

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by Chief Officer Housing & Employability****West Dunbartonshire Council Special Meeting: 23 February 2022**

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**Subject: Review of Scheme for Establishment for Community Councils.**

**1 Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to update on the second phase of consultation on the Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils which ran for 16 weeks from 31 August until 21 December 2021 and outline the proposals for phase three.

**2. Recommendations****2.1** It is recommended that members:

- Review the findings of the second phase of consultation, as outlined in SCDC report at Appendix 1;
- Approve draft Scheme, Draft Constitution and Standing orders
- Approve the proposals for stage 3 consultation to conclude the process and finalise the new updated Scheme for the Establishment of Community councils; and
- Note the amended timescales to conclude the process in May and hold the Community Council elections in October 2022, following the local elections in May.

**3 Background**

**3.1** At a Special Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 24 February 2021, Council approved the proposals to review the current Scheme of Establishment. The consultation is being carried out in three phases in line with legislation and guidance. The first two phases of consultation were both extended to 16 weeks by Council. It is recommended that the final stage is kept to the statutory four weeks to conclude the process.

**3.2** The Scheme review has coincided with restarting community conversations on empowerment, as part of the West Dunbartonshire Community Empowerment Strategy (2019) with key priority projects now being taken forward as part of the first year of the Delivery Plan. These conversations have been valuable and will continue. In some cases they have led to interest in establishing new Community Councils in a couple of areas where there are currently none operating.

- 3.3** During the first two consultation phases there have been various opportunities for community councils, anchor organisations, wider community groups, forums and community members to input. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions most of the engagement has been carried out online. A Stronger Voices group was established for the purpose of the review to include representatives from equalities and other groups in addition to the Community Council Forum.
- 3.4** The second phase of consultation has delivered the following:
- Community workshops – two online workshops were held in November 2021;
  - Community Council Forum – online session held in October 2021;
  - Direct contact with individual community councils;
  - Community groups in areas with no community councils;
  - Stronger voices group – two online meetings were held; and
  - Elected members session held in November 2021.
- 3.5** Further details of the key themes and findings from these consultations can be found in the Stage 2 Consultation report in Appendix 1.

## **4. Main Issues**

- 4.1** The second stage of consultation built on many of the themes identified in stage one. The four key themes were:
- Engaging and representing your community (including membership, equality & diversity);
  - Influencing the Council and Community Planning Partners;
  - Working collaboratively with other local groups; and
  - Administration and support.
- 4.2** A dedicated web page was set up to allow access to the first draft of the Scheme, Model Constitution, Standing orders and a draft Handbook. The handbook is to provide more detailed guidance for community councils in a more accessible format which can be updated more readily than the Scheme.
- 4.3** In each of the sessions there was more detailed discussion on the key themes noted above and an opportunity to discuss the draft documents. A number of new themes and recommendations emerged which are summarised in the report at Appendix 1. The key overarching themes were:
- Community councils are voluntary organisations made up of people with other commitments and therefore require to be supported to meet their potential;
  - Arrangements to support community councils need to be clear, with clear lines of communication with council services and anticipated response times.

- The link with empowerment legislation and the Community Empowerment Strategy is important, as is the role of the Community Council forum and Community Alliance.
- Relationships between community councils and statutory and other partners need to be further developed to allow them to succeed in their goals and make change happen.

**4.4** One detailed formal submission was received from ACAN, who represent some groups in Alexandria and are interested in establishing a community council. This contained many detailed recommendations and similar themes which emerged from the wider consultation. A representative from ACAN was invited to take part in the Stronger Voices group in January 2022, to further input and shape the final documents. The ACAN submission also included a boundary proposal which will be included in the final consultation on boundaries in Phase Three.

**4.5** Based on the findings from this consultation further drafts of the Scheme, Model Constitution and Standing orders have been produced at Appendix Three. It is also worth noting that a national review of the Model Scheme is currently underway and there should be scope to make any necessary amendments required once this process is completed.

## **Next Steps**

### **Proposals for Phase 3**

**5.1** Following approval by Council, the following steps are proposed to complete the review:

- The drafts of the Scheme, Model Constitution and Standing orders are made available for final consultation and comment. Stronger Voices Group will act as a key conduit to finalise the drafts;
- Boundary proposals are publicised for final comment before being incorporated into the final draft Scheme (see further detail below);
- Community council Handbook is co-produced with the Stronger Voices Group with support provided by the Communities Team and SCDC;
- Final drafts of all documents are presented for approval at a Special Council Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022; and
- Timescales for Community Council Election are finalised by Committee Services later in 2022.

**5.2** Final stage boundary consultation. To build on the findings from the first and second consultation on boundaries:

- Issues maps to all CCs clearly showing the proposed changes and giving an opportunity to comment.
- Compare with other boundaries such as those of the HSCP and National Park Authority.

- Publish an online consultation with the final proposed changes/ boundaries.
- Finalise the boundaries and produce maps for approval by Council with the final Scheme and appendices.

## **6 People Implications**

- 6.1** The process is led by the Communities Team, working closely with the consultants and key community stakeholders. Officers from Legal, Finance and Committee Services are fully engaged in the process.

## **7 Financial & Procurement Implications**

- 7.1** There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The review will be concluded utilising existing service budgets. Consideration should however be given to actions arising from the review and consultation processes, and any associated costs.

## **8 Risk Analysis**

- 8.1** Developing and supporting Community Councils is a key part of the Council's approach to Community Empowerment, as laid out in the Community Empowerment Strategy. Failure to review the Scheme using the correct process could have a negative impact on the reputation of the Council.

## **9 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 9.1** An equalities impact assessment has been updated throughout the process and a final version will be produced for approval with the final drafts. The review is being carried out as an inclusive process working closely with the Equalities Forum and other key stakeholders and seeking to engage with a wide range of residents including those who are seldom heard in local communities. A copy of the EIA as it currently stands is included at Appendix Four.

## **10 Consultation**

- 10.1** The consultation process is ongoing with the plans for the 3<sup>rd</sup> round as outlined above.

## **11 Strategic Assessment**

- 11.1** The review of the Scheme is being carried out in a manner 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.

**Peter Barry, Chief Officer Housing and Employability  
West Dunbartonshire Council**

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**Appendices:** Appendix 1 – Report on Stage 2 Consultation, March - June 2021  
Appendix 2 – Draft Scheme of Establishment  
Appendix 3 - Draft Model Constitution, Code of Conduct & Standing Orders  
Appendix 4 – Equality Impact Assessment

**Background Papers:** Review of the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils, Special Council: 24 February 2021, and 26 August 2021.

**Wards Affected:** All

