

Erratum Notice



Special Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council

Date: Thursday, 26 August 2021

Time: 13:00

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Dear Member

I refer to the agenda issued on 13 August and now enclose an updated **Appendix 2 – Report on Stage 1 Consultation March to June 2021 (replaces pages 13 to 40)**. This version includes an Executive Summary.

Yours faithfully

JOYCE WHITE

Chief Executive

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Supporting best practice in community development

Review of West Dunbartonshire Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils

**Report on Stage 1 Consultation
March-June 2021**

**Scottish Community Development Centre
19 August 2021**

Executive Summary

Review of West Dunbartonshire Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils: Report on Stage 1 Consultation March-June 2021

The first stage of consultation has been completed. All active Community Councils and other key community and voluntary sector organisations consulted about the issues facing Community Councils and their potential role in implementing the wider Community Empowerment agenda.

The results of those discussions have informed the first draft of a revised Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils which, will be used as the basis for more detailed consideration by Community Councils, the Community Councils Forum, elected members, other community and voluntary sector organisations (comprising a “Stronger Voices” group) and in a series of wider events in local areas in stage two of the consultation. That second stage of consultation will inform a final draft of the revised Scheme, and also inform associated guidance and support arrangements such as a Handbook for Community Councils.

The main elements of the draft revised Scheme recommended for further discussion, which should also inform the preparation of the accompanying Handbook for Community Councils, are as follows:

West Dunbartonshire Community Empowerment Strategy

The revised Scheme should explicitly support implementation of the Council’s Community Empowerment Strategy, making the most of the potential of Community Councils as an integral part of local delivery.

Community Council boundaries

A number of outline proposals for adjustments to Community Council boundaries are suggested, in order to improve the effectiveness of Community Councils and their relevance to local community identities. The draft revised Scheme also outlines a process for agreeing boundary changes.

Purposes of Community Councils

The revised Scheme is proposed to be updated by referencing other relevant legislation and policy designed to empower communities. This includes the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, and duties on public bodies to engage communities in service planning such as children’s services, community justice and others.

Roles and responsibilities of Community Councils

The draft revised Scheme should reflect this enhanced statutory framework and strengthens Community Councils’ influence on a broader range of issues. This will involve supporting effective community engagement in line with the National Standards for Community Engagement and strengthening accountability through appropriate communication with all sections of the community. This should include building representation on a broad spectrum of local opinion, including those most affected by inequalities and proposals for

change. The draft revised Scheme supports methods for robust engagement and good partnership working between communities and public bodies.

Influence of Community Councils with Community Planning Partners

To develop Community Council roles and responsibilities, the draft revised Scheme clearly describes how Community Councils should effectively communicate with relevant parts of the Council. The draft revised Scheme contains protocols to ensure that Community Councils are better informed of proposed policy and service-related changes affecting their areas. Also, that they can communicate proposals and concerns on behalf of their local community to relevant public sector bodies, in time for meaningful dialogue about these, this includes on participatory budgeting.

Equalities and diversity

The draft revised Scheme ensures that Community Councils understand and comply with the Equality Act 2010, which requires them to take reasonable action to work for equality of opportunity and outcome across the “protected characteristics” identified in the Act. It helps them achieve this with support from other organisations and Community Planning partners.

Community Council membership

To address challenges in recruiting and retaining members, some proposed changes in membership arrangements are contained in the draft revised Scheme. These include rationalising full, co-option and associate membership categories to make it easier for representatives from other local organisations to play a full voting role in Community Councils. The proposals also enable Community Councils to tap into skills and experience of people who may move out of an area or who live elsewhere and have relevant skills and expertise to contribute.

Support for Community Councils

Skilled and consistent support to community Councils is key to helping them achieve their aims – especially as volunteer led organisations operating in a complex environment. The draft revised Scheme proposes support officer(s) for Community Councils to provide advice, support and guidance on issues which concern them, improving communication and liaison arrangements and developing skills and knowledge to carry out their role.

Financial resources

The draft revised Scheme proposes greater collaboration between Council staff and Community Council representatives to ensure that the financial support arrangements for Community Councils meet their needs. This includes clarifying expectations on all sides and responding to challenges faced by them in accessing, accounting for and maximising the resources available to Community Councils.

Amendments to the Scheme

There may be times when the Scheme needs to be updated between formal reviews, such as in response to the COVID 19 emergency or changes in legislation. The draft revised Scheme therefore contains proposals for interim amendments between formal reviews.

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1 Introduction and background

West Dunbartonshire Council has commissioned [Scottish Community Development Centre \(SCDC\)](#) to facilitate community engagement in the review of the West Dunbartonshire [Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils](#). This independent process is designed to complement the Council's own review of support arrangements for Community Councils which began before the pandemic, and is linked with ongoing implementation of [West Dunbartonshire Community Empowerment Strategy and Action Plan](#).

1.1 The review process

There are three consultative stages of the review process:

1. An initial 16-week period of consultation, which took place between March and June 2021, followed by production of a first draft Scheme of Establishment (which is the point that we are now at).
2. A subsequent 8-week consultative period leading to a second draft Scheme of Establishment (due to take place in September/October 2021).
3. A final 4-week consultation to conclude the contents of the final version of the Scheme of Establishment (due to take place in early 2022).

At each stage the results will be presented to Special Council meetings for approval as required by relevant legislation governing the operation of Community Councils.

1.2 The first stage of the review

This first stage has involved talking directly to Community Councils, other local community organisations (particularly where there are no active Community Councils), and relevant local third sector organisations (including West Dunbartonshire Equalities Forum and others). In order to understand best practice with Community Councils elsewhere in Scotland, analysis of other Schemes of Establishment has been undertaken and informal discussions held with the Improvement Service.

The first stage of work explored what people think about the role and functions of Community Councils, their current and potential influence, their support needs, and their geographical boundaries.

This report suggests strengthening specific aspects of the current Scheme of Establishment such as more targeted support for Community Councils, promoting diversity, agreeing meaningful geographical boundaries, and updating the finance system.

Once the scope of these suggested improvements has been agreed, Community Councils and other local organisations should be involved in the actual draft wording of the revised Scheme of Establishment, in line with the collaborative spirit of West Dunbartonshire

Community Empowerment Strategy. This collaborative approach will not only enhance the Scheme of Establishment, but also help Community Councils influence decisions, strengthen their governance and support that they need to operate more effectively. Getting this right is key to helping volunteer Community Councillors, and of course the local authority, to make most efficient and effective use of their time and assets for the collective good of their communities.

Dialogue in this first stage of the review has confirmed that innovation and investment will be needed if Community Councils are to have a meaningful role in bringing many voices to establishing and prioritising what matters locally. This is why the Scheme of Establishment review is best seen alongside other community development activity that is taking place to support the Council's ambitious Community Empowerment Strategy, as well as the implementation of recent legal duties and powers such as those contained in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act.

Figure 1: Diagram showing the relationship between the Scheme review and community empowerment



1.3 Impact of COVID 19

The pandemic has had a significant impact on communities over the last 12 to 18 months and has therefore formed part of the backdrop to this review. Whilst the pandemic has had a damaging impact, at the same time the value of networks of community-based groups and services have been recognised across Scotland as essential to our ability to survive the pandemic and support the most vulnerable communities. The experience has prompted much reflection into what kind of society and communities we want for ourselves and what this means for our public services and how they are organised. Its lessons have stimulated our thinking as a nation about “building back better”.

Supporting stronger democratic Community Councils to adapt to changing circumstances is one important way of ensuring that “building back better” does not become an empty slogan. Getting this right will require collaboration, participation, patience and precision as the Scheme of Establishment is developed in the coming months building on what people have said in the first stage of the review.

On a practical level, the experience has highlighted the ongoing benefit of virtual platforms to enable Community Councils to meet if and when face to face meetings are challenging. Consideration should therefore be given to the model standing orders (to be developed alongside the Scheme of Establishment) to include arrangements for online meetings in ways which are effective, open, and transparent whilst also protecting participants from unreasonable or abusive behaviour.

2 The consultation process

2.1 Community Councils

Each of the 11 active Community Councils in West Dunbartonshire (listed in Appendix 1) has participated in informal discussions with SCDC during the first stage of the review. The focus of the discussions was what might need to be revised or strengthened in the revised Scheme of Establishment, including issues like geographical boundaries, the role of Community Councils and how they can develop their influence to get things done. More information on these meetings can be seen in section 3 (below).

A further six Community Council areas do not currently have an active Community Council (also listed in Appendix 1). SCDC has held discussions with local community organisations and representatives in five of those six areas, in order to understand the reasons for the lack of Community Councils and their potential in the future.

There is also a Community Council Forum open to all Community Councils in West Dunbartonshire. The Forum has operated for many years but has been less active recently. We understand that the Forum is now beginning to meet and plan for the future again.

2.2 Reaching beyond Community Councils

It has been well documented across Scotland that Community Councils often struggle to draw membership from across communities in terms of diversity of age, gender, and ethnic origin, despite the fact that Community Councils often express a desire to achieve this.

With this in mind, other voices beyond those already active in Community Councils were engaged during the first stage of the review. This includes younger people via the West Dunbartonshire Youth Council, and those from often marginalised communities with protected equality characteristics via the West Dunbartonshire Equalities Forum. The purpose has been to inform how to develop the Scheme of Establishment to widen participation in Community Councils and represent and support diversity.

2.3 ‘Stronger Voices’ group

In addition, SCDC has established an informal ‘stronger voices’ discussion group, so called because it is an opportunity for a wide range of community perspectives (within and beyond Community Councils) to explore how to give Community Councils a stronger voice.

There have been two online meetings of the group to date, involving Community Councils, the Youth Council, Equalities Forum, Tenants and Residents Federation, Third Sector Interface and the Community Alliance. Discussions have included how, for example, the revised Scheme of Establishment could increase representation from people of more varied ages, ethnic origins or disabilities to participate in Community Councils.

2.4 COVID constraints

[The requisite Statutory Notice](#) for the first stage of the Scheme review was published in March 2021 and also sent to each Community Council informing them of the 16-week formal consultation finishing on 29th June.

The consultation took place during an extended period when COVID restrictions made it impossible to engage people in face-to-face meetings. Community Councils were meeting online if at all and, although some were active in supporting local distribution of food and other aid, many were largely unable to deliver their core functions.

For the first stage of the Scheme review, lockdown measures delayed the pace of online and telephone discussions with Community Councils and others, sometimes requiring a degree of persuasion to arrange discussions. Most meetings have not involved a full complement of Community Councillors with typically a smaller number of office bearers and key members taking part. Nonetheless, by completion of the first stage of consultation, members from every active Community Councils had offered their perspective through online or telephone discussions typically lasting between 30 and 90 minutes.

It should be noted that some Community Councillors do not wish to use digital platforms for various reasons. Most Community Councils have not been able to meet regularly during the pandemic and are just building their capacity to do so now. An increasing number are now using a Zoom license provided by the Council's Communities Team for online meetings. It is anticipated this could make it easier to widen the numbers engaged in our discussion in the second phase of consultation.

As well as engaging with each of West Dunbartonshire's active Community Councils, community organisations and representatives in the six Community Council areas without an active Community Council were also contacted. Delays in arranging meetings with Community Councils impacted on these discussions, because SDCD took the decision to focus initially on securing Community Council buy-in and input to the consultation process. Nonetheless, wider dialogue with other local organisations and representatives took place in five of the six areas without an active Community Council. It is anticipated that more of this wider activity will happen in the second stage of the consultation process starting in September 2021.

2.5 List of organisations consulted

A list of organisations consulted is contained in Table 1 (below).

Table 1: Organisations consulted during the first stage of the review process

Organisation	Discussions held	More information
ACTIVE COMMUNITY COUNCILS (CCs)		
Balloch and Haldane CC	Yes	Meeting with office bearers / key members
Bonhill and Dalmonach CC	Yes	Meeting with office bearer
Bowling and Milton CC	Yes	Meeting with office bearers / key members
Clydebank East CC	Yes	Meeting with office bearers
Dumbarton East and Central CC	Yes	Meeting with office bearers / key members
Faifley CC	Yes	Meeting with office bearers / key members
Kilmaronock CC	Yes	Meetings with office bearers and Community Council
Linnvale and Drumry CC	Yes	Meeting with office bearers / key members
Old Kilpatrick CC	Yes	Meetings with office bearers / key members
Parkhall North, Kilbowie & Central CC	Yes	Meeting with office bearers / key members
Silverton & Overtoun CC	Yes	Meeting with office bearers / key members
INACTIVE COMMUNITY COUNCILS		
Alexandria	Yes	Meetings with Vale of Leven Trust and Alexandria Community Action Network members
Dalmuir and Mountblow	Yes	Interview with former chair of local housing association and Golden Friendships member
Dumbarton North	No	No response from local community organisations
Dumbarton West	Yes	Meeting with Phoenix Community Centre
Duntocher and Hardgate	Yes	Interview with former Community Council chair
Renton	Yes	Meetings with Renton Development Trust trustees
WIDER STAKEHOLDERS		
Youth Council	Yes	Group discussion
Equalities Forum	Yes	Group discussion & via 'Stronger Voices' group
WD CVS	Yes	Contributed to 'Stronger Voices' group
WD Tenants Federation	Yes	Contributed to 'Stronger Voices' group
WD Community Alliance	Yes	Contributed to 'Stronger Voices' group
Y Sort It / Champions Board	No	Contact made, no participation so far due to availability

3 Wider context for the Scheme review

3.1 A changing landscape for Community Councils

Since the inception of the Community Council role in the mid 1970s there have been a number of important developments including:

- Local government reform in 1996.
- The introduction of Community Planning.
- Evolving public sector agendas such as joint service planning, social inclusion, and community empowerment.
- New public sector organisations delivering services such as Health and Social Care joint boards, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park (the planning authority for some areas of West Dunbartonshire), Police Scotland and Scottish Fire & Rescue.

These matter as we reflect on the evolving role of Community Councils that the Scheme of Establishment seeks to support, a role which has now become more complex for Community Councils.

3.2 The evolving legal and policy framework

This review of the Scheme of Establishment is happening alongside implementation of flagship legislation for [Community Empowerment](#), a [Local Governance Review](#) proposing more local decision making, increased emphasis on [place and placemaking](#), and the introduction of [Local Place Plans](#) in planning legislation. These are just a few of a number of recent initiatives to share power and work collaboratively with communities to improve people's lives.

Community Councils often refer to their statutory role in influencing decision making as their unique feature, particularly as they are sometimes elected by the general public. The Community Empowerment Act and other developments outlined above have affected this to a significant degree. There are now many new laws and policies which create duties on public agencies to engage communities in decisions, including services as diverse as children's services planning, community justice planning, community learning and development, and how equality and human rights are guaranteed locally.

The specific opportunities for Community Councils to speak for communities in relation to planning and licensing decisions still applies, but other rights for communities to engage and participate in decision making are now enabling other community organisations to have a greater role in community decision making. Communities of place and of identity now have more rights to participate in public service delivery and decision making without going through a Community Council.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 specifically increases the rights of communities to:

- Influence the work of Community Planning Partnerships and the public agencies that are part of them, including local authorities.
- Have formal dialogue with most public service providers about how to improve service or about the decisions they make.
- Take assets like buildings, public land or forestry into community control or ownership.
- Be consulted about how Common Good resources and property are used, developed or sold.

In addition, public authorities are required generally to promote and facilitate public participation in their decisions and activities, including in the allocation of resources - otherwise known as Participatory Budgeting.

Figure 2: Diagram illustrating the wider legal and policy context for Community Councils



3.3 A work in progress

Whilst more local people and organisations are entitled to influence a broader range of issues, the reality is that these rights are still evolving. These broader rights under the Community Empowerment Act are also available to Community Councils, but they are no longer the only community organisations which have legal rights to participate.

The review of the Scheme of Establishment should recognise this in terms of:

- A need to reference the broader array of legal duties regarding participation that can be accessed and used by Community Councils.
- How increased rights for a wider pool of citizens to influence decisions has implications for the work of Community Councils and their representativeness.
- Promoting working with others to understand and develop clear statements of community aspirations and priorities (such as community-led action plans or Local Place Plans).
- Consider using this as a basis for unified community action to develop services and to influence what public services do in local areas to assess needs.

Figure 3: Diagram illustrating how community engagement and community-led action planning can build a strong mandate for Community Councils



3.4 Flexibility in a dynamic landscape

The existing Scheme of Establishment draws heavily on the Scottish Government's [model draft Scheme of Establishment](#) published in 2009, and there are advantages in continuing to do so. However, this model Scheme is due to be updated over the remaining part of 2021, so liaison with Improvement Service and CoSLA would be advisable to ensure consistency.

It would also be sensible to ensure that the revised West Dunbartonshire Scheme can be amended more easily between major reviews through local democratic processes, for example if updates are required in response to changing legislation, policy or other factors.

Study of Schemes of Establishment developed elsewhere in Scotland suggests that similar issues to those outlined above are already being tackled elsewhere (our detailed analysis focussed particularly on Aberdeenshire, Dumfries and Galloway, and Edinburgh). Approaches and content of other Schemes have therefore informed the content of this report.

4 Overview of responses from participants

Community Councillors engaged in the consultation process are committed to a concept of public and community service which most wish to see further developed and supported. However, the vast majority describe some degree of frustration with their levels of influence and ability to carry out their function as fully as they would like. There are common concerns about how they are resourced financially and in terms of access to information and advice. They all aspire to be as representative as possible, but report that broadening that representation requires them to be more relevant for a wider range of residents like young people, who generally tend not to relate to the business of Community Councils until they are older.

The ability to appeal to those residents by demonstrating that their views have weight is a significant challenge. Many of those consulted describe basic problems of being able to reach the right people to address the issues that local people are raising with them and the time often taken to get responses or issues resolved with the local authority or other public sector organisations. It is this more proactive influence with public authorities on issues which affect people's lives which they find harder to achieve. This is perhaps the reason that, when asked about their successes, many Community Councils chose to refer to Community Council liaisons when they had been able to stop things happening by mobilising widespread community support. Examples given included new housing development and locations of new schools.

It is striking that Community Councils quoted fewer examples of success relating to grassroots community action leading to the development of proactive services and projects. Although these are a feature of their work to some degree this would be strengthened by a wider interpretation of the statutory role and levels of influence in line with our recommendations.

Some Community Councils did describe more proactive activity. Examples included input to strategic town centre development, green space development and harbour development where Community Councils were making proposals based on local opinion. Two Community Councils described their relationships with other local organisations, often due to an overlap in members, which led to positive outcomes for both organisations. This had led to issues raised with Community Councils being taken forward by other groups raising independent funding, although some Community Councils had attracted resources themselves.

Running through the comments of Community Councils was the feeling that opportunities to listen and act on the lived experience of local people on framing the direction of public services were often missed. When considering the widened statutory framework for community participation in public service delivery and decision making, Community Councils could be in a stronger position to help deliver these objectives - with the right support.

What local Community Councils have said is not unique. It mirrors issues raised in [SCDC's own research](#) on Community Councils across Scotland as whole. It is also linked to the fact that Community Councils often have an older and sometimes reducing membership, which

makes the need to connect with other local voices more important than ever, especially younger people and others who do not usually play a significant role. Having confidence in the ability to influence is central to the task of recruiting new members from across the community, so these issues need to be viewed as linked and strengthened through the review of the Scheme of Establishment.

Of those consulted, many saw a need for a “relaunch” of Community Councils to help people understand their purpose and to support their role at a time when other channels of community expression have emerged, as explained above.

The value of lived experience of those using services from marginalised communities and the role of deliberative processes, like citizens’ assemblies and participatory budgeting, highlight the need to think afresh about the role Community Councils could play. Strengthening Community Councils, other community organizations and residents to increase their collective influence in decision making is key to ensuring that communities are organised and their energies are not reduced by duplication of effort or conflict. The updated Scheme of Establishment should help Community Councils reflect on this new context and develop enduring relationships that enrich democracy and community cohesion.

The Community Councils interviewed were invited to identify their specific ‘asks’ for the future. Examples of these are summarised below; please note that the intention is to give a flavour of responses, not to create a comprehensive list.

Promoting & strengthening Community Councils

- There is a general need to help promote and market Community Councils’ role.
- Community Councils need more new members to help deal with their workload and handle succession planning as members get older.
- Help is required to explore how to involve younger members in particular, in Community Council meetings or other ways of engaging with young people.
- Community Councils feel they need earlier notice of planning issues and potential applications. Some are keen to have a more robust veto, others refer to the need for a more collaborative relationship with the planning authority (which could be the Council or the National Park Authority).
- Some Community Councils would like more say on how public funds are spent within their area, including the possibility of holding Participatory Budgeting funds, and see this as consistent with their statutory role.
- Some Community Councils would like more engagement about empty buildings to bring them into productive community use.

Representation

- The absence of Community Councils in some areas may require changes in boundaries.
- Many Community Councils wish to increase the diversity of their membership to better represent their areas, and would like support to explore this.

Support

- A number of participants found the Communities Team very supportive.
- The role of the 'link worker' role between the local authority and Community Councils needs clarification, general support for a named person rather than a generic email address.
- Community Councillors need training but noted a tendency for the local authority to ask about it but not necessarily deliver what was requested.
- Improved two-way learning and co-operation between the local authority and Community Councils is needed, building on support to the Community Councils Forum.
- Practical assistance is needed with things like printing.

Communication and raising issues with the council

- Easier direct access to Council officers is needed, such as each department having clear named contacts with email addresses and phone numbers. Many Community Councils feel that limited direct communication is affecting their ability to fulfil their role, with stories of how those damages local confidence in Community Councils.
- All officers should be made aware of the Council's customer charter and respond to Community Councils quickly when issues are raised.
- Though elected members are viewed positively in most cases, some Community Councils would like to see more elected councillors at meetings on a regular basis.
- Input from Police has reduced in recent times. The personnel are thought to be changing too regularly for effective engagement.

Funding

- Current core funding arrangements are not felt to be workable for a significant number of Community Councils, including difficulties for Community Councils in securing payments from the Council when funding requests are made.
- Some Community Councils are not receiving any resources at all or are choosing not to claim funding and instead securing funding for local priorities such as food banks from other sources.
- One Community Council raised an issue about insurance, following changes over insurance requirements and provisions in recent years.
- Resourcing problems like these affect Community Councils' abilities to discharge their roles and to facilitate the involvement of those on lower incomes.

5 Proposed changes to the Scheme of Establishment

This section contains an explanation of suggested changes to the existing Scheme. The details of the changes have been incorporated into the first draft of the Scheme for presentation to Council in August 2021. This report only refers to sections of the Scheme where changes are suggested.

Where changes are suggested, the proposed content has been based on:

- The ideas and comments of the Community Councils members interviewed.
- The Stronger Voices Group.
- Conversations with specialist organisations such as the Youth Council and Equalities Forum.
- Examples of existing and evolving Schemes of Establishment elsewhere in Scotland.
- The combined experience of SCDC and Council officers.

5.1 Boundaries

The issue of geographical boundaries was proactively explored with all Community Councils interviewed and also a number of community groups in areas without an active Community Council. A number of suggestions were made about boundary changes, all of which will need to be discussed further and in more detail (including establishing whether they are informal suggestions made by the members who were interviewed, or have been endorsed by Community Council as a whole).

These proposals fall into three broad categories:

1. Where new housing has been developed or is proposed, and residents had suggested being part of a different Community Council area would better suit their needs and/or identity (contained in Table 2 below).
2. Where difficulties in maintaining Community Council membership led participants to speculate whether creating smaller or larger areas might help (contained in Table 3 below).
3. Where the lack of a Community Council in a neighbouring area encouraged a proposal to incorporate adjacent areas into an existing Community Council (contained in Table 2 below).

A map of current Community Council boundaries is shown in Appendix 2.

Table 2 (below) contains suggested boundary changes to reflect local identities and where there is no active Community Council.

Table 2: Boundaries - proposed changes to reflect community identities

<i>Community Councils areas affected</i>	<i>Suggestion</i>	<i>Rationale</i>	<i>Proposed by</i>
from Alexandria (inactive) to Balloch & Haldane (active)	Transfer area on west side of loch (Lomond Shores to Duck Bay) from Alexandria to Balloch & Haldane.	Area relates more closely to the lochside community of Balloch than Alexandria and there is no active Community Council in Alexandria.	Balloch & Haldane Community Council
from Dalmuir & Mountblow (inactive) to Old Kilpatrick (active)	Transfer 'Western Isles' streets between Lusset Glen and overhead power lines from Dalmuir & Mountblow to Old Kilpatrick.	Community relates more to Old Kilpatrick than Dalmuir and has an Old Kilpatrick postcode.	Old Kilpatrick Community Council
from Dumbarton East & Central (active) to Silverton and Overtoun (active)	Transfer streets between Greenhead Road and Third Avenue from Dumbarton East & Central to Silverton & Overtoun.	To reflect community geography.	Silverton & Overtoun Community Council
from Kilmaronock (active) to Balloch & Haldane (active)	Transfer housing area on north side of Dumbain Road from Kilmaronock to Balloch & Haldane (e.g. along parish boundary).	Housing is on the edge of Balloch and some miles from the nearest community in Kilmaronock.	Balloch and Haldane Community Council

Table 3 (below) contains ideas where reviews of boundaries could assist with resolving other issues, such as the widespread challenge of securing sufficient members and office bearers for Community Councils to be viable. These suggestions merit further consideration, but should be treated as possible ideas for further exploration rather than firm proposals.

Table 3: Boundaries - ideas for further exploration

<i>Community Councils areas affected</i>	<i>Idea</i>	<i>Rationale</i>	<i>Suggested by</i>
Bonhill and Dalmonach Community Council (active)	Explore creating two Community Councils by splitting the Community Council area into two along the north-south axis of A813/Hillfield Street north-south axis	To reflect 'old' and 'new' Bonhill identities and potentially increase relevance and attractiveness to new Community Council members	Bonhill and Dalmonach Community Council office bearer
Dumbarton East & Central Community Council (active), Dumbarton West Community Council (inactive), Silverton and Overtoun Community Council (active)	Some interest in exploration of merging Dumbarton East & Central with Dumbarton West and/or Silverton and Overtoun	Challenges of getting members	Dumbarton East & Central office bearers
Dumbarton West Community Council (inactive), Dumbarton North Community Council ? (inactive)	Create a new Community Council boundary focussing on Oxhill, Kirktonhill and West Bridgend.	Redraw the boundaries to support disadvantaged areas.	local action group interested in forming a Community Council

As explained above, the suggestions in Tables 2 and 3 are not formal requests from Community Councils as they are not the result of full Community Council meetings. Also, the nature of the consultation meant that there was no opportunity to discuss proposals made by one Community Council with another affected (if indeed that other area had an active Community Council).

For this reason, the following staged approach to resolving boundary issues is suggested:

1. Community Councils should be asked to confirm boundary changes they definitely wish to proceed with.
2. The local authority should facilitate a collaborative deliberative process involving affected Community Councils, and other community representatives if appropriate, to agree boundary adjustments, informed through relevant factors (potentially including consultation with local residents).
3. If no agreement can be reached, refer the matter to a panel comprising members of the local authority and the Community Councils Forum.
4. Agreed adjustments should be incorporated into the revised Scheme for Establishment of Community Councils.

We have considered whether it would be possible to have a more flexible approach to changing boundaries between future Scheme Reviews. On further consideration it appears that would lead to complications with the need for additional Community Council elections, so we have not suggested it at this stage. There may however be scope for further discussions in the next phase of the consultation process on the Scheme review.

5.2 Statutory purpose and role of Community Councils

The existing Scheme's introduction and section on the statutory framework for Community Councils is limited to the original 1970s legislation and does not mention more recent community empowerment legislation. Nationally, ongoing discussions about revisions to the Scottish model Scheme of Establishment are considering the role of Community Councils in relation to community empowerment legislation. Addressing these locally now would ensure that West Dunbartonshire has a more contemporary frame of reference for Community Councils which will reflect the broader statutory framework of community empowerment, engagement and representation. This in turn may enhance the popularity of Community Councils as vehicles for achieving positive change.

The draft revised Scheme contains additional content reflecting these changes in context.

5.3 Powers & responsibilities

The consultation revealed a general desire to increase powers available to Community Councils to allow them to discharge their statutory role more effectively. Satisfaction about whether Community Councils felt listened to or their concerns acted on varied; some describing feeling ignored, while others felt they could influence decisions (for example in the planning context where objections to proposals such as the siting of schools and housing developments had been felt to be successful).

The exact additional powers Community Councils wanted was something they did not find easy to describe in detail. Comments have been incorporated into the draft Scheme and include the following topics:

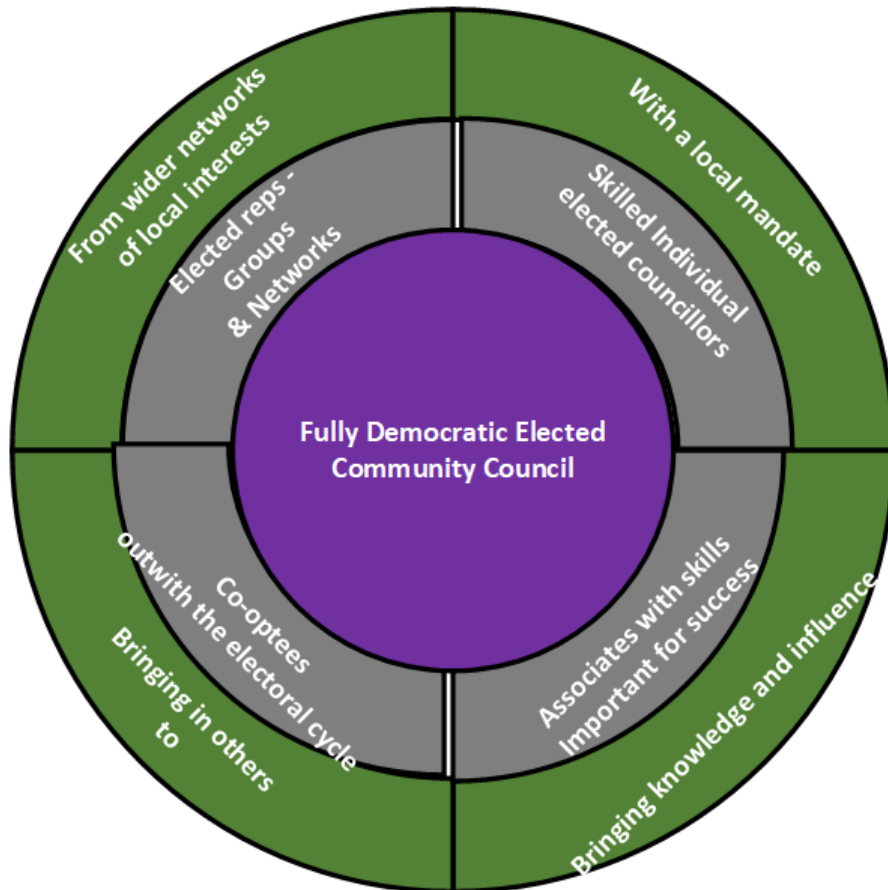
- Promotion of Community Councils
- Representativeness of Community Councils
- Consultation and collaboration with local authority and Community Planning Partners

5.4 Membership and elections

Community Council elections and membership categories would benefit from being clarified. At present the tendency for Community Councils to describe their statutory functions as defined by fact that they are elected can be misleading, as in West Dunbartonshire none of the 11 active Community Councils has had sufficient candidates to contest elections since 2011.

It appears that the various membership categories in the current Scheme are being misunderstood to some extent, so the diagram (Figure 4 below) and proposed text changes included in the first draft of the Scheme identify clearer purposes for the various membership categories.

Figure 4: Diagram showing proposed framework of membership categories



The revisions proposed in the draft revised Scheme clarify different membership categories in Community Councils, including full membership, co-option and associate membership (as well as the 'ex-officio' role for elected politicians). The aims are to maximise participation and expertise available to Community Councils whilst ensuring that only residents are able to vote on the Community Council.

The next phase of the work will include discussions about membership and elections, with the aim of increasing participation, and how those might be handled in terms of advice and guidance.

5.5 Improving influence

The vast majority of Community Councillors interviewed expressed frustrations about the degree of influence of Community Councils. The draft revised Scheme contains new content designed to

increase the influence of Community Councils with the local authority and Community Planning Partners, in line with the West Dunbartonshire Community Empowerment Strategy.

The proposed wording includes some key steps to achieve greater influence by improving the conditions for participation, improving communication methods between Community Councils, the Council and Community Planning Partners, and influencing on budget discussions. We will focus on these issues in more detail in the next phase of the consultation.

5.6 Support arrangements

The first stage of the review revealed a considerable need for support for what is generally a reducing and often ageing group of volunteers to deliver a complex and very important task - running an effective Community Council. Building those skills and capacity is likely to be a long-term process extending over a number of years.

The draft revised Scheme contains suggested wording around future support arrangements, some of which have been trailed in earlier sections of this report:

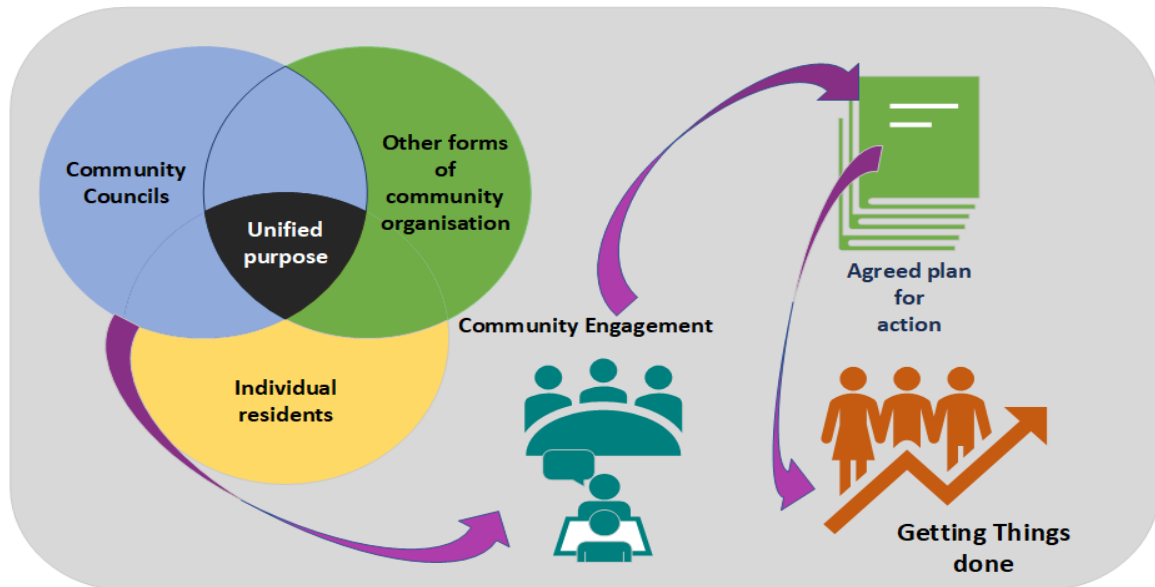
- Advice and mentoring for Community Councils, most likely from within the Communities Team.
- Community Councils liaison officer(s) whose role should be to act as a point of contact for Community Councils when other more direct approaches to service departments have faltered. This should not be the main point of contact as it could become a bottleneck for effective contact.
- Co-designing new financial arrangements by the Council and Community Councils Forum.

Other aspirations expressed by consultees will be investigated in more detail in the next phase of consultation, including:

- An effective, responsive and sustainable training programme. Training participants have been very positive where training has been delivered, but there is a sense that not all training needs analysis has been followed through with training delivery.
- Support to refocus and strengthen the Community Councils Forum is seen as important to enabling the strategic effectiveness of Community Councils across West Dunbartonshire and to support local activity. This would also be an effective way to strengthen links with other groups and networks such as the Equalities Forum, Youth Council and Community Alliance. Figure 5 (overleaf) outlines a possible model to describe how Community Councils could work with other local organisations in the community to unify and present a single voice, for example in setting local priorities or developing Local Place Plans.

(See also Figure 5 overleaf.)

Figure 5: Diagram describing the role of Community Councils in supporting a community wide view



6 Implications for Community Empowerment Strategy

West Dunbartonshire Council has already consulted extensively in developing the West Dunbartonshire Community Empowerment Strategy and Action Plan and is now moving to its implementation. It makes sense to see the future development of Community Council development and the review of the Scheme of Establishment as a part of that bigger ambition, because a cornerstone of the Community Empowerment Strategy is the development of local representation for communities at a scale that makes sense to them.

This will require existing community organisations to work more closely together in a coordinated fashion to set the local agenda. This is sometimes known as the ‘community anchor’ function, providing overall local leadership for collective endeavour across all local accountable community-led organisations in a particular area.

Community Councils can relate to this approach in the following ways:

- Community Councils could play this anchor role if they have the capacity and the consent of their community. To do so effectively may require changes in the way other local organisations interact with Community Councils, possibly through use of the Associate Member provision in the Scheme of Establishment as described in section 5.
- In other areas it may be more appropriate for Community Councils to play an equal role as a peer in a broader network of organisations rather than taking on the role of the umbrella structure itself.
- In yet other areas, it may be that communities would prefer other groups, such as action groups, community development trusts or community associations, to take on the local leadership role. In such cases the Community Council should co-ordinate its role and activities with these other organisations to ensure they complement each other.

Whichever structure communities choose, they must be able to demonstrate their openness and local accountability. In order to deliver the intent of the Community Empowerment Strategy and the revised Scheme of Establishment, local communities need strong influential local organisations as described in this report. Whatever the role of Community Councils in each local community, they will need support to ensure a close and dynamic relationship to set local priorities and work together as part of a collective whole in order to represent their communities, maintain a fresh mandate for action and drive change.

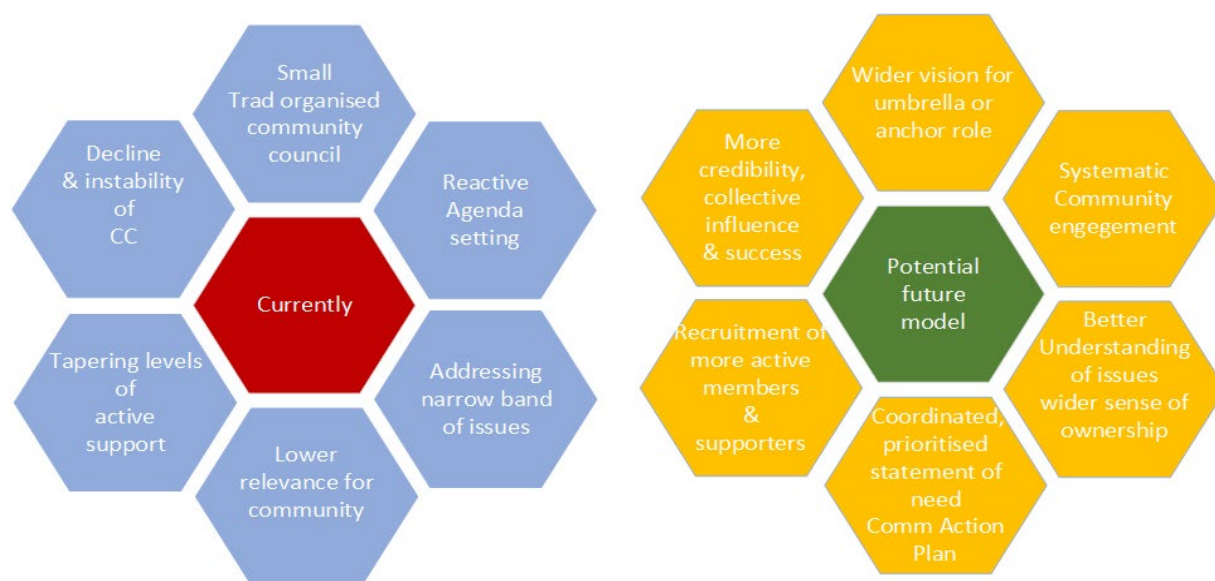
For these reasons, continuing support for Community Councils should be an integral part of delivering the Community Empowerment Strategy, the ‘community anchor’ function and community-led planning and action.

7 Conclusions and next steps

The revised Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils should function not only to regulate the operation of Community Councils but also to actively support their role, at a time when community empowerment and local “place based” approaches have become more important than ever for the future of Scotland's communities and public services.

The approach taken in this report has been to look at the potential content of the revised Scheme through the lens of their evolving role, key relationships and the mechanics of participation and how these interact to amplify or inhibit their success. This review is an opportunity to explore this in depth and make some key changes that should, with the right support, strengthen Community Councils by helping to arrest and reverse the decline that many of them have seen in recent years.

Figure 6 - Diagram showing how elements supported by the review of the SoE could result in stronger Community Councils



Community Councils and other local community organisations are clearly keen to collaborate with each other and with West Dunbartonshire Council to strengthen the revised Scheme in ways which could improve their organisational effectiveness and boost the potential for community empowerment.

Community Councils and the wider ‘Stronger Voices’ Group should continue to be involved in finalising the detail of how this could be done in the remainder of the Review’s statutory consultation process:

Stage 2: Following approval at the Special Council meeting in August 2021, the first draft of the revised Scheme will be further consulted on and developed. There will then be:

- 8 weeks of public consultation on those draft documents in September/October 2021.
- Discussions at further Community Council meetings and the 'Stronger Voices' group.
- Discussion and debate at wider event(s) for community organisations in West Dunbartonshire.

The results of this engagement will then be collated and presented to another Special Council meeting likely to be in December 2021.

Stage 3: A third round of consultation will take place on a final draft of the Scheme for four weeks, anticipated to be in January/February 2022.

Stage 4: The Council will then approve the final Scheme at a Special meeting in early 2022, following which Community Council elections will take place.

SCDC, July 2021

Appendix 1: List of Community Councils

Community Councils currently **active** in West Dunbartonshire:

- Balloch and Haldane
- Bonhill and Dalmonach
- Bowling and Milton
- Clydebank East
- Dumbarton East and Central
- Faifley
- Kilmarnock
- Linnvale and Drumry
- Old Kilpatrick
- Parkhall, North Kilbowie and Central
- Silverton and Overtoun

Community Councils currently **inactive** in West Dunbartonshire:

- Alexandria
- Dalmuir and Mountblow
- Dumbarton North
- Dumbarton West
- Duntocher and Hardgate
- Renton

Appendix 2: Community Council boundaries

Please refer to map overleaf.

