

**Supporting best practice in community development**

# **Review of West Dunbartonshire Council's Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils**

**Report on Stage 3 Consultation  
March-April 2022**

**Scottish Community Development Centre  
27 April 2022**

# 1 Introduction

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West Dunbartonshire Council commissioned the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) to facilitate community engagement in the review of the West Dunbartonshire's existing 2015 Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils (the Scheme). This independent process complements the Council's own review of Community Councils support arrangements and is linked with ongoing implementation of the [West Dunbartonshire Community Empowerment Strategy and Action Plan](#).

There were 3 public consultation stages for review of the [existing Scheme](#):

1. **An initial 16 week consultation between 9<sup>th</sup> March and 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021 to gather views on boundaries and other issues for possible inclusion in the revised Scheme.** A report was presented to a Special Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021 with an initial draft Scheme of Establishment, which was approved by the Council for public consultation.
2. **A subsequent 16 week consultation between 31<sup>st</sup> August and 21<sup>st</sup> December 2021 on a draft Scheme and associated documents.** A number of draft documents were published for consultation and the results agreed at a Special Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council scheduled for 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022.
3. **A final 4 week consultation took place from the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022 to the 5<sup>th</sup> April to consider a final draft of the Scheme of Establishment.** The results will be presented to a special full Council meeting in late May 2022.

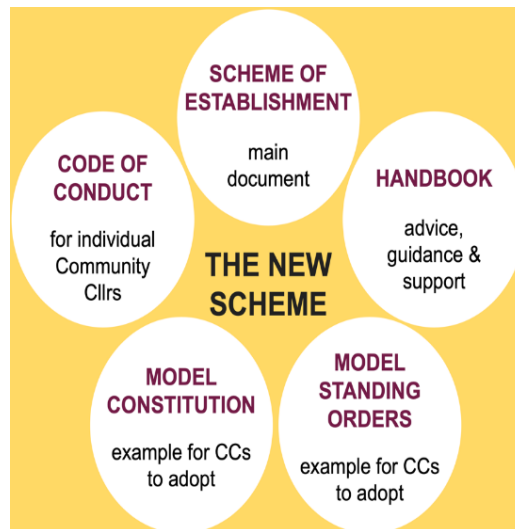
More detail about the overall review and versions of all of the Scheme documents as they developed during the first two stages are [available here](#).

**This report refers solely to the third stage of consultation.** The consultation documents shared for comment in the this final stage of the consultation are [available here](#).

## 2 The third stage of consultation

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The third of the three consultations built on the documents, revised as a result of the previous dialogue with relevant organisations and the general public, and also sought views on the new Handbook for Community Councils. The components of the overall Scheme are shown in the diagram below:



Once approved in 2022, the full Scheme document itself will be the overarching framework for the operation of Community Councils in West Dunbartonshire, incorporating the Code of Conduct, Model Constitution and Model Standing Orders as appendices. The Handbook will complement the Scheme with advice, guidance and support information, including links to examples of good practice in community engagement and planning.

Targeting for the third round of consultation was consistent with previous rounds and comprised of:

- **Opportunities for the general public to comment** – An updated [integrated webpage](#) was created about consultation to date, as a public information resource with links to relevant documents. Contact details for Communities team representatives and an SCDC team member were provided to support responses.
- **Community Councils** – Direct email contact was made with all active Community Councils inviting them to respond to the consultation. There were no written responses received during this phase.
- **‘Stronger Voices’ (SVG) group** – The third phase of consultation maintained contact with the wider group of stakeholders from equalities groups, young people’s organisations and other community led structures such as the West Dunbartonshire Tenants and residents organisation, the Community Alliance and Equalities forum. The method for doing so was focused on online sessions with representatives at the Stronger Voices Group. Although two of these were planned, only one was necessary in the end.

### 3 Overview of comments received

This part of the report provides a summary of responses received through the various engagement channels described above:

### **3.1 Public consultation**

As with all other phases of the consultation a public notice with opportunities to access all relevant documents was published in the press and online on the [Council website](#). Despite satisfying statutory requirements to raise awareness, no responses were received from members of the public. This may raise issues about the extent to which the local press remains a viable method of reaching local people and whether it may be time to extend this type of advertising via a fuller range of online, social media and other methods. Fortunately, key stakeholders have been reached and extensively engaged via other means.

### **3.2 ‘Stronger Voices’ group (SVG) session on SOE draft documents**

Below are the final points raised at the last SVG in March 2022. Attendance at the meeting was limited to members of Community Councils, however the discussion was very constructive with supportive comments rounding out some of the contents of the drafts. Significant numbers of the wider membership submitted their apologies but clearly did not feel the need to attend, nor did they take the opportunity to add anything to the published draft shared with them as individual organisations. Our analysis of this is that other groups engaged with feel that they have already made the points they wish to and that these have been incorporated into the developing drafts of the scheme. Consultation fatigue caused by the elongated timescale is another factor in this.

Following discussion with the SVG we would recommend that the final version of the scheme solidifies links between the Community Councils and the wider youth, equalities and access panel representatives who took part in the work. Proposals to do so have been made in general terms, but we suggest adding some more concrete prompts to ensure that these valuable connections to support community engagement are followed through.

Specific comments made a real contribution to the final thinking. They can be summarized as follows:

#### **Main Scheme Document**

Participants were broadly happy with this with the following additional observations.

#### ***Community Council Forum***

- There is need to further clarify the role of the Community Council Forum (CCF) as this was seen to be of central importance to the successful relaunch and operation of community councils. In particular the Scheme should help to describe:
  - How it functions to enable individuals CCs to work together to tackle wider issues which complement the roles of local CCs themselves.
  - There should be clear links to the CCFs own terms of ref, constitution etc. to ensure that its internal democracy is understood and that it is supported to be representative of the wider community council concerns. It was

acknowledged that the CCF role, remit and powers must be set by CCs reps and not pre-determined by the Council.

- Its current relatively weakened state was recognised as were its past challenges and these need to be addressed to make it the type of organisation needed to support the process.
- It was recognised that since the CCF is central to helping CCs deliver their functions that it should be well supported, including the possibility of securing its own independent resources for staffing and a central premises. This should be driven by its members in the longer term.
- This was particularly important to ensure that investment of volunteer time in the Forum built the collective effectiveness of the local CCs and did not take volunteer energy away from them. This was recognised as a difficult balance to achieve.
- The Scheme should state how the CCF is able to build on the rights of CCs to call senior officers from WDC and other CP partners to attend its meetings. This was deemed to be essential to enable CCs to raise, debate and seek improvements to services affecting the area as whole.
- The Scheme should make clear that it is important and should be an easy process to get appropriate officers to attend local CCs meetings when appropriate.

### ***Elections***

These points were made in relation to the main Scheme:

- The point on the timing of elections should be revised with the permitted proximity to other elections reduced to six months. This was in recognition that administrative reasons should not trump democratic accountability for community councils.
- Agreed electoral terms for CCs should be clear in the Scheme, with four years suggested as the norm at the meeting. It is this that should drive the timing of elections rather than the proximity of other elections as a key democratic principle.
- There was a view that closer proximity to other elections might actually enhance interest in the CC election process although it was recognized that it was not practical to hold them simultaneously.
- The need to strive for regular elections was viewed as a basis of the claim to statutory status. It was generally accepted that we should be pushing as hard as practically possible for electoral processes, though it should remain possible for the current approach to deliver functioning CCs where they were not.
- There is a need for some more clarification in the Scheme on the role of CCs in relation to licensing and planning matters relating to bookmakers and takeaway food outlets in addition to existing material on alcohol licenses.
- It was also suggested that there needs to be further clarity on the role of Local Place Plans and this should be included in the scheme.

***Model Constitution*** - There were no other comments in relation to the constitution with attendees content with the revised content.

**Standing Orders** - There were also no comments in relation to the standing orders

### ***Community Council Finance***

The fact that a meeting with finance colleagues had begun to look at revising some aspects of the financial support arrangements for CCs was welcomed, particularly,

- Greater transparency re. the budget for the CCF.
- A more flexible approach to auditing with the need for formal accountant input being removed.
- The potential for more flexibility in the way the terms of use of the admin grant were interpreted.

These points were generally welcomed, as was the commitment for further joint work with the CC forum on these issues. It was thought that these should be included in the Handbook. It was agreed that it would be helpful to explore other issues such as:

- Further exploration of insurance matters, particularly how the CCF/CCs are advised about issues of public liability. This is important as there are event based methods of consultation where such insurance is extremely important and therefore advice, support and additional funding may be needed to support CCs to carry out their statutory functions as effectively as possible.
- Flexibility on the admin grant was welcomed. It was felt that further agreement should be sought to open up this budget to allow for other potential development functions essential to the administration of CCs to be explicitly recognised. This could include the potential to support local events where the community council took the opportunity to consult the community on issues of local interest and concern therefore facilitating their core purpose through community engagement.
- It was felt to be useful to provide budget templates which could encourage CCs to think about the expenditure they need to:
  - Fulfill their core purpose. Including development funding to support community engagement
  - Allocate their admin grant accordingly.
  - Identify areas where they were not funded.
  - Seek additional funds, including from other sources, where required.

### ***The Scheme handbook***

- The development of the handbook and its content was welcomed as a resource that helps support CCs in how to do deliver their functions more effectively build confidence amongst CC members and in the wider community.
- It was suggested that due to its size it should be a primarily web based document which helped users navigate the scheme as a whole. It should make use of active links between sections to ease navigation and also to relevant external documents

known to be updated when required. It should also be split into digestible downloadable sections for those who need to access hard copies.

- It was suggested that it should also be produced in a loose leaf folder version as well as online, which would avoid digital exclusion amongst those who do not find it easy to access web based resources and still be easier to update.
- It was agreed that CCs should send examples of local engagement practice to the Communities team and these should be added to the handbook webpages to share best practice on an ongoing basis.

### **3.3 Boundaries**

The first stage of consultation reported on a number of potential boundary changes and further discussion with community councils proposing these took place in stage two. Stage three had a separate online survey on these changes to ensure that they were available for public comment. Results are reproduced in appendix one. There were 19 responses in total, though this is also likely to include Community Councils themselves.

The consultation supported the recommendation of all proposals except the change in boundary between Dumbarton East and Central / Silverton and Overtoun CCs. After local consideration this was no longer supported by the proposers themselves because of the impact on membership and therefore viability of the Dumbarton East and Central CC.

A proposal for the proposed move of the small area by River Leven from Alexandria CC to Balloch CC is also recommended for approval. The rationale for this is to align Community Council boundaries with planning authority boundaries between the Council and the National Park. This will make it simpler for the Community Council and Planning Authorities to deal with planning issues. No residents live in the small area which is proposed to be transferred. The only premises are occupied by the Angling Club, Rowing Club and an electricity sub-station.

## 4 Conclusions

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The consultation process has met its objectives in terms of the statutory requirements of the Scheme review process, but also the Councils broader aims to assist Community Councils in the collective endeavour of achieving greater community empowerment for local communities in line with the Community Empowerment Strategy and Action Plan.

- It has enabled the role and remit of Community Councils to be modernised and linked to contemporary legislative and policy frameworks which will hopefully enhance their influence with a wider range of local Community Planning partners.
- It has revisited what the Council and Community Planning Partners should do to help make this a reality and not simply a policy aspiration.
- It has enabled Community Councils to revisit how they could be more representative of their communities and what support they will require in order to do this.
- It also enabled other community stakeholders representing equalities groups, young people and others to propose constructive suggestions for how Community Councils could be strengthened and operate alongside other community organisations. This will help to build community resilience, local solidarity and increase influence locally.
- The process achieved significant, ongoing engagement from Community Councils to make the case for modernisation and partnership relationships essential to success.
- It helped co-design a menu of support that the groups are clear must be met if they are to fulfil the role and remit emerging from this review. This must be actively resourced if CCs acting in a voluntary capacity are to be able to deliver it.

### Additional Learning

Engaging the wider public was not a successful aspect of the engagement processes as doing so through the lens of complicated legal documents is never likely to succeed. To engage the public with a vision for community empowerment and mechanisms in WDC should be an ongoing aim for the Community Empowerment Strategy and this link is now explicit in the Scheme.

The process followed the Statutory Framework for reviewing Schemes, however went much further, engaging more voices in more aspects of the work than is usually the case. The timing of this review is useful as it will allow the council and local communities to add a distinctive voice to thinking about the national review of Schemes for the Establishment of Community Councils, which is ongoing at the moment. However, the existing statutory consultation process is quite old-fashioned, and seems likely to be reformed this year.

The Council's decision to extend timescales increased the scope for involvement but was constrained to some degree by the national three stage process. The combination of the two has led to a very long process where a degree of consultation fatigue set in around the final phase. A shorter process with more use of modern communication techniques (e.g. online and social media) might be more effective in future. It is also unlikely that there will be a need for such a fundamental review when the scheme is next due to be reviewed in 2027.



## **Appendix 1**

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### **WDC CCs boundaries consultation March-April 2022 Report of survey responses**

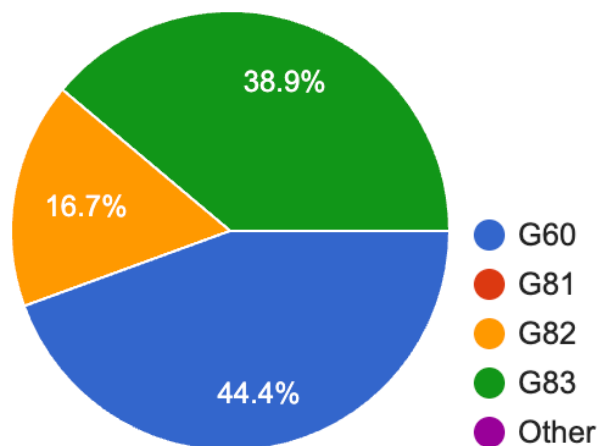
19th April 2022

#### **Introduction**

1. The online survey was open to the public for 4 weeks, closing on 5th April 2022.
2. Eight responses were received by that deadline.
3. To enable further responses, the survey was left open for late responses until 19th April 2022.
4. A further 11 responses were received during that additional fortnight, making 19 responses in total.
5. This report summarises all 19 responses.

#### **Place of residence of respondents**

**Question: before you start, please tell us the first half of your postcode**  
(18 of 19 respondents replied)

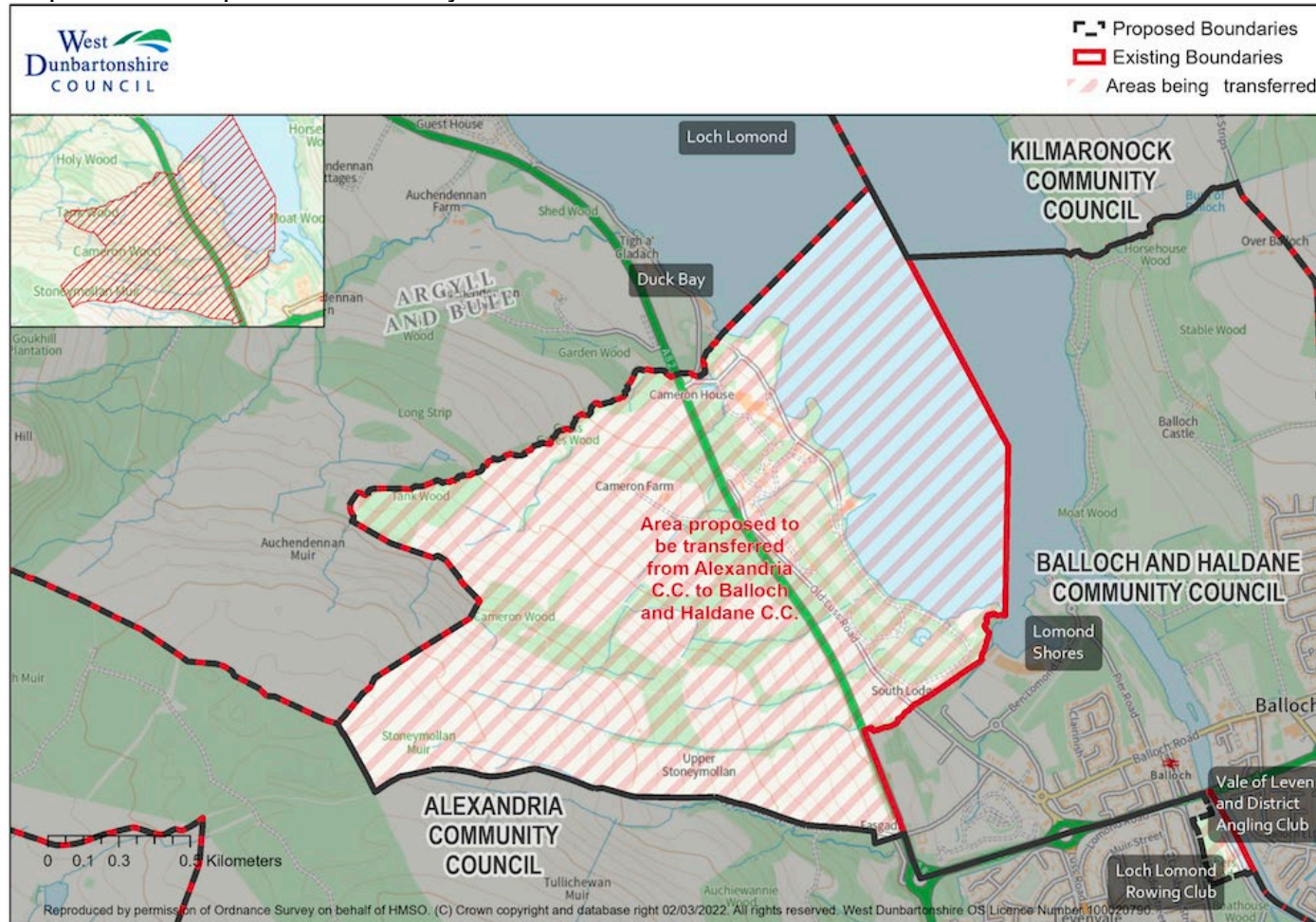


All respondents lived in West Dunbartonshire postcode areas:

G60	Old Kilpatrick, Bowling	8 respondents
G81	Clydebank	0 respondents
G82	Dumbarton, Milton, Renton (and Cardross)	3 respondents
G83	Alexandria, Balloch, Gartocharn (and west bank of Loch Lomond)	7 respondents

# 1: West Balloch

Map that accompanied the survey:



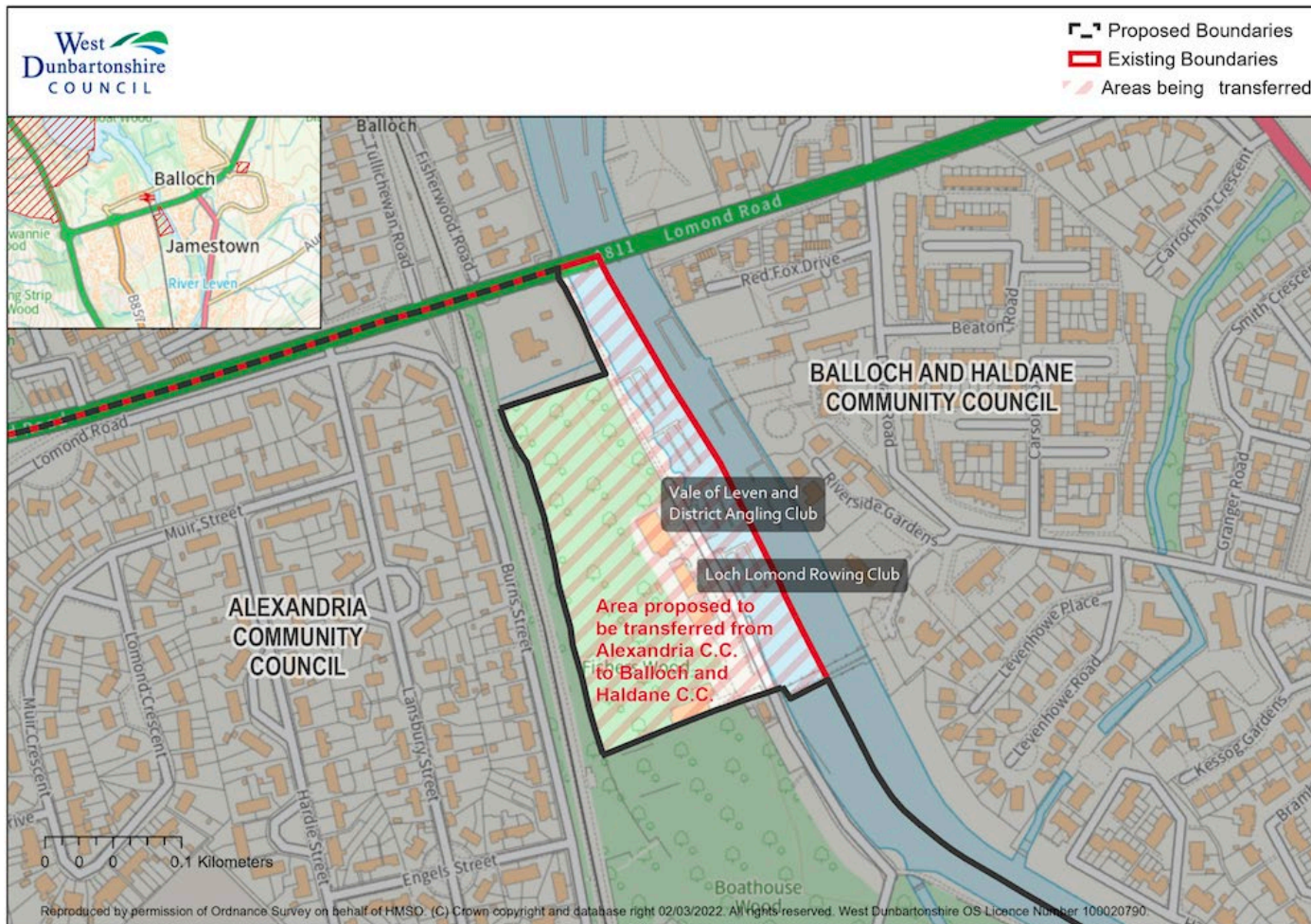
Question: do you agree with this proposed change?

Agree	8
Disagree	0
Don't know / doesn't affect me / no response	11

**Question: If you answered 'no', please tell us why...**

0 response

## 2: Balloch - by River Leven



**Question: do you agree with this proposed change?**

Agree	4
Disagree	2
Don't know / doesn't affect me / no response	13

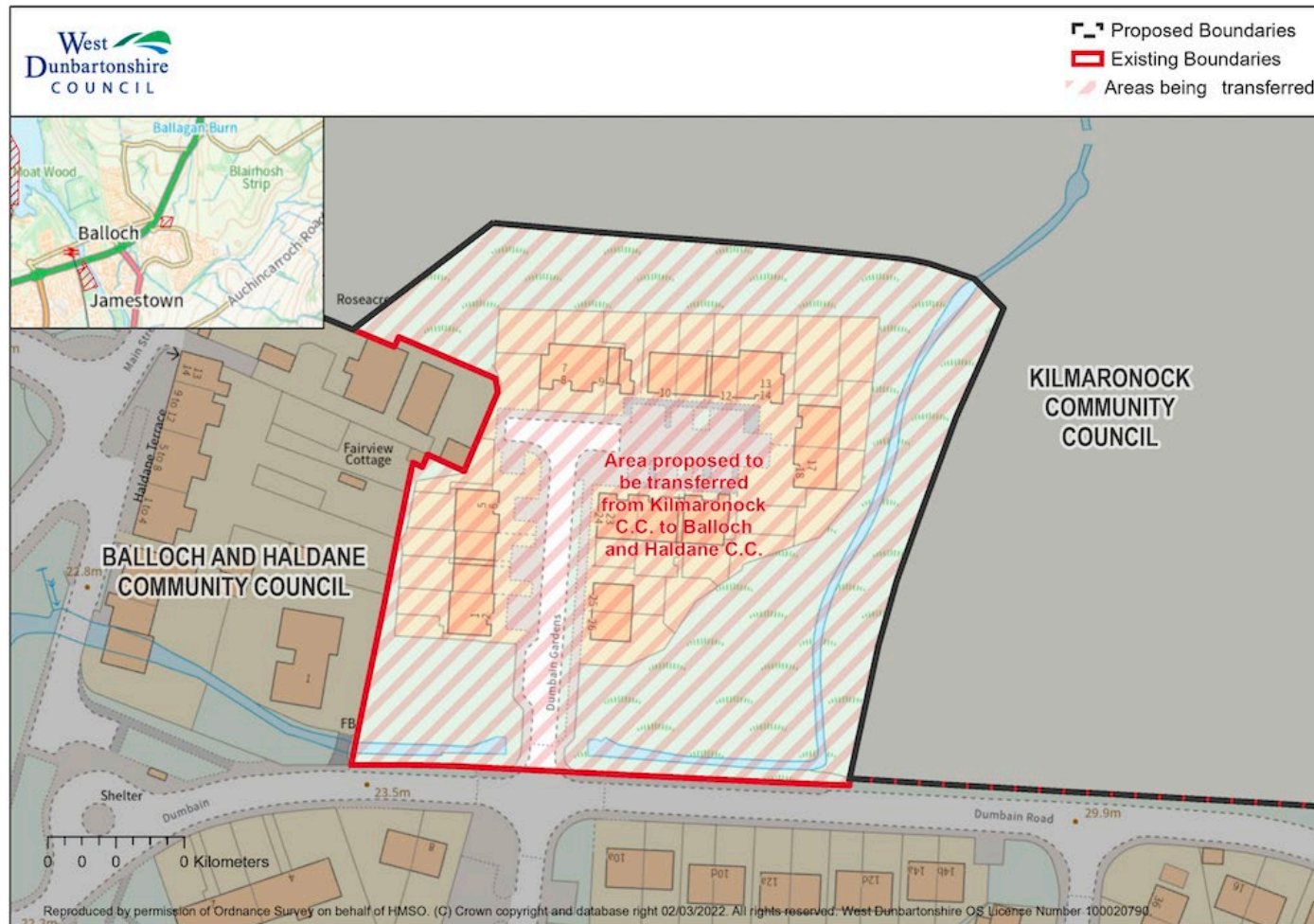
**Question: If you answered 'no', please tell us why...**

1 response: *"makes no sense. That area is on the western bank of Leven and is quite clearly part of Alexandria. There must be some reason .... perhaps if that reason was given then I might be persuaded."*

NB: the reason for the proposed change is to align Community Council boundaries with planning authority boundaries, to make it simpler for the Community Council and planning authorities to deal with planning issues. No residents live in the small area which is proposed to be transferred. The only premises are occupied by the Angling Club, Rowing Club and an electricity sub-station.



### 3. East Balloch (Haldane)



**Question: do you agree with this proposed change?**

Agree	7
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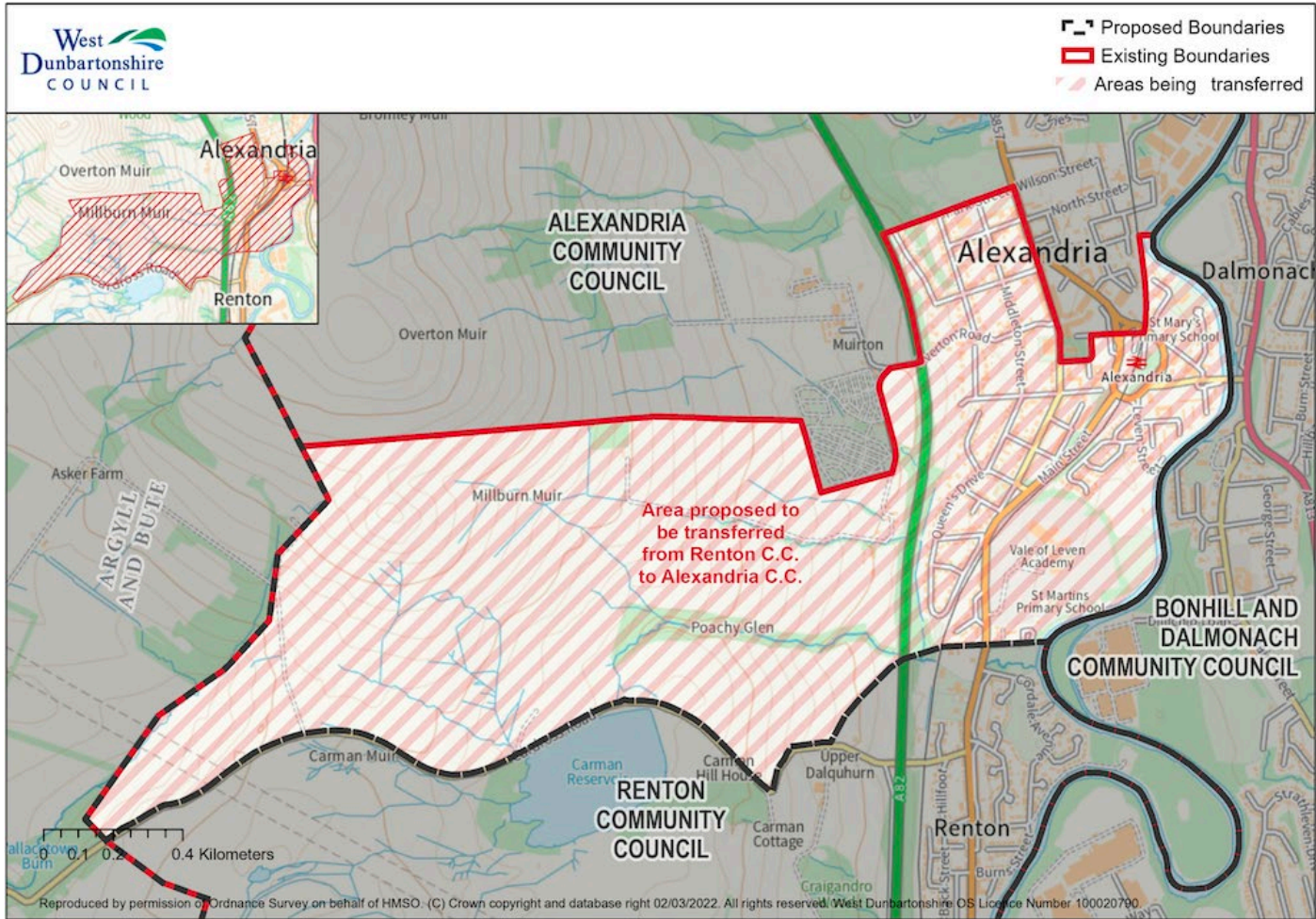
Disagree	0
Don't know / doesn't affect me / no response	12

**Question: If you answered 'no', please tell us why...**

0 responses.



#### 4. Alexandria / Renton



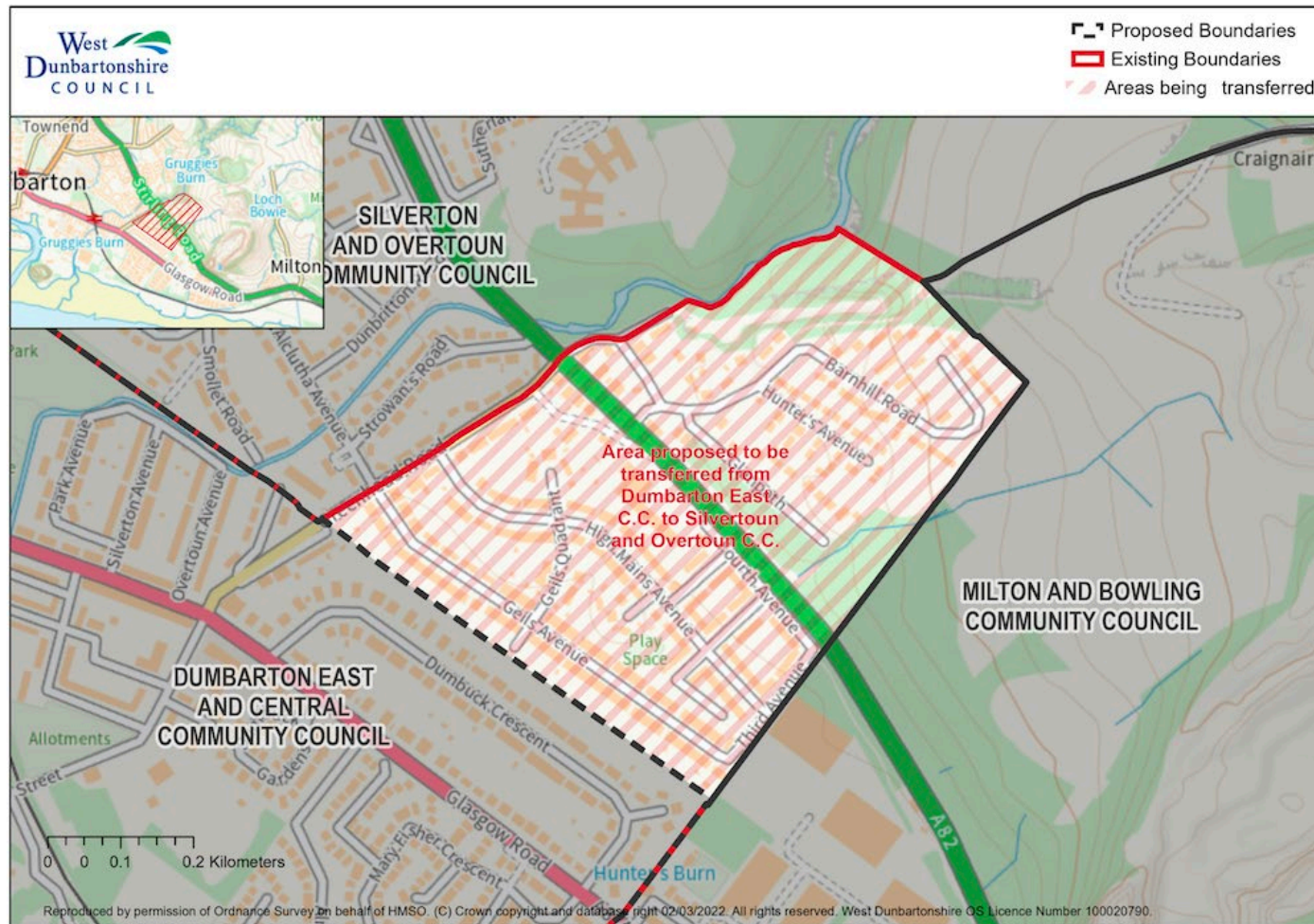
**Question: do you agree with this proposed change?**

Agree	5
Disagree	0
Don't know / doesn't affect me / no response	14

**Question: If you answered 'no', please tell us why...**

0 responses.

## 5. East Dumbarton



**Question: do you agree with this proposed change?**

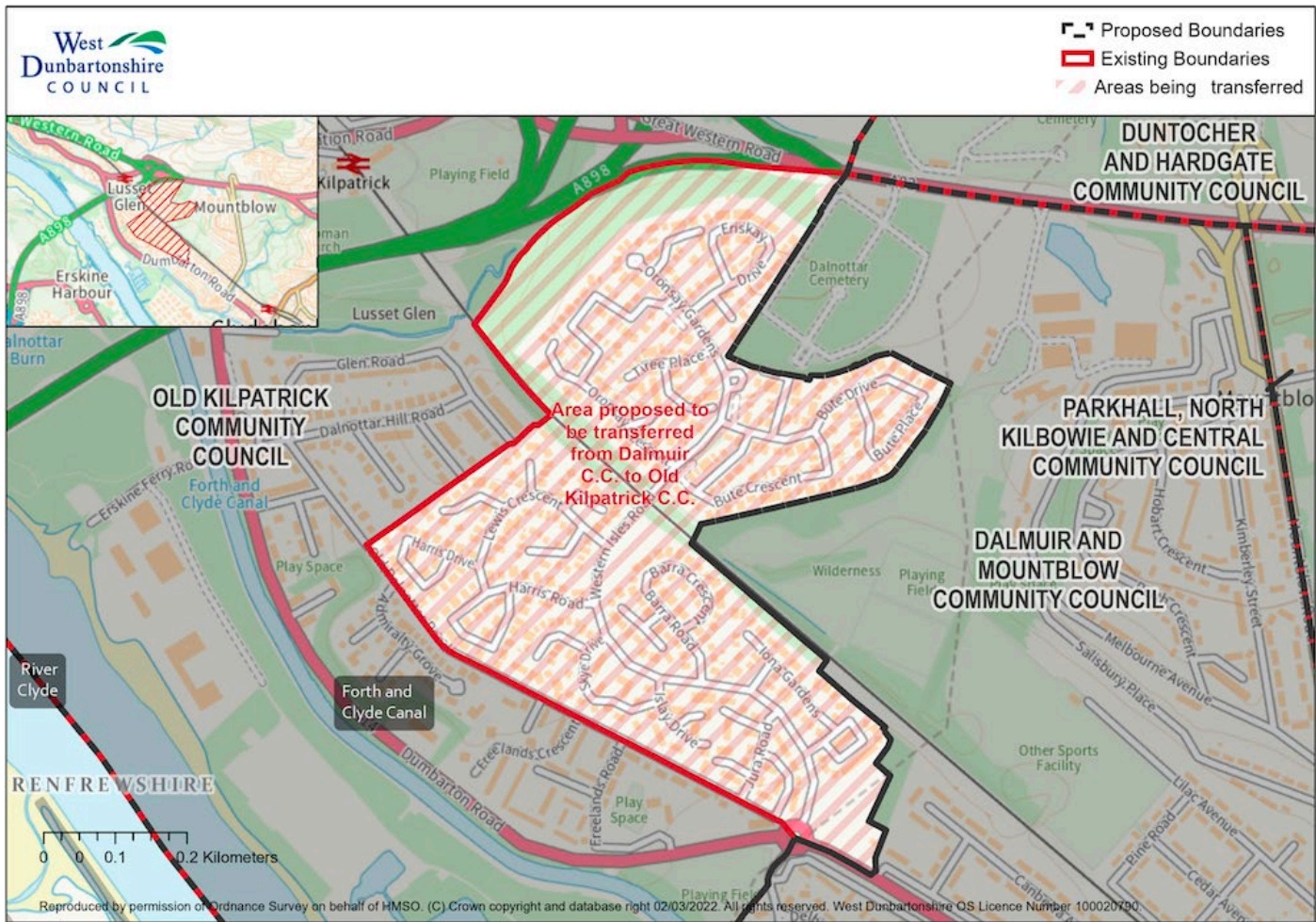
Agree	4
Disagree	3
Don't know / doesn't affect me / no response	12

**Question: If you answered 'no', please tell us why...**

1. *"If this marked area is taken from Dumbarton East & Central Comm Council and transferred to Silverton and Overtoun CC, Dumbarton East & Central CC would lose two of its members and this would undoubtedly mean that our Community Council would cease to exist as it is quite impractical to get new members for DECCC - believe me we have tried for years! This is a fact, we will not survive as a Community Council if this change takes place."*
2. *"I originally thought it made more sense for this area to be part of SOCC but having talked to DECC who would lose 2 Community Councillors I think it should stay as it is."*
3. *"I'm a member of DECCC and stay in the Affected area along with another member. If this was to go through then my community council would no longer exist as they wouldn't have enough members. We never proposed this change and have never agreed with it. If it does go through I have no intention of joining the other community council. So I strongly recommend that this is rejected."*



## 6. Old Kilpatrick / Dalmuir



**Question: do you agree with this proposed change?**

Agree	13
Disagree	0
Don't know / doesn't affect me / no response	6

**Question: If you answered 'no', please tell us why...**0 responses.

### **Any final comments?**

1. *"Most of the changes seem to have some logic ... the only reason to shift the rowing club and angling club to Balloch ( though they aint Balloch) would be to include them in any conversation on water sports but surely that can be facilitated in some other way. Geographically it is a nonsense."*
1. *"As Secretary of Dumbarton East & Central Comm Council, I can only, and have only, commented on the area of this Community Council but have made the issues clear."*

*"This change should have been made a long time ago."* [refers to proposed change no.6: Old Kilpatrick / Dalmuir]