The Countryside Agency

Setting up One Stop Shops

A good practice handbook on linking services in market towns

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Introduction

The Rural White Paper (2000)[1] highlighted the potential role of market towns as 'service centres' or 'hubs' for rural life and led to the establishment of the Countryside Agency's Market Towns Initiative (MTI). The MTI Healthcheck[2] is a process of research, consultation and visioning, which enables the town to identify both gaps in its local services and opportunities to provide new facilities.

Over the last ten years, in general, market towns have declined as service centres. The Market Towns Healthcheck represents one way in which the Countryside Agency has been successful in supporting over 200 such communities. This procedure helps local communities find ways to assess and improve the vitality of their towns and surrounding countryside.

One of the methods that a number of progressive towns have adopted to combat the decline in services has been the establishment of a One Stop Shop. This is staffed, accessible premises which provide a range of public, statutory, private and voluntary sector services to the local community.

Recent studies[3,4] have shown that the clustering of services into one outlet has much to commend it. A One Stop Shop:

- provides professional support;
- can create synergy between the different professionals offering support;
- can be flexible in the way services are offered;
- offers physical convenience and social contact - especially valuable to the more vulnerable members of society;
- can provide economies of scale.

Against this background, the Countryside Agency commissioned research to:

- explore the lessons that can be learned from existing One Stop Shops;
- develop guidance that could assist those planning to create new facilities and those wishing to develop or expand existing services.

1. Our Countryside: the future - a fair deal for rural England. Rural White Paper, 2000. DETR and MAFF, The Stationery Office, London.

2. The Market Towns Healthcheck Handbook, 2002 Countryside Agency, Cheltenham.

3. The Joint Provision of Services, 2000. University of Gloucestershire for The Countryside Agency.

4. The Economic Costs of Joint Provision, 2000. The New Policy Institute for the Countryside Agency.

This handbook is a product of the research and is aimed at a variety of audiences ranging from local communities to main service providers. It is based on case studies of One Stop Shops in eight English market towns:

Brandon Healthy Living Centre in Suffolk
East Grinstead Help Point in West Sussex
Fakenham Connect in Norfolk
Haltwhistle Partnership in Northumberland
Ibstock Community Shop in Leicestershire
Longtown Investment Partnership in Cumbria
Moreton-in-Marsh Area Centre in Gloucestershire
Walton Community Centre, Walton-on-the-Naze in Essex.

It also draws on the detailed comments and information provided by over 50 other market towns that have experience in this field.

The focus of the handbook is on sharing the experience of what has worked well. It also points out potential pitfalls and stresses that there is no single solution or 'standard size fits all'. Each locality will have its own unique set of conditions, organisations and personalities to weld together. Nevertheless, there are certain key questions that must always be answered and, in this respect, the handbook aims to provide a checklist.

The handbook is divided into a number of broad themes, each of which forms a chapter containing relevant information, questions and answers. Readers should be able to enter the handbook at any point to explore the material which covers their areas of interest and concern. A table showing some of the barriers which may be encountered during the establishment of a One Stop Shop and the opportunities that exist when a One Stop Shop is developed or expanded, is shown on page 44.

At the end of each chapter there is a checklist of items to consider when proposing, developing and operating a One Stop Shop. There is no one right way of doing things, but each item should be given full consideration, even if a decision to take no action is made.

The handbook also contains appendices that include a bibliography, references to other websites, contacts, a glossary, sources of funding and a summary of each of the eight case studies.

At the very start

Key messages

- There are two models of One Stop Shop.
- In towns that are remote from their main administrative centres, some county and district authorities have taken the lead in providing a local access point with a specific focus on council-run services.
- In towns where regeneration programmes have been established, the One Stop Shop is often a part of a wider community-based initiative.
- Every market town is different. Assess your own local needs.
- Make the most of local opportunities.
- Choose a name, which suits your local circumstances.
- The case studies (see page 47) may help you to develop an understanding of what type of facility is really required.

What's in a name?

In the course of writing this handbook, confusion arose about the term 'One Stop Shop'. None of the towns in the case studies uses the term, preferring instead to use names that have been locally agreed, such as 'community shop', 'Connect' or 'help point'.

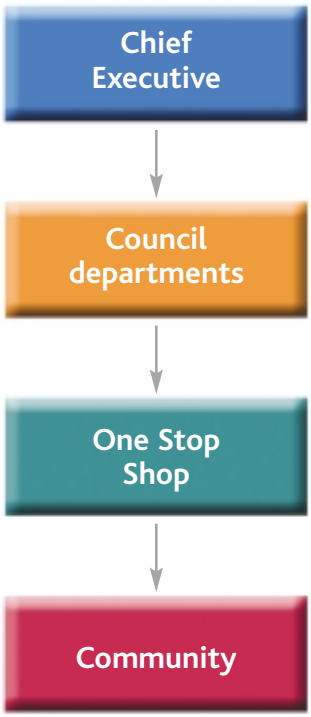
Whatever the name, it should be short and 'catchy' - more descriptive alternatives, such as 'integrated service centres' or 'one stop information offices', are too long and cumbersome. In addition, the term 'One Stop Shop' is confusing for many members of the public who believe that it is a shop selling a variety of goods or an amalgamation of essential local rural services. For the sake of convenience, this handbook does use the term 'One Stop Shop', albeit with reservation.

Two distinct reasons for having a One Stop Shop

The case studies, which underpin this handbook, reveal two distinct reasons for having a One Stop Shop, local authority drivers and community need. This can be shown in diagrammatic form. The two

models (below and opposite) respond to different needs, operate in different ways and are suited to the organisations which establish them. Only a few of the case studies (eg Moreton-in-Marsh) combine features of both.

Local authority model



The first model is the One Stop Shop established by the local authority in what is essentially a top down approach. The local authority model is usually inspired at a political or senior officer level and enables the authority to deliver services in a way that responds to current government agendas to improve the delivery of public services.[5, 6]

In East Grinstead and Moreton-in-Marsh, the market towns are remote from the main administrative centres of Chichester and Cirencester respectively. The need to provide better access and create more sustainable communities has encouraged the local authorities to take the initiative in providing a local access point. East Grinstead Help Point and Fakenham Connect provide a portal to a range of local government information and services and assist customers in contacting the appropriate departments and officers who can deal with more specific or complex issues. Information drawn from the wider consultations with other market towns highlights that the majority of One Stop Shops have been established using the local authority model.

Moreton-in-Marsh Area Centre provides a wider range of services, balancing the provision of local authority services against the needs of the wider community.

5. Strong Local Leadership - Quality Public Services. 2001. Local Government White Paper, DTLR, The Stationery Office, London.

6. e-gov@local - Towards a national strategy for local government. 2002. Consultation paper, ODPM, London.

Local regeneration model

The second model is the One Stop Shop that is established in response to the needs of the town and is commonly part of a local regeneration programme. It is usually only one part of a wider regeneration agenda, usually being led by a local community regeneration partnership. The planned Healthy Living Centre for Brandon in Suffolk, for example, will incorporate a holistic approach to community needs and is designed to encourage self help and partnership working. This model is essentially a bottom-up approach.

Each model offers particular advantages as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: The two main One Stop Shop models

Local Authority model	Local Regeneration model
• Responds to government agenda to deliver services and achieve best value. • Helps users to access public services. • Provides face-to-face contact for people unable to use web or telephone-based services. • Maintains a local contact point when main offices have been centralised. • Enables all tiers of local government to provide information and services through a single outlet. Examples: East Grinstead Fakenham Moreton-in-Marsh	• Driven by local need as established eg in Market Towns Healthcheck. • Community owned – a self help solution. • Addresses a lack of local information outlets. • Provides a base for local organisations and service providers. • Provides low-cost solutions for small and voluntary groups. Examples: Brandon Haltwhistle Ibstock Longtown Walton-on-the-Naze

Other reasons for having a One Stop Shop

Other triggers for developing a One Stop Shop may be the loss of a local private sector facility, such as a bank, or the closure of a council owned school. In Ibstock the closure of the last bank in the town motivated local businesses to seek ways of providing a local cash machine. In the end, they bought the bank and established a One Stop Shop. In Brandon, the relocation of the primary school triggered a property review by the County Council and gave the local community an opportunity to propose alternative uses based upon the local regeneration needs of the town. In Walton-on-the-Naze, the ground floor of a former bank building has been adapted for use by the Walton Community Project using a small pot of funding provided by Barclays Bank. This now provides a base for the town centre manager, the local volunteer bureau and community voluntary service, the careers service and general tourist information, as well as a project office.

A first stop or single stop shop?

In addition to determining which model is appropriate, a view should be taken on whether the One Stop Shop is a single or first stop shop. Does it attempt to respond as fully as possible to a range of services or does it signpost people to other facilities? Further issues relating to this are considered on page 26.

Existing provision of services

Market towns will vary in the way in which they function and in the existing services which they provide. This makes it important to base the need for establishing a One Stop Shop on local circumstances, so that the most appropriate services can be offered. At the same time, much can be learned from the experience of others. Some One Stop Shops have visited other similar projects (not necessarily One Stop Shops) or have attended network meetings, while they have been formulating their own ideas.

One option is to establish a One Stop Shop from scratch and another is to link it with existing facilities within the community, such as a library or town council. The latter has many advantages, including shared rental and running costs, utilising existing staff and attracting customers from an already established base. Cotswold District Council launched two pilot One Stop Shops in Tetbury and Fairford in October 2003. They will be based in local libraries for a number of good reasons:

- the libraries already provide customer assistance;
- they have publicly accessible computers;
- the staff have a good knowledge of the local area;
- customers are on neutral ground;
- car parking facilities are readily available.

Identifying related factors

'start out slowly, make it work and then expand'.

The level of social, economic and environmental need in the towns highlighted in the case studies varied considerably. There was, however, a correlation between those towns that have a high level of need (according to the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation[7]) and those that have community-led One Stop Shops. Conversely, the more prosperous towns, which are less likely to have local regeneration partnerships, have One Stop Shops operated by the local authority. In towns that have a need for local regeneration, a bottom-up approach may therefore be more appropriate than a top-down approach, which is better suited to more prosperous areas.

In many market towns and surrounding rural areas, the dispersed nature of settlement patterns can contribute to difficulties in accessing services. This is also a factor in relatively accessible rural locations for those who are reliant on public transport. The extent to which a One Stop Shop can fill this services gap will need to be assessed locally and solutions sought. In Longtown, the network of parish halls in the outlying villages is being used to disseminate health information to people who might otherwise be hard to reach.

7. Index of Multiple Deprivation. 2000. ODPM, London.

Checklist

The name

- ☐ Is it easily understood and can it be misinterpreted?
- ☐ Will it be easily recognised by the public?

The preferred model

Local authority, local regeneration or combination of the two?

The need

- ☐ Has any research been undertaken, among the local community, to determine the need for a shop?
- ☐ Have comparisons been made with other One Stop Shops elsewhere?

What will the One Stop Shop have to offer over and above the facilities that already exist within the town?

Who is the One Stop Shop aimed at - the local community, tourists, and/or local businesses?

Who to involve

Key messages

- There is no one partnership model for a One Stop Shop. It is important that it is tailored to meet specific local needs.
- Local authority led initiatives require good working relationships between the different levels of local government and between departments.
- Community led partnerships need to involve many public agencies and voluntary organisations, as well as the private sector. Outside professionals and organisations can help a project develop but control must remain with the local community.
- Large public sector agencies are important in the development and continuity of One Stop Shops but public sector policy strategies and practices are not always in step with local delivery objectives and timetables.
- Local managers or co-ordinators can be useful in minimising delays and developing effective partnership working.

Who to involve at the start?

In West Sussex, the County Council was wholly responsible for setting up the One Stop Shop. It runs a network of help points throughout the county, with East Grinstead being one of them. Fakenham Connect is an example of a local authority information service run as a joint initiative. It is run by Norfolk County Council, North Norfolk District Council and Fakenham Town Council. In the Cotswolds, the District Council chose to establish a council information point (CIP) at its Area Office in Moreton-in-Marsh and has now decided to pilot two further CIPs within the District.

Commonly the driving force for the One Stop Shop within local authorities comes from local councillors and chief executive officers. The actual work of establishing the facility is then delegated to an appropriate department. In East Grinstead, this was initially the library; while in Fakenham, it was the property department of the District Council. Changing local government agendas, however, mean that the responsibility for One Stop Shops is now more commonly found in departments promoting community engagement and access.

Where local regeneration is a key objective, the One Stop Shop may only emerge as a later proposal. Nevertheless, a range of organisations have commonly been involved from an early stage and it is easy to identify those which have been the key drivers in the process. In Ibstock, the lead role was taken by local businesses who were concerned about the potential collapse of local retailing. They were joined by community activists and greatly assisted by key officers in the local authority. In Walton-on-the-Naze, a number of community based organisations had already been cooperating to prepare a bid to the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) for the revitalisation of the town. In Brandon, there is a project steering group made up of the main stakeholders, including the Brandon Community Partnership, County and Town Councils and the Primary Care Trust.

A list of key organisations that should be considered as partners in the development and management of One Stop Shops is outlined on page 15.

Consultants and enablers

In cases where there is a wider market town regeneration agenda, the initial research and assessment of the town has often involved an outside organisation commissioned to facilitate the process. In Ibstock and Haltwhistle the initial research was undertaken by the Civic Trust Regeneration Unit. In Brandon the New Economics Foundation assisted a firm of surveyors preparing the feasibility study. In Longtown, it was the City Council's rural officer whilst, in Walton-on-the-Naze, assistance came from Community Voluntary Services, Guinness Trust and University of Essex.

The use of consultants may be beneficial to drive the process forward but there is a danger in bringing in outside expertise, when it is not resourced in the long term. In Longtown, staff from regeneration agencies were 'parachuted in' for short periods of time and this led to a lack of continuity, repetition and, ultimately, frustration among local people.

In Brandon, the County Council has taken an ongoing enabling role. It has identified council owned sites for potential development in the town and, as the steering group has been developing its proposals, the County Council has serviced the group and provided it with professional guidance. The staff involved, however, have stressed the need for the project to be steered by the local community and not by outside professionals.

As projects progress, the relationship between the players inevitably changes and this opens opportunities for different enablers. In Haltwhistle and Walton-on-the-Naze, the local district councils support the projects by acting as employers of the One Stop Shop staff, thereby taking away the administrative burden from the front-line organisation. Significantly, they take a hands-off approach to the management of the staff, leaving this instead to the local regeneration partnership.

"There needs to be a balance of local input and outside help."

Building partnerships

The value of a freestanding partnership can be its operational independence, which frees it from domination by one large organisation and allows decisions to be made more quickly. It also has the potential to gain the trust and support of the local community faster and more actively than a project promoted by a single organisation.

Decisions by organisations to come together and build partnerships have arisen because of specific concerns about the state of the local economy, the decline in local services or the need for physical regeneration. In the case of Haltwhistle and Ibstock, the impetus for a variety of agencies to come together reflected successive community regeneration initiatives prompted by downturns in local economic prosperity.

In Walton-on-the-Naze, joint working between the District Council and local organisations had been triggered by the submission of an SRB bid. When this proved unsuccessful, the momentum to find funding was not lost and, subsequently, the East of England Development Agency provided funding to support the Market Towns Initiative within the town. The current Walton Community Project operates independently from the District Council but maintains a good working relationship with it and the Town Council.

In Brandon, the local community partnership has attracted the support of a larger and better resourced umbrella development trust for the area, which will enable a more ambitious project to be delivered.

Partnerships are not, of course, always harmonious. In some of the case studies, there are clear splits which result either in partners feeling that their interests are not being represented or in potential partners being absent from the table altogether. This only serves to undermine the legitimacy and support for the project and, when disagreements become public, can threaten community support. To some extent this dynamic reflects the changing face of market towns - long established power bases and commercial interests are weakening and new organisations are emerging. With the exception of the general rules of respect, patience and compromise, there are no simple answers to partnership building and maintenance but much guidance can be found from organisations, such as the Development Trusts Association (see page 31) and the wide range of partnerships already in existence in the villages, towns and cities of England.

The role of the local authority

Some One Stop Shops are entirely operated by the local authority. This is appropriate where the objective is to deliver council services and information, as at East Grinstead.

A questionnaire-based survey conducted for this study found that the main initiators and funders of One Stop Shops tended to be local councils, either through partnerships between the county, district and

town councils, or by district councils as extensions to existing branch offices and outreach facilities. East Grinstead, Fakenham, and Moreton-in-Marsh are illustrations of this approach. Indeed, different tiers of local authorities within a county may be able to improve working relationships by pooling resources in this way. Equally, departments within a single council may find that they have to improve their working relationships. Fakenham Connect highlighted the fact that some of the council departments were reluctant to engage with the area office or attend surgeries. Similarly, East Grinstead experienced differing levels of cooperation from different departments. If the department under which the One Stop Shop sits influences others, there will be a high degree of cooperation whereas. if it is at a distance, ie estate management, working relationships may be poor.

Cotswold District Council successfully established a Council Information Point in the area office at Moreton-in-Marsh and now intends to broaden its remit. In late 2003 it will include other partners - such as the Police, the Primary Care Trust, Age Concern and the Inland Revenue - in the provision of service information.

Where a partnership approach is taken, the involvement of the local authority can still be critical. At a local level, the Town Council represents long-standing interests, is a consultee on matters, such as planning, and will have the statutory duty to provide some services in the town. It also has the ability to fund One Stop Shops by increasing the local council tax precept. At the district or borough level the council will have a major influence over planning, highways, recreation and housing matters and will also have access to various funding streams. At the county level, the council may be a major landowner (schools, libraries, highways) and will also be responsible for delivering a wide range of services. Again, it may have direct access to funding.

All the tiers of local authorities have democratically elected councillors who will be influential in gathering either support or opposition to any local proposals.

If the project fails to attract the support and involvement of local authorities at the outset, problems may arise later. The authorities, as potential funders, may take a cautious approach to a project in which they have not previously been involved.

Involving the private sector

Not all One Stop Shops will need to involve the business community. However, the most successful partnerships include the private sector in their proposals and management. At Ibstock, local retailers provided the impetus for establishing Ibstock Community Enterprise Ltd (ICE), which in turn established the One Stop Shop. It is significant that ICE has not been structured as a charity and instead seeks to trade to generate its income, thereby reflecting the modus operandi of the local businesses. The relationship with the private sector is also one of

equals, with ICE seeking to enter into trading relationships, as opposed to asking for agreements.

In Longtown, the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Cumbria in 2001 acted as a catalyst for change. The business community, which had previously been reluctant to become involved in attempts to revitalise the local area and economy, realised the importance of becoming involved in the partnership to push forward agendas for change. Another example is Haltwhistle, where some years ago the failure to involve the business community in the local partnership created an atmosphere that undermined progress in the town.

The role of big players

In all the case studies, major agencies, such as the Regional Development Agency or the Countryside Agency, have had a role to play. The ongoing relationship of major players does, however, vary. In Ibstock, a desire to move to a more business-like relationship with the agencies has been frustrated by bureaucratic requirements, even though the agencies hold the project in high regard. This is in contrast to the private sector involvement mentioned previously. It appears that the way policy strategies are developed by the agencies does not always marry with local delivery objectives.

"Big public sector organisations are not used to working with community enterprise bodies, so they struggle to understand them. They are more focussed on public authority working patterns and see themselves as benevolent grant givers. Consequently they are not interested in having a business relationship."

In addition, while many One Stop Shops are striving to develop new approaches to support local need, most public sector bodies (including local authorities) are bound by corporate regulations inhibiting innovative thinking.

In another case study there was a feeling that the RDA had an urban bias. This led to difficulty in getting the RDA to appreciate local concerns related to pockets of rural isolation and poverty in an otherwise prosperous area. Breakdowns in communication, such as this can hamper the establishment of the One Stop Shop and contrast with the experience in other towns such as Brandon and Walton-on-the-Naze, where the RDAs have played an important role in helping to identify funding and support for the project.

The funding and reporting requirements of the agencies were a source of constant dissatisfaction with many of the case studies. These requirements can lead to gaps in project continuity and the loss of valuable staff members resulting in frustration for all the parties involved. As one interviewee described it:

"Projects are always asked to be financially sustainable but rarely are the agencies able to make any long-term commitment to providing services themselves."

Although service providers play a vital role in supporting the establishment and continuity of One Stop Shops, they are constrained by corporate regulations, targets and changing government agendas. Often, providers are unable to take a flexible approach to resolving solutions or take a top-down approach to what should be a bottom-up solution. Such conflicts are recurring issues which need to be resolved, if One Stop Shops are to be a success.

Local co-ordinator

Key to the whole process of developing and establishing a One Stop Shop is the appointment of a local manager or co-ordinator who will act as the 'lynch pin' and key driver of the One Stop Shop. This person will be important in holding the partnership together, achieving an effective working relationship and working to a programme. They should have enthusiasm and commitment and act as a champion for the One Stop Shop.

Checklist

Who is going to be responsible for setting up the One Stop Shop?

- ☐ The local authority?
- ☐ A local regeneration partnership?
- ☐ A combination of partners?

Local authority-run initiative

Which department(s) or service functions will be co-ordinating the facility?

- ☐ Will voluntary and statutory agencies (rural community council, citizens' advice bureau, primary health care trust, etc) want to have an input?

How is the community going to be involved?

Local regeneration partnership initiative

How will it fit in with other partnership activities?

What other local groups and agencies, including the private sector, will be involved in providing services?

How will the community be involved?

Is outside expertise required and, if so, how will issues relating to repetition of advice, lack of continuity and a lowering of public expectations be overcome?

- ☐ Will other local authority partners (districts, parishes, town councils or county councils) be involved?

- ☐ Has a local co-ordinator or manager been appointed?

Have the following organisations been approached?

- ☐ Local authorities
- ☐ Regional Development Agency
- ☐ Public bodies
- ☐ Community and voluntary organisations
- ☐ Private businesses
- ☐ Police
- ☐ Primary Care Trust
- ☐ Citizens' Advice Bureau
- ☐ Inland Revenue
- ☐ Housing Association
- ☐ Employment Service
- ☐ Chamber of Commerce

(Note: this list is not intended to be comprehensive)

The role of the community in setting up and running One Stop Shops

Key messages

- Different types of One Stop Shop will have different levels of community involvement.
- Where there is a need for local regeneration, the need for local community involvement in the One Stop Shop is likely to be greater.
- The community is not just composed of local residents; it also includes workers, businesses and local organisations as well as young people and the elderly.
- There are many different ways to involve people.
- Community involvement is an ongoing process and needs constant investment.
- Sometimes the community cannot do it all and will need to bring in outside help.

One Stop Shops provide information and services to the local community. It is worth asking the question 'is the relationship between the One Stop Shop and the community a simple one of provider and customer or is there a more complex relationship in which the customer has a role to play in managing and directing the service'?

The first chapter looked at the two models of One Stop Shops: those run by local authorities and those run by local regeneration partnerships. Each type will have different objectives which can be summarised as either making local authority services and information more accessible or providing a component of, or even a catalyst for, local regeneration. The role of the community will vary, according to the type of One Stop Shop and its objectives.

Local authority run One Stop Shops

In three of the case studies (East Grinstead, Fakenham and Moreton-in-Marsh) the One Stop Shops are run by local authorities. The involvement of the local communities in setting up and running the One Stop Shops at Fakenham and East Grinstead was low. The impetus for creating a One Stop Shop was generated from within the council

and managed by council officers and councillors. The questionnaire survey indicated that, with local authority run One Stop Shops, there is a progressive decline in active community engagement, as the project moves from the development stage through to the management stage. Nevertheless, most local authority led One Stop Shops have explored mechanisms for encouraging community involvement. User groups have been established in some One Stop Shops and questionnaires have been used to try and ensure that the service responds to local needs. At Moreton-in-Marsh, a local event was used both to market the Area Centre and to attract feedback from users. The staff at East Grinstead also encouraged user feedback and sought to increase their profile in the local community by networking and attending local meetings.

The local authority run case studies were all located in relatively prosperous towns where local regeneration is less of a driving force than in the other case study towns. The need for community involvement in the management and strategic direction of the service could, therefore, be said to be relatively low.

One Stop Shops and local regeneration partnerships

In those case studies where the One Stop Shop is part of a local regeneration initiative, the involvement of the local community in the start-up and running is much more important. The role of the One Stop Shop is to meet the needs of the local community and so, consultation is essential from the very start. A project steering group involving local stakeholders and users can also assist.

In four of the case studies, the regeneration of the town is being promoted by a community partnership, with the One Stop Shop representing one of a number of local actions. Because of the emphasis on community-led regeneration, the partnership seeks to maintain a high degree of community involvement at all levels, from the election of representatives on to the partnership board through to opportunities for volunteers to help provide advice and services.

"A One Stop Shop should celebrate its success"

The local community will, inevitably, be complex and is not entirely synonymous with local residents. It can also include people who work in the town, as well as the owners of local businesses. All sections of the community should be considered from the young to the older people. Within the community there will also be a wide range of established organisations. Some of these, eg the parish or town council, may want to have a formal role in the running of the overall organisation and/or to provide services and information from the One Stop Shop.

Community involvement can cover the full range from passive to active participation and includes involvement methods, such as questionnaires, elections and planning for real exercises. Such events should emphasis the achievements of the One Stop Shop which, in turn, will help to raise its profile within the local community and encourage people to buy into the service.

Examples where communities are actively engaged in the management of One Stop Shops include the following:

- Ibstock Community Enterprise Ltd has a membership of nearly 500 local people and workers and an elected board with 13 members.
- Haltwhistle carried out a major consultation exercise called Whistle Stop and has 19 trustees some of whom are locally elected.
- Longtown delivered questionnaires to 3,000 local households and every school was consulted. The town partnership draws its members from a wide range of local organisations.
- Walton-on-the-Naze carried out a visioning event attended by 250 people and now has a programme board of 10 elected representatives.
- Amble Development Trust, Burgess Hill Town Council Help Point and Kirby Stephen Community Council Centre are others, drawn from the wider survey, in which the community is actively involved.

"Things take time and, if there are damaged relationships in the community, it can take years to get over."

In some towns featured in the case studies, there were obvious frictions between established interests and the local regeneration partnership. The involvement of local district or borough councillors can help to bridge these divides, as they can use their electoral mandate to encourage greater cooperation between the various groups and organisations.

Keeping the community involved

Whilst community involvement may be a continuous process, it can be hard to keep people engaged and to maintain the same momentum throughout the One Stop Shop's lifetime, especially if there is a long development phase. Some projects that involve major building programmes will take years from conception to completion. At Brandon, having some smaller quick-win projects running alongside the major development has helped keep people involved.

"One Stop Shops cannot rely solely on word of mouth to keep them open"

Fast-moving projects can also encounter difficulties. In Walton, where the project office took only a few months to set up, the local residents were initially suspicious when it opened. Over time, however, trust between the project and the residents has grown and it is now widely seen as a means of support rather than a threat.

Community involvement can also be assisted by constant promotion and marketing of the One Stop Shop and the wider partnership, combined with feedback on project progress and future proposals. Networking and one-off promotional events all help to keep people engaged with the project.

Community involvement will constantly throw up new challenges and the occasional frustration. These have to be accepted and absorbed into an ongoing process of growth and evolution.

Complementing community skills

It is also important to ensure that the correct skills are in place. On occasion, it may be necessary to bring in outside or professional expertise to work alongside local community interests. Ultimately though, the drive must come from local enthusiasts and advocates.

Having a flexible approach

In taking a holistic approach to community involvement, it is important to continually reassess the needs of the local community and ensure that the processes involved in managing the One Stop Shop are flexible enough to adapt to changes in demand. Regular surveys of user requirements through, for example, customer satisfaction surveys will act as tools in determining people's needs. Moreton-in-Marsh identified a need to target a broader base of users, including 10-15 year olds. The council recognised that, although they have established contact with Connexions (a careers advice and support service for young people), more facilities needed to be provided for this age range.

How One Stop Shops target their audiences and what they have to offer will vary depending on local circumstances and compatibility with other services, but there may be opportunities to offer access to the internet or the use of facilities for parties, discos etc.

Checklist

How is the community going to be defined?

Who is going to be included – local people, organisations, businesses, schools and/or employees?

What role is the local community going to play in the One Stop Shop?

Will local people be consumers of information services operated by the local authority?

or

Will they be actively involved in a 'bottom-up' initiative promoting self-help and community participation?

How flexible can the One Stop Shop be to changes in demand?

What mechanisms are being used to encourage community involvement and to ensure that involvement is sustained?

In what way will the needs of the local community be recognised?

Is outside help required to advise, assist or identify the role of the community in One Stop Shops?

Where to put a One Stop Shop

Key messages

- One Stop Shops should be situated in either a town centre location or where there are other 'anchor' attractions that draw people to the site.
- The One Stop Shop must have a strong identity.
- The building must be accessible to all users.
- Greater use may be encouraged through proximity to a readily available public transport network with adequate car parking facilities nearby.
- The building must suit the relevant needs and be easily adapted to accommodate changes in customer demands.
- A visible ground floor 'shop window' or display area as well as appropriate signage are important, so that people are aware of the service and its function.

Why location is important

One Stop Shops appear to function most successfully when they are located in accessible town centres. They can then maintain a high profile in the local community and make the most of passing trade. Walton-on-the-Naze has made use of former bank premises - in many market towns these are found in prominent locations.

The disadvantages of a peripheral location may be offset, if the One Stop Shop is combined with other types of 'anchor' activities, such as a cashpoint, a library or a community centre. However, care needs to be taken in determining the combination of services offered. For example, the provision of a cashpoint machine and a building society service within the Ibstock Community Shop has attracted additional custom and mitigated its location, slightly away from the main retail area. On the other hand, user feedback for Fakenham Connect, shows that its location - a short distance away from the town centre on a small campus with a number of other civic services - is a barrier to its use by local people.

Longtown has adopted a completely different approach. Instead of having a single building providing a range of services, it is endeavouring to coordinate the services provided from a number of different and existing sites; in other words 'multi stop shops'. Some services, such as the parish centre, are located within the town centre,

whilst others are located on the edge of the town or even in surrounding village halls. The instigators have argued that this approach maintains the independence of the various organisations, whilst ensuring coordination and overall accessibility.

Attracting users to the One Stop Shop location

"The reception must be downstairs. For a while the ground floor was used as a furniture shop with the office and reception on the first floor but it was invisible and people didn't know it was there."

A One Stop Shop needs to retain a functional identity of its own, so that it is easily identifiable to users, as well as being able to attract casual passers-by who may not be aware of its existence. The reception area must be attractive and inviting with 'kerb appeal'. It needs to fulfil two functions. The One Stop Shop must create an informal atmosphere, where staff can respond to general enquiries, while respecting the confidentiality of others who may have booked appointments.

This view is further reinforced by observations from Ibstock and Walton where it was noted that some new users initially just view the information available and return at a later date with a specific enquiry.

A distinct identity also helps to differentiate the One Stop Shop from other council and statutory services. There is some evidence that people are less willing to use services provided directly by local councils. Walton Community Project staff experienced initial difficulties, when they opened, because people thought that they were linked with the local authority. They are an entirely separate organisation and were able to overcome this misconception.

Care needs to be taken in how a One Stop Shop's identity is perceived. Some people in Haltwhistle tend to confuse the community-run One Stop Shop with the local council (eg blaming the One Stop Shop for the poor repair of the pavements). On the other hand, West Sussex County Council successfully provides a local authority-run service in the foyer of East Grinstead library which attracts high levels of usage and support. A library location is often not perceived to be part of local authority services.

The One Stop Shop must be well signposted to advertise its presence and have a visible 'shop window'. If it is combined with another service facility or is located within a local authority building, such as a public library, a separate enquiry window and display boards can help to raise the profile.

Making the location accessible to all users

In determining the exact location of a One Stop Shop, consideration must be given to the proximity of bus and train services for the town's surrounding hinterland, as well as to access for local residents. Where One Stop Shops are located in town centres, existing parking facilities may be adequate. Where the location is less central, additional parking spaces close by may be necessary as well as the provision of secure cycle parking. In all locations, the needs of the less able-bodied must be taken into consideration.

Types of buildings suitable for co-location of services

The building must enable the One Stop Shop to function as the local community requires. Banks, libraries, shops, existing council area offices and local authority buildings have all featured within the eight case studies.

Both Moreton-in-Marsh and Fakenham have adapted space within existing council buildings. In the case of Fakenham, a former youth centre situated in proximity to other council services proved suitable for conversion. If the co-location of services can make use of shared facilities in existing local authority buildings, this may well reduce start-up times. However, in some cases the sharing of facilities can cause operational problems.

The proposed new Healthy Living Centre at Brandon plans to adapt the existing town hall site and an adjacent primary school, while the Longtown Investment Partnership in Cumbria has chosen to retain a wide range of existing buildings including the parish centre, schools and community centre.

Moreton-in-Marsh Area Centre is located within a listed building, which has limited the opportunities for external marketing of the service.

Identifying potential buildings

Each case study had acquired its building in a different way. Ibstock and Walton both acquired former banks, one by buying the freehold and the other on a short-term lease. Haltwhistle bought and then refurbished an empty shop in the early 1990s. The site for the Brandon Healthy Living Centre was identified when the school relocated and Suffolk County Council carried out a property review. Longtown and the council-run One Stop Shops at Fakenham, East Grinstead and Moreton-in-Marsh all make use of existing buildings.

Haltwhistle and Ibstock are both acquiring additional buildings, in order to improve the services that they provide to the town. These buildings are either empty or the subject of local concern and have had their potential identified in wider consultation and visioning exercises.

Checklist

Is the building or site identified in an accessible and prominent town centre location?

- ☐ If not, are there other facilities or services that will attract users to the service?
- ☐ Will the public be comfortable using this location?

Will the One Stop Shop be combined with other service facilities, such as a library, cash point or community space?

Could its identity be misinterpreted?

- ☐ Can the One Stop Shop be reached easily on foot, by bicycle, or public transport?
- ☐ Is it within easy reach of local car parks, or are there parking spaces available nearby?
- ☐ Can those with limited mobility and wheelchairs, as well as those with prams, access it?

Is the One Stop Shop located with other facilities and, if so, will this inhibit or strengthen its operation?

Consider:

- ☐ Different opening hours
- ☐ Coordination and change in staff duties
- ☐ Briefing and training of staff
- ☐ Maintaining a distinct identity

Can the One Stop Shop be adapted in the future to accommodate changes in customer demands?

Can the building be adapted or use changed?

Will planning permission be granted?

Do any of the changes have to adhere to building regulations?

What to put in a One Stop Shop

Key messages

- Footfall is critical. Draw people in with your services.
- Have a good shop window to attract people.
- Make the main information area spacious and informal.
- Staff should be visible and easily accessible.
- Ensure the building and internal spaces are accessible.
- Opening hours should suit the users.
- Decide if you are a first stop shop or a single stop shop, and then gear the level of resources and user support accordingly.
- Keep the agreements with other users as flexible as possible.

One Stop Shops depend upon people using their services to be successful. Footfall is, therefore, a critical factor, much as it is with any other kind of shop. In order to attract a high percentage of passing trade, it is important to consider the location (discussed in the previous chapter), external and internal appearance, accessibility and opening hours.

External and internal appearance

The One Stop Shop should have a good shop frontage with clearly marked signs and information, as well as a window through which people can see, which encourages the public to enter. Inside, the One Stop Shop must be welcoming and easily accessible, especially for those with a disability. Ground floor space is, therefore, essential - a lesson learned by Haltwhistle Partnership, who previously used an upstairs office making the organisation invisible in the town. The general information space should be generous in size with a front desk or reception area. East Grinstead identified the need to make the information area a bright community space. Any information displayed needs to be visible and recognisable.

The shop needs to create a certain ambience of informality. It should be able to balance two quite different needs. One is the staff need to provide information directly to those requiring help (who may be reluctant to ask) or to assist those booking appointments. The other is the individual user's need to browse without feeling watched or intimidated. Easy and visible access to the staff is important.

One Stop Shops, run by community organisations, often avoid the use of separate staff offices. Instead, all the staff work from the publicly accessible information space. Ibstock does not have dedicated desks for its staff; instead, they use whatever space is available and the same computers as the public. This open design can create challenges. Interruptions can be frequent but, if the priority is to respond to public requests, this is not necessarily a problem. However, almost every case study identified the need for a separate meeting room for confidential discussions with service users.

Accessibility and opening hours

Accessibility is an important factor, when considering the design of a One Stop Shop and its siting. It is essential that disabled people, as well as parents with prams and pushchairs, can access the building. If there are community meeting rooms, these will need to have access to kitchen and cloakroom facilities with lifts, if these rooms are not situated on the ground floor. Haltwhistle Partnership has made use of a former shop but is now working towards acquiring a new building that will incorporate a community centre and be fully accessible. All proposals need to consider health and safety issues, clearly signed emergency exits and adequate fire precautions.

Some local authorities that have more established One Stop Shops - such as the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, South Gloucestershire District Council and Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council - have been able to provide induction loops for the hard of hearing, a signers service, reserved car parking for blue badge holders, allocated children's play areas, translation services and video links to other council office locations.

One Stop Shops need to be open when people are most likely to use them. All the case studies were open Monday to Friday and some opened on Saturdays. Both Moreton-in-Marsh and East Grinstead open one evening a week and on Saturday mornings. Of course, this can pose a challenge when the number of staff is limited and underlines the need for strong team working and flexibility.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is vital that the One Stop Shop is located close to a good reliable public transport network, because many of those likely to draw on the resources of the One Stop Shop will not have access to a car.

Drawing people in

Some services which One Stop Shops provide are defined as 'magnets', naturally attracting people to them. Others will benefit from the 'passing trade' generated by the magnets.

A number of One Stop Shops provide a photocopying service and others provide Information and Communications Technology access. Ibstock runs a building society agency, which accounts for half the footfall into the community shop. Such magnets pull people in and it is

then possible for other service providers in the One Stop Shop to reach new customers. At Ibstock, the Learning and Work Adviser finds that it is easier to make contact with people coming into the Community Shop building than it is elsewhere, because she is more trusted in that setting. This saves on a lot of marketing. Equally at Haltwhistle, the police find that they are more accessible in the One Stop Shop than they are in the police station or on the telephone. They are able to provide more joined up advice, as they have access to a wider range of information and are also able to spread crime prevention advice more effectively.

"People often come to use one service but end up using others."

In this way, the One Stop Shop can market itself through word of mouth and personal feedback.

The mix of services can, however, be challenging. In Fakenham, the tourist information service is provided next to the housing cashier, thereby setting up the potential for embarrassing and/or amusing discussions.

Deciding what services to provide

Before developing a long wish-list of services, remember that it is usually best for the One Stop Shop to start small and expand gradually.

"Don't expect what you started with to be what you end up with."

Additional services can be added and others adapted as public awareness and demand requires.

In addition to considering what services are provided, thought must be given to the mix of services on offer, how they complement each other and whether they are compatible. A range of services, which could generate an income for the One Stop Shop, should be balanced against facilities offered by voluntary organisations.

A first or single stop shop

Once consideration has been given to the types of services, the next fundamental question is whether the One Stop Shop is a first stop or single stop shop, ie is it a gateway that then signposts people in the appropriate direction or does it provide a full service itself?

If the One Stop Shop only signposts people, the level of backup support that will be provided must be established. A community-based resource facility may provide access to a combination of different community, voluntary and statutory services but the emphasis will be focussed more on interested self-help than a solely 'customer based' interface. The smaller One Stop Shops, such as Longtown, only provide leaflets and contact details for other organisations. While the level of signposting may vary, the commitment of individual staff in all the case studies suggests that they would do whatever was needed to assist the enquirer to get what they require.

At East Grinstead, West Sussex County Council is keen to have staff on hand to provide information in person, rather than an automated telephone system. Every request is treated as an enquiry, not a complaint, and seen through to a satisfactory conclusion.

If the One Stop Shop provides a full service, as is proposed at Brandon, the resource implications are massive and substantial coordination with other agencies is required. Brandon is by far the most ambitious of the case studies and will eventually integrate doctors' surgeries with a library, arts centre, office space, crèche and tourist information. Some One Stop Shops will follow one of the two options outlined above, others will be a combination of the two.

Market research and provision of information

Market research is required at an early stage in order to provide the appropriate level and range of services. The Market Towns Healthcheck has been the basis of this research for many One Stop Shops. Involving the local community through consultation and participation in project development is also important.

East Grinstead stressed that a lot of information commonly requested can be found in the local library. Consequently, the potential to simply add on to an existing library service should not be overlooked at the planning stage.

In local-authority-run One Stop Shops, public confusion about the responsibilities of each tier of local government can present challenges, especially if individual departments or neighbouring councils are unwilling to work with the One Stop Shop staff. This underlines the need to involve all stakeholders at the planning stage. It also highlights the difficulties that local-authority-run One Stop Shops face, as the public sometimes identify them as part of the problem.

Information management presents an inevitable challenge for One Stop Shops. The challenge is perhaps greatest for those in local authorities. where information flows are much more complex and the volumes enormous. ICT provides some answers but also presents new problems. The drive towards e-government has cost implications for One Stop Shops and requires funds to cover new hardware, staff training and information management. In addition there is a need to ensure that all information is kept confidential and that access is not open to abuse. The use of key contact points in relevant departments is another way of reducing the burden on the One Stop Shop staff.

The wider survey of One Stop Shops in England shows that the most common services include:

- the provision of information for the local community (often through computer terminals);
- the provision of information relating to local government services;
- bill paying facilities;
- Citizens' Advice Bureaux or surgeries;
- tourism information centres.

The least common facilities offered were crèches, cafés and police stations (or police surgeries).

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

The extent to which One Stop Shops provide ICT differs. At East Grinstead, there is access to a wide range of computers and software but only because the Help Point is located in the library which provides ICT facilities. At Haltwhistle, there is a large ICT suite of 6 PCs and 2 laptops, while at Ibstock there are 4 PCs, printers and scanners. By contrast, Fakenham provides only one PC and at Walton and Moreton-in-Marsh, there is, at present, no community access to PCs.

Opinions on the future potential and use of ICT access vary. Some felt that the market has been saturated and access is now only needed by people in 'hard to reach' categories and by local businesses requiring bespoke training. Others, however, felt that there was still high demand, especially among older people and people living in outlying communities. This demand could be met if village halls could be persuaded to accept the installation of the equipment.

ICT servicing arrangements vary and some One Stop Shops have had bad experiences, such as delivery partners disappearing when the funding has ended. If the One Stop Shop is not part of a larger organisation with in-house support, then having a contract with a good reliable company or consultant seems to be the best approach. Haltwhistle uses this approach and reported no problems with their network. Other key considerations, which arose from the wider questionnaire-based survey of 50 market towns, highlighted the use of video links. Again, the relative success of such facilities is variable - in some One Stop Shops they are well used, while in others, such as Dursley Town Council One Stop Shop, they were underused and have been removed.

Tenancy arrangements

Most of the occupiers of the One Stop Shops have relatively flexible and informal tenancy arrangements. The local service providers often run sessions without formal tenancies and usually operate from a desk or meeting room. In the case of Walton, they are encouraged to start by the offer of free space for the first year. Payment for the use of a desk only starts once the service has become established. The exceptions are Haltwhistle, where upstairs offices are rented out to other organisations, Moreton-in-Marsh, which rents out an adjacent property, and Brandon and Ibstock, which are both developing new properties that will have formalised tenancies.

Checklist

What form of advertising is used to attract passers by?

Are there large shop windows, display boards and clearly marked signs?

Once inside the building, is the information clearly displayed and accessible?

Is information available to a variety of users, including those from ethnic minorities and people who have visual impairments or are hard of hearing?

Location:

- ☐ Is the shop located on the ground floor?
- ☐ Is it accessible for all users?
- ☐ What atmosphere does the space create?
- ☐ Where are staff located?
- ☐ If there are other community meeting rooms, where are these located and are they easily accessible for the less mobile?
- ☐ Have health and safety issues been taken into consideration?

What hours is the shop open?

- ☐ Are the hours flexible enough to accommodate those who work?
- ☐ What are the magnets for drawing people in?
- ☐ Are such facilities provided elsewhere?

Is the One Stop Shop a single shop or a first stop shop?

- ☐ If it is a first stop shop, what level of backup support is provided?
- ☐ Is each request for information responded to and is each response seen through to a satisfactory conclusion?

What sorts of tenancy agreements have been arranged with other users of the building and how flexible are they?

- ☐ Do other users share meeting rooms?
- ☐ Are there any incentives for them to relocate to the One Stop Shop eg free space for a year; reduced tenancy rates; free access to computer and photocopying facilities?

What are other users contributing to the One Stop Shop?

Is there a balance in the types of services on offer?

Does the One Stop Shop have the flexibility to alter the types of services offered at a later date?

How to manage a One Stop Shop

Key messages

- Distinguish between start-up and operation phases.
- During development, maintain flexibility in your management team.
- Ensure that control stays local.
- Run the board effectively.
- The staff are your key to success.
- A high standard of customer service is essential.
- Try to manage the One Stop Shop so that staff do not work in excess of their contracted hours.
- Volunteers can help, but also need management and space.
- Ensure that your staff are working in a safe and healthy environment.
- Strong marketing is essential. Word of mouth is the strongest form.
- Decide how you will monitor your success.

Start-up and operation

Once a board or steering group has been established (see who to involve, page 10), the means of managing the One Stop Shop need to be agreed. There are two distinct phases to the management: start-up and operation. Difficulties can arise when there is no clear transition from the start-up phase to the operational phase. The skills and the people required for each phase may be very different. Expecting the same people to carry on from one phase to the next could mean the project fails to reach its full potential. This was indicated at Fakenham, where the council property department, which set up the project, ended up providing line management for the One Stop Shop staff.

"The back end of the project (including developing strategic objectives and the overall management) needs to be as co-ordinated as the front end (ie. front of house)."

The view from Brandon is that, in the development phase, the steering group should avoid being inflexible, as that only creates cliques and personal agendas. Instead, all the stakeholders need to be identified and their participation sought throughout the process. Consequently, organisations and individuals can join in or even drop out according to their interests and resources.

Who is in control?

The major agencies (councils, Regional Development Agencies, Countryside Agency) often have an involvement in the One Stop Shops

but, with the exception of those run by the local council, they provide a facilitating and enabling role, as opposed to one of management. For example, Tynedale Council provides financial support and employs some of the staff at Haltwhistle but does not exert direct control. Other agencies may provide funding and networking.

At East Grinstead, the overall manager is based in County Hall some 50 miles away. Consequently, the local supervisor is empowered to organise and make all the day to day decisions. This is also true for Moreton-in-Marsh.

The emphasis promoted by Walton and adopted by Suffolk County Council at Brandon was for the drive to come from the community. This helps ensure that the project stays relevant to the local community and that local ownership of the project is maintained.

As discussed in the first chapter, a wide range of local organisations and individuals may be involved in the overall strategic management of the project. It is important that, if a board is established, it has a clear role and individuals are allocated to particular tasks. Meetings need to be well chaired with clear decision-making taking place. If and when staff are employed, clear management and reporting responsibilities need to be agreed and the temptation to overload them with every job that needs doing in the town resisted!

There is also the need for a local coordinator or manager with commitment and enthusiasm to drive the project forward, (see page 15 for more details).

Brandon provides an interesting arrangement, whereby the local Brandon Community Partnership will be promoting the project, while a larger and better resourced umbrella organisation (the Keystone Community Partnership; a development trust for the local area) will provide the funding and ownership vehicle. This two-tier approach to community enterprise enables the grass roots organisation to free itself from some of the administrative burden of property ownership and instead focus on the delivery of local services.

(For further help and advice on management issues, contact the Development Trust Association or the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) as well as other organisations listed in Appendix 1 - see page 68).

Staffing a One Stop Shop

The staff are the public face of the One Stop Shop and its success will stand or fall on their qualities. In the seven operational case studies (Brandon is still being developed), all of the frontline staff are women. Their emphasis is on customer service and the background of most of them reflects this, whether they have come from the public, voluntary or private sectors.

The 'hints and tips' provided by the staff in the case studies include:

- Plan staff needs carefully; there is a tendency to under-staff.
- Employ the staff first and involve them in the start-up.
- Always be prepared to admit you don't know, but then go and find out. Be able and willing to dig for information.
- Always prioritise visitors over deskwork and the person in front of you over a ringing telephone. Make eye contact!
- Have excellent local knowledge, be aware of current issues and know the workings of local government.
- Be diplomatic, persistent and have good negotiating skills.
- Be a people's person. Be good at listening and understanding. Make everyone feel important. Be outgoing.
- Try to diagnose the customer's real problem.
- Be prepared to take rudeness.
- Be both self-motivated and a good team worker.
- Be good at promotion and marketing.
- A good sense of humour is vital.

Each one of the case studies has a senior staff member, who is responsible for day to day operations and reports to the board or steering group or, in the case of the local authorities, to line management. The nature of the job and the small size of the teams means, however, that the distinctions between 'management' and 'staff' are thoroughly blurred with the emphasis being on strong team working and cooperation.

It is worth noting that a constant change in new steering group members charged with managing One Stop Shops can have a detrimental effect on the group's dynamics as a whole. Care should be taken when considering new members, ensuring all members of the steering group are party to the final decision.

The staff in many of the case studies frequently work more than their contracted hours. This is a reflection of the nature of the job and the frequency of evening meetings, the time for which is rarely recovered. The exception among the community-run One Stop Shops is Ibstock, where the staff manage to work largely within their contracted hours. While strong management and self discipline are the likely reasons for this, Ibstock is also the only one of the case studies to be making full use of volunteers which obviously helps increase the staff resource, albeit with additional management implications.

Although volunteers are directly involved only in the Ibstock Community Shop, in some of the other case studies they assist with activities run by the organisation and also participate at board level and in project steering groups. A lack of time and space to manage volunteers are cited as the principal reasons for not involving them more extensively. At Ibstock, volunteers play an important part in the overall team, although it is important that they are managed to ensure that they do not provide advice beyond the competence of the organisation as a whole. Ibstock identified the way in which staff often

become 'trusted intermediaries'. They get to know a lot about individual members of the community, which enables them to deliver a better service, but they can only maintain that position through ongoing confidentiality and trust.

The health and safety of the staff is a matter which can easily be overlooked. Publicly accessible buildings pose a particular risk for staff, so it is important that they are not forced to work alone. There should always be at least two people on duty, even if one is a volunteer or from a different organisation.

Marketing

As with any small business, marketing is a vital but often overlooked activity. The most dynamic One Stop Shops are those which have a noticeable level of private corporate or retail sector experience at the board or staff level.

Word of mouth is by far the most important and beneficial form of marketing for all the One Stop Shops. The personal recommendation of a neighbour or friend will encourage new users. Equally, however, bad reports can undermine the work of the One Stop Shop.

In terms of websites, www.haltwhistle.org provides the most information and www.walton-on-the-naze.com is also good. However, none of the One Stop Shop websites provide a comprehensive range of local information, perhaps reflecting the emphasis on face to face contact and advice. Other useful website addresses are included in Appendix 1, page 68.

Most of the community-run One Stop Shops publish a regular newsletter, distributed throughout the town, while the local authority One Stop Shops provide publicity leaflets.

The local press can have an important role to play, although relationships vary from town to town. Where relationships are positive, the One Stop Shop is able to attract high levels of publicity and support.

The One Stop Shops run by local authorities are more concerned about branding and style than most of those run by community organisations. Walton commented that it is important for the One Stop Shop to be identifiably separate and different to the local council, as people are more willing to approach an independent agency. Retaining a community feel to the One Stop Shop is equally important.

Monitoring

Assessing the success of One Stop Shops poses some fundamental challenges, especially regarding baselines. Each project differs so much it is hard to identify a common set of indicators which allows like to be compared with like. Equally, the nature of the service means that a simple count of people will not reflect the quality of service provided.

Some of the One Stop Shops have given little thought to the issue of monitoring. Ibstock has perhaps gone the furthest and is also exploring the issue of quality assurance through a system specifically designed for voluntary sector organisations[8].

No definitive answer has yet been established regarding the benefits of quality assurance or accreditation. Whilst some form of accreditation would achieve credibility and increase the status of the One Stop Shop, it would be an additional financial burden and require an increase in bureaucracy.

8. Charities Evaluation Services, London. PQASSO Quality Assurance System - designed as a workpack specifically for use by small and medium voluntary sector organisations - see http://www.cesroi.org.uk/pqasso.htm

Checklist

Who is managing the start-up and operation phases?

- ☐ Is there a board/steering group?
- ☐ Is there a local manager or co-ordinator?
- ☐ Will the management structure be flexible enough to involve all parties at the outset?
- ☐ Who will be invited to participate in this group - local councillors and officers, voluntary organisations, community groups, private sector organisations, potential One Stop Shop staff?
- ☐ Who will be funding the One Stop Shop and what is their role in the start-up and day-to-day operation?
- ☐ Does this differ from other partnership, voluntary or community group involvement?
- ☐ What will the formal constitutional arrangement be for the shop? (Local Authority, trust, limited company, friendly society, etc).

Who will be staffing the One Stop Shop?

- ☐ Who will be responsible for line management of frontline staff?
- ☐ Will the shop have a permanent manager?
- ☐ Will there be there sufficient staff cover for the proposed opening hours?
- ☐ Will staff have sufficient back-up support to cover illness and holidays?
- ☐ Who will be responsible for evening or weekend opening hours?
- ☐ Will the hours staff work be monitored or recorded in any way?

How will the One Stop Shop staff operate?

- ☐ What skills and attributes will staff require?
- ☐ Will they be trained in customer services?
- ☐ Do staff have a good local knowledge of the area?
- ☐ What other local information sources will be available to them?
- ☐ How will staff refer enquiries to other council departments or agencies?
- ☐ What records will be maintained?
- ☐ Will staff be trained to handle awkward enquiries or difficult customers?
- ☐ What is the expected role and contribution of community volunteers and how will they be managed?

How can a safe and healthy working environment be created?

- ☐ What security measures will be in place to allow for public access?
- ☐ Will staff be able to alert others in the event of an emergency, particularly if working alone?
- ☐ Are there adequate fire, health and safety precautions in place, and if necessary attendance registers for visitors?
- ☐ How will issues relating to multiple occupiers be dealt with?

How will the One Stop Shop be marketed to the public?

- ☐ Will staff be required to wear a uniform to help establish a distinct identity?
- ☐ Who will be responsible for marketing the services offered?
- ☐ How will this publicity be achieved?
- ☐ Will there be a website or newsletter associated with the service?

How will the progress of the One Stop Shop be monitored?

- ☐ Will this involve a count of people using the service?
- ☐ Will this require a computer-based programme?
- ☐ Will a quality assurance scheme be implemented?

What does it cost?

Funding and financing a One Stop Shop

Key messages

- Don't under-estimate the start-up costs of setting up a One Stop Shop. The lowest start-up costs are those where the service can be tailored to fit in with existing facilities, or where a building is already available.
- Funding both for initial start-up costs and running the One Stop Shop is likely to come from a number of sources. In most cases local authorities will be making some contribution to the One Stop Shop.
- Running costs will vary, but there is a positive relationship between high operating costs and number of employees.
- Applying for and receiving public funding will be frustrating!
- New ways of offering services can be explored, particularly where there are opportunities to generate some income to offset revenue costs.
- Outsourcing of some financial management responsibilities, such as payroll services, can help free project staff for more important duties related to the One Stop Shop.
- Involve the local community from the start.
- Clarify the role of the One Stop Shop in the broader vision.
- Recognise that it will take longer and be harder than you first imagine but be patient.

The cost of setting up and running a One Stop Shop varies enormously according to the type of building, the range of services and even the organisation that will be running the project. A breakdown of the costs is given in Table 2 (see page 39).

Setting-up costs

Start-up costs for One Stop Shops range from £3,000 to £500,000. Some One Stop Shops have been established for very small amounts, by using space in an existing building or taking a short lease on existing

premises. The East Grinstead Help Point was established in an existing library, making use of an enquiry window. The start-up cost was, therefore, restricted to the cost of computer hardware and software. At Walton, the One Stop Shop is located on the ground floor of a former bank on a one year lease. Start-up costs were purposely kept low, because the project did not want to create the impression that it was spending money on itself. Consequently, the furniture and one of the two computers were second hand.

Other One Stop Shops have required substantial investment. The proposals for Brandon are very ambitious; developing a healthy living centre with library, crèche, meeting rooms and many other facilities. The cost is currently expected to be £7.2m. Less expensive was Haltwhistle, where a building was bought and refurbished for £170,000, albeit in the 1990s. Haltwhistle has now found that it has outgrown the building and is exploring opportunities to acquire new premises, which will be converted into a combined One Stop Shop and community centre.

The council-operated One Stop Shops sometimes have high costs, although it is difficult to separate the pure One Stop Shop function from other offices and services in the building. In both Fakenham and Moreton-in-Marsh, £500,000 was spent converting existing buildings. This came about because of local authority changes in the approach to service delivery, which led to reviews of property portfolios. The former council office in Moreton-in-Marsh was converted into an Area Centre hosting 42 voluntary organisations. In Fakenham, the existing council office was going to be too expensive to convert to disability standards and, so, all the services were relocated to a surplus youth centre which was converted into a joint council information centre.

Start-up times also vary. Generally, those with the lowest costs have been the quickest to start up – Walton only took a few months.

Table 2: Start-up and running costs

Name	Type of OSS	Type of space	Occupation	Start-up cost	No. of staff	Annual core cost
Brandon	Local Regeneration	New build - healthy living centre	Freehold	£7.2m	3 full time 2 part time	£260,000 (forecast)
East Grinstead	Local Authority	Enquiry window in library	Freehold	minimal – computer + software	3 part time	n/a
Fakenham	Local Authority	Reception desk in Council office	Freehold	£500,000 (for whole building)	1 full time 1 part time	£42,800 (Fakenham Connect only)
Haltwhistle	Local Regeneration	3 storey building with ground floor retail unit	Freehold	£70,000 purchase (early 90s) + £100,000 refurb	4	£57,000 (some staff employed with additional project funding)
Ibstock	Local Regeneration	Single storey building inc. retail unit	Freehold	£43,000 purchase (1997) + £25,000 fitting out	3	£80,000 (some staff employed with additional project funding)
Longtown	Local Regeneration	Multiple sites	Freehold	n/a	2	Salary + on costs
Moreton-in-Marsh	Local Authority	Council offices	Freehold	£500,000 refurb in 2002	1 full time 5 part time	£192,000
Walton-on-the-Naze	Local Regeneration	Ground floor retail unit	1 year lease	Minimal – second hand furniture + 2 computers	1 full time 1 part time	£52,000

Running costs

Running costs vary quite substantially, according to the level of provision of services and the number of staff employed. Many of the case studies have annual core costs in the range of £40,000 - £80,000, while those responding to the survey showed a generally higher range of £100,000 - £200,000 per annum.

The results of the questionnaire survey of One Stop Shops show that, while there is no relationship between service provision and operating cost, there is a positive relationship between high operating costs and the number of employees.

The additional core running costs are likely to include any building service charges, telephone calls and computer equipment.

Many One Stop Shops, especially those operating as part of wider regeneration activities, will also receive funding for discrete projects. The overall budget of the organisation can, therefore, be much higher and some of the staff working in the One Stop Shop may also be funded with project money, as opposed to core funding.

Sources of funding for setting up a One Stop Shop

Funding to acquire property is often secured from a variety of sources, including local authorities, external grants and loans and central government funding initiatives.

It is worth remembering that, as a precursor to obtaining funding for the acquisition of premises or for new build, a feasibility study and/or business plan may be required to satisfy the conditions of local authority funded capital development programmes. Funding needs to be set aside for such studies, which could be done inhouse, or by consultants, under start-up costs. In addition, do not forget the costs of taking on a mortgage, if this is necessary.

Funding to acquire and convert a former bank in Ibstock to a Community Shop resulted from winning £100,000 in a regional and national competition sponsored by Business in the Community. More commonly, funding has been secured from:

- Regional Development Agency;
- Countryside Agency (eg, the Market Towns Initiative programme);
- County councils, district councils, town councils, parish councils;
- Central Government programmes (such as Single Regeneration Budget);
- Heritage Lottery Funding;
- Rural Community Council;
- charitable trusts;
- European funding;
- private sector funding and assistance;
- donations.

Help in kind is also a valuable resource and can be used to match-fund other sources of funding. Time donated by local businesses and council support staff can be used, as can the use of meeting rooms and equipment during the planning stage.

Sources of funding for running costs

The need to fund the running costs of a One Stop Shop will depend upon the model that has been adopted. If the One Stop Shop is being operated by the local authority, funding will tend to be secured within the overall departmental budget and will not impact on front line staff. If, however, the One Stop Shop is being operated by the community or as part of a wider regeneration programme, then the need to secure core funding will be constant.

The problems involved in relying on public sector funding for core costs include:

- time and effort required to prepare an application;
- requirements of the funding, if it is secured;
- difficulty in finding funding for core organisational costs;
- limited number of years for which funding will be given.

By far the best option is to be self funding, thereby avoiding all of the above problems. This is also highly attractive to potential funders of start-up costs.

Self-funding, however, carries its own disadvantages. It may divert considerable effort from your core activities, especially if they are not income generating. It may mean that you have to have a bigger building, which in turn increases the start-up costs. It requires a different package of skills.

Three of the case studies are operated by the local council and are, therefore, able to rely upon council budgets for their funding. Three others are in receipt of MTI funding which covers the majority of their core costs. The Haltwhistle Partnership office generates an income of between £12,000 and £15,000 from tenants and hot-desk users. One other case study, Brandon, is still in the development phase, but intends to be self-funding from the rents generated by tenants.

The remaining case study - Ibstock Community Enterprise Ltd (ICE) - is a good example of a One Stop Shop that is managing to generate over 50% of its own funding. ICE, which operates the Ibstock Community Shop, was established with substantial input from the local traders and, consequently, there is a strong trading ethos within the organisation. A building society agency has been set up in the Community Shop which not only brings in 50% of the footfall but also generates a commission-based income linked to turnover and savings. The ATM cash machine generates an income, staff time is hired out on a consultancy basis, goods and services are sold, advertising is sold in the newsletter, a private sector employment agency advertises jobs in the window, rent is charged to other users of the building and ICE is soon to start managing the local bottle banks on behalf of the council. The parish council also increased the precept and now grants ICE £4,000 per annum. Generating income in this way gives the organisation independence, although some aspects, such as the consultancy work, need to be kept under review to ensure a balance with the core aims of the organisation.

A number of One Stop Shops have found that providing a photocopying service not only attracts the public to the office but also generates a small income.

The public sector's approach to funding One Stop Shops was a frequent source of frustration among the case studies. Some felt that funding was too burdensome and required projects to contort in order

to achieve required outputs. Others criticised the requirement, made by many funders for projects to have long-term financial viability, while being unable to provide long-term funding. Others felt that the restrictive and controlling approach of public sector organisations to community-led organisations meant that the full potential to trade and generate their own income could never be reached.

"Funding-driven regeneration with a focus on innovation always creates havoc. In 2001, seventy-seven eligible funding streams were identified and yet the complexity of securing the money means that little of it will reach the town … Projects are always asked to be financially sustainable but rarely are the agencies able to make any long-term commitment to providing services themselves."

Until these issues are addressed, funding the running costs of One Stop Shops is likely to be an ongoing problem.

For further information on funding sources see Appendix 3 (page 76).

Managing financial operations

There is a tendency to assume that all financial management must be carried out in-house. An alternative route is to outsource some of the tasks in much the same way as many small private sector businesses. In Ibstock, the ICE uses a local firm of accountants to provide payroll services and in Haltwhistle and Walton the local authority carries out this task. This has proved to be much more efficient and cost effective.

Public service funding can cause problems. Longtown, in particular, as well as Haltwhistle, expressed frustration with funding programme requirements which often focus on short-term outputs whilst demanding long-term viability. This diverts resources away from locally set objectives.

The problem lies with the central government rules under which the funding programmes have to be run, rather than the local officers in the councils or agencies.

Checklist

What start-up costs will be involved?

- ☐ Will this require the purchase or rent of an existing building?
- ☐ Does a feasibility study and/or business plan need to be prepared?
- ☐ Will renovations or refurbishment be required to bring the building up to standard?
- ☐ Will new furniture and equipment be required?
- ☐ Is a new building planned to house the One Stop Shop?

If the One Stop Shop is to be accommodated with other council run services, how will the link be managed and financed?

How will this development be financed and what other agencies will be contributing towards the acquisition and running costs of the building?

Who will be providing the initial finance to run the One Stop Shop?

- ☐ Will this funding be coming from a number of sources?
- ☐ Will it require grant funding applications to be made?

Once the application has been made, how long will it be before grant funding becomes available?

- ☐ If grant funding is to be short-term, will this have an effect on staffing levels and continuity of operation?

Has any provision been made for further funding once initial sources have been exhausted?

What operating costs will be involved in the day-to-day operation of the One Stop Shop?

How will staffing costs be met?

How will costs, such as computer equipment, telephone calls, stationery, etc be met.

Are there any opportunities for generating income?

- ☐ Will voluntary organisations, societies, local businesses and others be making use of the facilities?
- ☐ Will they be charged rental costs for accommodation or meeting rooms?
- ☐ Are there any services that will be provided and made available to generate income, eg photocopying?
- ☐ Is there scope for private sector companies to promote services or advertise within the One Stop Shop?
- ☐ Can the One Stop Shop be used outside normal hours for training courses and functions?
- ☐ Can any of the financial management responsibilities be offset by others or can bodies, such as local authorities, provide assistance?

Barriers, constraints and opportunities

Table 3 draws together a number of key points, which need to be considered, when setting up or expanding a One Stop Shop. It focuses on potential barriers and constraints alongside opportunities for achieving progress. Neither list is intended to be fully comprehensive.

Future opportunities

- A key concern voiced by many One Stop Shops is that they are unable to share their experiences and lessons learned in an effective way. One mechanism to stimulate discussion and new ideas would be through the twinning of One Stop Shops facilitated by Action for Market Towns.
- One Stop Shops present an insight into how services can be delivered at a local level. Each one is different, because it is responding to local conditions and is aimed at a 'grass roots' level. It represents an opportunity to observe a multitude of different ways of delivering services to the local communities. Local authorities and other agencies should seek to learn from One Stop Shops, if they are to become more responsive to the needs of their communities.
- Government changes to Best Value Reviews undertaken by local authorities suggest that there will be more focus on how authorities work with communities to achieve best practice.

	BARRIERS / CONSTRAINTS	OPPORTUNITIES
Participation	Local businesses / public sector agencies may feel reluctant to participate, if not involved from the outset. Poor communication with council departments / outside organisations may lead to misinterpretation of information, a lack of engagement and instil a sense of isolation among staff. If there is no key person driving the project forward,it may lead to limited engagement and interaction from all parties. New working relationships with public sector service providers can be constrained by corporate regulations, which may prove difficult to overcome. Not all public service providers 'march to the same tune'.	Partnership working enables people to learn from each other and creates the freedom to make decisions without being bound by regulations. The support of local politicians can be canvassed.
Community representation	The introduction of new organisations with energy representation and ideas may clash with existing and established organisations, such as town and parish councils. It may be difficult to encourage a broad spread of community on the board / steering group without incentives.	Local energy and enthusiasm can be harnessed.
Location / access	Building regulations and planning applications can be significant hurdles, when seeking change of use for a building, undertaking alterations to a historic building or improving access. Health and safety issues need to be resolved with regard to lone working and the potential abuse of staff in order to ensure that staff are properly supported and the One Stop Shop presents an open and informal front.	A well-located One Stop Shop can provide a flexible approach to the provision of services, reach those without access to a car and, for others, reduce the need to travel.
What to provide	The One Stop Shop should not be seen to duplicate or compete with other existing services.	The One Stop Shop can focus on local needs and provide a personalised service. It can support the local economy through joint venture initiatives. It can cater for the needs of communities from the surrounding hinterland as well as those within the town.
Management	Sporadic intervention from funding agency staff and limited long-term commitment will inhibit staff development and programmes. Conflict between staff and new management may occur, if a One Stop Shop has taken over, or is accommodated within, an existing facility	The success of the One Stop Shop can be celebrated. It can raise the profile and success of the town, binding the community together. If the service provided is constantly evolving, it will help to ensure that the customer base does not diminish.
Funding	Applications to funding sources consume staff resources. Compliance with different funding regulations may prove difficult to adhere to and may increase bureaucracy.	If the One Stop Shop is set up well, it will be able to experiment and adapt.

Table 3: Barriers/constraints and opportunities

Case studies

Brandon Healthy Living Centre

Background and location

Brandon is located in north Suffolk, close to the border with Norfolk and approximately half way between Norwich and Cambridge. It lies 19km north of Bury St Edmunds and 6km north-west of Thetford. The town has a population of 8,500. Brandon is a member of the national Business Improvement District pilot facilitated by the Association of Town Centre Management. Most local jobs are in distribution or at the nearby RAF base at Lakenheath.

The proposals for the Healthy Living Centre are currently at the planning stage but the intention is that the development will be located on the site of the existing town hall and will also use a former primary school site to the southern end of the town. The school was owned by Suffolk County Council and would traditionally have been sold on the open market. However, the County Council decided to explore the potential use of the site for the local community. The school has now been sold to the Keystone Community Partnership using SRB funding from the East of England Development Agency.

Facilities and services offered

It is planned that the Healthy Living Centre will accommodate 11 GPs and possibly a dentist, with associated meeting and counselling rooms. Other facilities planned for the same site include:

- a new library;
- Citizens' Advice Bureau;
- offices and accommodation for the Town Council;
- tourist information;
- district council housing office;
- playgroup and nursery accommodation;
- retail and office space;
- a café/bar;
- an arts centre;
- conference facilities.

The intention is for the space within the building to be flexible and allow for shared use and interaction.

Origins and purpose of project

A regeneration project has been running in Brandon since 1998 and a town appraisal was completed in 1999. The key player in the proposals is Brandon Communities Partnership (BCP) which is currently structured informally but aims to become a charity. The 'board' comprises local people and covers not only the town of Brandon but also the surrounding villages. Currently, there is one full-time employee, based in a former pub which was bought by the Forest Health District Council using SRB funding. The aim is to turn the building into a youth drop-in centre with a community resource centre above it. The town has also received funding from the Countryside Agency under the Market Towns Initiative (MTI) and the MTI Healthcheck has been used to help drive the mix of uses in the Healthy Living Centre.

Organisational structure

There is a formal steering group for the Healthy Living Centre which will manage the project. This includes representatives from all the relevant local councils, Keystone Community Partnership, voluntary organisations, the Primary Health Care Trust as well as BCP. All representatives were invited to take part in a structured visioning process and planning for real exercise carried out by external consultants in January 2002. The intention is that the Healthy Living Centre will run its own company and that this will in turn be owned by KCP. The steering group is serviced by Suffolk County Council.

The Keystone Community Partnership (KCP) is an alliance of community and voluntary groups, district and county organisations and businesses which was established in 2001. Its aims include coordinating and promoting improvements to the quality of life in the area of Norfolk and Suffolk, known locally as 'The Brecks', centred around the towns of Thetford and Brandon. Brandon Communities Partnership is a member of KCP.

The Brandon Healthy Living Centre, which is forecast to open in 2005, will have an estimated total capital cost of £7.2m. Running costs are forecast to be around £260,000 annually. It will be staffed by two managers, a caretaker, a shared receptionist and temporary bar staff.

Community involvement

Suffolk County Council see this as an important flagship project but is keen to see the drive for achieving the project coming from within the community - hence the important roles that KCP and BCP both play in its development. The community has been closely involved in proposals since the early stages and the final plans will be presented to a community meeting.

Lessons learned

Many people within the community initially expressed a preference for an arts centre. However, on closer examination, it became apparent that the Healthy Living Centre as a holistic concept could deliver most of the facilities required. It will be important to retain community ownership and overcome concerns by local GPs about their existing investment in surgery buildings.

Conclusions

This is an example of a project that is still in the planning phase and has built on successive community regeneration initiatives over a number of years. It is structured around multi-agency partnerships acting on behalf of community interests.

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East Grinstead Help Point

Background and location

East Grinstead Help Point is situated in the reception area of East Grinstead library on the edge of the shopping centre. The town has a population of 24,000 and is located in West Sussex close to Gatwick airport and the borders of East Sussex, Kent and Surrey. The town is thriving economically.

The Help Point operates from an enquiry window and shares work space with the library issue counter. It is open during office hours five days a week as well as Saturday mornings and has good disabled access.

Facilities and services offered

The aim of the Help Point is to give information about all levels of council services, as well as health services and central government advice. This is provided by leaflets and surgeries, with Help Point staff answering initial enquiries and directing the public to the appropriate information.

In addition, there are a range of other services available within the building. These include the CVS, Tourist Information, the East Grinstead Access Office, Sussex Careers service, Housing Benefits and the Town Twinning Association. Public ICT access is available within the library.

Origins and purpose of project

The East Grinstead library was built 19 years ago as a multi-use community library. The county town of Chichester is 80 kms away and the fact that library staff were handling a large quantity of enquiries identified a need for easier access to information. The Help Point was established in 1992. There are now a further 17 help points throughout the County. East Grinstead Help Point received 18,349 enquiries in 2002.

Organisational structure

The East Grinstead Help Point is wholly run by Sussex County Council. In some other Sussex towns help points are run in partnership with the relevant District Councils. The Help Point was formally managed by the library department but this role has now been passed to the e-government department within Community Engagement and Organisation. The network manager is based in county hall at Chichester. The local supervisor is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Help Point facility and this arrangement works well. The three part-time staff each work 25 hours a week including two Saturdays in three. This calls for close co-operation and team working between the staff to cover for holidays etc. There are a further 20 staff employed within the library providing additional support and sources of information to the Help Point team.

Resource costs for setting up the service were minimal and running costs are related to staff wages, software, hardware and telephone calls.

Community involvement

The local community was not involved in setting up the Help Point and is not involved in its management. There are no volunteers. However, staff recognise the need for greater engagement and networking with the local community.

Key barriers and how they were overcome

The space available for Help Point staff is limited but there are no problems with its use since the benefits of sharing the building, in terms of security and access to information, outweigh the problems.

Positive outcomes and successes

The use of specially designed software guides the staff and, at the same time, logs enquiries to form a database. A newly designed system will also enable staff to store the information supplied in response to enquiries.

Lessons learned

1. Have good customer care skills.
2. Have a room for confidential meetings.
3. Don't underestimate the value of information held by the library.

Conclusion

This One Stop Shop facility is an example of a successful top-down initiative. The East Grinstead community may be economically empowered but users of the Help Point seem to value its services.

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Fakenham Connect

Background and location

The town of Fakenham is situated in North Norfolk, some 33km north west of Norwich and 28km east of Kings Lynn. It has a population of 8,295 and is a mixed community with a large number of elderly people, but also young families. Fakenham attracts tourists in the summer months being close to the North Norfolk coastal resorts.

The town centre has recently been the subject of a major environmental improvement programme. There is low unemployment in the town but, equally, there are few local job opportunities.

Fakenham Connect is located on the outskirts of the town centre within a small campus of buildings providing various community services. The Fakenham Connect services are delivered from the reception desk on the ground floor of the main Council office building.

Facilities and services offered

Fakenham Connect provides information on town, district and county council services, community information, health information and benefits verification. It also answers tourism enquiries, when the adjacent tourist information office is closed.

Other services available to the public in the building or immediate vicinity are the library, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Registrar's office and Town Council offices, as well as the Housing, Building Control, Environmental Health and Planning Services Departments of North Norfolk District Council.

There is no separate confidential meeting room.

Fakenham Connect opens five days a week during office hours and access for people with disabilities is good.

Origins and purpose of project

The Town Council and District Council were historically co-located in the Town Hall in the main town square. The high costs of adapting the building to disability standards meant that it had to be sold and alternative accommodation provided by converting a disused youth centre located on the edge of the town centre. Fakenham Connect opened in September 2000.

Organisational structure

Fakenham Connect is jointly run by Norfolk County Council, North Norfolk District Council and Fakenham Town Council. A steering group of local councillors meets bi-annually.

The staff are currently line managed by the Estates Manager of North Norfolk District Council. This relates historically to the involvement of the Estates section in the development of the project when it was set up. However, responsibility is likely to be moved to the Health and Corporate Services Department of North Norfolk District Council in the near future.

There are two members of staff: a local co-ordinator, who works full-time, and a part-time assistant. There are no linkages with any other local partnerships or private sector bodies.

The building is owned by the County Council and leased to the District Council. The total cost of refurbishment for all services operating in the building was c. £500,000. The annual running costs for the Fakenham Connect service were £42,800 in 2000/01.

Community involvement

There is a user group associated with the project which is scheduled to meet three times a year but has only met once. No volunteers are involved in running of the service.

Key barriers and how they were overcome

There is a low level of awareness of the services provided by Fakenham Connect and some council staff confuse it with an area office. The project therefore hopes to develop a marketing strategy, with the intention of changing the name to 'Council Information Centre'.

As the staff are occasionally subjected to verbal and low level physical abuse there are issues for personal security. Panic alarms have been installed while, in other Council Information Centres physical barriers have been installed.

Positive outcomes and successes

No success factors were identified at the beginning of the project. Equally, head counts are felt to be too simplistic. However, a user satisfaction survey was carried out in November 2002. The results showed that users were positive about the staff and service, with the biggest criticism being the physical location of the service. In 2002 there were on average 1,443 monthly enquiries.

Lessons learned

1. It is important to give people a choice of how to receive information. Many will be happy to be given advice by telephone but others may need more detailed personal face-to-face support.
2. The start-up phase needs to be clearly separated from the ongoing operational phase.
3. It is important to target the needs of people in villages who do not have access to transport or ICT. Library vans could potentially be useful in fulfilling this role.

Conclusions

This service has been established as a top-down community resource information point for the three tiers of local government serving the town of Fakenham.

Past management problems have been identified and are being addressed, as is local awareness of the services offered.

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Haltwhistle Partnership

Background and location

The Haltwhistle Partnership Office is located in the centre of Haltwhistle, a small market town of 3,900 people in Northumberland which lies close to the boundary with Cumbria. The town is situated 33km to the east of Carlisle and 56km to the west of Newcastle. The next nearest town is Hexham, 22 km to the east.

Haltwhistle has a reasonable range of local services but retailing is now becoming less viable due to competition from out-of-town supermarkets. Generally, the economy is in decline following the earlier closure of some of the traditional chemical and mining industries. Tourism is of increasing importance to the local economy.

Facilities and services offered

The Partnership Office is a three-storey building in the centre of Haltwhistle. It is open normal office hours five days a week. Disabled access is to the ground floor only.

Office space and ancillary facilities are available for three staff on the ground floor together with a free-to-use public computer terminal with internet access. A large meeting room occupies the first floor together with a computer training suite, and a small meeting room. Additional office space on the second floor is occupied by voluntary sector tenants. In addition, a further twelve organisations use the office to deliver services on a 'hot desk' basis.

Another ground floor shop unit owned by the Partnership is let out to a privately run café.

Origins and purpose of project

The Haltwhistle Partnership was formed in 1994 as a regeneration initiative for the town and eleven surrounding parishes, following earlier consultation work by the Civic Trust Regeneration Unit. After a period of low activity, various local businesses and councillors worked to broaden the membership of the Partnership. Funding was secured in 2000/01 to review the needs of the town. This identified the need for a One Stop Shop. Grant funding was secured from One North East under the Market Towns Initiative, which enabled a new Project Officer to be employed.

Organisational structure

Haltwhistle Partnership is a charitable company limited by guarantee with 19 trustees representing a range of different areas and organisations.

There are four project staff, one of whom is the Project Officer for the Market Towns Initiative. The Project Officer and Administrator are both employed by Tynedale District Council. The Information Worker and the Training and Development Worker are employed by the Partnership.

The building was bought in the 1990s, with assistance from the local Council, for £70,000 and a further £100,000 was spent on refurbishment.

Core running costs amount to £57,000 a year. Project costs, including employment of the Information and Training and Development Workers, are additional.

Community involvement

The local community was consulted prior to the One Stop Shop being established. Residents can become members of the Partnership and elect members of the board.

Volunteers have, in the past, helped in the office with the publication of a newsletter but lack of space and time meant it became increasingly difficult. There are still opportunities for volunteers to be involved in projects run by the Partnership outside the office.

Key barriers and how they were overcome

Initially the reception area was on the first floor and the ground floor was occupied by a shop which effectively meant that the service was 'invisible' and people didn't know it existed. This was resolved by moving the office to the ground floor.

When the Partnership was first set up, it was too dominated by community interests. The more recent involvement of local businesses and agencies has redressed this imbalance.

Positive outcomes and successes

The One Stop Shop enables service providers to offer services directly to local people and means that users do not have to travel 22km to the next nearest town of Hexham. The Partnership has found that working without being bound by local authority regulations gives it more freedom to experiment.

Services using the hot desk facility, such as the Police, find that it enables them to reach a wider proportion of the population than they can from dedicated premises.

Lessons learned

It is important to identify the real need for services and to establish what is missing from the locality. Initially a drug awareness project was started but, as this was not an issue locally, it tended to attract users from outside the area and was shunned by local young people. Also important to have an accessible building with sufficient space including an area for confidential meetings. Word of mouth is the strongest form of marketing.

Conclusion

The office of the Haltwhistle Partnership operates as a grassroots community initiative providing the community with access to service provision, as opposed to other areas of its regeneration work.

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Ibstock Community Shop

Background and location

Ibstock is situated 18km north west of Leicester with the nearest neighbouring town being Coalville, 6km to the north. The parish has a population of 6,000. Ibstock was traditionally a colliery town but is also known for its famous brickworks.

The town has a number of shops dispersed along the High Street, one supermarket and two cash points but no bank or building society branches. Ibstock Brick is now the largest employer following the closure of the last coal pit in 1991.

Ibstock Community Enterprises' Community Shop is located in single-storey former bank premises to the northern end of the town.

Facilities and services offered

The Community Shop contains a large reception area providing a range of information. This area is screened off from a meeting room which also contains computer terminals for staff and public use. A separate confidential meeting room is being constructed.

The Community Shop is open weekdays during normal office hours and Saturday mornings. It has good access for disabled users.

Services offered include local information and publications, learning and employment advice, office and secretarial services with photocopier provision, room and equipment hire. There is also a cashier's booth for the Hinckley and Rugby Building Society, with a cash machine outside the building operated by the Bank of Scotland.

Other services offered by external organisations operating from the Community Shop include various voluntary and neighbourhood consultation surgeries. A range of local interest groups make use of the premises for meetings. At one time, the CAB also operated from the building but levels of use declined and it now operates from Coalville.

Origins and purpose of project

Ibstock Community Enterprises (ICE) was set up to encourage regeneration, community activities and events in Ibstock for the benefit of the local community. The area was identified as a priority area for assistance after the pit closures in the 1980s and early 1990s. A housing renewal area was established to bring in £100,000 of capital investment and in 1995 the Civic Trust Regeneration Unit researched the needs of the town. However, in the same year, the TSB announced that it was closing the only bank left in the town.

Recognising the damage the bank's closure could do to local trade, a number of local retailers tried to encourage other banks into the town. Although they weren't successful, the new cooperation between local businesses and people meant that other initiatives could be pursued such as a Christmas shopping festival.

With the help of the Cooperative Development Agency, ICE Ltd was established in 1996. In 1997 ICE entered a better towns competition proposing that it buy the old TSB bank. It won the county and national competitions and, with the winnings, bought the bank, installed a cashpoint and created the Community Shop.

Organisational structure

ICE Ltd is a company limited by guarantee with a cooperative structure. Membership currently numbers 470 people and is open to everyone who lives and works in the village. There is a management committee with 13 elected members. There are three full-time staff in the Community Shop who are all employed by ICE, and have backgrounds in voluntary organisations. They all help to staff the Building Society agency.

The running costs amount to £80,000 annually and are mostly self-funded, with additional funding being provided by an SRB5 grant and a Parish Council contribution. The Building Society also generates income of about £6,000.

Community involvement

The work of ICE was initiated by a small group of residents and local business people. Volunteers are an important resource for the Community Shop and are encouraged to choose what work they want to do.

Key barriers and how they were overcome

For many organisations of this type, funding is an ongoing problem. ICE, however, was established by local businesses which expected it to trade. It now generates a substantial part of its own income and enjoys the benefits that this independence brings.

The reorganisation of the full Citizens' Advice Bureau led to the service being withdrawn but it is hoped to re-establish this link as there is still a demand.

Positive outcomes and successes

Over 20,000 people have visited the One Stop Shop since it opened and the Learning and Work Adviser has helped over 30 people to obtain jobs. ICE itself has supported over 30 voluntary groups with funding. The ATM cashpoint has proved an enormous success, as has the building society branch which accounts for many visits.

Lessons learned

1. Organisations and staff have found that there are advantages to providing services in a shared building, due to greater face to face contact with each other.
2. There needs to be lots of reasons for people to visit.
3. Don't forget the health and safety of staff; they shouldn't work alone in public buildings.
4. Don't try to do it on the cheap and don't underestimate start-up costs.

Conclusion

The Community Shop has been highly successful in addressing local needs. ICE has been successfully managed and now has a high degree of financial independence.

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Longtown Investment Partnership

Background and location

Longtown is located in Cumbria on the River Esk close to the border with Scotland, 14km north of Carlisle and 5km from Gretna Green. It has a population of 3,000 and, historically, it developed as a market town based on agriculture, although its prosperity has recently declined. Cumbria, and Longtown in particular, were badly affected by the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 2001. The area also suffers from geographical marginalisation, with limited local employment opportunities.

While there are a number of locally owned shops in the town, retailing has declined as a direct result of supermarket competition. However, it remains a popular location for tourists visiting the border area.

Longtown does not have a single One Stop Shop but, instead, has placed an emphasis on a range of services from different organisations which are available at various locations in the town. These are all co-ordinated by the Longtown Investment Partnership.

Facilities and services offered

The parish council and Market Towns Initiative are both based in the Arthuret council building in the centre of the town. The accommodation provides an office for the parish clerk and a meeting room with ancillary facilities on the ground floor. The MTI office is located on the first floor and a local church leases the remaining floorspace.

The meeting room is used by a wide range of local organisations and includes surgeries provided by Carlisle City Council for benefits advice and advice by the Chamber of Commerce. In future it is hoped to encourage the CAB to work from the Centre.

At the southern end of Longtown there is a community centre which provides health advice, a gym and sauna, a soft play area, playgroup and youth outreach project, as well as a lounge bar and conference room. Additional services available across the town are a Sure Start nursery and IT resources located in a primary school, a FE centre attached to the secondary school, a swimming pool, library and youth workers. There are also proposals in hand for a food project.

Currently, health services are provided from two clinics although there is the possibility of combining them, if a suitable site can be found.

Origins and purpose of project

The Longtown Investment Partnership (soon to be renamed Longtown and District Enterprise Trust) was set up in late 2001, when the town and its surrounding parishes were given market town status. This followed a long period of work by the main agencies and local organisations facilitated by the Community Support section of Carlisle City Council.

Following public consultation on the MTI Action Plan the need for a resource centre and potential One Stop Shop was established. However, due to a number of earlier proposals that had risked duplicating existing resources, the proposal for a single resource centre was treated with a degree of scepticism and was not pursued.

Organisational structure

The Partnership follows the framework defined in the MTI Action Plan and will shortly be constituted as a charity. Membership is drawn from a number of local organisations including the parish council, local schools, churches and the bank. There are a number of issue-based working groups.

The parish clerk works part time four days a week, while the MTI Manager works full-time and is employed by Carlisle City Council but managed locally.

Community involvement

A lot of consultation has been carried out within the community as part of the MTI healthcheck regarding services and facilities. This has included all the schools in the parishes covered by the MTI. Other consultation work has been undertaken by the County Council and by youth workers from the City Council.

All members of the Partnership are volunteers. Currently there are no volunteers working in the office, although it is hoped to develop more involvement.

Key barriers and how they were overcome

Funding-driven regeneration has created havoc in the local community. Little of the money, which Longtown was eligible to apply for, actually reached the town. Funding programmes are usually short term, thus inhibiting long-term planning, and staff from the agencies were often 'parachuted in' for short periods of time. Conflicting political agendas at the county and district levels created added barriers to local action. A strong working relationship between all the partners at the local level is the only way of overcoming these problems.

Businesses were traditionally reluctant to engage or to work with each other. Foot and mouth changed this completely and businesses now acknowledge the need to work together, if they are to get financial support for the town.

Positive outcomes and successes

It is too early to assess the success of the Longtown model but there is an obvious energy to make the proposals work by building on what is already there and focusing on the long-term needs of the town as opposed to short-term funding requirements.

Conclusions

The Partnership provides an example of the potential to improve local access to services and information by developing existing infrastructure without putting everything under one roof. Maintaining good working links between all partners will be key to the success of this approach.

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Moreton-in-Marsh Area Centre

Background and location

Moreton-in-Marsh Area Centre is based in the main high street of the town in an imposing Grade II listed building. Moreton-in-Marsh is a prosperous market town in the north of the Cotswolds with a population of 3,202 and is situated 40km from Cirencester.

The accommodation includes a reception area and three meeting rooms, a hot desk office, a council chamber and a registrar's office, as well as providing accommodation for the District Council's Building Control, Pest Control and Environmental Health Departments and ancillary facilities.

There is free parking outside the building and a ramp is available for disabled access. The centre is open on weekdays and Saturday mornings, as well as staying open one evening a week.

Facilities and services offered

The Centre offers a wide range of facilities, including assistance for elderly people and people with disabilities and hosts 42 voluntary organisations. It also provides display areas on local services and tourist information for the local area.

Surgeries are held by the planning department of Cotswold District Council with drop in assistance for council tax and housing matters, as well as cashier facilities for council tax, business rates and building regulations fees. A Citizens' Advice Bureau surgery is available one-and-a-half days a week. IT courses are offered by Gloucestershire College of Art and Technology (GLOSCAT), as well as Connexions careers advice and support service for young people. The launch of the first ever on-line CAB service took place in May 2003.

Origins and purpose of project

The main Cotswold District Council offices are based in Cirencester and there used to be an area office in Moreton-in-Marsh. The current Area Centre has evolved from this office which had been in existence for over 15 years.

The role of the area office was reviewed by the Council in 1997, while considering the need in the north of the District for wider service provision in the form of a One Stop Shop facility in a more prominent location. The opportunity was taken to refurbish the accommodation after consultation with staff and user groups in order to provide suitable community space and meeting rooms, as well as a front desk for enquiries.

Organisational structure

The Centre is run and funded entirely by Cotswold District Council under the direction of two Centre Managers with one full-time and three part-time staff. The Development Coordinator at Cirencester provides line management and staff can access the local authority IT network. Net expenditure on the Centre in 2002/2003 amounted to £192,000. In addition, a small income is generated by the registry service provided by the County Council and by hiring meeting room facilities to local businesses.

The District Council is currently working with other partners, such as the Police Authority and Primary Care Trusts, Age Concern, Inland Revenue and the County Council Legal Services, to consider the provision of additional service information. It is also looking at the possibility of installing computers for on-line access to Council information by the public. A surgery by the Department of Work and Pensions has just started.

Community involvement

The Centre does not employ any volunteers in the office but it does offer work experience placements to school children and those with mental health problems.

Key barriers and how they were overcome

It has taken some while for the existence of the Centre and the types of services available to become widely known. This is now being addressed through a marketing campaign. Initially some organisations had to look for temporary accommodation during the refurbishment and they have chosen not to return which may be a lost opportunity. The link to the District Council does entail some added procedures and red tape.

Positive outcomes and successes

The Centre has enabled a variety of services to be available to the community in one place, and this has reduced the need to travel and made access easier for many hard-to-reach groups. In the nine months from April to December 2002, 62,806 people made use of the centre. Staff are enthusiastic and committed and the public receive quick responses to their enquires.

Lessons learned

A corporate review has identified the possibility of establishing two further Council Information Points (CIPs) within the District. Public libraries are seen as a particularly good location for such facilities, and would be able to offer longer opening hours.

Conclusions

Collecting base information on services/facilities offered at the outset has allowed the benefits of the service to be monitored. This local authority run One Stop Shop has adopted a focus on customer service provision rather than a community driven facility.

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Walton Community Project

Background and location

Walton-on-the-Naze is a seaside town located some 16km to the east of Colchester in Essex. The town has a largely elderly population of around 6,700 but also serves the immediate hinterland of 4,000 additional people. Frinton-on-Sea, 3km away, is the nearest large town providing a range of services. Walton-on-the-Naze has experienced economic decline, partly as a result of falling domestic tourism within the UK.

The project office is located in the central shopping area of the town in a former bank and comprises a single room with ancillary facilities. It is currently open five days a week. There will soon be access for disabled users.

Facilities and services offered

The office provides:

- a base for the town centre manager;
- volunteer bureau and community voluntary services;
- careers service;
- general information service for local people and tourists;
- accommodation for adult community courses;
- an advice service by HSBC bank;
- monthly Business Link surgery;
- councillor surgeries.

Origins and purpose of project

The Project was established in 1996 by various local organisations and individuals. They worked with Tendring District Council to develop a SRB funding bid to help regenerate the local economy. Although this bid was unsuccessful, it provided the impetus to seek grant funding. In 2001, £400,000 of market towns funding was secured from the East of England Development Agency. This allowed for a Market Towns Healthcheck and visioning exercise to be undertaken to identify priorities for the town centre regeneration.

Organisational structure

The Walton Community Forum is responsible for running the Project. It was formally constituted in 2002 and will register as a charity in late 2003. Its membership includes local authorities, voluntary groups, business organisations and education providers. There are two project staff, one of whom is the town centre manager. Both have private sector backgrounds.

The office was set up with minimal resources initially and has a total budget of £135,000 for 2003/04.

Community involvement

The Project is entirely community driven, with experts on hand to provide advice and support. The overall aims and objectives of the Project were established at the visioning event. An elected board includes co-opted members and all residents are eligible to vote at open forum meetings.

A range of volunteers are involved with various projects and steering groups but not in the running of the Project office.

Key barriers and how they were overcome

The initial failure of the SRB bid was a significant disappointment. However, ideas were adapted for subsequent funding applications. High levels of bureaucracy, relating to funding and grant applications, has put a drain on limited staff and management resources.

Positive outcomes and successes

Around 1,500 local people visited the Project office in its first five months of operation in 2002, with many subsequently returning. The Project appears to be raising the profile of Walton-on-the-Naze and attracting community support.

Proposals for environmental improvements to the High Street featured as the first event for the Project. Since then, various promotional events have been organised and a quarterly newsletter is also distributed in the local area.

Lessons learned

1. The project has involved the local community and project staff from the outset and built up a rapport with other local projects.
2. It is an independent agency, although it maintains good working links with the Town Council, District and County Councils, as well as other bodies, such as the Regional Development Agency.
3. Walton Community Forum markets and promotes the town and its own work vigorously.

Conclusions

The Community Project started off as a very small-scale operation but has expanded with its success and access to grant funding. Information sharing between various users has been enhanced due to the shared nature of the facilities.

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brendapage@walton-on-the-naze.com
Website: www.walton-on-the-naze.com

Appendix 1

Bibliography, useful websites and contacts

Bibliography

1. The Joint Provision of Services, 2000, by University of Gloucestershire for the Countryside Agency.

2. The Economic Costs of Joint Provision, 2000, by the New Policy Institute for the Countryside Agency.

3. Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services (2001), Local Government White Paper, DTLR, The Stationary Office, London.

4. e-gov@local -Towards a national strategy for local e-government, Consultation Paper (2002) ODPM, London.

5. Our Countryside: the Future – A Fair Deal for Rural England, Rural White Paper (2000) DETR and MAFF, The Stationery Office, London
.

6. The Market Towns Healthcheck Handbook (2002), Countryside Agency, Cheltenham.

7. Index of Deprivation (2000), ODPM, London.

8. Charities Evaluation Services, London. PQASSO Quality Assurance System - designed as a workpack specifically for use by small and medium voluntary sector organisations -
see htpp://www.ces-vol.org.uk/pqasso.htm

Useful websites and contacts

The website details below are correct at the time of publication.

Regional Development Agencies

• Advantage West Midlands
Telephone: 0121 380 3500
www.advantagewm.co.uk

• East Midlands Development Agency
Telephone: 0115 988 8300
www.emda.org.uk

• East of England Development Agency
Telephone: 01223 713900
www.eeda.org.uk

• North West Development Agency
Telephone: 01925 400100
www.nwda.co.uk

• One North East
Telephone: 0191 261 2000
www.onenortheast.co.uk

• South East Development Agency
Telephone: 01483 484200
www.seeda.co.uk

• South West of England Development Agency
Telephone: 01392 214747
www.southwestrda.org.uk

• Yorkshire Forward
Telephone: 0113 394 9600
www.yorkshire-forward.com

Rural Community Councils

• Bedfordshire Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01234 838771
www.bedsrcc.org.uk

• Berkshire Community Council
Telephone: 0118 961 2000
www.communityberkshire.co.uk

• Buckinghamshire Community Action
Telephone: 01296 421036
www.bucks-comm-action.org.uk

• Cambridgeshire ACRE
Telephone: 01353 860850
www.cambsacre.org.uk

• Cheshire Community Council
Telephone: 01244 323602
www.charitiesdirect.com

• Community Action for South Gloucestershire, North & North East Somerset & Bath
Telephone: 01275 393837
www.community-action.org.uk

• Community Council of Northumberland
Telephone: 01670 517178

• Cornwall Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01872 273952
www.cornwallrcc.co.uk

• Cumbria Voluntary Action
Telephone: 01768 242130
www.ruralcumbria.org.uk

• Derbyshire Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01629 824797
www.beehive.thisisderbyshire.co.uk

• Devon Community Council
Telephone: 01392 383443
www.devonrcc.org.uk

• Dorset Community Action
Telephone: 01305 250921
www.dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk

• Durham Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01207 529621
www.durhamrcc.org.uk

• Essex Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01245 352046
www.essexrcc.org.uk

• Gloucestershire Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01452 528491
www.grcc.org.uk

• Hampshire Community Action
Telephone: 01962 854971
www.action.hants.org.uk

• Hereford & Worcester Community First
Telephone: 01684 573334
www.communityhw.org.uk

• Hertfordshire Community Development Agency
Telephone: 01727 852298
www.cdaforherts.org.uk

• Humber & Wolds Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01430 430904
beehive.thisishull.co.uk

• Isle of Wight Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01983 524058
www.iwrcc.org.uk

• Kent Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01303 850816
www.kentrcc.org.uk

• Lancashire Community Futures
Telephone: 01722 717461
www.communityfutures.org.uk

• Leicestershire Rural Community Council
Telephone: 0116 266 2905
www.ruralcc.co.uk

• Lincolnshire Community Council
Telephone: 01529 302466
www.cclincs.com

• Norfolk Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01953 851408
www.norfolkrcc.org.uk

• Northamptonshire ACRE
Telephone: 01604 765888
www.ruralnet.org.uk/~NorthantsACRE

• Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01623 727600
www.nottsrcc.org.uk

• Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01865 883488
www.oxonrcc.org.uk

• Shropshire Community Council
Telephone: 01743 360641
www.collegehill.org.uk

• Somerset Community Council
Telephone: 01823 331222

• Staffordshire Community Council
Telephone: 01785 242525
www.staffs.org.uk

• Suffolk ACRE
Telephone: 01473 242500
www.suffolkacre.org.uk

• Surrey Voluntary Service Council
Telephone: 01483 566072
www.surreygateway.net

• Sussex Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01273 473422
www.srcc.org.uk

• Tees Valley Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01642 213852

• Warwickshire Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01926 499596
www.ruralwarwickshire.org.uk

• Wiltshire Rural Community Council (Community First)
Telephone: 01380 722475
www.communityfirst.org.uk

• Yorkshire Rural Community Council
Telephone: 01904 645271/2
www.yorkshirercc.org.uk

Regional Government offices

• East Midlands
Telephone: 0115 971 9971
www.go-em.gov.uk

• East of England
Telephone: 01223 202000
www.go-east.gov.uk

• North East
Telephone: 0191 201 3300
www.go-ne.gov.uk

• North West
Telephone: 0161 952 4000
www.go-nw.gov.uk

• South East
Telephone: 01483 882255
www.go-se.gov.uk

• South West
Telephone: 0117 900 1700
www.gosw.gov.uk

• West Midlands
Telephone: 0121 212 5050
www.go-wm.gov.uk

• Yorkshire and The Humber
Telephone: 0113 280 0600
www.goyh.gov.uk

Government departments

• Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Telephone: 020 7211 6200
www.culture.gov.uk

• Department for Education and Skills
Telephone: 0870 000 2288
www.dfes.gov.uk

• Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Telephone: 020 7238 6000
www.defra.gov.uk

• Department of Health
Telephone: 020 7210 4850
www.doh.gov.uk

• Department for International Development
Telephone: 020 7917 7000
www.dfid.gov.uk

• Department of Trade and Industry
Telephone: 020 7215 5000
www.dti.gov.uk

• Department of Transport
Telephone: 020 7944 3000
www.dft.gov.uk

• Department of Work and Pensions
Telephone: 020 7712 2171
www.dwp.gov.uk

• Home Office
Telephone: 0870 000 1585
www.homeoffice.gov.uk

• Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Telephone: 020 7944 3000
www.odpm.gov.uk

Professional institutions

• The Royal Town Planning Institution
Telephone: 020 7929 9494
www.rtpi.org.uk

Other useful organisations

(see also Funding Sources page 76)

• Action for Market Towns
Telephone: 0845 644 6202
www.towns.org.uk

• Action with Communities in Rural England
Telephone: 01285 653477
www.acre.org.uk

• Arts Council
Telephone: 020 7333 0100
www.artscouncil.org.uk

• Aspects of Life Fund
www.aspect.com/company/lifefund.cfm

• Association for Town Centre Management
Telephone: 020 7222 0120
www.atcm.org

• Barnardo's and the Children's Play Council
Telephone: 020 8550 8822
www.barnardos.org.uk

• British Chambers of Commerce
Telephone: 020 7565 2000
www.britishchambers.org.uk

• Bizz Advice
www.bizzadvice.com

• British Tourist Authority
Telephone: 020 8846 9000
www.visitbritain.com

• Business in the Community
Telephone: 0870 600 2482
www.bitc.org.uk

• Business Links
Telephone: 0845 600 9006
www.businessadviceonline.org www.caci.co.uk

• Carnegie UK Trust
Telephone: 01383 721445
www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk

• Central & Local Government Partnership
Telephone: 020 7664 3287
www.clip.gov.uk

• Civic Trust
Telephone: 020 7930 0914
www.civictrust.org.uk

• Coalfields Regeneration Trust
Telephone: 0800 064 8560
www.coalfields-regen.org.uk

• Comic Relief
Telephone: 020 7820 5555
www.comicrelief.com

• Community Development Foundation
Telephone: 020 7226 5375
www.cdf.org.uk

• Community Fund (formerly National Lotteries Charity Board)
Telephone: 020 7747 5300
www.community-fund.org.uk

• Community Matters
Telephone: 020 7837 7887
www.communitymatters.org.uk

• Companies House
Telephone: 0870 333 3636
www.companies-house.gov.uk

• Campaign to Protect Rural England
Telephone: 020 7976 6433
www.cpre.org.uk

• Countryside Agency
Telephone: 01242 533244
www.countryside.gov.uk

• Customs and Excise
National Advice Service: 0845 010 9000
www.hmce.gov.uk

• Development Trusts Association
Telephone: 0845 458 8336
www.dta.org.uk

• Energy Saving Trust
Telephone: 020 7222 0101
www.est.co.uk

• English Heritage
Telephone: 0870 333 1181
www.english-heritage.org.uk

• English Historic Towns Forum
Telephone: 0117 975 0459
www.historic-towns.org/ehtf

• English Partnerships
Telephone: 020 7881 1600
www.englishpartnerships.co.uk

• English Tourism Council
Telephone: 020 8563 3000
www.englishtourism.org.uk

• Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
Telephone: 020 7297 4700
www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk

• Farm Retail Association
Telephone: 02380 362150
www.farmshopping.com

• Federation for Private Business
Telephone: 01565 634467
www.fpb.co.uk

• Federation of Small Businesses
Telephone: 01253 336000
www.fsb.org.uk

• Heritage Lottery Fund
Telephone: 020 7591 6045
www.hlf.org.uk

• Housing Corporation
Telephone: 020 7292 4400
www.housingcorp.gov.uk

• Improvement & Development Agency for Local Government
Telephone: 020 7296 6693
www.idea.gov.uk

• Industrial Common Ownership Finance Ltd
telephone 020 7251 6181
www.icof.co.uk

• Innovation Relay Centres
http://irc.cordis.lu

• Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Telephone: 01904 629241
www.jrf.org.uk

• Land Registry
Telephone: 020 7917 8888
www.landreg.gov.uk

• Learning & Skills Council
Telephone: 0870 900 6800
www.lsc.gov.uk

• Legal Services Commission
Telephone: 020 7759 0000
www.legalservices.gov.uk

• Living Over the Shop
Telephone: 01904 630963
www.livingovertheshop.org

• Local Government Association
Telephone: 020 7664 3000
www.lga.gov.uk

• National Association of British Market Authorities
Telephone: 01942 203797
www.nabma.com

• National Association of Farmers Markets
Telephone: 01225 787914
www.farmersmarkets.net

• National Business Angels Network
Telephone: 020 7329 2929
www.bestmatch.co.uk

• National Centre for Social Research
Telephone: 020 7250 1866
www.scpr.ac.uk

• National Council for Voluntary Organisations
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

• National Farmers Union
Telephone: 020 7331 7200
www.nfu.org

• National Federation of Enterprise Agencies
www.smallbusinessadvice.org.uk

• National Playing Fields Association
Telephone: 020 7833 5360
www.npfa.co.uk

• Nationwide Foundation
Telephone: 01793 657183
www.nationwidefoundation.org.uk

• Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation
Telephone: 0870 770 0339
www.nifonline.co.uk

• Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
Telephone: 020 7944 8383
www.neighbourhood.dtlr.gov.uk

• Office for National Statistics
Telephone: 0845 601 3034
www.statistics.gov.uk - also includes
• Neighbourhood Statistics Service

• NOMIS (official labour market statistics)
Telephone: 0191 374 2468
www.nomisweb.co.uk

• New Opportunities Fund
Telephone: 0845 000 0121
www.nof.org.uk

• Policing and Reducing Crime Unit
Telephone: 0870 000 1585
www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crimpol/index.html

• Prince's Trust
Telephone: 020 7543 1234
www.princes-trust.org.uk

• Small Business Service
Telephone: 0845 600 900
www.businessadviceonline.org.uk

• Sport England
Telephone: 020 7273 1500
www.sportengland.org

• Sure Start
Telephone 0870 000 2288
www.surestart.gov.uk

• Sustrans
Telephone: 0117 929 0888
www.sustrans.org.uk

• Technology Means Business
Telephone: 01536 207445
www.technologymeansbusiness.org.uk

• Tudor Trust
Telephone: 020 7727 8522
www.tudortrust.org.uk

• UK Business Incubation Initiative
Telephone: 0121 250 3538
www.ukbi.co.uk

• UK Online for Business
Telephone: 0845 715 2000
www.ukonlineforbusiness.gov.uk

• Valuation Office
Telephone: 020 7506 1700
www.voa.gov.uk

Appendix 2 Glossary

THE MARKET TOWNS INITIATIVE
The Countryside Agency, in partnership with other organisations such as the regional development agencies, offers financial support for selected towns to carry out a market town healthcheck and implement an action plan.

Best Value: a duty set by the Local Government Act, 1999, for the continuous improvement of local authorities. Performance indicators are set by government.

e-government: aims to deliver local government services through electronic means, including telephone, fax and, increasingly, the internet. Access may be direct, or mediated through call centres or front offices, in which the operator has access to information electronically and can seek information or complete transactions on behalf of members of the public, who prefer to conduct business face-to-face or by telephone.

Index of Multiple Deprivation: a means of helping to identify disadvantaged communities through a ranking system which measures deprivation for every ward and local authority area in England. It combines a number of indicators into a single score for each ward. For further information see the ODPM website - www.odpm.gov.uk

Market Town: an important service centre for communities in the surrounding hinterland.

Market Towns Initiative: the Countryside Agency aims to revitalise market towns by helping communities assess their needs, identify a vision for the future and complete an action plan to help them achieve it.

Market Towns Healthcheck: the starting point of the Market Town Initiative whereby the town carries out a healthcheck to identify the issues that affect the quality of life for residents in and around the town. The healthcheck then forms the basis of an action plan.

Precepts: local taxes imposed by parish and town councils to cover costs relating to rubbish collection, street lighting etc. Parish councils receive funding through precepts, which unlike local authority funding, are not capped.

Primary Care Trusts: free-standing statutory NHS bodies that are accountable to their Health Authority. They are responsible for the planning and securing of health services within the local population.

Single Regeneration Budget (SRB): provides funding to support regeneration initiatives in England carried out by local partnerships.

Appendix 3 Funding sources

The Countryside Agency, Regional Development Agencies and other organisations offer a wide range of funding for the support of market town revitalisation. The funding sources listed here may provide financial support for creating and maintaining market town partnerships, as well as for delivering specific projects.

The funding sources are divided into two sections:

- Countryside Agency funding;
- Funding from other organisations.

Countryside Agency funding

The funding sources from the Countryside Agency include:

Rural Transport Partnerships:

supports local transport partnerships and projects to provide additional transport services or facilities in rural communities, including towns and villages.

The Rural Transport Partnership supports:
- development of partnerships;
- employment of an officer;
- development of an action plan;
- start-up costs;
- transport improvement costs.

Parish Transport Grant:

supports small-scale transport projects which have been identified by parishes to meet local transport needs. Ideas should be developed in liaison with rural transport partnership officers and might include support for:
- the purchase of cars or mopeds for community use;
- a car club or social car scheme;
- community transport services, including; refurbishment and maintenance of existing community vehicles;
- vouchers for taxis for the elderly or other people needing transport;
- funding a local bus company to divert a service through a village.

Community Services Grant:

helps those living in rural communities to meet their needs for local service provision. Applications can come from individuals, community groups, churches, independent retailers and parish councils.

Eligible services include those within:
- village halls/community centres;
- churches;
- pubs;
- independent shops and garages;
- community-led shops;
- post offices.

Grants range from £500 to £25,000

Doorstep Greens:

this scheme, funded by New Opportunities Fund, was set up in 2001 to assist 200 disadvantaged communities to design and create their own local green space or renew existing run-down spaces.

Local Heritage Initiative:

a national grant scheme, funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, that helps local groups to investigate, explain and care for their local landscape, landmarks, traditions and culture including:

- archaeological heritage;
- natural heritage;
- built heritage;
- customs and traditions;
- industrial heritage.

See also the Market Towns Funding Directory: http://www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns/funding_01.htm

Funding from other organisations

There are many other funding initiatives which will be relevant for projects identified in market town action plans. Links to grant providers can be found on the following websites:

- www.access-funds.co.uk
- www.co-financing.co.uk
- www.ncvo-vol.org.uk
- www.rcu.gov.uk
- www.volcomgrants.gov.uk