

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Community Participation Committee: Wednesday 20 September, 2006

**Subject: Community Participation Committee (CPC) Achievements
Evaluation and Development**

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The report is in response to a question from a community representative about the effectiveness of the CPC.

2. Background

- 2.1** Following the Local Government Elections in May 2003 at the Council meeting of 25 June, it was agreed to set up the Community Participation Committee with interim membership arrangements, pending the consultation review by the Council.

- 2.2** Following a period of consultation, at its meeting of 7 May 2004, the CPC agreed on proposals for permanent membership and its role and remit, subsequently approved by Council.

- 2.3** The Committee's role and remit is as follows:

- To encourage and support the development of local community based organisations.
- To provide a forum, but not the only forum, for obtaining the views of community based organisations.
- To co-ordinate discussion and action on issues raised by community groups and forums.
- To consider and comment on Council participation structures and policies.
- To co-ordinate community involvement in the on-going development and review of the Council's Decentralisation Scheme (in terms of the Local Government Etc. (Scotland) Act 1994) and to make recommendations to Council on the nature of Decentralisation in West Dunbartonshire or any delegation of power.
- To consider matters relating to Community Councils
- To consider matters relating to the Voluntary Sector
- To promote and monitor community representation and public involvement in service department decision-making processes, through council committees and other relevant structures.

3. Main Issues

3.1 In general there are some positive achievements and some areas for improvement.

3.2 Positive achievements include:

- Widening the range and number of places for community representation on the CPC to include places for the Black and Ethnic Minority Communities; health issues and money advice and poverty issues.
- From May 2005, a standing agenda item “Future Agenda items from Community Representatives” agenda was introduced. This is helping to widen the agenda with items including West Dunbartonshire Community Health Partnership, Anti Social Behaviour, Advisory Speed Limits, Tourism, Welfare Rights, Addiction Services, Dog Fouling and Littering Fines and Recycling.
- The Committee has had the opportunity to comment on a wide range of Council strategies, policies and plans – for example the Consultation Strategy was amended and simplified in response to feedback from the committee members before going to Council for approval. See Appendix 1 for a full list.
- The opportunity to comment on the development of the Council’s Customer Service Standards.
- The identification of a budget to fund a planned event to promote links between the CPC and young people.
- Presentations on a wide range of Council services of particular relevance to the community have provided comprehensive information to committee members and promoted understanding of services, policies and resource issues e.g. the full range of community learning and development services; sports development services; recycling; welfare rights.
- Two CPC community representatives have taken up the invitation to participate in the WD Community Learning Development (& Guidance) Partnership.
- Community Involvement: the committee has been invited to shape thinking on relevant subjects such as the Role of the CPC in relation to West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership; the development of a community planning partners’ Citizens’ Panel; the development of Community Councils - “What can We do to Help Community Councils Fulfil their Role?”; West Dunbartonshire Community Day and West Dunbartonshire Standards for Community Involvement.

- A CPC Newsletter is produced after each meeting, to provide a handy summary of the business of the committee for relevant officers and community groups on the WDC Community Group Database.
- 3.3 Efforts have been made to raise awareness of the CPC's consultative and advisory role and a presentation was given to the Senior Management Network in May 2005 to promote this. The Policy Officer, Community & Consultation also sends regular invitations to a wide network of officers to put forward relevant items for the agenda.
- 3.4 Pre-agenda meetings have also been established to allow community representatives to discuss items before the meeting and clarify points.

3.5 *Areas for Improvement*

Though the Committee's views have been taken into account in the ways described above, there is still limited evidence of direct impact on decision-making. It is evident that more needs to be done to promote the influencing role of the committee.

At times there is limited feedback from community representatives on items presented for discussion. Attendance at pre-agenda meetings is so far low. It may help to investigate support options to assist community representatives to take issues for discussion to their groups and bring back views.

- 3.6 An evaluation of some of these issues would help identify ways of tackling some of the above points (perhaps through an informal session and/or a questionnaire). Some changes might be suitable for immediate implementation, but if any substantial changes are identified it is suggested it may be more appropriate to consider implementing these after the elections in May 2007.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 Members of the committee are invited to comment on the contents of the report.
- 4.2 Members of the committee are invited to put forward suggestions for how to carry out the evaluation.

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Council Strategies, Policies and Plans

Draft Disability Equality Strategy

WDC Corporate Plan

WDC Customer First Strategy

WDC Consultation Strategy

WDC Anti-Poverty Strategy

West Dunbartonshire Corporate Action Plan for Alcohol and Drugs

WDC Race Equality Scheme