

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture, and Facilities****Council: 26 August 2021**

Subject: Community Planning Support**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to note the successful Community Planning support provided by Argyll and Bute Council in 2021, and to propose that this arrangement continues.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that Council agrees to enter into a partnership with Argyll and Bute Council for the provision of Community Planning support.

3. Background

- 3.1** In March 2021 Elected Members were updated in the Monthly Briefing that the departure of the Performance and Strategy Manager had presented an issue for the Council in relation to leadership of the Community Planning function. The postholder was responsible for guiding the Council's Community Planning activity and supported the Community Planning West Dunbartonshire Management board. This is a specialist area that needs an individual with experience and knowledge at a senior level, and there was no one from the Performance and Strategy team who could provide this leadership. Argyll and Bute Council had a very experienced and highly regarded Community Planning Manager in post, and an interim arrangement was introduced in February 2021 for them to support our local activity while a new West Dunbartonshire approach was considered.

- 3.2** Since February 2021 the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Team has successfully led Community Planning in West Dunbartonshire. Examples of activity have included:

- Co-ordinating the delivery of meetings for the Community Planning West Dunbartonshire Management Board in May and August;
- Supporting the Executive Management Group led by the West Dunbartonshire Council Chief Executive;
- Providing briefings for members of the Administration attending COSLA meetings;
- Provided briefings to inform submissions by officers to consultations held by organisations such as Police Scotland; and
- Delivering roadshows with employees of Community Planning partners to inform them of the work taking place.

- 3.3** The temporary support from Argyll and Bute Council was agreed to run until

September 30, 2021. A decision now needs to be taken on the future approach for Community Planning in West Dunbartonshire.

4. Main Issues

4.1 The departure of the Performance and Strategy Manager offered up an opportunity to review the service. An approach was identified that would create stronger and integrated partnership working with other teams in the Council, as well as deliver efficiencies for the organisation. The Performance and Strategy team is now led at a senior level by the Strategic Communications, Culture and Performance Manager, supported by a newly appointed Performance and Strategy Team Leader with professional experience and expertise in this service area. The wider Performance and Strategy team is experienced and capable, and will continue to support the Council successfully on all existing fronts.

4.2 It is recognised that following this review a skills gap remains in the Council with regard to the leadership of Community Planning and the Community Planning West Dunbartonshire Management Board.

4.3 Two options were considered to resolve this:

Option 1

- Continue the existing support which has been successfully provided by Argyll and Bute Council in a longer-term arrangement. Key Community Planning partners Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service have both endorsed the current arrangements, and are happy to see it continuing. The annual fee of £22,000, reviewed on an annual basis, gives West Dunbartonshire Council access to a resilient and expert team including a Community Planning Manager, Community Planning Officer and Community Planning Assistant. It also offers opportunities for best practice benefits across the two areas, and importantly, offers potential future benefits of closer working given that many of the partners agencies involved in community planning work at a regional or national level across both local authority areas. Service delivery would be seamless with Argyll and Bute Council continuing to support the CPWD from 1 October, 2021 onwards. The arrangement would generate annual revenue savings for the Council of approximately £28,000 without any detriment to Council employees. At a time when the pressure on Council budgets is significant such low impact savings are rare and welcome.

Option 2

- Appoint a Community Planning Officer who would join the Performance and Strategy Team to support this activity. This officer would be the only employee in the Council with the broad specialist knowledge of community planning structures, legislation, national guidance and best practice. This would continue to leave the organisation vulnerable from a resilience stand-point in what is a key and high-profile area. This option would require a recruitment process which would leave the Council without senior Community Planning expertise for a period of up to three months at a critical time

when Covid-19 recovery is underway. On appointment the officer would understandably take several months to gain the local knowledge and understanding to be able to operate effectively creating the risk of loss of momentum for CPWD. Finally, the Community Planning Officer salary and on-costs would remove any opportunity to generate savings from the structural review of Performance and Strategy.

- 4.4** Having considered these options it is the recommendation to Council that officers progress with Option 1 to make a longer-term arrangement with Argyll and Bute Council for Community Planning support.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no people implications for existing Council employees with Option 1.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** Officers have agreed a fee of £22,000 per year for Community Planning support from Argyll and Bute Council. This would be reviewed on an annual basis to take account of inflation and other factors.

- 6.2** This fee would be paid for from the savings generated by the structural review of the P&S team. This reallocation of duties and responsibilities, as well as the fee to Argyll and Bute Council, would create a revenue saving for the Council of approximately £28,000.

- 6.3** In terms of Procurement Law, arrangements such as this are permitted under the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970. It is considered that this arrangement will be compliant and officers from Legal Services of both Authorities will ensure the Legal Agreement between the parties addresses these requirements.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** There is a risk that the Community Planning Manager at Argyll and Bute could leave or be absent for a period of time leaving West Dunbartonshire without a Community Planning Manager. This would be mitigated by the fact the Argyll and Bute team has a several officers with specialist knowledge of this area who would be able to assist in such an instance. It should be recognized that such an eventuality is also a risk with the Option 2 but in that instance the Council would have less resilience.

- 7.2** There is a risk that the cost of the support provided by Argyll and Bute could rise in the coming years and no longer represent value for money for West Dunbartonshire Council. This is mitigated by the fact that Argyll and Bute Council is a local authority partner and neighbour, and the two organisations work positively together in a number of areas. Argyll and Bute Council has also made it clear that they are a public sector organisation and are therefore committed to charging West Dunbartonshire Council only what is fair for the recovery of the time provided. In the unlikely event that costs did become unaffordable then the Council would be able to reconsider its approach without penalty.

7.3 There is a risk that a legal agreement between West Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Council cannot be reached on terms that are compatible with Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970. This will be mitigated against by the fact both Councils have experienced Legal Service teams, and have experience of working with other organisations on joint projects.

7.4 There is a further risk that any potential opportunities for joint collaboration are not optimised if this proposal is not progressed.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 This proposal is relevant and therefore has been impact assessed. The proposal supports the centrality of Community Planning in furthering Public Sector Equality Duty, and 'building back better'. Since starting to provide support the staff from Argyll and Bute Council have recognised the need and worked with us to place equality considerations centrally in Community Planning. The proposed arrangement will help ensure that this continues to be the case.

9. Consultation

9.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the SCCP Manager, Finance, Legal, Strategic HR and Procurement. The Argyll and Bute Council Community Planning support has been discussed with the wider Performance and Strategy service. The team is generally comfortable with how things have progressed to date, and seeing it continue in future. Further work would follow as part of a longer-term partnership to embed the collaborative working approach. Trade Union Conveners have been kept updated throughout and a formal meeting was held on 1 July 2021. At the meeting there were no objections to progressing with this partnership given the particular circumstances. A commitment was made to meet to discuss the Argyll and Bute Council partnership with the TU Conveners on an annual basis so there was a periodic review of progress.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 This report supports the following Council strategic priority:

- Efficient and effective frontline services that improve the everyday lives of residents

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment for Community Planning Support from Argyll and Bute Council

Background Reports N/A

Wards Affected: All

