

Consulting with community groups & facilities

Talk to the people who run the places and activities in your area

Lots of different people contribute to the life of each community and different groups may own and run the facilities on which communities rely. Common groups to include are sports clubs, churches (or other religious groups), community asset trusts and village hall committees. It can be important to include business too, where the service they provide are important to the community. The village pub, village shop or post office might not be suitable for financial investment but voluntary activity could help keep them viable and preserve them for the future.

What to ask

It is important to understand how local facilities are doing. What constraints and challenges do they face? What are their plans for the future?

It is useful to identify projects for physical improvements to community facilities. These can be to maintain & sustain facilities or to expand what they can do and who they benefit. It is important to understand who will benefit and whether the group has the plans, skills and means to deliver the project.

This should not be the whole conversation though. There may be other challenges and opportunities to consider. The number of volunteers who help, how much time they can spare and the skills they have will determine what kind of project they can take on and what benefit it can bring.

There may also be challenges to the future of the group - weaknesses with governance that expose them to risk, uncertainty with their location or difficulty attracting and retaining people to their activities. Whilst the Parish Council might want to understand these challenges when thinking about investment, it may not be their work to solve them. Here the Councils' Communities Team can help provide some guidance to groups and help them find sources of support.

What to ask

You might choose to create a short survey about each facility. It is probably more personal and helpful to have a conversation to have a conversation. Just be sure to cover what you need and make some notes soon after.

Conversation prompts

What is the most valuable thing that the facility gives to the people who use it?

After 5 years of success and good luck, what would the facility look like? What happens there? What has changed?

What are the group's priorities for investment? Do they have the funds or a plan to raise what they need?

What permissions do they need? Do they need any outside support to achieve their plans?

Things to remember

Be clear and concise	Use simple language and avoid jargon.
Be specific	Ask about one thing at a time to avoid confusion.
Avoid leading questions	Ensure your questions are neutral and do not suggest a particular answer.