

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Officer – Housing & Employability****Corporate Services Committee: 19 May 2021**

Subject: Delivery of the Community Empowerment Strategy and Action Plan**1 Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to set out how West Dunbartonshire's Community Empowerment Strategy and Action Plan (approved 2019) will be delivered and a recommendation for additional resources to support delivery.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that members

- (i) Note the process set out for delivery of the Strategy
- (ii) Approve the additional resources required for this work

3 Background

- 3.1** At a Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 27 November 2019, Council approved the Community Empowerment strategy and Action Plan (the Strategy).
- 3.2** The Strategy was prepared through extensive engagement with communities over the course of 2019. It set out the key principles that support empowered communities and defined an Action Plan for delivery. The Action Plan set out six broad themes to be addressed. These were:
- Awareness, knowledge and understanding;
 - Confidence;
 - Standards;
 - Collaboration;
 - Skills; and
 - Resources and Infrastructure.
- 3.3** Following approval of the Strategy and Action Plan a detailed Delivery Plan was to be prepared to ensure successful roll-out. The delivery plan would allow further consideration of any resource requirements needed.
- 3.4** In light of Covid-19 the project working group took the opportunity to review the Strategy as part of a due diligence exercise. This process strengthened the resolve that the recovery phase presents an opportunity to invest in community empowerment as a tool to support communities through recovery. This aligns with the strong policy context in support of empowerment and

participation that most recently includes the Scottish Government's Social Renewal Advisory Board paper, 'If Not Now, When?' This paper sets out ambitious plans to help shape Scotland's communities, post-Covid-19.

- 3.4 To support the delivery of the Community Empowerment Strategy and to ensure adequate resources a Growth Bid was prepared and considered as part of the Council's 2021/22 budget process. The growth bid for an additional permanent resource in the form of four full-time Project Workers was recommended for approval at the Council meeting on 22 March 2021. Council agreed to make the two existing temporary Project Workers posts permanent and requested that a further paper should come to Corporate Services Committee to outline how the Council plans to deliver the Community Empowerment Strategy and Action Plan and what resources are required.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1 Work on the delivery plan has been delayed due to Covid-19 but the aim to deliver on the commitment made through the Community Empowerment Strategy remains. This work supports the call from the Scottish Government to work with communities as key partners through recovery. In response to this the Delivery Plan now includes an additional theme, Social Renewal and Participation, to ensure a programme of increased opportunities for participation, empowerment and local decision making.
- 4.2 The Council's existing capacity to deliver on the empowerment agenda is currently constrained by its resources. The Communities Team works collaboratively with key partners and service areas to promote and strengthen this approach. However the scope and workload of the team has increased significantly over the past two years through necessity, opportunities for improvement and more recently as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.3 Following the Council budget meeting 22 March 2021 a decision was taken to refer the issue of additional resources to the Corporate Services Committee to allow for a more detailed paper and consideration.
- 4.4 This paper proposes a measured investment in the Communities Team to deliver on the Council's empowerment ambitions. This includes adding two permanent full time Project Workers to the team. In doing so, this will complement the recent decision taken by Council (March 2021) to make the existing temporary Project Worker posts permanent.
- 4.5 This additional resource, together with resources committed from other services through the Community Empowerment Project Board will support the development of a coalition of officers and partners to drive forward and deliver real change in communities.
- 4.6 This investment will contribute to the Council's community empowerment agenda and in doing so will provide increased opportunities to participate and engage in community life which can help to address (see Appendix One):

- Health inequalities;
- Social isolation and loneliness;
- Digital exclusion;
- Anti-social behaviour;
- Low social capital;
- Drug and substance misuse; and
- Education and wealth inequalities.

4.7 The requested additional resource will support local citizens and groups to develop new skills, to increase participation in community life and build resilience. All of which is crucial to the delivery of this agenda and to truly increase empowerment. By developing new ways of working there is the opportunity to truly transform local communities and the lives of local citizens.

4.8 Working with communities to deliver such meaningful change is a long-term ambition. It will require a continued effort from across the organisation and partners. This first significant step solidifies the Council's commitment to achieving long-term change across all communities. Progress against the Delivery Plan and the suitability of resources will be kept under review.

4.9 Plans are in place for the establishment of a Community Empowerment Project Board to direct the project, chaired by the Chief Officer Housing and Employability. The Board will be reflective of the key partners required to deliver this ambitious project:

- Housing and Employability;
- Roads and Neighbourhoods;
- Supply, Distribution and Property;
- West Dunbartonshire HSCP;
- West Dunbartonshire CVS; and
- Police Scotland

4.10 Other key partners will be invited to attend Board meetings as and when appropriate.

5 People Implications

5.1 The proposed new resource will be based in the Communities Team, Housing and Employability.

6 Financial & Procurement Implications

6.1 These posts have already been included in the budget approved by Council on 22 March 2021.

7 Risk Analysis

7.1 Strengthening the team is a key part of the Council's approach to Community Empowerment, as laid out in the Community Empowerment Strategy. Failure to secure this resource could have implications for the successful delivery against the Community Empowerment Strategy and the Council's wider empowerment ambitions. This could result in a negative impact on the reputation of the Council.

7.2 Engagement with key stakeholders is an essential part of the empowerment agenda and every effort will be made to ensure measures will be in place to support both digital and in-person engagement as soon as it is safe to do so.

8 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 Equality and accessibility considerations will be taken into account during the recruitment process.

9 Consultation

9.1 N/A

10 Strategic Assessment

10.1 The proposed strengthening of the Communities Team is to support the community empowerment agenda and the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan objectives, in particular in relation to meaningful engagement with active empowered and informed citizens who feel safe and engaged.

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Appendices:	Appendix One: Supporting Outcomes
Background Papers:	General Services Budget Report March 2021 West Dunbartonshire Community Empowerment Strategy & Action Plan November 2019
Wards Affected:	All