

PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL

20 June 2018

REVIEW OF LOCAL ACTION PARTNERSHIPS

Report by Depute Chief Executive (Chief Operating Officer) (Report No. 18/214)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report presents the findings of the What Works Scotland study into local decision making, commissioned by the Community Planning Partnership.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 1 December 2017, the Community Planning Partnership Board agreed to a review of local decision making within the context of community empowerment legislation, and this was reported to the meeting of Perth & Kinross Council in December 2017 ([Report 17/419](#)). [What Works Scotland](#) (WWS), the respected collaborative community research organisation, was commissioned to carry out this review, with the remit set out as part of the report to Council in December 2017 (see Appendix 1). The aim of this research was to help strengthen community empowerment and local democracy in Perth and Kinross.
- 1.2 The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 set out requirements for local authorities and other public bodies to involve communities in decision making, and a duty on Community Planning Partnerships to work with communities to prepare and deliver Locality Action Plans which tackle inequalities.
- 1.3 Scottish Government has set a target for 1% of Council budgets to be consulted on using Participatory Budgeting as the consultation method. COSLA has endorsed this target. Initiatives like the 1% target and introduction of Participatory Budgeting need to be viewed in the wider strategic context which is about a significant shift to participative democracy in Scotland, alongside representative democracy. In December 2017 The Scottish Government launched the Local Governance Review as part of its ambition to empower communities to make more decisions for themselves and the current consultative phase of this is now underway.
- 1.4 In 2016 Perth and Kinross Council established 5 Local Action Partnerships, a form of local Community Planning Partnership, which seek to address inequalities by engaging communities in decisions on local priorities and services.

- 1.5 The objectives of the What Works Scotland study in Perth and Kinross were:
- To assess the effectiveness of current local community planning arrangements
 - To make recommendations to strengthen these, consistent with the provisions in the Community Empowerment Act, to ensure effective local decision making
- 1.6 The review was undertaken January to March 2018. A WWS report, *What Works in Local Decision Making: A Case Study of Perth & Kinross Community Planning Partnership* was completed in March 2018. The report is included as Appendix 2. This report will be presented to the Community Planning Partnership Board meeting on 15 June 2018.

2 FINDINGS

- 2.1 While recognising that there are challenges, and proposing improvements to be made, the report identified a number of positives in the Action Partnerships as they have developed to date. These included:
- A high level of commitment from partner agencies
 - A deepening understanding of the complexity of hidden deprivation and inequalities, thanks in part to the work of the Fairness Commission
 - Success in steering participatory budgeting, whilst recognising that further work was required to widen the participatory budgeting process to be as inclusive as possible, for example through increased use of on-line voting.
 - Some councillors recognising their role as one of facilitation, including encouraging and supporting culture change within the Council and CPP
 - Discussions taking place in Action Partnership meetings on how to widen participation and reduce inequalities
 - Support from staff in the Stronger Communities Teams
 - Community representatives taking on new leadership roles
- 2.2 The report noted that Action Partnerships are beginning to adapt, innovate, and respond to local circumstances, for example by setting up subgroups to reflect particular geographies or themes. Action Partnerships need the autonomy to problem-solve and work with other local structures so that they add value locally by addressing inequalities.
- 2.3 The report also noted that Action Partnerships are making efforts to engage a wider cross-section of the population, for instance through awareness-raising at local meetings, engagement with residents attending Participatory Budgeting events, and attempts to involve young people through local schools. The report proposes that the Action Partnerships trial a broader range of methods of involving people in decision making. However Action Partnerships have more work to do to increase wider awareness and active participation across localities. Action Partnerships improving their links with local structures, including community councils, community partnerships and development trusts will help Action Partnerships clarify their role at a local level and add value to existing community work.

2.4 The report identified “key success factors” for Action Partnerships to work towards. They are as follows:

- a. *Local and national context:* Action Partnerships are still in their infancy, characterised by new political membership, competing perspectives on community empowerment and a wider context of austerity. It is important to engage with this context and create a long-term platform for Action Partnerships to succeed, for example, by seeking cross-party support so that Action Partnerships can become an accepted and established space for governance in Perth and Kinross.
- b. *Culture and mindsets:* arrange events for Action Partnership members to learn about the new era of collaborative decision-making and the need for facilitative styles of leadership.
- c. *Budget distribution:* Consider a review of the approach to budget allocation across Action Partnerships. A policy of equal distribution of resources across a landscape of inequalities is potentially regressive, especially in the context of participatory budgeting.
- d. *Long-term planning:* the participatory budgeting process could be planned as an annual cycle to allow Action Partnerships more time to prepare in advance for the different stages.
- e. *Incentives and support mechanisms:* improve incentives to public participation in local decision making by continuing to develop and strengthen participatory budgeting and trialling other democratic innovations such as mini-publics, online participation and digital dialogue. Continue to draw on best practice from national and international sources. Lower barriers to participation by providing help with financial costs, digital access, childcare and transport
- f. *Governance and delivery structures:* increase the inclusion and influence of community members in partnership meetings through careful and skilled facilitation. Support elected members with a clear definition of their roles and their responsibilities in these spaces. Specify more clearly the roles of Community Planning partners supporting this process. Clarify that Action Partnerships have the autonomy to work flexibly in more localised forums within their own contexts and according to the needs of each locality.
- g. *Facilitative leadership:* Action Partnerships would be better served by a model that includes both a chairperson, with a formal role, and an impartial facilitator, responsible for the process of meetings. Experienced facilitators can help to change the style of the meeting by designing sessions that are dynamic and engaging, drawing on a range of facilitation techniques.
- h. *Improve links with local structures:* There is a recognised need for reform and improved support for community councils across Scotland. In addition, Perth and Kinross Council has initiated a review of community councils. Given this wider context of reform, it is important to clarify the relationship of Action Partnerships to other democratic structures and community organisations, including community councils, community partnerships and development trusts, and to clearly articulate the distinct role of Action Partnerships within this landscape.

- i. *Learning and Skills*: Promote a culture of inquiry and learning to support the development of new approaches to local decision-making. Stimulate passion and excitement for the transformative potential of action partnerships and participatory budgeting.

2.5 The challenges identified by WWS and a summary of proposed responses are detailed in the table below.

| Current Challenges | Proposed Response |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Governance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refresh / strengthen governance guidelines and code of conduct ▪ AP's are reviewing draft guidelines and adopting to meet their requirements ▪ Provide clear, regular budget statements and guidance on the use of budgets ▪ Action Partnerships consider adopting a constitution |
| Locality size and geographies that "make sense" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Action Partnerships are introducing sub groups, for particular geographies or themes as they deem appropriate ▪ Action Partnerships develop or strengthen links with other local structures |
| Widening participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to develop Participatory Budgeting on an annual cycle ▪ Implement communications plan ▪ Engage more with Community Councils ▪ Participation in subgroups by non-members of the AP ▪ Develop toolkit of support for Action Partnerships to try other methods of widening participation, e.g. citizen's juries; mini-publics |
| Barriers to involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Option to attend via Skype at all AP meetings ▪ Ensure community reps know how to reclaim travel expenses and carer expenses ▪ Ensure that all venues used are accessible ▪ Consider offering creche facilities |
| Clarity of roles, accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take up WWS offer of training in facilitative leadership as per paragraph 2.4g above. ▪ Strengthen governance documentation ▪ Implement communications plan / increase visibility and accountability to communities |
| Clarity of purpose and added value of Action Partnerships and PB | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen Action Partnerships' understanding of inequalities ▪ Delivery of the Action Plan and reporting to wider community and CPP |

| Future Challenges | Proposed Response |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AP member understanding of PKC and CPP processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meetings / workshops bringing together the chairs and lead officers of Action Partnerships with those of the Outcome Delivery Groups |
| Equitable distribution of resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scope methods of calculating budget based on population size and inequality measures ▪ Set up a working group to review the options |
| Staffing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wider involvement of staff, particularly all members of the Stronger Communities Teams |
| Exchange of learning across the CPP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Action learning, facilitating collective learning within the Action Partnerships, building the capacity of community reps |
| Understanding of the broader community empowerment agenda | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement communications plan ▪ Offer public and staff workshops on CE Act implications for communities (asset transfer, participation requests etc) |
| Minimum 1% PKC budget allocation via PB | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scope PKC current spend in localities to identify opportunities for a PB approach |

2.5 The report was shared with elected members at the end of April 2018, in advance of a workshop for elected members led by the report's author, Dr Clare Bynner. The report was then shared with all Action Partnership members. Action Partnerships have been invited to discuss the report at their meetings in May / June to help shape the response to the report and further improve local decision making. The report will be put on the Perth & Kinross Council website and shared with Community Councils.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The message from What Works Scotland is that progress is being made in Perth and Kinross to improve local decision making. Increasing democratic participation takes time. It involves changing cultures not only within the council and its partners but also within communities. There are signs of good practice emerging. There is an acknowledgement that more needs to be done, and a conclusion that more can be done by Action Partnerships, with a focus on widening participation, both in meetings and by other means. The report by What Works Scotland sets out how we can strengthen local democracy in Perth and Kinross.

3.2 It is recommended that Council:

- (i) Note the content of the What Works Scotland report.

- (ii) Consider the report and the response which the Council will make to the Community Planning Partnership in respect of development of their action plan.

Author(s)

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Approved

| Name | Designation | Date |
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| Jim Valentine | Depute Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer | 7 June 2018 |

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

| Strategic Implications | Yes / None |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement | Yes |
| Corporate Plan | Yes |
| Resource Implications | |
| Financial | Yes |
| Workforce | None |
| Asset Management (land, property, IST) | None |
| Assessments | |
| Equality Impact Assessment | None |
| Strategic Environmental Assessment | None |
| Sustainability (community, economic, environmental) | None |
| Legal and Governance | None |
| Risk | Yes |
| Consultation | |
| Internal | Yes |
| External | None |
| Communication | |
| Communications Plan | None |

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement/Corporate Plan

- 1.1 This report supports the delivery of the Strategic Objectives within Community Plan and Corporate Plan.

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Workforce

- 2.2 There are no direct workforce implications arising from this report.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.4 There are no specific asset management implications arising from this report.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.
- 3.2 This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:
- Assessed as not relevant for the purposes of EqIA

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.3 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals. No further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainability

- 3.4 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of the Climate Change Act, the Council has a general duty to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community, environmental and economic impacts of its actions.
- 3.5 The information contained within this report has been considered under the Act. However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report.

Legal and Governance

- 3.6 Not applicable.

Risk

- 3.7 There are no risks associated with this report.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 The Corporate Management Group members were consulted on the What Works Scotland report.

External

- 4.2 This report has been shared with members of the Community Planning Partnership Executive Officer Group and Community Planning Partnership Board

5. Communication

- 5.1 Following consideration of the report by the Community Planning Partnership, the content and actions arising from it will be shared with Action Partnerships and other community groups.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2.1 Report to Council on 20 December 2017 entitled “Review of Political Decision Making Structures (Report No: 17/419)

3. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Remit of the Review

Appendix 2 – What Works Scotland report