

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE: 25 NOVEMBER 2004

COMMUNITY PLANNING GUIDANCE AND ADVICE NOTES

Report by the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the key challenges for East Ayrshire presented by the Scottish Executive's Community Planning Statutory Guidance and Advice Notes.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 provides a framework to enable the delivery of better, more responsive public services. One of the main components of this framework is a statutory basis for Community Planning to ensure long-term commitment to effective partnership working with communities, and between local authorities and other key bodies and organisations.
- 2.2 A report was presented to Policy and Resources Committee on 28 November 2002 advising Members of the content of the working drafts of the Scottish Executive's guidance in relation to the various aspects of the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003.
- 2.3 A further paper was presented to Policy and Resources Committee on 12 June 2003 outlining the Council's response to the consultation on the Scottish Executive Draft Guidance in relation to the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003.

3. COMMUNITY PLANNING STATUTORY GUIDANCE

- 3.1 The Community Planning Statutory Guidance, published by the Executive in April 2004, is designed to act as a national framework to all those participating in the community planning process. It sets out what is expected of the core partner agencies, which have a statutory duty to either lead or participate in the process, to fulfil the duties and requirements of the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003.
- 3.2 The guidance recognises Community Planning as a local process and attempts to strike a balance between providing clarity in what the Scottish Executive expects from the community planning process and the need for local discretion in tailoring it to the needs and opportunities of local communities.
- 3.3 Emphasis is placed on the importance of ensuring that people within communities are fully aware of what Community Planning means for them and that they have the capacity to engage fully within local processes.
- 3.4 The Guidance is supplemented by nine more detailed Advice Notes on a range of issues important to the effective implementation of Community Planning in Scotland.

3.5 The expectations laid out in the Statutory Guidance and Advice Notes pose a number of key challenges for Community Planning Partners in East Ayrshire that will require to be addressed over time to ensure that joint working achieves a tangible and demonstrable improvement in public services.

3.6 Detailed below are the key challenges and the measures already taken or planned by the East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership to tackle these challenges.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4.1 The guidance emphasises the necessity of having effective and genuine engagement of communities at the heart of Community Planning and that consultation alone is not sufficient to ensure effective community engagement.

Community Consultation

4.2 In this context, the Community Planning Core Partners' Group has given a commitment to carrying out, where possible, joint community consultation. The financial package is currently being finalised to take forward the following proposals.

Community Consultation		
Initiative	Purpose/Outcome	Timescale
Commission a Community Planning Residents' Survey	Increased understanding of local priorities and views on public service provision/satisfaction	Four yearly from 2005
Establish a representative Residents' Panel and geographic focus groups	Increased understanding of residents' views and increased involvement of communities in the planning and development of services	Routinely, minimum of twice per year
Establish a joint annual consultation plan; a screening group; and operating arrangements linked to Public Performance Reporting arrangements	Effective co-ordination of community consultation across agencies and attainment of Best Value	Late 2004/Early 2005
Establish a citizens' forum/question time	To receive feedback on existing plans and activities and identify new priorities	Every two years at the mid-point of the Action Plan cycle

Community Engagement

4.3 The need to move from consultation to effective engagement and participation has been recognised by Community Planning Partners from the outset. To ensure effective and routine engagement of the community in the overall community planning process, it is proposed that existing Council engagement structures and systems be utilised by all Partners. These are as follows:

- local committees;
- equality forums;
- partnership groups;
- Dialogue Youth, as the main means of involving and consulting young people;

- community councils;
- community associations; and
- community and voluntary groups.

- 4.4 In addition, work is ongoing with both East Ayrshire Coalfield Area Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) Board and East Ayrshire North Social Inclusion Initiative Board, which are perceived as highly effective mechanisms for involving local people, to redesignate them as Local Community Planning Forums, each underpinned by a federation of community groups. In the Coalfield Area, the Coalfield Communities Federation (CCF) already plays a key role in community engagement. It brings together and articulates the views of each of the communities and settlements and creates a representative structure for community involvement in the SIP Board. It will continue to do so for the Local Community Planning Forum in the south. Work is currently ongoing to replicate the CCF model in the north of the Authority to ensure that the work of the proposed Local Community Planning Forum in the north is also grounded in the communities that it will serve.
- 4.5 In addition, the experience of developing and agreeing two Local Outcome Agreements (LOA) with the BNSF Pathfinder residents, and the successful engagement of local people in the process and the monitoring and review of the LOA, has established a solid foundation for the ongoing engagement of these communities in the community planning process.
- 4.6 The framework described above will be a significant component of the management arrangements put in place to ensure effective community engagement in the community planning process.

Community Capacity Building

- 4.7 Also highlighted in the guidance is the need to build social capital within communities to ensure that they have the capacity to engage effectively in the process. Social capital is defined as the skills, resources, networks, opportunities and motivation that a community has, or needs, to enable it to work together effectively to promote its own well being.
- 4.8 Community Learning and Development (CLD), both the service and the approach, has an essential role to play in giving communities the confidence and skills to engage effectively with Community Planning. It will enable communities to have a real influence over the planning, delivery and quality of mainstream services. East Ayrshire Community Learning and Development Partnership will continue to ensure that community learning opportunities and choices are available at a local level to support the engagement of communities in community planning processes. This will be driven forward through the development and implementation of local Community Learning Plans, which will tailor opportunities to the needs of individual communities. In the wider context, not only community development professionals but all frontline staff working with communities are called upon to utilise this approach to enabling and empowering communities.

Building the Capacity of Staff

- 4.9 There is, therefore, a recognition of the need to ensure that the staff of the agencies involved in the community planning process have the necessary skills and confidence to engage with community bodies.
- 4.10 The Community Planning Core Partners' Group has agreed to pilot the Aspirational Learning Programme with operational staff. This programme has the potential to build the capacity of staff to work in a new way together, and with communities to engage them effectively in the community planning process. It promotes new ways of thinking and works on the premise that in order to do things differently, we need to be able to think differently. Delivery of the programme to multi-agency groups will promote networking and build a firm foundation for partnership working. It will also develop a common vocabulary for planning within the community planning framework, which will encourage aspirational thinking and goal setting.

5. RESOURCING REGENERATION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY PLANNING CONTEXT

- 5.1 The guidance makes it clear that Community Planning offers new opportunities to improve how community regeneration is delivered in Scotland, by joining national and local priorities, and by tackling the problems of deprived neighbourhoods as part of the wider community planning process.
- 5.2 In this context, mainstream providers, working together, are expected to target their core budgets and programmes more effectively on deprived communities, with a view to 'Closing the Opportunity Gap' between disadvantaged communities and more affluent communities.
- 5.3 Community Planning Partners in East Ayrshire are currently preparing the Regeneration Outcome Agreement (ROA), due for submission to Communities Scotland by 20 December 2004, guidance on which was reported to Policy and Resources Committee on 2 October 2003. The ROA will detail how the Partnership proposes to regenerate disadvantaged communities and close the opportunity gap, utilising not only the Community Regeneration Fund, which replaces both SIP and BNSF funds, but also their core budgets and programmes, over the period April 2005 to March 2008.
- 5.4 The ROA will also demonstrate how the funded initiatives will address both local and national priorities and achieve the outcomes set out within it.

6. MAINSTREAMING COMMUNITY PLANNING WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

- 6.1 The essence of Community Planning is about collective/collaborative working, which should be integral to the various planning and service delivery functions of the Community Planning Partners.
- 6.2 Mainstreaming of Community Planning principles within each partner organisation requires ongoing training and development of staff. The Guidance and Advice Notes highlight the need for investment to build organisational capacity to engage effectively.

- 6.3 In addition, it will require effective leadership to ensure that the culture of partnership working and community engagement is cascaded to intermediate and front-line staff as well as at Directorate/Executive/Board level.
- 6.4 Much has already been done to ensure that Community Planning is taken forward collectively by the Partners. It was agreed from the outset that the Community Plan is the sovereign strategic planning document for all Partners in East Ayrshire.
- 6.5 Within the Partner agencies, Community Planning is taken forward at all levels by multi-agency groups, namely:
- the Core Partners' Group, chaired by the Leader of the Council, which sets the strategic direction at the highest political and officer level;
 - the Joint Officers' Group, which agrees operational activity and ensures the implementation of the Action Plans; and
 - the Action Plan Working Groups, which prepare and implement action plans to address the priorities of the Community Plan and ensure that progress is being made.
- 6.6 A full range of Community Planning documents is hosted on East Ayrshire Council's website, making them readily accessible to all.
- 6.7 Multi-agency, multi-disciplinary briefing sessions have been held over the summer months since the inception of the Community Plan, as follows:
- 2003/04: Community Planning in East Ayrshire – The Challenge. Ten staff briefing sessions were held attended by some eight hundred staff members.
 - 2004/05: Community Planning in East Ayrshire – Our Achievements One Year On. To date, seven briefing sessions have been held involving some four hundred and sixty staff members.

These sessions have ensured that staff have an awareness of how the Community Planning agenda is progressing and where their work contributes to achieving the outcomes of the Community Plan. In addition, they provide opportunities for networking.

Two briefing sessions are planned specifically for health staff to allow hospital based staff in particular the opportunity to hear about progress in relation to Community Planning. In addition, a multi-agency senior staff briefing session is proposed.

- 6.8 Edition 1 of the Community Planning Bulletin, highlighting achievements of the community planning process and items of interest, was circulated to staff of all partner organisations in spring 2004. The Bulletin is produced bi-annually and the second edition for 2004 is currently being prepared and will be circulated before the end of the year.

7. INFORMATION SHARING

- 7.1 The guidance highlights information sharing as essential to the success of Community Planning and better joint working between agencies. A number of real or perceived barriers have been identified, including:

- staff time, skills and financial resources;
- understanding what data sources are available, who holds them and how to use them;
- a lack of willingness by partner organisations to share information;
- legislative issues, particularly misunderstanding about the Data Protection Act;
- system security and other technical issues;
- boundary issues;
- consistency in defining data between partners; and
- the availability of data for some subject areas.

7.2 There is work being done nationally to address some of these issues and, locally, the multi-agency Research and Information Group is making a difference. However, there is much still to be done to ensure that there is a shared understanding of need and a robust basis for joint planning and targeting of resources.

8. THE ROLE OF ELECTED AND BOARD MEMBERS

8.1 The guidance highlights the important role, which Elected Members and Board Members have in the community planning process.

8.2 Within East Ayrshire, the Leader of the Council chairs the Community Planning Core Partners' Group, ensuring elected representative involvement in the process at the highest level.

8.3 Elected Members sit on the following Boards of the following strategic organisations, ensuring that Community Planning influences the agendas at the highest level:

- Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board;
- Strathclyde Police Board;
- Strathclyde Fire Board; and
- Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority.

8.4 Regular reports on Community Planning are presented to Committee and the Boards of the Partner organisations.

8.5 Community Planning presents some real challenges to Councils in leading the community planning process, therefore, it will require to be underpinned by development and support work for Elected Members in their strategic leadership, representative and scrutiny roles. Much still requires to be done in this regard.

9. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Community Plan has been agreed as the sovereign strategic planning document for East Ayrshire.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 It is the Scottish Executive's expectation that the Council and its Community Planning Partners will target their core budgets more effectively on deprived

communities, with a view to 'Closing the Opportunity Gap' between disadvantaged communities and more affluent communities within East.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Section 15 of the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 places a duty on the Council to initiate and facilitate Community Planning.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i) consider the challenges posed by the Community Planning Statutory Guidance and Advice Notes;
- ii) note the measures already taken or planned by Community Planning Partners to tackle these challenges; and
- iii) otherwise, note the content of the report.

Elizabeth Morton
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East Ayrshire Council
26 October 2004

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 Community Planning: Statutory Guidance
The Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 Community Planning: Advice Notes

Members wishing further information on this report should contact John Clayton, Head of Corporate Development and Communication on 01563 576165 or Gwen Barker, Community Planning and Partnership Manager on 01563 554602.

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