

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE: 19 SEPTEMBER 2006

COMMUNITY PLANNING: AN INITIAL REVIEW (Review of report from Audit Scotland)

Report by Depute Chief Executive / Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the findings and recommendations of the Audit Scotland document 'Community planning: an initial review', and of current activity to address issues highlighted in the report relevant to East Ayrshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 'Community planning: an initial review' was published in June 2006 by Audit Scotland. A full copy of the report has been placed in the Members' Information Point.
- 2.2 The study was undertaken on behalf of the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland, with evidence drawn from interviews with staff from a range of organisations in ten partnership areas and with officials from the Scottish Executive and other national bodies. East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership was one of the ten Partnerships. This qualitative work was supported by a survey of all thirty-two Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs).
- 2.3 This work was further supported by an analysis of the management costs associated with community planning; an examination of current community plans; and a review of information from other audit work, including Best Value audits.
- 2.4 The report acknowledges community planning as a long-term process, which will take time to deliver improvements in some areas. Since Audit judged it as too soon to find much evidence of the effectiveness of individual CPPs in improving public services, the study concentrated on reviewing the process in place to deliver community planning and plans to monitor and evaluate progress over time.
- 2.5 The report reviews the following areas and under each identifies a number of key findings:
- the national context within which community planning operates;
 - local arrangements for community planning; and
 - planning and performance management in CPPs.
- 2.6 In addition, the report includes recommendations for action by the Scottish Executive, nationally accountable partners, local partner organisations and CPPs.

3. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 3.1 The study found that community planning can add value to existing joint working by providing a local strategic framework and building co-operation and trust, and that where organisations work well together, real benefits to service users, communities and the organisations themselves can be realised.

Structural Difficulties

- 3.2 However, it recognises that both the complex public sector environment in which community planning operates and the lack of clarity about what community planning should be delivering can cause frustrations.
- 3.3 In particular, it highlights that different boundaries, accountabilities and financial regulations across partner organisations make community planning and joint working difficult; can limit flexibility to respond to local need; and can create administrative difficulties.
- 3.4 Although recognising the need for organisations to integrate the range of priorities emerging from the CPP into their own corporate strategy, the significant challenges facing organisations in addressing the potential conflict between local priorities and responding to nationally set targets, and accommodating the differing local priorities across CPPs are highlighted.
- 3.5 While it is recognised that some of these issues are being considered by the Scottish Executive as part of the public sector reform agenda, it is noted that they will only be resolved over the longer term.
- 3.6 The report highlights that, by providing for CPPs to become incorporated into legal entities, community planning legislation provides a statutory framework to assist partner organisations tackle the challenges posed by different accountability regimes, but notes that there is little enthusiasm for incorporation of CPPs.

Policy Agenda

- 3.7 The report highlights that, in addition to addressing locally identified priorities, CPPs require to respond to the national policy agenda, aimed at improving public services in Scotland. However, the lack of integration and prioritisation of national policy initiatives creates additional work for CPPs, which have to prioritise national policy objectives and reconcile them with local priorities. It further acknowledges that developing local strategies to respond to national policy directives, and the subsequent monitoring and reporting requirements, are resource intensive for partner organisations and local authorities in particular, reducing time and resources to meet local needs.

Funding

- 3.8 The report recognises the fragmented nature of funding to support national policy objectives and the requirement for each funding stream to have its own application process and monitoring and reporting arrangements. While the necessity of maintaining proper control over public funds is recognised, it is noted that the current system increases the bureaucratic workload of partnerships and creates an administrative burden, in particular on the lead agency responsible for managing the funds.

Responding to the barriers

- 3.9 The study found that while some CPPs demonstrated real commitment and willingness to work around the problems posed by the complex policy and organisational environment, the progress of others was impeded.
- 3.10 It was noted that where CPPs have been through the process of agreeing clear priorities for the area, it was easier for them to respond to the range of policy initiatives and funding streams.
- 3.11 In this regard, the fact that the Promoting Community Learning Action Plan of East Ayrshire's Community Plan forms the basis of the Council's submission for the Community Learning and Development Strategy is highlighted as an example of good practice.

4. THE NATIONAL SUMMARY

Community Planning Structures

- 4.1 The report highlights that, while most CPPs have broadly similar structures, the way that a CPP operates influences its effectiveness. The challenge for CPPs is to develop structures and processes, which fit local circumstances and enable meaningful partner involvement without being overly bureaucratic.
- 4.2 The report states that case study work identified that CPPs are most effective when:
- they connect the political and managerial leadership of the different partners;
 - there is clarity of role; and
 - there is commitment to delivering improvement through community planning.

Community Engagement

- 4.3 The considerable effort which CPPs are putting into improving community involvement is recognised. However, the need for engagement to be both sustained and systematic, and for the impacts and benefits to be demonstrated, is stressed. The opportunity provided by the National Standards for Community Engagement to improve the effectiveness of community engagement is noted.
- 4.4 In the course of the study, instances of overlap and duplication had been found and the potential to work more collaboratively in combining resources and sharing information from consultation exercises was stressed.
- 4.5 In this regard, East Ayrshire's joint commissioning of the 2005 Residents' Survey and the subsequent use of the results in the community planning process and partners' plans for specific service improvements is highlighted as an example of good practice.

Role of Elected Members

- 4.6 The report comments that elected members have an important role to play in community planning as both civic leaders and community representatives, but from a review of the national picture, concludes that generally participation is low. The challenge, in the view of Audit, is for Community Planning Partnerships to involve a range of elected members without the partnership being viewed as too dominated by the council.
- 4.7 While it is noted that some elected members in Scotland might see community planning as a threat to their control of council services and funding, concerns around accountability are viewed as legitimate and it is advocated that CPPs require to link community planning structures with the political decision-making structures of the council and other partner organisations to ensure proper governance for partnerships, as they affect individual partner bodies' policy and expenditure.

Rationalisation

- 4.8 Whilst one of the objectives of the community planning legislation is to help co-ordinate joint working and, where necessary, to rationalise a cluttered landscape, the report notes that there has been limited progress in this regard not least because the number of partnerships required by statute is increasing, examples being Community Health Partnerships and Regional Transport Partnerships.
- 4.9 Despite these constraints, the report advocates that CPPs should actively seek to rationalise their partnerships arrangements.

Partnership Support

- 4.10 The report notes that the level of partnership support varies and that supporting community planning can take up considerable staff time, and suggests that CPPs require to be aware of these costs and ensure that they are adequately reflected in budgets and service planning. In addition, they require to be satisfied that the investment of staff time in community planning will deliver service improvements and better outcomes for local communities.

5. PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Planning and Agreeing Priorities

- 5.1 The study found that there is some evidence that community plans and Council's corporate plans are now being integrated but noted that CPPs are finding it more challenging to ensure that community plan priorities are incorporated with other statutory partners' corporate plans. In this regard, the fact that the community plan is the lead planning document for the Council in East Ayrshire and West Lothian is highlighted as examples of good practice, with this seen as a mechanism for ensuring that shared priorities are integrated into mainstream service provision and providing a clear signal of the local authority's commitment to community planning.
- 5.2 It recognised, however, that planning and agreeing priorities in a partnership is challenging and that the lack of clarity both locally and nationally about what community planning should be delivering makes the planning process even more difficult.

Performance Management and Reporting

- 5.3 The study found that CPPs are improving their use of performance indicators but that progress has been slow and performance management and reporting arrangements could be further developed. It stresses that CPPs require to move on from developing processes to demonstrating the impact they are having on services and the well-being of local communities, and whether the benefits justify the added costs.

Scrutiny, Governance and Risk Management

- 5.4 Also highlighted was the need for the governance of CPPs to be improved through clarifying their accountability arrangements and developing more effective scrutiny and risk management.
- 5.5 The report states that in four CPPs, elected members have a scrutiny role in relation to community planning, with the fact that East Ayrshire's Policy and Resources Committee has responsibility for scrutinising the community planning priorities for action being specifically cited as an example of good practice.
- 5.6 In addition, the NHS Ayrshire and Arran's scheme of delegation for its three Community Health Partnerships (CHP), clarifying the role of the CHP within the community planning structure and the decision-making authority of staff involved in CHPs, is highlighted as an example of good practice in respect of governance.

Effectiveness of Partnership Working

- 5.7 The report highlights that CPPs, which were found to be working well, shared common characteristics, as follows:
- committed leadership among all partners;
 - a citizen focus to their work;
 - a shared vision for the area;
 - clearly resourced action plans; and
 - clear performance management arrangements.
- 5.8 Based on these characteristics and recognised good practice, Audit Scotland has developed an evaluation framework, detailed within the report, to assist CPPs in improving the effectiveness of their community planning.
- 5.9 This framework strongly resembles the Partnership Assessment Scorecard currently being utilised in East Ayrshire for this purpose.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AUDIT SCOTLAND REPORT

6.1 Attached at Appendix 1 are the recommendations made by Audit Scotland in the report, for action by respective agencies:

- the Scottish Executive and CPPs;
- Scottish Executive, with executive agencies and other central bodies as appropriate;
- nationally accountable partners, supported by Scottish Executive, for example Scottish Enterprise, the NHS and Communities Scotland;
- local authorities and local partner organisations; and
- CPPs.

6.2 Appendix 2 highlights the recommendations, which relate to CPPs and East Ayrshire Council, and current activity and actions being taken to address these issues by Community Planning Partners in East Ayrshire.

7. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Nil

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 East Ayrshire Council complies fully with the statutory duties placed on it arising from the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003. Audit Scotland's report was considered in detail at a meeting of the Partnership's Joint Officers' Group on 1 August 2006, when it was agreed that all relevant issues arising from the audit report will be taken forward as part of the Community Planning Joint Officers' 2006/07 Work Plan.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Policy and Resources Committee is asked to

- i) note the general findings and recommendations of 'Community planning: an initial review';
- ii) consider the specific findings and recommendations set out in the report for Local Authorities and Local Partner Organisations (set out at Appendix 1, 4th column);
- iii) note the action already being taken to address these issues (set out at Appendix 2); and
- iv) otherwise, note the content of the report.

Elizabeth Morton

Depute Chief Executive/ Executive Director of Corporate Support

7 September 2006

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 – Community Planning Guidance
(<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/localgov/cpsg-00.asp>)

The Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 – Community Planning Advice Notes
(<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/localgov/cpan-00.asp>)
Community Planning: an initial review – June 2006

Community Planning: an initial review, Published by Audit Scotland, June 2006 (Full copy placed in the Members' Information Point) and available from www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

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IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: Head of Corporate Development and Communication

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RECOMMENDATIONS

APPENDIX 1

Scottish Executive and CPPs	Scottish Executive (with executive agencies and other central bodies as appropriate)	Nationally Accountable Partners (supported by Scottish Executive)	Local Authorities and Local Partner Organisations	Community Planning Partnerships
Agree a small number of strategic priorities where CPPs can add value through partnership working.	Review the number of partnerships it requires local authorities and partner organisations to establish and ensure there are clear remits and no duplication.	Set clear guidelines for their local organisations on what they expect to be achieved through local partnership working.	Develop schemes of delegation to streamline decision-making within CPPs.	Ensure the CPP Board is clear on its remit and responsibilities, and is structured to fulfil these.
Agree how to measure performance against these policy areas.	Improve co-ordination and integration among initiatives.	Allow greater flexibility and autonomy to accommodate local CPP priorities when responding to national priorities.	Ensure that all relevant priorities and related actions agreed by the CPP are incorporated into their corporate plans.	Define clearly the role for elected members and members of other partner governing bodies within their community planning arrangements.
	Rationalise the different funding streams accessed by partnerships.		Consider providing an annual statement to the CPP explaining how the community plan is reflected in their corporate plans.	Ensure that community engagement becomes more sustained and systematic across partners and champion the use of the national Standards for Community Engagement.
	Develop a more standard approach to monitoring spend against different funding streams.		Contribute to joint risk registers related to community planning.	Review and rationalise structures to focus on delivering services that add value.
				Consider developing a partnership guide which describes the roles and remits of each element of their structure.
				Agree a shared vision and a manageable number of priorities for their community plan.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Scottish Executive and CPPs	Scottish Executive (with executive agencies and other central bodies as appropriate)	Nationally Accountable Partners (supported by Scottish Executive)	Local Authorities and Local Partners	Community Planning Partnerships
				Develop processes for managing performance and agree indicators to track progress on key local issues.
				Develop their arrangements for scrutiny of community plans and expenditure.
				Develop their approaches to risk management.
				Review how effectively they are operating as a partnership.

ACTION IN EAST AYRSHIRE TO ADDRESS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CPPS AND COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT ACTION
CPPs	
<p>Ensure the CPP Board is clear on its remit and responsibilities, and is structured to fulfil these.</p>	<p>The Community Planning Partnership Board is an ‘unincorporated body’ the constitution and operational arrangements for which clearly define its remit and responsibilities.</p> <p>The CPP is committed to the principle of continuous review and, therefore, as part of the current Four-yearly Review of Community Planning, structures, including the CPP Board, are being reviewed to ensure ongoing clarity of purpose.</p>
<p>Define clearly the role for elected members and members of other partner governing bodies within their community planning arrangements.</p>	<p>The Leader of the Council and the Chair of Social Inclusion are integral to ensuring effective Elected Member involvement in Community Planning. The Leader chairs the Community Planning Core Partners’ Group, which sets the strategic direction for Community Planning and the Chair of Social Inclusion chairs the Community Planning Partnership Board. In addition, regular and routine reports are presented to Policy and Resources Committee on Community Planning activity.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to whether any further steps are required to ensure ongoing and effective Member involvement in the Community Planning process as part of the Four-yearly review.</p>
<p>Ensure that community engagement becomes more sustained and systematic across partners and champion the use of the national Standards for Community Engagement.</p>	<p>The commitment to jointly consulting and engaging with the public has resulted in the development of a Consultation and Engagement Framework, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Residents’ Survey (2005); • Residents’ Panel and Geographic Focus Groups; and • annual consultation and engagement plan. <p>All Partners have committed to ensuring that the National Standards for Community Engagement are achieved, as a minimum.</p>

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ACTION IN EAST AYRSHIRE TO ADDRESS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CPPS AND COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT ACTION
CPPs	
Review and rationalise structures to focus on delivering services that add value.	<p>Rationalisation of plans and structures is one of the seven strategic commitments which have been made by Partners. The Community Plan is the sovereign strategic planning document for East Ayrshire and every opportunity is taken to rationalise the number of plans and strategies on which we are currently working.</p> <p>Significant progress has been made in relation to rationalising plans and structures, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Community Plan acts as the Council's Corporate Plan; • the Improving Health Action Plan acts as the Joint Health Improvement Plan; • the Community Safety Partnership drives forward the Improving Community Safety Action Plan; and • the Promoting Community Learning Action Plan acts as the Community Learning Strategy. <p>In addition, in relation to the Children's Services Plan, the Community Safety thematic group has merged with the Improving Community Safety Action Plan Group and the Improving Health thematic group has merged with the Improving Health Action Plan Group.</p>
Consider developing a partnership guide which describes the roles and remits of each element of their structure.	The development of 'A Guide to Community Planning' is ongoing, encompassing roles and remits of the Community Planning structures, and will be widely circulated following the conclusion of the Community Plan Four-Yearly Review, which encompasses a review of structures.

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ACTION IN EAST AYRSHIRE TO ADDRESS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CPPS AND COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT ACTION
CPPs	
<p>Agree a shared vision and a manageable number of priorities for their community plan.</p>	<p>The Community Plan is recognised by all Partners as the sovereign strategic planning document for the delivery of public services in East Ayrshire over the 12 years from 2003 to 2015 and sets out the overall vision for the local area, as follows:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“East Ayrshire will be a place with strong, vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people’s needs.”</i></p> <p>The Community Plan has six jointly agreed priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting community learning • Improving opportunities • Improving community safety • Improving health • Eliminating poverty • Improving the environment. <p>Activity to address these priorities is driven forward through associated four-year action plans.</p>
<p>Develop processes for managing performance and agree indicators to track progress on key local issues.</p>	<p>Mechanisms are in place to produce Community Plan Annual Action Plan Performance Reports.</p> <p>The multi-agency Research and Information Group has been tasked with identifying indicators to demonstrate progress and impact in relation to the Community Plan.</p> <p>In addition, it is proposed that high level outcomes and associated indicators are developed as part of the Four-Yearly Review Process to further assist in demonstrating the impact of Community Planning over time.</p>

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ACTION IN EAST AYRSHIRE TO ADDRESS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CPPS AND COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT ACTION
CPPs	
Develop their arrangements for scrutiny of community plans and expenditure.	<p>Annual Community Plan Action Plan Performance Reports are submitted for scrutiny to the Council's Policy and Resources Committee and the decision-making structures of all Core Partner organisations.</p> <p>The Council's Chair of Social Inclusion chairs the Community Planning Partnership Board ensuring scrutiny of Community Regeneration Fund expenditure.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council chairs the Community Planning Core Partners' Group and the Council's Chair of Social Inclusion and representatives of the Partners decision-making structures are members of the Group ensuring scrutiny in respect of the range of funding allocated to Community Planning Partners.</p>
Develop their approaches to risk management.	<p>Community Planning activity, where relevant, currently features within the Corporate Risk Management register for Council.</p> <p>Discussions will take place with Partners to consider how best to identify and address Partnership risks.</p>
Review how effectively they are operating as a partnership.	<p>To allow the effectiveness of partnership working through Community Planning in East Ayrshire to be measured, the Partnership Assessment Scorecard (PAS) has been developed and will be circulated on 1 March each year by email to a range of staff and community representatives directly involved in Community Planning structures, and to other staff throughout the Partner organisations. The PAS was first utilised in March 2006 and results have set the baseline against which the effectiveness of partnership working can be measured in future.</p> <p>Actions to address issues identified through this access are addressed through actions in the Community Planning Joint Officers' Group Workplan.</p>

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ACTION IN EAST AYRSHIRE TO ADDRESS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CPPS AND COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT ACTION
SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE AND CPPS	
Agree a small number of strategic priorities where CPPs can add value through partnership working.	Within East Ayrshire, priorities are already developed in the context of the national policy agenda. In addition, Partners continue to respond to new and emerging national priorities, such as Anti-Social Behaviour, 'Choose Life', Financial Inclusion and Rural Service Priority Areas.
Agree how to measure performance against these policy areas.	Community Planning Partners urge the Scottish Executive on an ongoing basis to rationalise arrangements and agree to measure activity to address national priorities through existing CP mechanisms rather than developing M&E systems for each individually and over burdening CPPs.
LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND LOCAL PARTNER ORGANISATIONS	
Develop schemes of delegation to streamline decision-making within CPPs.	NHS Ayrshire and Arran's scheme of delegation for its three Community Health Partnerships (CHPs), clarifies the role of the CHP within the community planning structure and the decision-making authority of staff involved in CHPs.
Ensure that all relevant priorities and related actions agreed by the CPP are incorporated into their corporate plans.	The Community Plan has been adopted as East Ayrshire Council's sovereign planning document (Corporate Plan) ensuring that shared priorities are integrated into mainstream service provision and providing a clear signal of the local authority's commitment to community planning.
Consider providing an annual statement to the CPP explaining how the community plan is reflected in their corporate plans.	Since the Community Plan has been adopted as East Ayrshire Council's Corporate Plan, the Public Performance Report reflects progress and achievement in relation to Council activity under the themes of the Community Plan.
Contribute to joint risk registers related to community planning.	Community Planning activity, where relevant, currently features within the Corporate Risk Management register for Council. Discussions will take place with Partners to consider how best to identify and address Partnership risks.