

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Council - 26 August 2009

Subject: Elected member involvement in Community Planning Structures

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to propose arrangements which support the widest possible participation by elected members in Community Planning structures, and in particular, in the six thematic groups which have been established recently.

2. Background

- 2.1** With the development of multi agency Single Outcome Agreements (SOA), and with continuing political commitment at Scottish Government ministerial level, Community Planning has an increasingly important role in the public sector in Scotland. It has the potential to bring about significant positive improvements in service delivery and public sector reform.
- 2.2** In addition, the process for the allocation of ring fenced Fairer Scotland Funds (FSF) will change at the end of this financial year, and from April 2010 these funds will be allocated as part of WDC block revenue allocation (GAE). It is therefore even more important that there is active participation by members in key aspects of Community Planning in West Dunbartonshire.
- 2.3** Community Planning in West Dunbartonshire is undergoing a significant transformation in terms of structures and processes. This includes a change management programme which is challenging, but which involves all key public bodies in West Dunbartonshire and significant parts of the Third Sector. There is also a significant development agenda for better engagement with communities. It is important that elected members have the opportunities to be fully involved in these processes.
- 2.4** A briefing workshop covering these issues was held for members in June but was not well attended. This workshop will be repeated at the end of September or early in October. This will provide members with detailed information on the current status of the Community Planning Partnership and the programme models which are being implemented to increase the prospects of successful and sustained improvements in the quality of life of vulnerable individuals and communities in West Dunbartonshire.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The organisational framework for West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership (WDCPP) is based on an Executive Group, a wider Strategic Board and six thematic groups consistent with the six themes described in WDCPP Community Plan 2007/2017. Governance arrangements and partnership agreements are currently under review.
- 3.2** There are also three community forums located in Dumbarton, Clydebank and Vale of Leven. These provide a key focus for community involvement in Community Planning, with representatives participating in the Strategic Board, and on the six thematic groups. One member from each community forum sits on the Strategic Board, along with one member of each Forum sitting on each of the six thematic groups. This means that, in comparison with the national position, an exceptionally high number of 21 individual community residents are currently participating directly in Community Planning structures in this area. In addition, Community Forums also provide a platform for engagement and feedback to wider communities, linking up with existing structures such as the Council's Community Participation Committee and special interest groups.
- 3.3** The Executive Group is chaired by an independent community resident and populated by the leader of the Council, and the chief officers of the statutory partners – West Dunbartonshire Council, West Dunbartonshire Community Health Partnership, Strathclyde Police and Strathclyde Fire & Rescue.
- 3.4** The Strategic Board is also chaired by the same community resident and populated by West Dunbartonshire Council, (3 elected members and 1 officer), West Dunbartonshire Community Health Partnership, Strathclyde Police, Strathclyde Fire & Rescue, Skills Development Scotland, West Dunbartonshire Council for Voluntary Service, Scottish Enterprise, SPT and three community forum representatives. The elected member places are composed of the leader of the Council, one member from the administration and one member from the opposition. (In March 2009 Council agreed a total of 4 elected member representatives to the Strategic Board – 3 administration and 1 opposition – however this did not take account of the fact that in May 2008, the WDCPP had agreed a reduction in the overall number of places on the Board, which included a reduction of 1 place for elected members. In accordance with this revised position, one member of the administration has since stepped down from membership of the CPP Board.)
- 3.5** Thematic groups are the key delivery models for Community Planning. Each group has an identified lead agency officer and management group made up of senior officials and three community residents. Lead officers are at senior/director level staff. The membership of thematic groups also includes a place for one elected member on each group. The six thematic groups in West Dunbartonshire are – Employment and Business Growth; Safe and Strong; Housing; Education and Life Long Learning; Health and Well Being; and Environment and Sustainable Development. Each thematic group is responsible for leading between three and five major programmes of work that

deliver priorities described in our SOA. These programmes are mainstream funded with additional contributions from our FSF budget where added value can be identified.

- 3.6** The key functions of thematic groups should be seen as:
- Developing and managing relevant action plans and programmes of work
 - Overseeing the delivery of relevant parts of the SOA on behalf of key public bodies
 - Making recommendations for FSF investment to boost and add value to these programmes of work
 - Managing operations, information exchange, problem solving
 - Agreeing the interface between each theme and establishing processes and links that set out clear lines of responsibility and avoid duplication of effort.
- 3.7** There are currently three elected members sitting on the CPP Strategic Board, two from the administration and one from the opposition. It is proposed that Council identify a further three to act as substitutes, including one for the position of vice chair, which is taken by the Leader.
- 3.8** It is further proposed that six elected members are identified by Council to participate in the thematic groups with an additional six members identified as substitutes. These members should be different from those members participating in the Strategic Board.
- 3.9** This would give 18 elected members in total the opportunity to become involved directly in Community Planning structures, either as direct participants or as substitutes. It is proposed that substitute members would receive copies of all relevant papers, and attend any relevant training and development delivered by their respective group.
- 3.10** Given the political profile of the Council it is recommended that the membership of both the Board and Thematic Groups is identified on a ratio of 3:2:1. That is nine elected members in total from the Administration, six from the Opposition and three from other parties and Independents. (3:2:1 on the Board and 6:4:2 on the Thematic Groups.)
- 3.11** It is proposed that the administration should provide members and substitutes for two thematic groups and a member only for one additional thematic group. The opposition should provide members and substitutes for two thematic groups. Other parties/Independents should provide a member and substitute for the remaining one thematic group and a substitute member for one thematic group, sharing responsibility with the Administration member.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There are no immediate Personnel implications.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no immediate financial implications.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 Community Planning is playing an increasingly important role in coordinating public sector activity in Scotland and driving forward public sector reform and improvements to service delivery. Without active elected member involvement, there is a risk that this process will not move forward as effectively in West Dunbartonshire as in other parts of Scotland. There is a risk that, without elected members commitment to this process of multi agency partnership working, important links between Council priorities and resources and the priorities and resources of the CPP will not be made.

7. Conclusions & Officers' Recommendations

7.1 Community Planning in West Dunbartonshire is at an earlier stage of development than in other local authority areas. Council has a statutory duty to lead this initiative. The widest possible elected member involvement will reduce the risk of perceptions that the Council is not discharging this responsibility effectively.

7.2 The recent Best Value report identifies a number of areas for development, including strategic leadership. The direct involvement of elected members in these new, dynamic and innovative public sector structures will support this process. Alongside WDC senior management, who are already playing leading roles in many thematic groups, elected members will have the opportunity to develop the strategic leadership role, improve perceptions, and ensure the Council is well placed to engage in public sector reform agenda in Scotland.

7.3 Council is asked to:

- (i) Consider the contents of this report.
- (ii) Note the current participation of elected members in WDCPP Executive Group and Strategic Board.
- (iii) Identify the six members and six substitutes to participate in Community Planning thematic groups, and three substitutes for the Strategic Board, as described in paragraphs 3.7 – 3.11 above.

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Date: 10 August 2009

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Appendices: None

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All