with small children

Schools, nurseries, playgroups | Liaising with the local school can enable children and young people to be consulted more easily.
To reach parents with younger children, visit local playgroups, nurseries and toddler groups

Community clubs and societies | Particularly useful in reaching a set group in the community eg the Over 70s or Lunch Group is ideal for meeting with more elderly residents. A short consultation session within a meeting.

<u>Bus stops, railway stations</u>	A good opportunity to meet school children and commuters. A short survey with easy to tick answers would be appropriate to consult those in a rush!
<u>Out on the street</u>	An opportunity to carry out interviews and to meet people, particularly those who may not be part of a community group.
<u>Focus groups & workshops</u>	Excellent for more formal, in depth discussion and action planning, perhaps involving an outside expert.

Evening meetings may deter
- commuters who are not home early
- night shift workers
- the people who do not want to go out in the dark eg some elderly people
- parents of young children may not be able to get child care
- children

Daytime meetings may deter
- Workers
- Parents with children at home
- Children and Young People

…. and meetings of any sort may deter people who are shy or who live on the margins of the community.

MATERIALS

Each 'Tool' lists the materials required to assemble it. Many of the materials are inexpensive to buy and the tools easy to use, whilst others will require more preparation and expertise, but should be accessible to most community groups. Most of the tools are portable and many can be adapted for outdoor use, in which case weatherproofing is advisable!
A general list is given below:

Post it notes	Sticky dots
Pens	Felt tip pens
Large sheets of paper	Large A3 post its
Blu tak	Sellotape
Sticky labels	Cocktail sticks
Clipboards	Flipcharts
Cameras	Computers
Velcro pads	Display boards
Video/audio recorder	Card
Paper glue	Staples
Photocopier	Laminator

HOW

- Look through the tool kit to find the ways of consultation or action planning that suit your particular circumstance. Consider who you are looking to consult and why, before choosing a method.

- You may have to use several tools either at the same event or at separate times, in order to involve different sectors of the community.

- Consider when and where the consultation should be held to best reach the target group, making the exercise as

relevant, interesting, convenient and accessible as possible

- Be prepared to go out to the target group rather than expect them to come to you!

- Careful planning is important, particularly if the consultation is part of a community event or you are running an action planning exercise. Make sure you have plenty of materials and enough helpers

- Ensure that the venue is accessible to disabled people, particularly those in wheelchairs or people with hearing or sight impairment

- Provide facilities to encourage families with young children, such as a crèche or a play area

- Make displays eye-catching, interesting and colourful and position them at the appropriate height for wheelchair users and children.

- Devise a special attraction to engage young people such as table football, computer games or even a mobile skatepark

- Create the right atmosphere for people to feel confident and relaxed about getting involved eg use informal seating arrangements and provide refreshments

- Advertise the event widely and effectively. Use colourful and eye-catching material, publicise it in newsletters, at strategic local venues, call/leaflet individual houses, use

the local media. This should be done a few weeks ahead
and also just before the event.

- Allow people to express their views in an unpressured way
  and acknowledge that everyone's view is valid.

- Accept that there will always be differences of opinion
  when people have differing interests and needs.

- Be open and transparent about what can and cannot be
  achieved by the process – do not raise people's
  expectations unrealistically.

- Include profiling exercises so that you know who has
  taken part (and who hasn't) and a feedback exercise
  asking for comments about the event for evaluation
  purposes.

- Use local skills and talents at different stages of the
  process. A skills survey may also be appropriate to recruit
  helpers. Acknowledge that different people will be
  involved at varying levels of interest and commitment.

- Take time to collate the results of the consultations
  Let people know how you will publish the results of the
  consultation and encourage them to join in with the
  analysis, prioritising and action planning processes

- Keep the whole community involved in the process as
  much as possible, as this will encourage others to get
  involved

<u>Points to remember when consulting with young people:</u>

- Respondents need to feel comfortable, respected, valued, and accepted.

- Accessibility – timing, venue, travel arrangements are important. You should be prepared to go to them rather than they come to you

- Be creative - devise an exciting and interesting event that will grab their attention and encourage their participation. Some ideas are given on the next page. Discuss ideas with a sample group in advance if possible.

- Ask specific questions, define the limits if necessary and use straightforward language – vague open questions or too much choice can cause difficulties

- Make the consultation brief, interesting, fun! Vary methods if necessary

- Be clear about which age group you are targeting and set narrow age bands

- No hidden agendas – be open and up front. Don't agree to something you cannot carry through

- Respect opinions, even if expressed in a crude way. See through brashness or rudeness – it may be an act of defence

- Consider who is being consulted and try to ensure an equitable range of participants including disabled and marginalised young people

- Consider areas of potential conflict and how to manage this if it arises

- Ensure you report back to the group on the results of the consultation. Involve young people at the action planning stage and in the presentation of feedback to adults in the community

The following tools may be useful when consulting young people. They are visual, quick, fun and creative and will encourage participation.

Mapping:
Young people stick dots on maps to indicate where they live, where they meet each other, where they feel unsafe, where they would like facilities to be

Boxes and Stickers:
Choices are made by placing sticky dots on a group of options. Use different colours or shapes eg stars to denote different ages or genders of participants

Questionnaire:
Ask straightforward questions without too many options. Illustrate or use text language to make more interesting. Could take place at the school bus stop, in a club meeting or even online.

Graffiti wall:

Participants can write down their thoughts and ideas about themselves, their community and its facilities on a 'wall' or any large surface. For more privacy and less exposure, comments can be written on post-it notes and stuck on the wall.

Photo or Art survey:

Give out disposable cameras and ask the young people to photograph what they like and what they want to improve in the community/village. Or run an art session when young people can draw what they feel about where they live. Display the photos or the art at another event and invite participants to vote on what has been suggested in the photos

Video interviews:

Film the young people talking about how they find life in the village and what they would like to see improving in the future. Run an event where the footage can be viewed, discussed and assessed.

Model making

Make a 3D model of the village and ask for comments on what is good about the village and what could be improved. Cards, flags or post-it notes can be placed on the map to highlight important features or issues.

Tools

for

Consultation

Map and Flags

WHY

This enables you to identify where participants live.
It identifies areas of the community that have not taken part in the consultation – further consultations may be necessary.
It allows people to put their home into the context of the community and encourages social interaction

WHEN

At an indoor consultation or action planning event

MATERIALS
Map of the village/parish/community
Printed on A1 size paper and mounted on polystyrene base
Flags made from paper/stickers and cocktail sticks
A4 sign: Where do you live? Please place a flag on the map!

HOW

Site the map & flags at the entrance to the event.
Ask participants to identify where they live by placing a flag on the map. Different coloured flags could be used to denote different age ranges/genders. Analyse which areas of the village have not been represented and devise further consultations as necessary

Spectrum Lines

WHY

This is an easy way to find out people's views in either a subjective way (eg what do you feel about this? How much do you like this?) or an objective way (eg How long have you lived here? What is your age?)

WHEN

At any consultation or action planning event, particularly useful for people with limited literacy skills

---

MATERIALS
Large sheet of paper
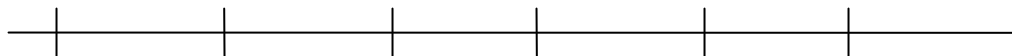Felt tip marker.
Supply of pens

HOW

Draw a line across the paper and mark grid lines to define the range of answers. Ask participants to mark their answer on the line.
Eg

How safe do you feel living in the village?

How long have you lived in the village?

Less than 1 year	1 year	2 years	3 years	5 years	10+ years

Boxes and Stickers

WHY

An easy, visual and non confrontational way to find out people's views and priorities. It gives clear (and colourful!) results.

It can also be used to provide a profile of participants.

WHEN

At any consultation or action planning event

MATERIALS Supply of sticky dots.
Large sheet of paper & felt tip marker or prepared sheets of A4

HOW Write out the question(s) on the paper.

Draw boxes to indicate range of answers.

Ask participants to place a sticker in the appropriate box or boxes.

Different coloured or shaped stickers can be used to denote different genders or ages

eg. How old are you?
    Please place a sticker in the box!

10-18	19-30	31-40	41-50	51-60

61-70	71-80	80+

Post It Notes

WHY

This is an informal way to find out what participants think about a variety of issues, such as the village and its services. It allows several participants to give their views at the same time without interruption or debate! It also allows participants to consider the views of others and encourages social interaction

WHEN

Useful to engage the community at a Drop in event
eg Parish Plan launch or for quick consultation at a village fete.

MATERIALS	Post it notes, pens, large pieces of paper or boards to display post it notes.

HOW

Decide which topics will form the basis of the consultation. These could be general likes and dislikes of the village, or specific aspects of village life eg traffic & transport, local amenities, the village hall etc. Displays of local photographs illustrating certain aspects of village life may encourage participation. Ask participants to write down their opinions, one idea per post it note, and stick them under the appropriate headings on the display boards.

Village Map

WHY
It identifies the key features of a community and encourages participants to focus on the village as it is now and consider ways that it could be improved. It encourages people to work together and to note the views & priorities of others

WHEN   At a group consultation

MATERIALS
Large pieces of paper, post it notes
Different coloured felt tip pens

HOW
Divide people up into groups of 3-4. Ask them to appoint a scribe and to draw a map of the village and surrounding area, or a specific area of the village that is under discussion. This does not have to be accurate or to scale!

Using different coloured pens mark the important landmarks such as boundaries, influential villages/towns nearby, environmental features eg rivers & woodland, transport links eg main roads & railway lines. Then mark features that relate to the topic of consultation – eg positive/ negative features of the village; local services and amenities; etc.

Ask the groups to suggest improvements that could be made and write them down on post it notes, and stick them on to the map. Put the maps up on the wall so all participants can see what is important for the different groups.

Suggestion Mapping

WHY

This allows people to put their comments onto a map or model of the community in an anonymous way, thereby reducing confrontation and intimidation. Several participants can be making their comments at the same time. It gives everyone a chance to see what suggestions have been made.

WHEN

At a drop in event, or as part of a village celebration
It can also be used to identify specific features in a village eg. The environment (green dots for woodland, blue for water, red for wildlife, yellow for flowers etc) or particular hazards (eg traffic)

MATERIALS
Map of village, preprinted or hand drawn.
Flags on cocktail stick flags/Suggestion cards/ colour coded dots/post it notes (depending on which method is most appropriate)

HOW

Make a map of the village marking the significant landmarks eg village green, church, pub, river etc. Comments about the village can be written on post it notes or cocktail stick flags and placed on the map. Sticky dots can be used to mark safe/dangerous places, good/bad features, things we want to keep/ things we would like to improve etc - red dots for negative points, green dots for positive points. Different coloured dots could also be used to note different genders & ages of participants.

Model Making

WHY

This is a bright and attractive tool to encourage a variety of people to give their views without intimidation or confrontation. It may attract a number of people who might otherwise be excluded from consultation.

WHEN

At a main consultation event about the village. Useful if you want to engage young people and children.

MATERIALS

3D model of the village, including houses, school, shop, pub, church. Post it notes, sticky dots, pens

HOW

Build a model of the village - involve the community in the construction or enlist the help of the local school. This part of the process, although good fun, can be less than rapid!

Comments about the village can be written on post it notes or cocktail stick flags and placed on the model. Sticky dots can be used to mark safe/dangerous places, good/bad features, things we want to keep/ things we would like to improve etc - red dots for negative points, green dots for positive points.

Different coloured dots could also be used for different genders, ages etc

Photo Survey

WHY

A visual way for people to identify positive and negative aspects of life in the community. A display of the results is an interesting way to show what people think about the village and to highlight particular issues.

WHEN

This is a particularly useful method to use with children and young people or those with poor literacy skills who may prefer to express their views pictorially rather than in words.

MATERIALS
Disposable cameras, Digital cameras
Computer and colour printer

HOW

Invite participants to take photographs of the good and bad aspects of the village. Disposable cameras can be issued to youngsters to encourage them to take part.
If a computer is available, digital cameras could be used and images uploaded for 'instant' printing.
The task can be set for a target group or on a more general basis and could include a theme eg 'Wish you were here… Wish you weren't here …..' or 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly'
Arrange a photographic display and invite people to view the results! The photographs could form the basis of an additional consultation – those in agreement could place sticky dots against the appropriate photograph or write their views on post it notes.

Time Line

WHY

It gives participants the opportunity to consider how their village or community has developed over time and to identify factors that have shaped the community. It is also a means of gathering people's wishes for the future

WHEN

As part of a general consultation, or tied in with an historic celebration in the community.

> **MATERIALS**
> Long piece of paper, felt tip pen
> Post it notes, sticky dots

HOW

Draw out a timeline of the history of the village. Mark the centre as 'NOW'. Add some key features in the history of the village - use diagrams or photographs to interest people in the display.

Participants should consider how the village has developed and what needs to happen to ensure positive development in the future. Ask participants to write ideas on to post it notes and stick them on the chart.

Suggestion Box

WHY
This is a good way of taking consultation out into the community, thereby broadens the scope of consultation by reaching more community members. People can give their opinions privately without reservation

WHEN
Useful as a complementary consultation or for broader consultation or to reach a specific target group eg commuters

MATERIALS
Suggestion boxes, weatherproof if appropriate.
An outline of what the consultation is about, what the objectives are and how the results will be made known.
Instructions on what participants should do.
Paper, pens

HOW
Leave Suggestion boxes at strategic points around the village such as church, pub, school, shop, bus stop etc together with a description of the consultation and how you would like people to take part. When the consultation has finished, publish the results and invite people to share in taking the action forward.

Suggestion Wall

WHY
This tool allows people to give their views without confrontation and encourages participants to consider the views of others. It can be used to take the consultation out into the community, thereby making consultation accessible to more people.

WHEN
It can be used at any consultation event. The wall can also be placed at a particular venue in order to consult with a specific target group eg in the village hall in order to find out the views of those who use the village hall or it could be situated at a popular village venue such as the village shop or the village pub to consult with a broader group of people.

MATERIALS
Large sheets of paper headed with specific questions for consultation. Supply of post it notes, pens

HOW
Display the suggestion wall at a strategic meeting point in the village, with instructions on how the consultation should take place. Devise a means of profiling those who take part in the consultation. Explain how the results will be reported back.

Graffiti Wall

WHY

This is an informal way to engage community members, and young people in particular. It encourages people to write (or draw!) their views in a non confrontational way

WHEN

Suitable for most consultations, and particularly appropriate at consultations with young people

MATERIALS

Large sheets of paper with either grid lines drawn on or different coloured pieces of paper stuck on to look like 'bricks' Felt tip pens. Boards/wall
(Make sure that the paper is thick enough to prevent the ink marking the support behind it!)

HOW

This is a variation of the Suggestion Wall. Fix the 'paper wall' to boards or to the wall.
If appropriate, write out specific questions and stick them on to a section of the wall.
Ask participants to write up their views.

Bus Stop Survey

WHY

This tool allows you to reach groups that might not otherwise be consulted such as young people, commuters etc
The survey should be quick and easy to answer, as participants may be in a rush. Pictures or cartoons and boxes to tick will make the questions seem more fun, particularly for young people.

WHEN

This will depend on whom you are consulting with – whether it is young people going to school, commuters travelling to work, shoppers going into the nearest town etc

MATERIALS
Clip board, pens, copies of the survey

HOW

Devise a short set of questions – try to fit them on to one side of A4 so that it can be completed in a short space of time. Include a profile section so you have a record of who has been consulted.
Briefly introduce the reason for the consultation to the participant. Ask the participants to tick the boxes as appropriate.
Thank them for their time.
Explain how and when the results will be published and encourage them to become more involved in the project as appropriate

Reconnaissance Walk

WHY
A sociable way of surveying the village. It allows specific issues to be considered in the context of the village. It increases local knowledge particularly for newer residents who may enjoy joining a group to explore the neighbourhood.

WHEN
Suitable for village groups, school classes, family groups

MATERIALS
Clipboards for every participant, pens.
Advisory route around the village to ensure that all (or specific) areas are covered

HOW
Community members walk through the local area and record both positive and negative features of interest. This can be done either individually or in groups.

End the walk with refreshments at the village hall or pub, giving an opportunity for everyone to socialise. Display the notes and observations for further comments.

Video/Audio Interviews

WHY

A fun, interactive and flexible way to get people's views which is particularly useful for community members who may be unable to attend specific consultation events or have poor literacy skills

WHEN

Consultations with elderly people, the housebound, visually impaired, children, young people, people with learning difficulties or poor literacy skills

MATERIALS

A video or audio recorder.

A set of topical questions on which to base the interview.

A means of playing back the recorded material so that it can be used as consultation data

HOW

Identify the people to be interviewed and arrange to visit them if appropriate. Explain both the objectives of the consultation and how the results will be communicated to them.

Build up a rapport with the interviewee and ask broad questions on the agreed topics. Never pressurise the interviewee to answer, but do encourage when appropriate!

Skills Survey

WHY
This is a good way to iidentify the skills (and gaps) within a group or community. It makes groups consider the skills that are required to take a project forward, some of which they may not have viewed as important.

WHEN
At the launch of a Parish Plan or a specific project in the community

MATERIALS
Skills Survey - see example overleaf

HOW
Ask each participant to fill in the survey by declaring themselves either a keen beginner or someone with experience. This tool can also be used to find out how much time an individual is willing to commit to a project without pressurising them.

SKILLS SURVEY

Please fill in this survey to indicate the skills you have and how they might help us with this project.

Name _____   Contact Number _____

SKILLS	Keen	Experienced Beginner
KEEPING PEOPLE INFORMED (Chatting, asking for help, telephoning)	☐	☐
LOCAL KNOWLEDGE (local contacts, knowledge of village history)	☐	☐
ORGANISING EVENTS (administration, delegating, planning)	☐	☐
PUBLICITY (dealing with media, writing articles)	☐	☐
AUDIO VISUAL (photography, video, film)	☐	☐
ARTISTIC SKILLS (graphic design, making displays)	☐	☐
OFFICE SKILLS (typing, data entry, letter writing, photocopying)	☐	☐
CONTACT POINT (member of other local groups)	☐	☐

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE
(understanding of young people,
Contacts at school/cubs

☐ ☐

CATERING
(cooking, mobilizing volunteers)

☐ ☐

ANALYSING INFORMATION
(designing questionnaires etc)

☐ ☐

PROJECT MANAGEMENT
(setting timescales & targets)

☐ ☐

CHAIRING
(helping meetings and groups run
smoothly)

☐ ☐

COMPUTER SKILLS
(databases, web design)

☐ ☐

BOOK KEEPING
(keeping accounts,
setting a budget)

☐ ☐

DISTRIBUTION
(knocking on doors,
delivering flyers)

☐ ☐

LISTENING TO PEOPLE
(interviewing, reporting
people's ideas,
Facilitating group sessions)

☐ ☐

PRESENTATION SKILLS
(visiting groups, public
speaking)

☐ ☐

Feedback

WHY

This tool enables participants to say what they thought about the event and suggest improvements! It gives you information to evaluate how successful the consultation has been.

WHEN

At the end of a consultation or action planning event

MATERIALS
Post it notes, pens, A4 sheets of paper.
2 or 3 large sheets of paper, entitled FEEDBACK

HOW

Before the event: Assemble the Feedback forms so that they can be handed out either throughout the event if it takes place over several hours, or at the end of the meeting, as appropriate. Decide which feedback questions you wish to ask

eg **What have you enjoyed most about today's event?**
Write one thing that you have learnt today
What was the most useful thing about today's event?
Write one way in which today's event could have been better

At the top of each A4 sheet type/write FEEDBACK. Put two or three questions onto the Feedback sheet, then stick a post it note alongside or underneath each question.
At the event: Stick the large sheets of paper on the wall near the exit of the event. Hand out the A4 sheets at the appropriate time, asking people to write down their answers, then stick the post it notes onto the sheets on the wall.

What Next?

WHY

To find out how participants would like to be informed about the results of the consultation or action planning event, and to explain the next stage in the process.

To encourage participants to become more involved in the community by volunteering
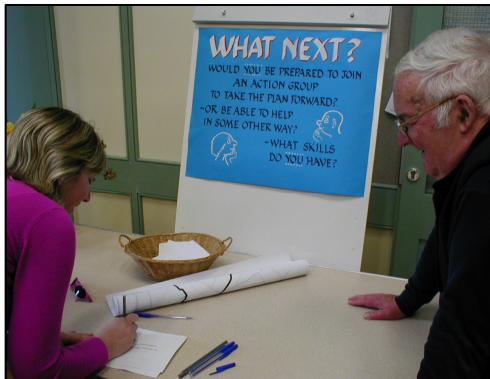
WHEN

At the end of an initial consultation or Parish Plan launch

MATERIALS

Large sheet of paper – What Next? – or photocopied sheets of A4, asking how people would like to be kept informed, and/or whether they want to join an action group etc. An example is given overleaf

HOW

Ask participants to fill in the form or sign up to register their interest

What Next?

Do you want to do something more?

Please indicate what you think should happen next

**Attend a follow up event
(Saturday 4 March at 2.30pm in the Village Hall)**

Form an Action Group

Publish the results of the consultation in the newsletter

Other suggestions

**Please give your name & address below
so that we can tell you about it!**

Tools

for

Action
Planning

Action Planning

The following tools enable members of the community to come together to discuss and prioritise the results of a survey or consultation, and to take the action planning process forward so that action can begin.

WHY

Having identified what is needed in the community through a survey or consultation, the next stage is to decide, WHAT has priority, WHEN it needs to be done, by WHOM and HOW. Breaking down the action planning process into manageable portions and encouraging participation from the whole community can make the task less daunting.

By making the action planning process inclusive and fun, people of all ages and backgrounds can become involved and be encouraged to take the planning process forward to the next stage.

Compromise and consensus become easier if participants are focused on cards and charts rather than on each other. However, whilst some consensus is necessary, be aware that minority views are also valid, particularly if the issue concerns basic human needs such as accessibility to services, safety and security.

WHERE and WHEN

The tools can be used for a small group or at a participatory event for up to 50 or so people. If organizing a large event allow plenty of space for groups sitting around tables, people looking at worksheets on the wall or on display boards, and room for refreshments to be served.

For maximum participation at any event, large or small, choose the time and venue carefully, provide refreshments and make it fun!

Problem Tree

WHY
This tool encourages people to discuss a difficult issue in depth by asking participants to identify the causes and effects of the problem. The causes can then be addressed in an action plan.
Different groups could work on the same issue from different perspectives in order to promote greater understanding between groups in the community

WHEN
Preliminary stage of an action planning discussion

MATERIALS
A large sheet of paper, felt tip markers, post it notes, pens

HOW
Draw a tree trunk shape in the middle of the paper. Draw root shapes below the trunk and branches above the trunk. Write the issue under discussion on the trunk eg 'Young people are hanging about the village'.

Ask participants to focus on <u>why</u> this is happening and to write down the answers on post it notes which should then be stuck on the 'roots' of the tree. This process should be repeated until all causes are identified. Then ask participants to write down the effects and post them on to the branches.

The causes can then form the basis of an action plan to resolve the issue. The exercise helps to differentiate between the causes (roots) and effects (branches) of the problem.

Solution Tree

WHY
This tool focuses on solutions to an issue by considering a positive outcome and identifying the actions that will be required to achieve this.

WHEN
Preliminary stage of the action planning discussion

MATERIALS
A large sheet of paper, felt tip markers,
post it notes, pens

HOW
Draw a tree trunk shape in the middle of the paper. Draw root shapes below the trunk and branches above the trunk. Write the desired scenario on the trunk eg 'Young people are actively engaged in the village' and ask participants to focus on the reason WHY this would be happening. Write down the causes on post it notes and stick them to the 'roots', then consider the effects that result from this, write them on post it notes and place them on the 'branches'.

The suggested actions (the 'roots') can form the basis of an action plan to address the issue which will result in the identified benefits (the 'branches').

Simple Ranking

WHY
This tool encourages participants to discuss suggestions/ proposals/issues that have been made and to rank them in order of importance or preference

WHEN
At a secondary consultation or action planning session

MATERIALS
Large piece of paper, post it notes with suggestions from previous consultation, pens

HOW
Place the post it notes at random on the large piece of paper. Decide on the criteria for ranking eg best/worst, urgent/not urgent, important/not important and ask participants to place the post it notes in order. Some of the suggestions will be easy to place, whilst other suggestions will require more discussion. The notes can be placed and replaced throughout the discussion until a final decision is agreed.

This will prioritise suggestions/issues for the action plan.

Pairwise Ranking

WHY

This tool allows participants to explore a particular issue or range of issues by comparing suggestions/ solutions against one another to establish priorities for action.

WHEN

At an action planning discussion

MATERIALS

A large piece of paper, felt tip markers

HOW

Discuss the issue and list the items or suggestions that have been made. Draw a grid and list the items along both axes, then compare the items one to another, column by column, and write into the grid the one that has priority. Total up the results. The option with the most votes has top priority.

Eg. What improvements should be made to the village hall?

Improvements to the Village Hall				
A New Kitchen				
B Disabled Facilities	**1/B?** Disabled facilities			
C Stage	**1/C?** New Kitchen	**2/C?** Disabled Facilities		
D Car Parking	**1/D?** Car Parking	**2/D?** Disabled Facilities	**3/D?** Car Parki	
E Curtains	**1/E?** New Kitchen	**2/E?** Disabled Facilities	**3/E?** Stage	**4/E?** Car Parki
	1 New Kitchen	**2** Disabled Facilities	**3** Stage	**4** Car Pai	**5** Curtains

Picture Sequence

WHY
This visual tool is particularly useful when working with people with limited literacy skills. It encourages people to consider the current situation and to discuss the process of turning the present into an improved future in a pictorial way.

WHEN
At an action planning meeting either for a single issue such as a new village hall, putting together an action plan following a consultation or with children/ young people explaining what facilities they would like in the village

MATERIALS
3 large sheets of paper, pens, pencils.
Flipchart, marker

HOW
Draw a simple picture on one sheet of paper, illustrating the 'present', asking participants to suggest the important features and marking them on the picture (picture A).

On the second sheet of paper, draw a picture of how the participants would like it to be in the future (picture C).

Participants are then asked to discuss how they can get from Picture A to Picture C and points should be written up on the flipchart and/or drawn in picture B when agreed.

Barrier Busting

WHY
This tool asks participants to identify the barriers preventing a particular issue, situation or service from happening and setting out how this can be changed. People work in groups to exchange ideas and suggest solutions.

WHEN
It can be used with a small group, or as part of a larger action planning event

MATERIALS
Large sheets of paper
Pens and sticky dots
Large piece of paper for each group marked as follows:

Initiative/Suggestion:				
Barrier to this taking place	How it can be overcome	By Whom	When	Please vote!
1	1 2 3			
2	1 2 3			
3	1 2 3			

HOW

If you are using this tool with a small group, ask the participants to consider what is preventing an action from taking place, and to fill in the first column with their suggestions. The group then goes on to suggest actions that can overcome these barriers, and fills in the remaining columns to set up an action plan of how this can be achieved.

If preparing for a larger event, group the ideas and suggestions that have resulted from the survey or consultation into themes and write down the issues/ ideas on sheets of paper under appropriate headings. Display these around the room either on walls or boards.

Ask the participants to sit down and explain what is going to happen. Hand out 5 sticky dots to each participant and ask them to vote for the issues that they think are the most important by placing the dots against the issues of their choice. The issues that receive the most votes will be discussed and planned during the event. Participants then vote for their priorities.

The next stage involves participants working in groups of 5 – 8. Either ask participants to sign up to the theme that interests them when they are voting (above) or allocate them to groups at random by giving them a colour or a letter to designate their group. Label each table with a colour, letter or topic as appropriate.

Write the topic under discussion at the top of the Barrier Busting Grid (see above). You will need one grid per topic, per group. Place a Grid Sheet on each of the tables and a pen/ marker.

Each group sits around a table to discuss the initiative/ suggestion and appoints a scribe. After some discussion, the scribe of the group should fill in the first column on the grid by identifying up to three barriers that are preventing this suggestion from taking place. Then complete the rest of the chart, working out how the barriers can be overcome, by whom and when.

When each chart has been completed, the members of the groups stay together to 'carousel' around the room, looking at the solutions and plans devised and identified by the other groups and making alternative suggestions if necessary. The carousel can be organised in two ways: either the flip chart sheets remain at the tables and the groups move around the room, or, the groups sit at the tables and the flip chart sheets are passed from table to table. After a set time, the organiser calls time and moves either people or paper in a certain direction.

If appropriate, each participant can then vote by placing sticky dots on the actions they wish to see taken forward.

Invite participants to get involved in taking the action forward by asking people to form an action group for each topic. Let the participants know how and when they will be kept informed of progress.

Prioritising

(From Planning for Real®)

MATERIALS
Priority Cards detailing the ideas from the
consultations, arranged into themes
The 'When'
A4   paper with three rows marked NOW, SOON, LATER for
each group

The 'Whom'
6 heading cards to go across the top of the Now Soon Later
charts to make 6 columns marked:
We can do it on our own
We can do it with a little help
We can do it with some help plus some money
We could do it in partnership with others
We can't do it, but we can tell the council or other agencies
what needs to be done
Who else could help?

The 'How'
Suggestion cards /Problem cards, identified from the Now,
Soon, Later priority cards.
Lots of blank Action cards or post it notes and pens
'Show your support' Grid

The 'When' and 'Whom' grid

	We can do it on our own	We can do it with a little help	We can do it with some help plus some money	We could do it in partnership	We can't do it – but we can tell others	We can't do it - Who else can help?
Now						
Soon						
Later						

The 'Show Your Support' grid

Six people think this is a good idea			
Five People think this is a good idea			
Four People think this is a good idea			
Three people think this is a good idea			
Two People think this is a good idea			
One Person thinks this is a good idea			
Move the action card up if you agree	Action Card	Action Card	Action Card	Action Card

HOW

Make up Priority cards by writing up one suggestion per card from the community consultation. Identify areas of interest eg environment, community facilities etc and ask participants to join the group that interests them most.

In groups: everyone has the opportunity to look at the cards and place them on the Now, Soon or Later chart. This should be done by everyone at the same time without any discussion. Some cards may not make it on to the chart but should be kept for later discussion on why they were not prioritised.

Place the *'Whom'* cards along the top of the chart to make six columns. Retaining their place in the Now, Soon or Later rows, place the Priority Cards in the correct column to show who can take the action forward.

Each group is given a topic to discuss from the Now/Soon rows of the chart. Individuals in each group consider the Suggestion/Problem and write down Actions that could be adopted – one action per card.

Give each group a Show Your Support Grid. Place the action card(s) at the bottom of the grid. Ask participants to consider the action cards and either move the card up one place if they are in favour of the action, leave it where it is if they are indifferent to the action, or place a NO on the action if they strongly disagree with it. It is not permitted to move the card down the grid. When everyone has considered the suggested actions, there should be a top one or two actions that can be linked with the Who and When cards to form the basis of an action plan.

Consensus Building

WHY

This tool is used after a consultation has taken place and focuses on solutions to the issues raised at the consultation. It allows people to give their opinions and prioritise ideas/suggestions with the minimum of confrontation and debate. It emphasizes agreements reached so that action planning can be speeded up and taken forward. It can involve a wide range of community members.

WHEN

At an action planning workshop/event (can be used with up to 50 or so participants!) Can be followed up by filling in an action planning grid (see the next tool)

MATERIALS
5 – 10 Action cards per participant
(Cut the 'I Disagree' sheet into eight cards)
Pens
| High | | Medium | | Low | cards, one set per group

HOW

Hand out several Action Cards (with the words I Disagree on the back) to each of the participants. Ask the group to think of as many different actions to tackle the particular issue under consideration. This should be done individually without any talking. Each action should be written on a separate Action Card. Make sure that people don't discuss ideas as this will spoil the process – discussions can take place later.

After 5-10 minutes, ask one person to collect the ideas cards together, shuffle them up and distribute them amongst the group.

Place the **High, Medium and Low** Priority Cards in three rows on the left side of a table. Ask each person to read the action cards they have been given and place each one alongside the appropriate priority cards, face up so they can be read. Any actions that they disagree with or don't understand should be placed as a low priority. Again, this should take place without talking.

When all the cards have been placed, everyone in the group should read the cards and turn over any of the cards that they either disagree with the action, disagree with the priority, don't understand, or if they know that an action is already happening. Any cards that have been turned over will display the words "I disagree".

Mark the cards that are still face up with the priority they have been given (H, M or L) as these actions have been agreed by the group.

The group should now look at the remaining cards that show 'I Disagree'. Encourage the group to do this quickly without lengthy discussions! Discuss each card in turn and try to come to some agreement. It maybe the action needs clarifying or amending or a different priority allocated, but in most cases a compromise can be reached. If there is still disagreement within the group, record the reason, put the card to one side and move on to the next card.

There should now be a number of High, Medium and Low priority suggestions for each topic that can be used in an action plan. There are also suggestions that have not gained consensus, and these should be followed up with further discussion at a later date.

I disagree	I disagree
I disagree	I disagree
I disagree	I disagree
I disagree	I disagree

Planning Grid

WHY

Having assessed and prioritised the issues from a village consultation, an action plan should be drawn up to delegate actions and give a realistic timeframe to the projects. This tool identifies the organisations that need to be involved, the resources required and the timescale

WHEN

At an action planning session or event. This can be used after the consensus building tool. (See previous section)

MATERIALS
Large sheets of paper marked up with the grid below, pens

Project Title:				
What Action?	Who Leading?	Who else involved?	How Funded?	When?

HOW
Each group is given one of the high priority actions that has been identified by a previous consultation and a Planning Grid, marked out on a large piece of paper. Participants should fill in the Planning Grid by deciding on the Who, How and When to take the action forward. They should be both specific and realistic about the tasks that need to be carried out to achieve each action.

Repeat the process for each action.

If this exercise is part of an action planning event, it may not be possible to fill in all the boxes in the grid and further discussion by a focus group at a later date may be needed to finalise the plan.

Action Planning Event

WHY

An action planning event can be organised in order to include as many people as possible in the planning process, not just those people who are self-confident and committed to community involvement. It will encourage people to become involved in a project that interests them.

WHERE and **WHEN**

When organizing a large event allow plenty of space for groups sitting around tables, people looking at worksheets on the wall or on display boards, and room for refreshments to be served.

Tables should be big enough for 6 to 8 people to sit around with space to lay out some large sheets of paper and for people to move around. You will need a "wall" to put up sheets of paper or flip chart stands and pads.

For maximum participation at any event, large or small, choose the time and venue carefully, provide refreshments and make it fun – perhaps include a raffle with a free ticket for every participant.

MATERIALS

See the list of the particular tool(s) you select.
You may also need a selection of the following: Flip charts and stands or large A3 post it note pads, blu-tak, pens, felt tip markers, small post it notes, display boards, tables and chairs, clock, bell or whistle, microphone

HOW
Choose the tools that will best suit your purpose and situation. These will vary depending on whether you have already consulted the community to establish the issues, how contentious the issues may be, how many people you anticipate will attend, how much room you have and so on. Consensus Building, Barrier Busting, Planning Grid and Prioritizing are all good with a large number of people.

Profile the participants – this is not only a good way to break the ice and get people into the right frame of mind, but also for you to see who has (and hasn't) attended. See the 'Tools for Consultation' section.

Give out name badges – it makes introductions and conversations easier and it can also be a way of putting participants into groups – use a roll of sticky labels and mark each label with a colour corresponding to a group. Alternate the colours in a set sequence depending on the number of groups you wish to make, so that the groups contain an equal number of people. Or you can just ask people to sign up to a group discussing the topic they are interested in!

Establish the group rules –
- Listen to everyone's ideas
- Only one person speaks at a time
- Respect other people's ideas even if you don't agree
- Have fun!

Put a copy of the group rules and a brief outline of the process on each table so that participants have a guide to refer to. It may also help to have someone in each group who

knows what is going to happen and will guide the group through the process.

If a survey/consultation has already been carried out, make displays of the results so that everyone can see what issues were raised and the support they received.
If a survey/consultation has not already taken place, ask the participants to write down on post it notes the ideas/issues for improvement in the village. These can be stuck up on the flip chart sheets under appropriate headings eg transport, safety, etc. For quick prioritising, participants are each given 5 sticky dots to vote for the issues that they think are the most important.

Learn how to carousel! This process allows all groups to see each other's comments without getting in each other's way! Either fix the flip chart sheets to the wall and arrange for the groups to move around the room, or sit the groups at the tables and pass the flip chart sheets from table to table. After a set time, ask either the groups to move or the papers to be passed on.

Consider the actions already taking place with regard to issues raised –give each group a sheet of paper with suggestions from the consultation on a particular theme eg transport. Each group considers these issues for a few minutes and then lists on the paper the actions, projects or policies currently taking place that will tackle or help to improve the problem. If each group has a different coloured pen, it will make it easier to distinguish between comments.

The papers are then moved to the next group, to add any relevant comments. Repeat until all the sheets have been

looked at. The time spent on each sheet will reduce towards the end of the process. During this exercise, knowledge will be shared about local and strategic actions so that everyone should have the same information about the actions taking place. Invite 'outside' experts to take part in this exercise if appropriate.

Take a refreshment break – it allows people to stretch their legs, socialize and recharge. It also gives you the opportunity to move equipment, reassign people into groups etc.

Focus on what needs to happen in order to address/solve the issues/problems raised. Use tools such as Consensus Building, Prioritising or the first column of the Barrier Busting chart to get ideas from the participants and establish what has high priority.

Plan out what will happen, when, how and by whom – use tools such as the Barrier busting chart or Planning grid. As groups will be working at different speeds through this exercise it may be that not all Action Plans for each of the high priority issues will be completed before the end of the session, so stress that this is the start of the Action Plan and invite people to form a Focus group in order to complete it.

Allow everyone to see what others have written and discussed – again the carousel process will work well if you need to accommodate a large number of participants Gather feedback and inform everyone of the next stage in the process. Ask them to volunteer to take the process further, tell them how the results will be made known newsletter, email etc) and thank them for their input.

Interested in Community-Led Planning?

If you think it is important to work with others to identify local needs and that everyone has a role in taking action to make your community a better place to live then you might like to consider the benefits of a community-led plan…

How can Oxfordshire Rural Community Council help?

If you would like to find out more about community-led planning, contact ORCC's Community Development Workers,
Anton Nath (Vale and South)
Aimee Evans (Cherwell and West)
They advise local people on the process, share expertise in consultation techniques, facilitate training and networking opportunities and encourage liaison with Local Authority officers
Contact them on 01865 883488
anton.nath@oxonrcc.org.uk
aimee.evans@oxonrcc.org.uk

"The provision of guidance and information at the start of the project provided by ORCC gave us a great start. They provided help with contacts at the County and District Councils, have provided assistance with displays and exhibitions to get the messages across to the community. Their enthusiasm and continued encouragement was fantastic"

Parish Plan Group Member
Lower Heyford