

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Community Participation Committee: 19 April 2006

Subject – Elections to Community Councils, October 2006

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to propose arrangements for the Elections to Community Councils due in October 2006.

2. Background

2.1 In terms of the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils, elections are due to be held in October 2006.

2.2 Although the Scheme provides for 17 Community Councils, only 10 are currently operative, with the remaining 7 having failed to form during the requisition and election process in 2002.

3. Main Issues

Requisitions for Community Councils

3.1 A Community Council can be formed at any time if 20 local electors sign a requisition for a Community Council to be set up in their area.

3.2 Since 7 of our potential Community councils are not operative, it is suggested that, as in 2002, the Council attempts, as part of the election process, to encourage local communities to set up Community Councils in those areas where they are not currently functioning.

3.3 Accordingly, the proposed Arrangements for Elections to Community Councils (attached as the Appendix to this report) includes an extended timetable to allow for the invitation and submission of requisitions to form Community Councils.

3.4 The requisition period would extend from 1st to 30th June 2006. The next stage in the process would be to invite nominations for election to both the newly requisitioned Community Councils and those which currently operate within the area.

The Election Process

3.5 Nomination forms will be issued to all serving Community Councillors. Nominations will also be available within the Council's Area Registration Offices and the Council Offices at Garshake Road.

- 3.6** The closing date for nominations will be 7th September 2006. If, by the closing date, the number of validly nominated candidates does not exceed the number of vacancies, those candidates will be elected unopposed. However, if the number of candidates is less than half the number of places on the Community Council, the Community Council will not be formed.
- 3.7** The elections will be conducted by postal ballot. Each voter will receive a single ballot paper but will be entitled to select a number of candidates up to the total number of vacancies (i.e. if there are 10 vacancies, the elector may put a cross beside up to 10 candidates). The successful candidates will be those who poll the highest number of votes.
- 3.8** Closing date for the poll would be 4 p.m. on 12th October 2006, with counts being held that evening or the next day in convenient locations. The timing and location of the counts will depend on the number of contests and the locations of the Community Councils where polls are to be held.

Timetable for the Elections

- 3.9** The proposed timetable for the elections has been amended from the timetable used in 2002, primarily to avoid the main summer holiday period. It is proposed that the formal requisition period be from 1st June to 30th June. This is, of course, an artificial deadline, as a Community Council can be requisitioned at any time. The proposed date for the Notice of Election is 17th August 2006, giving three weeks for candidates to obtain, complete and return their nomination forms.
- 3.10** If the proposed timetable is to apply, approval will be required at the April meeting of the Council.

Publicity

- 3.11** It is proposed that the requisition period and the elections be publicised at the appropriate times in the local press; that posters and fliers be printed and circulated as widely as possible, and that officers, in consultation with local members and the Community Councils Forum, hold 3 Community Council awareness meetings during the month of June in Clydebank, Alexandria and Dumbarton respectively to encourage residents to requisition Community Councils where there are none and to stand for election where Community Councils exist or are formed as a result of the requisition process.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1** There is a budget of £5,000 for Community Council Support in 2006/07. If there are a number of polls, it is possible that this budget could be exceeded.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Committee consider the terms of the report in relation to the proposed timetable and methodology for the requisition and election process, including the arrangements for publicity in order that the Committee's views can be made known to the Council at its next meeting.

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Background Papers: Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils

Wards Affected - All