

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE : 5 OCTOBER 2000**

### **A REVIEW OF EAST AYRSHIRE'S SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

#### **Report by Chief Executive**

#### **0.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To propose revised arrangements for delivering Social Inclusion initiatives within East Ayrshire, following a comprehensive review of the Council's current arrangements.

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The council's Policy and Resources Committee agreed, at its meeting on 28 March 2000, to instigate a review of the council's arrangements for implementing its Social Inclusion approach.
- 1.2 The overall aim of the review was to assess the extent to which the council's current arrangements were effective, efficient, and provided value for money.
- 1.3 The decision to review arrangements coincided with the council's decision to move overall responsibility for Social Inclusion to the new Corporate Resources Department as part of the recent council restructuring.
- 1.4 This report outlines the main findings from the review and makes recommendations for change where weaknesses or areas of concern were discovered.
- 1.5 The proposals outlined within this report will be presented to the East Ayrshire Social Inclusion Strategic Partnership Group for comment. Their views will be reported verbally to the Policy and Resources Committee.

#### **2.0 SCOPE OF THE REVIEW**

- 2.1 The review examined four areas:
  1. the decision-making processes associated with Social Inclusion;
  2. an assessment of the effectiveness of the current arrangements for securing partner involvement in the delivery of Social Inclusion initiatives;
  3. an assessment of the current staffing structure associated with delivering Social Inclusion (including those employees seconded to the Social Inclusion initiative), and
  4. inter-agency working and liaison with the Scottish Executive and CoSLA.
- 2.2 The review was carried out by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources and the Head of Corporate Development and Communication.

### **3.0 CONSULTEES**

3.1 The following people were consulted in the course of the review:

- elected members with a specific involvement in the Social Inclusion Partnership;
- employees seconded to, or directly employed by, Social Inclusion initiatives;
- chief officers with a Social Inclusion responsibility/remit;
- representatives of key partners;
- field work teams;
- Social Inclusion projects;
- community representatives, and
- the Scottish Executive.

### **4.0 ISSUES IDENTIFIED**

4.1 Without exception, there was a recognition amongst all of those consulted, that the arrangements that were in place during the first year of the Social Inclusion initiative should be altered. The following issues were identified.

- The Social Inclusion Partnership, in its current format, is not conducive to strategic discussion or decision making. There is a relatively large amount of bureaucracy associated with the funding support from the Scottish Executive that demands significant time and consideration by the Partnership given the absence of any other decision making forum. Also the overall size of the Partnership is relatively large.
- Representatives and organisations from non-coalfield areas have responsibility for taking funding decisions for projects that operate exclusively within the coalfield area, and vice versa.
- Confusion exists amongst local committee community representatives about their role as members of the Social Inclusion Partnership (i.e. whether they represent the local committee or their local community).
- There is an extended decision-making process that sees local committees approving action plans, the Social Inclusion Partnership then endorsing them and reference of overall financial decisions to Policy and Resources Committee. It is anticipated this will become even more cumbersome as the council moves to an eight week committee cycle.
- No mechanism for securing decisions outwith the formal Committee/Partnership structure exists.
- There are no Standing Orders for meetings.
- A strain is placed on the resources of both the council and its partners by operating three separate Social Inclusion areas (Coalfield area/Northern area/Irvine Valley and Kilmarnock areas) and this can also lead to a fragmented approach being taken on strategic issues such as employment and training.

- There is no clear focus for input by elected members (i.e whether their involvement is at local committees, policy and resources committee, or Social Inclusion Partnership).
- A relatively high number of senior officers are involved in the management of Social Inclusion initiatives, with relatively few resources to direct.
- Secondment support arrangements have meant that, in some cases, local projects and initiatives (eg the Irvine Valley Regeneration Group) have suffered through voids not always being filled by departments.
- There is a perceived lack of support to projects funded by the partnership.

## **5.0 PROPOSED CHANGES**

5.1 The main changes to the council's arrangements for delivering Social Inclusion involve making changes to the council's area based approach, splitting the current responsibilities and workload of the existing Strategic Partnership Group, and making a number of consequential changes to staffing support. These changes are summarised below.

### **5.2 Decision-Making Processes**

5.2.1 It is clear that most of the issues that have been raised during the review stem from the council's initial approach of having three separate Social Inclusion areas with one overarching decision-making body (Social Inclusion Strategic Partnership). Tensions arise because only one of the three social inclusion areas (the coalfield area) has the very significant additional government funding to deliver Social Inclusion initiatives. Also, it is only the coalfield area that is subject to the high level of regulation imposed by the Scottish Executive as a condition of their funding support, yet all members of the Partnership Group are involved in dealing with this regulation.

5.2.2 It is therefore proposed that the number of geographic Social Inclusion areas be reduced from three to two and that a constituted partnership group be established for each of these two areas. Overall co-ordination will be secured through the Chair of Social Inclusion acting as Chair at both groups. Community input would be focussed clearly at this partnership group level with each group securing appropriate community representation. These groups would have more direct responsibility, including budgetary responsibility, for their actions. In terms of the coalfield area, the Scottish Executive funds, along with any other contributions from partners would form a 'block grant'. In the non-coalfield area, the same approach would be taken with any funds committed to social inclusion with the area (for example support from the Social Inclusion Challenge Fund). The current arrangement for securing Local Committee approval for action plans would terminate and local and community input would be direct at partnership group level. Each individual partnership group would be free to establish themed working groups that would draw in specialist officer support and any additional community representation that was necessary.

- 5.2.3 Finally, co-ordination of Social Inclusion initiatives across East Ayrshire as a whole would be secured by any arrangements that are established in due course for community planning. Until such arrangements are in place, the Chair of Social Inclusion would continue to provide this overall council-wide co-ordination. A new Executive Group with delegated powers will be established allowing any necessary decisions to be taken between formal meetings.
- 5.2.4 The proposed new decision-making structure is detailed in Appendix A.

### **5.3 Social Inclusion Areas**

- 5.3.1 It is proposed that the current Kilmarnock Social Inclusion area should merge with the Irvine Valley and Northern area.

### **5.4 Staffing Support**

- 5.4.1 It is recognised that these changes will not require the same level or number of employees working exclusively on Social Inclusion as originally approved by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 18 March 1999. Discussion will take place with appropriate departments about the impact of this on existing secondment arrangements.
- 5.4.2 The Scottish Executive have indicated that they would still expect to see an officer from the coalfield area support team being identified as the direct link to the coalfield area partnership group within any new arrangements. This will be reflected in the new staffing support arrangements.

### **5.5 Partner Involvement**

The proposed new arrangements will secure improved partner involvement by allowing organisations to focus their resources at the appropriate forum.

### **5.6 Inter-Agency Working and Liaison With The Scottish Executive And Cosla**

- 5.6.1 The link between the new Social Inclusion structures and external bodies will be made through the Chair of Social Inclusion and the Manager (Social Inclusion).

## **6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The new arrangements are designed to increase the effectiveness of the drive to deliver social inclusion across the whole of East Ayrshire still further.

## **7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Head of Legal and Administration/Solicitor to the Council will consider the appropriate constitution for the new partnership groups. The aim will be to devolve as many powers as possible to the group whilst still allowing the council to fulfill its formal responsibilities as the recipient of the Social Inclusion grant.

## **8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Nil arising from this report. All proposed changes will have a neutral effect on council expenditure.

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that members:

- i. note the review of the council's arrangements for implementing Social Inclusion;
- ii. approve the changes to the decision-making process as outlined within the report and appendix;
- iii. agree to reduce the number of social inclusion areas within East Ayrshire from three to two by amalgamating the current Kilmarnock area with the Irvine Valley and Northern Area, and
- iv. authorise the Director of Corporate Resources, in conjunction with appropriate directors and the Head of the Personnel, to amend the staffing support arrangements for Social Inclusion as a consequence of the changes outlined within the report, and subject to consultation with Trade Unions.

David Montgomery  
**Chief Executive**  
22 September 2000

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Social Inclusion Partnership Programme – 18 March 1999 – report to Policy and Resources Committee by the Chief Executive

Anyone wishing further information should contact Fiona Lees, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources (telephone 01563 576019).

## PROPOSED NEW DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE

### 1.0 East Ayrshire Community Planning Group

In due course, the council and its partners will agree an appropriate forum for delivering community planning. This group would consider high level social inclusion issues. Until any new structure is in place, this function would be delivered by the Chair of Social Inclusion by meeting with the principal Social Inclusion partners on an ad-hoc basis.

### 2.0 East Ayrshire Coalfield Social Inclusion Partnership Board

This body would be created by splitting the current Social Inclusion Strategic Partnership Group into two parts, one being the body representing the coalfield area and the other the remaining area of East Ayrshire. The membership would be drawn from the existing Social Inclusion Strategic Partnership Group and consist of elected members and appropriate partnership representation. Community representatives on the board would be drawn from the Coalfield Communities Federation and also selected following advertisement and notification of relevant interested bodies. In addition the East Ayrshire Council Director of Finance should be a member of the Board and be responsible for financial management and propriety of the group. Also, the core members of the SIP Executive Group (see below) would be ex-officio members. The constitution of the group should be established in such a way that it is fully accountable in terms of public liability, Following the Public Pound, and any legal requirements. Preferably this should be something secure, but short of full incorporation as a company. The constitution should provide for procedural rules but decisions should be arrived at by consensus. Matters that are subject to a failure to agree should be referred to the executive group for decision. The council's Chair of the Board would be the Chair of Social Inclusion.

### 3.0 Social Inclusion Executive Group

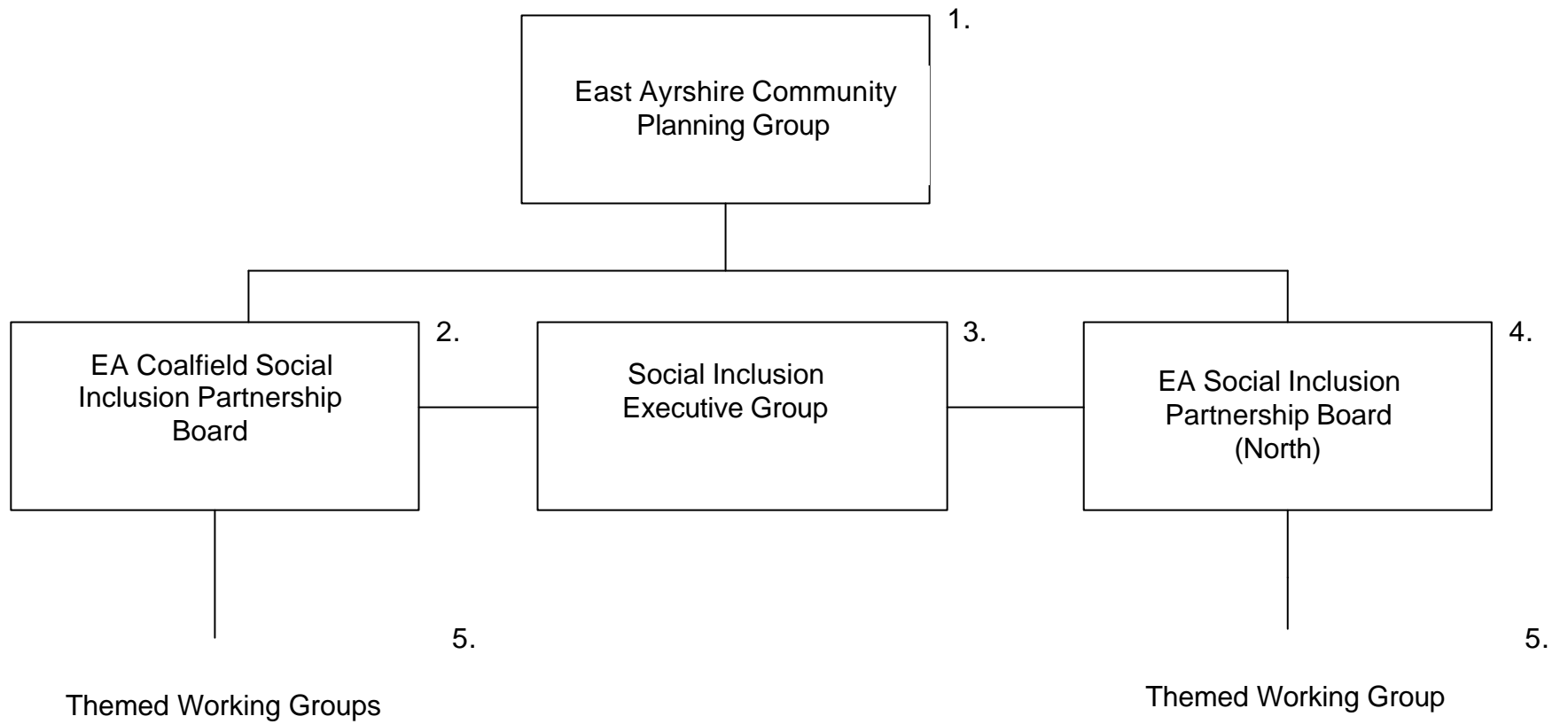
This group will be an officer group comprising a core of permanent members with other officers being co-opted as and when required. The permanent members would initially be the Depute Chief Executive, East Ayrshire Council and Senior Officers from Enterprise Ayrshire and Ayrshire and Arran Health NHS Primary Care Trust. The Executive Group would co-ordinate the activities of both Partnership Boards and would take any necessary urgent decisions outwith the normal meeting cycle. In addition, in the unlikely event of the Chair of Social Inclusion being unable to identify a consensus on a decision, the Executive Group would be tasked with resolving the issue in light of the views expressed at Board level and by partners.

#### **4.0 East Ayrshire Social Inclusion Partnership Board (North)**

This board should comprise elected members along with appropriate partnership representation. Community representatives should be selected following advertisement and notification of interested groups. The constitution of this Board need not be so formal as the Coalfield Partnership Board given the more modest budget it has to manage. However, it should operate under procedural rules and a constitution that provides for financial propriety and other matters relative to Following the Public Pound etc. Once again, the Chair of Social Inclusion should chair this group and the permanent members of the Executive Group would be ex-officio members with the same role as described above.

#### **5.0 Themed Working Groups**

Themed working groups could be established, reporting to and being instructed by, the partnership boards. Composition of the groups would depend on the matters in hand however they would generally comprise officer representatives of the partners along with appropriate community representatives depending on the theme. It would be up to the partnership boards to determine how many groups were required and their themes. Groups would meet on an ad-hoc basis and determine their own procedural and operational roles in recognition of any requirements set by the parent bodies. The partnership Boards will instruct on methods of reporting and monitoring.



**AGENDA**