



PRCC.23 13/14

Prosperous Communities
Committee

15 October 2013

C

Subject: Sustainable Communities Act

Report by:

Joanna Riddell, Head of Localism

Contact Officer:

Joanna Riddell
Head of Localism
01427 675113
joanna.riddell@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an outline of the Sustainable Communities Act and provide examples of where the Act could be used.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Members adopt the attached process in relation to suggestions under the Sustainable Communities Act.
2. That Members create a working group, comprising of 3 Members, to consider all proposals and report back to this Committee prior to submission to the Local Government Association.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

This is a new piece of legislation.

Financial: FIN/23/14

There may be some financial impact particularly with regard to citizen engagement and advertisement of the Act.

Staffing:

None

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

None identified

Risk Assessment:

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

Yes

No

Key Decision:

Yes

No

1 **The Sustainable Communities Act**

1.1 The Sustainable Communities Act became law in 2007. The Act sets up a new process of governance enabling authorities to influence central government action, policy and assistance to protect and improve local communities. Local authorities can use it to do things like gain new powers, devolve existing powers and money from central to local control. The Act clearly supports our Localism work.

2 Cllr Welburn proposed a motion in December 2012 relating to the Sustainable Communities Act and its potential use, to further support our Localism programme. This resulted in a speaker, Steve Shaw from Local Works attending a seminar in February 2013 to provide details of the Act and its potential uses. The seminar was well supported by Members. In order to use the Act we need to ensure that there is a process to capture proposals and assess these, prior to submission to the Local Government Association. There is no deadline for submission of proposals and no limit to the number of proposals that can be submitted.

3 **What the Act Says?**

3.1 The overall aim of the Act is to make government to do more to help local councils to promote sustainable communities. It is about making government responsible to the demands and needs of local communities.

3.2 The Act sets up a process giving councils the power to make proposals to government in order to promote sustainability of local communities.

3.3 Sustainability is defined as encouraging the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the authority's area. Social wellbeing includes participation in civic and political activity.

3.4 When making proposals councils must consult and try to reach agreement with local people. This could be achieved by setting up panels of representatives or by using our existing Citizens' Panel. Once agreed the proposal will be put forward to Government for action. The Government has to then reach agreement with the Council as to how the proposals will be implemented.

3.5 A valid proposal has two simple criteria:

- That the proposal is something that only central government could do, ie it does not already have the power to do this.
- That it can be shown that the proposed action would promote 'sustainable communities' as defined above.

3.6 Examples of what the Action could be used for:

- changing the planning system so that developers can not appeal to central government to overturn a decision.
- promoting local investment, business and jobs;
- protecting parks and open spaces;

- promoting sustainable development;
improving public transport;
- protecting local public services;
- improving working between partners and agencies;
- •supporting groups e.g. older people, vulnerable people etc;
- •promoting local people having a voice in local decision making.

Sustainable Communities Act – Process for Submission of Proposals

Proposals

A proposal form will be available on line which can be filled in electronically or printed and returned via the post.

Citizen Involvement

Prior to submission of the proposal to the LGA we must involve our citizens in not only deciding which proposals should be submitted but also in generating proposals in the first place. This will be achieved through information on the website, guidance being provided to Parish Councils/Community groups and promotion of the Act by officers.

Involving local residents in generating proposals also creates a sense of empowerment and will strengthen our relationship.

Representative Panel

When we have proposals to consider these must be reviewed by a panel prior to submission. The panel must be 'representatives of local persons'. It is considered that our Citizens' Panel would fulfil this criterion but additional community members could also be included. The panel will meet at least once a year to consider proposals.

Reaching Agreement

There must be genuine attempts to reach agreement prior to the proposal being submitted to the LGA.

Proposals will be by the Panel to a Member Working Group in order that the final decision can be taken together. This will allow genuine recognition and allow for a collaborative decision to be made. This will then be reported to Prosperous Communities Committee.

Transparency and Feedback

It is very important to provide feedback on the proposals. This information will be provided on the website.