

**DRAFT**

West Dunbartonshire Council

**“Involving Communities”**



(WDC Scheme of Decentralisation 2004-07)

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Foreward Councillor Gail Casey

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## **“Involving Communities”**

### **WDC’s Scheme of Decentralisation 2004-07**

*Foreward by Councillor Gail Casey, Chair of the Community Participation Committee (CPC)*

Ensuring that people have a voice in what happens in their communities continues to be one of the key tasks of West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC).

It is only by listening to our citizens that we can respond better to their views, ideas and concerns.

This document sets out some of the key ways in which we currently inform and involve our citizens in decision-making.

Since its re-organisation in 1996, Local Government has been and continues to be in a process of change. Despite the challenges this presents, there has been some very positive work between the Council and the community.

Key objectives for the next 3 years include:

- Involving our communities and other partners in decision-making and strengthening partnership working , for example
  - Developing the Community Participation Committee
  - Developing community representation on Council committees and other decision-making structures
- Strengthening the existing representative groups which are currently in operation in West Dunbartonshire and encouraging networking between them, for example
  - Strengthening Community Councils and CC Forum
  - Supporting WD Access Panel to promote and improve access to services
- Providing information about the Council, its services and its involvement with partners, for example
  - Developing an External Communications and Consultation Strategy
  - Producing West Dunbartonshire News for distribution to households in West Dunbartonshire
- Strengthening links with the community and voluntary sector, for example
  - Revising Voluntary Sector Policies with partners
  - Reviewing the local grants system

I want to see the priorities and objectives of the scheme implemented across West Dunbartonshire to make sure that local people can raise their issues with the Council and make a real input into the decisions we make as a Council.

The Community Participation Committee will have an important role in monitoring and overseeing the implementation of the scheme.

The Scheme will be reviewed and monitored annually. We are particularly aware that the Scheme should be responsive to partnership developments going on through Community Planning. As public services providers we must work together with partner providers around the issues of public involvement.

*Councillor Gail Casey, Community Participation Committee*

## What is 'Involving Communities' about?

West Dunbartonshire Council is responsible for delivering a wide range of services to the people of West Dunbartonshire. We want to deliver our services in a way that meets people's needs and makes it easy for people to use them. To achieve this we have to:

- talk to our service users
- act on what they tell us and tell them what we have done
- explain if there are reasons why we can't
- work in partnership with other public service providers including the community and voluntary sector
- have systems which make all the above possible.

Why should we do this?

Experience tells us that we provide better services when we listen to what people need and want. We also know that we can improve services and be cost effective through working with our partner organisations.

In 1996 Central Government asked Councils to produce a Scheme of Decentralisation to show how they would achieve the above. Councils still have a legal duty to have a scheme. Now Central Government has introduced Best Value and Community Planning which also put community involvement at the centre of their approach. More about this below.

The challenge for public organisations, including the Council, is to find the best, affordable, ways of doing this.

'Involving Communities' sets out our key priorities for achieving this and outlines some key actions for 2004-05. A full action plan for 2004-05 is available on request from: Anne Clegg, Policy Officer (Community & Consultation), Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton G82 3PU, tel. 01389 737177, fax 01389 737223, e-mail [anne.clegg@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:anne.clegg@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

### Community Planning/SIP Integration

One of the main effects of the Local Government Act (Scotland) is the combining of Community Planning and Social Inclusion Partnership structures. Part of this process will involve developing combined approaches to community engagement. The Council is closely involved with this process of change. To find out more about Community Planning/SIP integration, contact the Community Planning Co-ordinator on 01389 737243.

## **Review of Scheme**

The 1999-2002 Scheme of Decentralisation has been reviewed with the involvement of a multi-agency officer group and a group of representatives of community and voluntary groups. A meeting also took place to gather views from Community Councils. The Council's Community Participation Committee has also commented on the review. Community Groups have been invited to comment on aspects of the Scheme, such as the membership and role of the Community Participation Committee. People have also been invited to comment on this via the Council's website. We have also received feedback from SIP Community Forums.

## **Aims and Objectives for 2004-05**

- Involving our communities and other partners in decision-making and strengthening partnership working
- Strengthening the existing representative groups in West Dunbartonshire and encouraging networking between them
- Providing information about the Council, its services and its work with partners
- Strengthening links with the Community and Voluntary Sector

## **Involving our communities and other partners in decision-making and strengthening partnership working**

Some of our priorities

- Developing the Community Participation Committee (CPC)
- Developing community involvement in Council committees and other decision-making structures
- Using our Citizens' Panel
- Developing budget consultation in service departments
- Developing links with SIP/Community Planning integration structures
- Delivering services in a 'one stop shop' way for service users through single shared assessment
- Involving young people in decision-making
- Involving tenant representatives in decision-making about services

## **Strengthening the existing representative groups in West Dunbartonshire and encouraging networking between them**

Some of our priorities

- Community Councils - provide support to Community Councils and WD Community Council Forum
- Tenants' Representation – build the capacity of tenants' representatives
- Community Safety – review the use of community safety awards money
- Community Learning and Development – continue to develop ICT Learning Centres as a resource for members of the community
- Accessible Services – support West Dunbartonshire Access Panel to improve access to Council offices and the wider community.

## **Providing information about the Council, its services and its work with partners**

Some of our priorities

- Up-dating Council A-Z
- Running Community Day as part of Community Week
- Producing West Dunbartonshire News
- Developing External Communications and Consultation Strategy
- Informing tenants through :
  - Tenant Participation Strategy
  - Factsheets
  - Newsletters
  - Website
  - Community Day/Week
- Providing information about Community Planning through
- Hot News – e-mail news to partners
- Website

## **Strengthening links with the Community and Voluntary Sector**

Some of our priorities

- Agreeing a process with partners for producing joint voluntary policies in line with 'Engaging Communities'
- Funding voluntary and community groups through Local Council Grants

### **Monitoring**

The Scheme will be monitored and reviewed annually.

For further information contact: Policy Officer, Community & Consultation, WDC, Policy Unit, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton, G82 3PU, tel. 01389 737177, fax 01389 737231, e-mail [anne.clegg@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:anne.clegg@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)