

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

NORTHERN LOCAL COMMUNITY PLANNING FORUM - 31 MAY 2007

A REVIEW OF EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL'S DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Report by Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present for the information of Committee, proposals to develop community engagement within East Ayrshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 East Ayrshire Council has, since its inception, kept its decision-making structure under constant review. The Council's decision-making structure has been based on a traditional service-specific system with majority of Committees linked to the work of individual Service Departments. The structure has also provided for decentralised decision-making through three Local Planning Committees and a system of seven Local Committee areas.
- 2.2 The Council as part of its improvement plan and supported by the Accounts Commission in its report on the audit of East Ayrshire Council agreed to a review of its own political and management structure and to further develop the Council's scrutiny arrangements.
- 2.3 The Council at its statutory meeting on 17 May 2007 agreed to introduce a cabinet decision-making structure together with governance and scrutiny functions. Due to the importance of the Community Plan within East Ayrshire, the Cabinet business will be structured on a thematic approach focusing on Community Planning themes, aspirations and aims in terms of:-
- improving opportunities;
 - improving the environment;
 - promoting community safety;
 - improving health;
 - eliminating poverty; and
 - promoting community learning.

3. STRENGTHENING LINKS WITH COMMUNITY PLANNING STRUCTURES

- 3.1 The Council considers that it is important to strengthen the links between its own decision-making structure and the Community Planning structure. A great deal of consideration has been given to this particular issue and it has been concluded that it is necessary still to have a separate Community Planning decision-making structure, greatly refined and this is being pursued

through the Community Planning Partnership, but with stronger links to the Council's political decision-making structures.

3.2 This requires to be achieved at three particular levels:-

3.2.1 Operational - it is suggested that the Council might wish to consider the integration of local committees (perhaps in a reduced number to accommodate the new multi-member ward boundaries) with our Local Community and Voluntary Groups, Community Planning Federations and operational representation from Community Planning Partners.

3.2.2 In respect of this the Council might also wish to consider the potential for each of the Council's 3 Executive Directors to undertake the role of local community champion for each of the respective 3 areas.

3.2.3 Strategic - There also requires to be a link with the Council as the Lead Partner of the East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership at a strategic level. The Thematic Model lends itself to reporting on the performance and outcomes of the Council and its Partners against each of the community plan themes, aims and aspirations and action plans including also the performance of projects funded through the Community Regeneration Fund which, given its nature, should report to the Management and Resources Committee. A similar approach can be achieved through the Streamlined Service Specific Model and equally the Cabinet/Executive would be in a position to receive reports on performance and outcomes against the Community Plan.

3.2.4 Scrutiny - The development of strong and robust scrutiny arrangements as detailed within this report will provide a further platform for Member scrutiny of Community Planning activities and further strengthen links between the Council's decision making structure and Community Planning structures.

4. DEVELOPING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND LINKS WITH THE COUNCIL'S AND COMMUNITY PLANNING STRUCTURES

4.1 The Local Committee network formed the main plank of the Council's decentralised decision making structure. The existing Local Committee network comprised of seven Local Committees which covered specific geographical areas based on the former 32 Wards of East Ayrshire Council. Following the review of Ward boundaries and the introduction of larger multi-Member Wards, the structure of Local Committees requires to be reviewed. Further, it is suggested that there is an opportunity to develop the role of any new Local Committees to maximise community involvement in Community Planning and Council/Partner Agency services.

5. NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

5.1 East Ayrshire Council and its Community Planning partners have agreed to implement the National Standards for Community Engagement, in order to ensure that community engagement is carried out consistently and to the highest possible standards.

- 5.2** The National Standards for Community Engagement have been developed by the Scottish Executive with the involvement of over 500 people from communities and agencies throughout Scotland. The Standards are a practical tool to help improve the experience of all participants involved in community engagement to achieve the highest quality of process and results.
- 5.3** The Standards set out the following 10 Statements of Commitment that are designed to help develop and support better working relationships between communities and agencies delivering public services.

Involvement: we will identify and involve the people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement.

Support: we will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement.

Planning: we will gather evidence of need and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken.

Methods: we will agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.

Working Together: we will agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently.

Sharing Information: we will ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants.

Working with Others: we will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement.

Improvement: we will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants.

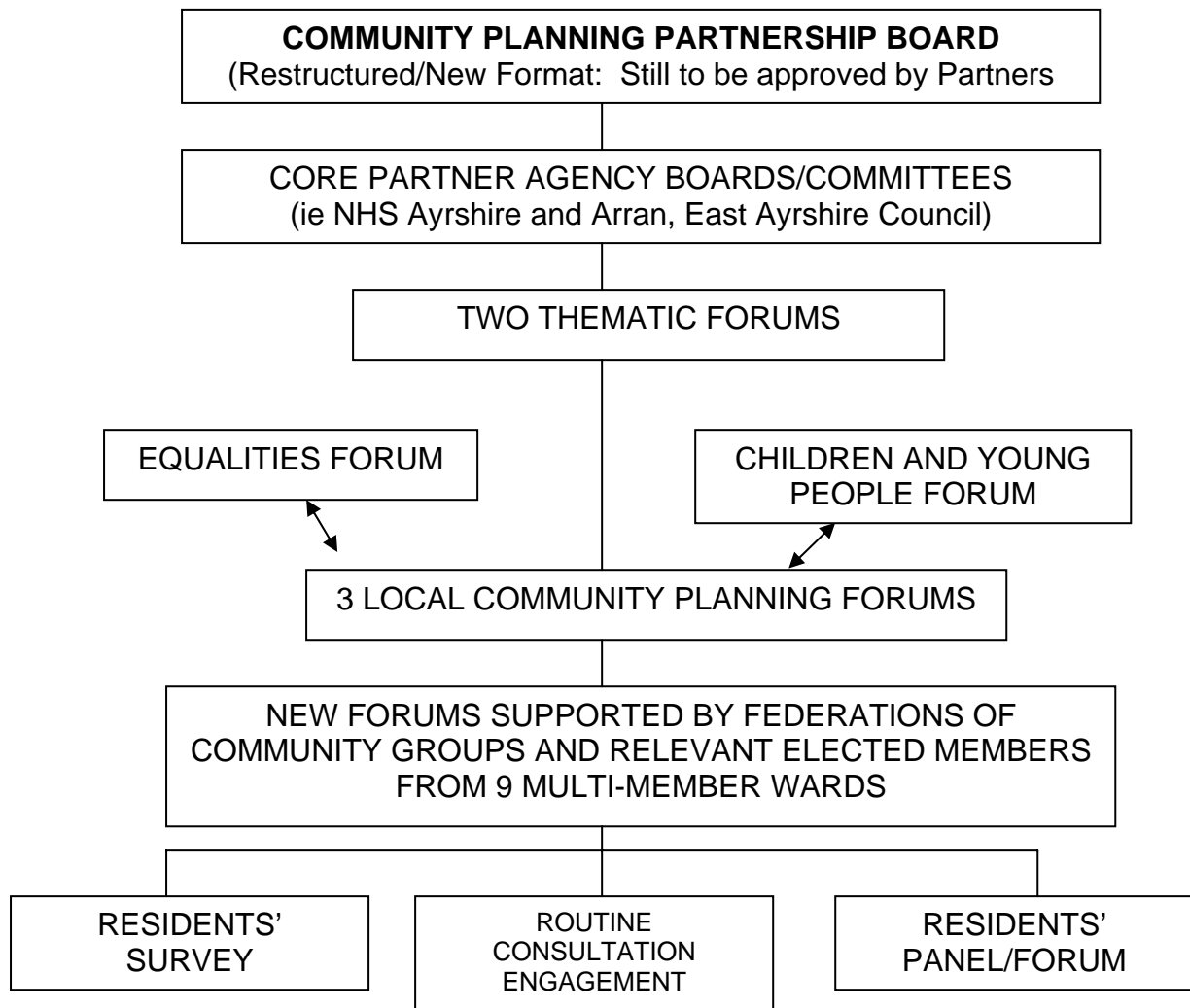
Feedback: we will feed back the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected

Monitoring and Evaluation: we will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and meets the national standards for community engagement

6. LOCAL COMMUNITY PLANNING FORUMS

- 6.1** It is considered that the reconfiguration of Local Committee areas to take cognisance of the new multi-Member Wards will provide the opportunity for the development of three Local Community Planning Forums to ensure effective community engagement in setting and influencing local/strategic priorities and improving service delivery and development.

6.2 Possible Structure



7. EVENTS/THEMED MEETINGS

- 7.1** The format of meetings of each Local Community Planning Forum would be flexible and provide for the opportunity to arranged themed events/meetings. For example, each Local Community Planning Forum could meet five times per financial year and two of these meetings could be events/themed meetings.
- 7.2** Prior to the start of each financial year, an exercise would be carried out with each Local Community Planning Forum to assist them to identify their priority issued for discussion/that year. The Local Community Planning Forum “Champion” (relevant Executive Director with appropriate Officer support) would then assume responsibility for working up a proposal paper on how best these issues are dealt with, for example: individually within each Local Community Planning Forum; in conjunction with the other Community Planning Forums if they have identified similar issues; by the preparation of a discussion paper; or by organising a themed event/meeting. The themed event/meeting could be organised where representatives wished to discuss a

particular issue, for example, anti-social behaviour, health or housing. The event could be organised for one or more Forums depending on the relevance of the theme. In addition, the event could be broadened out to include representatives of the wider community.

Example: anti-social behaviour

- Joint presentation by colleagues from Strathclyde Police, Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team and Leisure Services to demonstrate the proactive work being carried out.
- Opportunity for questions
- Opportunity for discussion and debate within Forum/Partnership Working Groups
- Identification of key issues and way ahead
- Key issues submitted to relevant Committee/Board for consideration/action, for example Improving Community Safety Working Group, Council Department, relevant Council decision making body and Community Planning Partnership Board.
- Report progress back to relevant Forum.

7.3 The model is based similar to the annual consultation seminar for Community Representatives but much tighter in timescale and overall organisation.

8. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

8.1 The development of Local Community Planning Forums would provide for the significant resources both in time and officer participation already invested to be more effectively targeted and better focussed. Such issues would cover greater co-ordination, planning and development role for staff across all partners and would cover:

- Community Planning partners would require to sign up to process
- Reduced number of groups to service
- Clarity of purpose/Terms of Reference would be required
- Balance of Elected Member and Community/Partner Agency involvement required
- Forum Champions would be required
- Significant work/negotiation to establish three Federations
- Training and development role for participants on Forum/Partnerships would be required.

8.2 The Council has agreed to remit to the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support to develop an Officer Working Group to progress the initiative with a view for its introduction from 1 April 2008. This timescale will provide for appropriate consultation with existing stakeholders including Community Representatives. A final report will be submitted back to Elected Members at an appropriate meeting prior to 1 April 2008. In addition the Review Group would also give consideration to the operation of existing Forums within any new arrangements which would include the Better

Government for Older People, Women's Forums, Ethnic Minorities Forum, Disability Forum and the Community Safety Forum.

9. NEW LOCAL COMMUNITY PLANNING FORUMS

9.1 East Ayrshire Council has agreed in principle to the development of three Local Community Planning Forums as follows:-

| <u>New Forum</u> | <u>Wards Covered</u> | <u>Number of Elected Members</u> | <u>Area Covered</u> |
|---|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Northern Local Community Planning Forum | 1- Annick and 6 - Irvine Valley | 7 | Lugton, Dunlop, Stewarton, Kilmaurs and surrounding landward areas. Fenwick, Waterside, Moscow, Galston, Newmilns and Darvel Areas |
| Central Local Community Planning Forum | 2 - Kilmarnock North, 3 - Kilmarnock West and Crosshouse, 4 - Kilmarnock East and Hurlford, 5 - Kilmarnock South | 14 | All of Kilmarnock including Crosshouse, Knockentiber, Gatehead, Crookedholm and Hurlford |
| Southern Local Community Planning Forum | 7 - Ballochmyle, 8 - Cumnock and New Cumnock, 9 - Doon Valley | 11 | Includes Mauchline, Sorn, Catrine, Muirkirk, Lugar, Logan, Auchinleck, Ochiltree, Scars, Netherthird, Craigens, Cumnock and New Cumnock, Stair, Drongan, Rankinston, Dalrymple, Hollybush, Patna, Dalmellington, Bellsbank and surrounding areas. |

9.2 The Council agreed that prior to the introduction of the new arrangements from 1 April 2008 the three new Local Community Planning Forums would operate in accordance with the existing Scheme of Delegation and that existing Community Representatives from the predecessor Local Committees be invited to attend the relevant Local Community Planning Forums during this interim period.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 In terms of Section 57 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 as amended, the Council can appoint Committees (or equivalent) for the purpose of discharging any of its functions in pursuance of arrangements made under Section 56 of the same Act.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

12. COMMUNITY PLANNING ISSUES

12.1 The development of Community Forums will progress community engagement and assist in the progression of Community Planning initiatives within East Ayrshire.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 It is recommended that:-

- (i) Community Representatives' organisations are invited to submit in writing comments on the proposals to Bill Walkinshaw, Head of Democratic Services, London Road, Kilmarnock by 31 August 2007; and
- (ii) otherwise, to note the report.

Elizabeth Morton
Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

BW/SC
23 May 2007

BACKGROUND PAPERS - Nil

Any person wishing further information on this report should contact Bill Walkinshaw, Head of Democratic Service on Tel No (01563) 576135.

Implementation Officer: Bill Walkinshaw, Head of Democratic Services