

West Dunbartonshire Council

Report by Chief Executive

Community Participation Committee – Wednesday 21st April, 2004

Subject: Proposals for the Membership, Operation and Development of the Community Participation Committee (CPC)

1. Purpose of Report

This report puts forward proposals for the membership, operation and development of the Community Participation Committee and invites comments and feedback on these proposals.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council has a responsibility to develop meaningful ways of involving our communities in decision-making about our services and the policies that shape them.
- 2.2 We recognise this involvement as necessary for improving services and offering them in ways that meet the needs of people using these services in West Dunbartonshire.
- 2.3 Central Government is directing local authorities to do this through the legislation set out in the Local Government Etc (Scotland) Act 1994 regarding Decentralisation and in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 regarding Best Value, Community Planning and community regeneration.
- 2.4 West Dunbartonshire Council has set up the Community Participation Committee as a key mechanism for providing a link between our communities and the Council.
- 2.5 The membership, role and remit of the committee has been examined as part of the review of the Decentralisation Scheme. (The process used is described in more detail in the report on the revised Decentralisation Scheme.)
- 2.6 This report sets out the findings of the review with regard to the CPC, and makes recommendations about future action.

3. Main Issues

3.1 *Role in Wider Agendas/Processes*

The review has highlighted the need for all agencies to work together on ensuring that structures complement one another and avoid duplication. All partners should work together to achieve coherent processes. This indicates

that the membership, role and remit of the CPC should be considered as part of this process.

It is proposed that the CPC should have an advisory role in the public involvement/community representation aspects of the SIP / Community Planning integration process.

3.2 *Role in Council Decision Making Processes*

The CPC should have a meaningful role. Feedback from the community representatives indicates they want to influence decision-making. They are not interested in taking part in a 'talking shop'.

3.3 This requires systems for views from the community to feed into the appropriate decision-making body within the Council. It also requires mechanisms to ensure monitoring and feedback on how and why decisions have been reached.

3.4 While the review identified a broad, strategic role for the CPC, it also highlighted the fact that the CPC cannot be the sole mechanism for involving the community. We also need to develop further our processes for involving people in decision making about direct service provision. The CPC is not a sufficiently direct mechanism for achieving this.

It is proposed that we consider both ways of developing the role of the CPC within the Council's decision making processes, and consider a range of other systems for community involvement.

3.5 *Specific Feedback from Consultation*

A questionnaire on the membership, role and remit of the CPC was sent to over 400 community groups and posted on the Council's website. 32 responses were received. Appendix 1 sets out the responses.

3.6 *Role and Remit of the CPC*

The broad role and remit as set out by Council was largely endorsed in the responses to the questionnaire, and was also recognised as valid by the review groups.

- 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 consider comments and suggestions from community based organisations about Council services – this perhaps doesn't go far enough and should be developed as "to promote and monitor community representation and public involvement in service department decision-making processes, through council committees and other relevant structures"

Additionally, the review process identified two further functions for the CPC.

- "To act as an advisory body on the processes around the development of public involvement/community representation structures in the SIP/Community Planning integration process".
- To act as an information provider and recipient on matters of interest and relevance to the community

It is proposed that these functions should form the remit of the CPC.

3.7 Membership

The review highlighted a variety of views on the community membership of the CPC. Some support was expressed for more representation for smaller, individual groups. However, the majority view was that the larger interest groups and forums should have representation. Appendix 1 outlines the responses from the questionnaire. According to this, places could be allocated in a number of ways. The following suggestions attempt to reflect the most widely held views:

Option One

Community Councils Forum	2
Tenants & Residents Federations	2
Elderly forums	2
Youth Forums	2*
Disability Forums (x2)	4
Community Care Forum	2
SIP Community Forums	6
West Dunbartonshire Access Panel	1
Minority Ethnic Association	1
Neighbourhood Forums (x3)	6
Individual Community Groups (on a rota basis)	2

This would give 30 Community representatives. With 10 elected members this seems too large for a workable committee.

*responding to points about a single young person feeling out of place

Option 2

Community Councils Forum	2
Tenants & Residents Federations	2
Elderly forums	1
Youth Forums	2*
Community Care Forum	1

SIP Community Forums (x3)	3
West Dunbartonshire Access Panel (representing the disability fora)	2
Minority Ethnic Association	1
Neighbourhood Forums (x3)	3
Individual community groups (on a rota basis)	2

*responding to points about a single young person feeling out of place

This would make a total of 19 community representatives – a committee of 29 members

Option 3

Community Councils Forum	2
Tenants & Residents Federations	2
Elderly forums	1
Youth Forums	2*
Community Care Forum	1
SIP Community Forums	1
West Dunbartonshire Access Panel (representing the disability fora)	1
Minority Ethnic Association	1
Neighbourhood Forums (on a rota basis)	1
Individual community groups (on a rota basis)	2

*responding to points about a single young person feeling out of place

This would make a total of 14 places for community representatives and 24 places in total, increasing the current number by two, but slightly changing the composition.

Each of the above options would include new representation of SIP community forums and of minority ethnic communities.

Some feedback was received indicating that young people may prefer to be represented through other structures e.g. the Childrens' Services Committee or in other ways (as opposed to coming to meetings). This requires further examination.

If the committee were to seek delegated powers of any kind, the number of community representatives with voting rights would be governed by local government legislation – 2 elected members to every 1 community representative. The structures could be organised to have a breadth of community representation including a limited number of voting representatives – this could be arranged in a number of ways, including on a rota basis.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 The committee is asked to recommend to Council proposals in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.6 (the role and remit of the committee).
- 4.2 The committee is asked to identify a preferred option (see paragraph 3.7.) for membership (or amended option) and recommend the preferred option to Council. In doing so, the committee is asked to note that the community and voluntary decentralisation review group expressed a preference for option 2.
- 4.3 The committee is invited to raise any further issues in relation to the above.

Tim Huntingford
Chief Executive

Person to contact: Anne Clegg, Policy Officer, Community & Consultation, tel.7177
Liz Cochrane, Policy Manager, Policy Unit, tel. 7271