

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Supporting charities, volunteers and communities

11. Campaigning and influencing

11.13 Local Authority Plans and Strategies



Introduction

In late 2005 the Welsh Government (WG) accepted a proposal to reduce the number of local plans and strategies that local government have to produce from dozens to just four. This reduction process was called 'plan rationalisation' and its aim was to lessen the administrative burden placed on local councils and to enable them to focus on delivery to the citizen rather than on complying with processes set out by the Welsh Government.

However, the plan rationalisation programme does apply to issues that the Welsh Government does not cover and/or which deal with non-devolved matters. So, for example, councils still have to produce a Community Safety Strategy by law but this isn't mentioned within the plan rationalisation commentary because community safety is largely a non-devolved issue.

The important thing to remember about plans and strategies is that you should be engaging with the processes to influence what goes into them - if your issues are not reflected in the plans then the authority is unlikely to expend time, effort and resources progressing them.

The four strategies

Plan rationalisation has resulted in the Welsh Government requiring just four statutory, high level strategies in each local authority:

- Community Strategy - being the over-arching document with three prescribed strategies below
- Children and Young People's Plan
- Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy
- Local Development Plan

The development of these four plans and strategies has meant that previous plans and strategies with which people have been familiar have been subsumed into, or aligned with, these four new statutory plans in some way.

Just because there are now only four statutory plans, it does not mean that planning in other areas has stopped - it simply means that local authorities can now choose how to meet and monitor their strategic and operational goals. They may choose to continue to develop their own plans beneath the 'big four', or maintain previous planning arrangements and simply align them with the four new plans, or have no other plans

and just ensure that all the issues are addressed through the four statutory plans. Whatever they choose to do (and all local authorities work in different ways), all of the issues should somehow be covered in the four strategies. This information attempts to explain what the new strategies cover, what they have subsumed from the old planning regime and how other continuing planning processes fit in with this. Some local level plans will cut across one or more of the new statutory plans, whereas others will be clearly bedded into just one. However, we are still in a transitional period for concluding some of the plans and strategies and the planning processes will be working differently across the 22 local authority areas in Wales. Please view this information as an indicative guide only and talk to your local authority for more detail about how this is working in your area.

Community Strategy

The Community Strategy is intended to bring together all those who can contribute to the future of communities within a local authority area, to agree on the key priorities for the area and pursue them in partnership. The Community Strategy is the over-arching strategy for each local authority area. It must provide a long term strategic vision to promote or improve economic, social and environmental well-being, based on set of shared ambitions and values, discussed and negotiated with local citizens, communities and their leaders. The statutory guidance for the development and delivery of community strategies states,

‘The overarching partnership structure should ensure that the diversity of the third sector is reflected in all partnerships that support the development and implementation of community strategy objectives...’

The overall strategic direction and priorities of the Community Strategy should then be reflected within the other statutory and non-statutory strategies, with all four plans being interlinked and cross-referring to one another. The plans or strategies (or elements of them) that may have been subsumed into this, or must be aligned to this in some way include:

- Local Housing Strategy
- Local Transport Plan
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy (Community Safety Plan)
- Local Substance Misuse Action Plan
- Strategy for Older People (Local Action Plan)

It is also relevant here to note the importance of Local Delivery Agreements that are put together by Local Service Boards (LSBs). They set out the joint actions that partners will take on a small number of challenging projects that need leadership, problem-solving and support by the LSB. The projects will be grounded in the community strategy priorities and will form part of the community strategy action plan.

Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP)

This is the defining statement of strategic planning intent and priorities for all children and young people's services in the area. The CYPP drives better local integration of children's services; helps strengthen local partnership arrangements; describes what improvements will be achieved in the local area and when these improvements will be delivered. There is a duty on local authorities to consult with bodies providing voluntary sector services to children and young people in their areas. The local plans and strategies (or elements of them) that may have been subsumed into this, or must be aligned to this in some way include:

- Disabled Access Strategy
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership Plan
- Single Education Plan
- Children's First Management Action Plan
- Basic Skills Strategy
- Children's Services Plan
- Cymorth - Children and Youth Support Fund Plan
- Early Entitlement Plan (1 - 10 year olds)
- Young People's Partnership (11 - 25 yr olds)
- 14 - 19 Learning Pathways
- Local Housing Strategy
- Supporting People Operational Plan
- Local Substance Misuse Action Plan
- Public Library Plan

Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy (HSCWBS)

The local authority and Local Health Board (LHB) are jointly responsible in law for the planning of services which promote the health and well-being of the community and they discharge this duty through the preparation and implementation of the HSCWBS. It should provide a co-ordinated response to all the issues that affect people's health, social care and well-being, including tackling the social determinants of health, such as housing, employment and crime. It should be the primary mechanism for defining the local response to 'Health Challenge Wales', but the Community Strategy and the CYPP should also reflect the importance that the wider determinants of health and public health have on the health of the nation.

The recent restructuring of the NHS in Wales means that we now have fewer LHBs (see our separate information sheet on Health and Social Care in Wales). However, this has not changed the statutory duty for both the local authority and the LHB to co-operate with County Voluntary Councils in the areas they cover and other voluntary groups with an interest in the provision of health and wellbeing services when preparing the HSCWBS. The local plans and strategies (or elements of them) that may have been subsumed into or aligned with the HSCWB Strategy include:

- Carers' Strategy
- Placement Strategy
- Social Care Plan
- Learning Disability Strategy
- Local Air Quality Management Plan
- Local Housing Strategy
- Supporting People Operational Plan
- Local Substance Misuse Action Plan
- Strategy for Older People
- Public Library Plan

Local Development Plan (LDP)

LDPs are replacing Unitary Development Plans (UDPs) and will start being adopted from 2011 onwards. They are concerned with land use and will express how an authority area will develop, change or be conserved over a 10 - 15 year period. LDPs must take account of the Wales Spatial Plan and as part of the first stages of preparation, local authorities are required to agree and adopt a Community Involvement Scheme, setting out how local communities, the third sector, business, the public sector and WG will be engaged in the process. This should reflect the corporate approach to community engagement and where possible, joint engagement in developing the Community Strategy and the LDP is recommended. The local plans and strategies (or elements of them) that may have been subsumed into or aligned with the LDP include:

- Local Housing Strategy (inc local homelessness strategy and BME housing strategy)
- Supporting People Operational Plan
- HRA Business Plans (for authorities retaining housing stock)
- Local Transport Plan Contaminated Land Remediation Strategy
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- Local Air Quality Management Plan
- Municipal Waste Management Strategy
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Plan

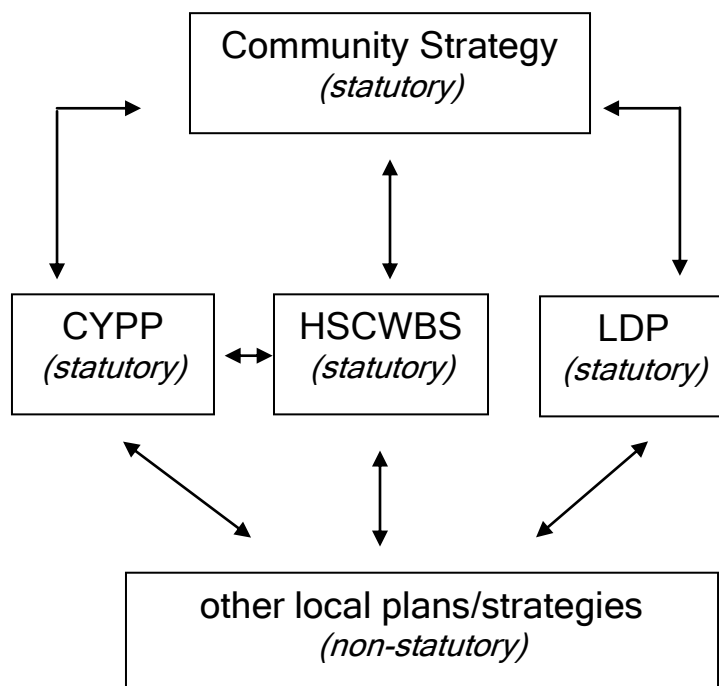
The regional agenda

Another important plan that impacts at a regional level and is important at the local level is the **Wales Spatial Plan**. Wales has been divided into six areas for the purposes of spatial planning and in each of these six areas, the local authorities, private and third sectors and Welsh Government and its agencies are working together in Spatial Plan Area Groups. The purpose is to ensure that what is done in the different sectors is integrated across these regional areas and the joint agreed vision for each of the six areas will set an important regional context for the community strategy process. This regional process is largely about trying to influence how Welsh Government develops infrastructure projects on a regional basis - a question of what gets done,

where. It is in the spatial planning process that one can begin to see how national, regional and local issues and responses are linked.

How it all fits together

It might be useful to think of the plans at a local level fitting together as follows:



Engaging with strategy development

In theory, plan rationalisation may have helped the sector, as it means only having to engage with the development (and implementation) of four statutory local authority strategies instead of 32. However, given that many authorities still have a raft of planning structures sitting beneath the 'big four', there is a continuing requirement for the sector to be engaged and have its voice heard. The new structures and processes will need to bed in over a longer period of time before the impact of this new planning regime can be properly evaluated. The best way to find out what's happening and get engaged with the planning processes in your area is to contact your local county voluntary council who have important links with the local authority.

Further information

Voices for Change Cymru is a WCVA project supported by the Big Lottery Fund. There are now more opportunities than ever to make your voice heard and this project provides services to help third sector organisations influence policy and legislation at local and national levels.

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Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

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