

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Community Participation Committee - Wednesday 15th February, 2006

Subject: Up-date on WDC Decentralisation Scheme- “Involving Communities” and Action Plan

1. Purpose of Report

The report provides an up-date on the activities set out in the Council's Decentralisation Scheme, to allow CPC members to monitor progress.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 made it a statutory requirement for Councils to have a Decentralisation Scheme.
- 2.2 Decentralisation is about moving services and information closer to local people and involving people in the decisions about policies and services which affect them. It is a process rather than an end in itself.
- 2.3 Since the Government introduced this requirement, Community Planning and Best Value have been introduced as main drivers of local government activity. These also make community involvement a high priority for public authorities and reinforce the thinking behind Decentralisation.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 Since the last review of the Decentralisation Scheme, there have been a number of relevant developments. These include the development of the Customer First Strategy, the Draft Consultation Strategy and the re-drafting of the Communicating Effectively guidelines, which help staff meet the information needs of services users (most particularly, people with disabilities or people whose first language is not English).
- 3.2 These now form the basis of our corporate approach to community involvement. The Decentralisation Scheme can be seen as the overarching strategy, with the Customer First and Consultation Strategies implementing different aspects of it. Communicating Effectively provides the relevant good practice guidance in relation to communication.

- 3.3 The term “Involving Communities” is more immediately meaningful to members of the community than “Decentralisation”. It is suggested that it should be used in place of “Decentralisation” in future documents and references.
- 3.4 The future development of the “Involving Communities” Action Plan now needs to be linked more closely to the Council’s Corporate and Service Planning process. It is expected that this will make the best use of time in relation to identifying future actions and following up and reporting on progress.

Appendix 1 shows the current progress on Chief Executive’s actions.

- 3.5 The “Involving Communities” actions relate to the corporate priorities of
- providing high quality, best value services and
 - developing our children and young people.

Within these the “engaging stakeholders” objectives are:

- Increase the community’s knowledge, interest and participation in the political processes
- Improve the co-ordination of consultation with all stakeholders, both internally and with our partners
- Increase the participation of under represented groups in consultation
- Increase accountability to stakeholders
- Involve employees in decisions that affect their work

For “partnership working” the objective is:

- Improve opportunities for partnership working through Community Planning

The “engaging children and young people” objective is:

- Increase the number of children and young people involved in the democratic decision making process.

The Policy Officer, Community & Consultation is meeting with officers from a range of Council Services to identify what is currently being done to meet these objectives. From this we will also be able to identify any gaps in our activity. This will allow us to specify new actions for 07/08.

- 3.6 The Policy Officer, Community & Consultation, will report to the June CPC on the progress in relation to the above exercise.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 Members are invited to recommend to Council that the term “Decentralisation Scheme” should be replaced with the term “Involving Communities”.
- 4.2 Members of the committee are invited to consider the progress on “Involving Communities”.

Tim Huntingford
Chief Executive

Person to contact: Anne Clegg, Policy Officer, Community & Consultation, tel. 737177

Background papers:

Community Participation Committee, 20/08/03 – Review of Decentralisation Scheme - Programme for Review
Community Participation Committee, 8/10/03 – Scheme of Decentralisation – Review Update
Community Participation Committee, Proposals for Revised Decentralisation Scheme, 24/04/04

