

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Executive

Community Participation Committee: 21 March 2007

Subject: Community Engagement Structures

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to respond to an Open Forum question from a member of the public at the Community Participation Committee on 24th January 2007, asking for details of the current community engagement structures and identification of their roles. The aim is to provide the opportunity for the committee to discuss any potential duplication.

2. Background

- 2.1** West Dunbartonshire Council and its community planning partners recognise the need to work effectively with interested members of the community to ensure that policies and services are well informed from the community perspective. By doing so, we will provide services better designed to meet needs.
- 2.2** WDC's "Involving Communities" (Decentralisation Scheme), sets out the wide range of ways in which the Council seeks to involve the community.
- 2.3** The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, sets out the framework for Community Planning and Best Value. Responsiveness and Consultation are key characteristics of Best Value and central to the Community Planning process. All community planning partners are making efforts to engage with the community, resulting in a number of community engagement structures.
- 2.4** It is in everyone's interests to ensure that these structures work to complement one another and avoid duplication.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** This paper concentrates on West Dunbartonshire Council and Community Planning Partnership structures including the shared West Dunbartonshire Citizens' Panel. It also invites comment on any other relevant structures.

West Dunbartonshire Citizens' Panel

- 3.2** Citizens' Panels are used widely in the public sector to gather the views of citizens on a range of subjects to help ensure our services and policies reflect the needs and wishes of our residents as far as possible.
- 3.3** West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partners are working together to run a West Dunbartonshire Citizens' Panel as a partnership resource, following on from a long-standing panel run by West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC).
- 3.4** This approach helps partners plan and work together on consultation and avoids duplication of effort. Surveys are planned around community planning themes and this system encourages sharing of the information gained from consulting panel members.

WDC Community Participation Committee (CPC)

- 3.5** The CPC is the key committee for involving the community in council decision-making. It provides the opportunity to influence how the Council delivers services and develops the policies that affect the community. It has places for up to 19 community representatives and 10 elected members.
- 3.6** The role and remit of the CPC is attached as Appendix 1.

Within the terms of the remit set out in Appendix 1, the 3 main functions of the CPC are to:

- provide a mechanism for community representatives to feed issues of concern directly into the Council's decision making processes (e.g. recent examples have included roads, recycling, council ward boundaries and addiction services financial resourcing)
- act as an advisory body to Council (this includes providing a platform to involve the local community in discussions about public services and to seek advice from community representatives on the most effective methods of wider consultation)
- provide information to community members on a wide range of Council service and policy developments, (as part of this approach, a newsletter is sent out after each committee to around 400 groups on the community database, to elected members and to around 100 managers in the Council).

Community Planning Partnership (CPP)

- 3.7** The CCP has a number of structures to facilitate community involvement. These include:-
- *The Community Planning Board (CPB)*
The CPB currently has 50% community representation. Its remit differs from the CPC in that it deals with strategic community planning/partnership issues including the development of structures to support the community planning process.
 - *Partnership Thematic Groups*
These include Communities; Business Growth & Employability; Health Improvement and West Dunbartonshire Community Safety Partnership. They focus on specific issues covered by the Community Plan and allow direct input from the most relevant community interests.
 - *The Civic Forum*
This structure offers an opportunity for any community representative – or individual – to participate in discussion of Community Planning Partnership issues.
- 3.8** All the above structures are due for review. The Council's decision-making systems including the CPC are about to be reviewed in the context of implementing the Best Value Improvement Plan. The Community Planning Partnership structures are undergoing a process of review.
- 3.9** These reviews will consider the relationship of the structures referred to above with a view to clarifying roles and responsibilities and avoiding duplication.
- 3.10** In addition, it is relevant to make reference to the existence of the Public Partnership Forum (PPF) – the public involvement vehicle of West Dunbartonshire Community Health Partnership.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** A budget has been identified for implementing the Best Value Improvement Plan. The review of Council decision making processes will be funded from this budget.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** The main risk in this process is that the community planning partners fail to co-ordinate their processes sufficiently.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1** The partnership approach to running WD Citizens' Panel is designed to promote co-ordination and avoid duplication.
- 7.2** The CPC is predominantly focussed on Council policies and services. The CCP structures (Board, Thematic Groups, Civic Forum) have a wider focus and would not facilitate detailed discussion of Council policies and services.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1** The Committee is invited to consider the contents of this report and offer views on how the current structures could work more effectively in relation to one another.

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Chief Executive
Date: 9 March 2007

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Background Papers: West Dunbartonshire Council – Wednesday 29th June 2005 & Wednesday 31st August 2005: Role of the Community Participation Committee in Relation to New Community Planning Partnership
Community Participation Committee: Wednesday 20 September, 2006
Community Participation Committee (CPC) Achievements Evaluation and Development

Wards Affected: All

Appendix 1

Role and Remit of CPC

- 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.