

**COMMUNITY PLANNING INQUIRY: CALL FOR VIEWS QUESTIONS**

**1. What action has been taken at a local level to improve community participation and collaboration between partners since the requirements of the 2015 Act came into force? Can you provide examples of success?**

In 2016, we established 5 (now 7) Local Action Partnerships (LAPs) to implement local community planning in line with the requirements of the Community Empowerment Act. LAPs bring together community and third/voluntary sector representatives with local ward Councillors and local public services. Initial piloting of Participatory Budgeting in Perth and Kinross, funded by Scottish Government, was a major incentive for communities to get involved in the LAPs. The opportunity to determine financial decisions locally and through participative democracy is an important success factor for sustained community participation in local decision making, which we have broadened through the Community Investment Fund (see below).

All 7 LAPs are now chaired by a community representative, supported by a Lead Officer from the CPP. Within the parameters of the Community Empowerment Act, their key purpose is collaborative work to reduce stubborn inequalities in localities. Priorities are set out in Local Action Plans linked to the wider area-wide priorities in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

Since 2016, the LAPs have disbursed £550,000 in devolved Council funds to support initiatives in Local Action Plans. LAPs were central to piloting Participatory Budgeting in 2017/18, when £325,000 was dispersed to 250 projects, with over 30,000 votes cast. During the COVID pandemic and lockdowns, LAPs oversaw disbursement of £185,000 devolved community grants to 83 projects which directly supported grassroots emergency support. Currently, the Council's Community Investment Fund (CIF) provides support to projects which tackle local inequality and improve quality of life, and LAPs also play a key role in assessing and recommending CIF grant applications, with many community representatives actively involved in grant panels. The CIF has disbursed almost £2m funding to over 250 projects since 2017/18.

There are various examples of how the LAPs support grassroots initiatives across Perth and Kinross in other ways. These include strengthened collaborative youth work in Strathmore, and widening access to sport and leisure in Perth city centre.

We are currently reviewing the impact to date and future direction of Local Action Partnerships within our wider Transformation Programme, in light of our experience since 2016 and wider changes to the national policy and delivery landscape. As with all initiatives of this nature, the contribution of each LAP is different according to local circumstances and needs and participation levels and impact has varied over time. An alternative approach to local decision making and participation is currently being piloted through a Local Committee in Kinross-shire. This has formal devolved decision-making powers for core Council infrastructure services and resources and brings local ward Councillors together with Community Councillors. Pilot evaluation

findings currently being finalised plus recommendations from our Transformation Review of community empowerment and engagement will inform the future design/shape of local community planning forums and delivery structures.

**2. What progress has your CPP made in tackling inequalities since the 2015 Act? To what extent has your CPP adopted a preventative approach in seeking to tackle inequalities? Can you provide examples of success? How are you responding to the current cost-of-living crisis?**

Examples of progress to date includes:

- **Love Letham:** a collaboration between the Council and the Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland with a community-led approach to identifying co-produced solutions to the key challenges facing families and young people in this locality.
- **Youth Services joint commissioning:** as part of the wider CPP focus on children and young people, the Gannochy Trust and Perth & Kinross Council fund youth work providers on a collaborative, multi-year basis in 5 localities across Perth and Kinross. Delivery partners are supported to address priority issues for local young people including social inclusion and emotional wellbeing, as well as developing volunteering opportunities for young people. The partnership has also supported the wider development of youth work practice across the area through mentoring and other support.
- The evolution of **adult learning** to better support target groups through CP collaborative working. The Adult Learning Partnership within the CPP is highly focused on improving employability and digital skill. This work was accelerated during the Covid pandemic when CP partners developed an online Adult Learning Hub offering both learning from home and in community learning spaces. On average, 250 people per month are now using these services, including refugees and asylum seekers.
- **Digital Inclusion:** CP partners, including Perth and Kinross Association for Voluntary Services (PKAVS)/other 3<sup>rd</sup> sector partners plus the Health and Social Care Partnership have strengthened joint working to support 10+ community facilities with broadband connectivity; providing devices to third sector support groups; and investing in digital printing facilities in local libraries. Research has also been commissioned to provide a baseline for levels of digital participation and identify future actions and priorities.
- **Capacity building** for foodbanks and community larders became critical during the pandemic. This work has continued due to the cost-of-living crisis, with the focus on creating strong partnerships across food providers to address food insecurity in our communities.

Also in response to the cost-of-living crisis, the CPP Board approved a Statement of Intent in September 2022 alongside the new Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2022-2032 with a focus on three immediate priorities:

- Bid to pilot a Cash First Partnership in Perth and Kinross, with a CP Working Group involving PKAVS, Perth CAB, various Council services and a number

of third sector support groups committed to strengthening the 'no wrong door' approach for vulnerable clients

- Support a Warm Spaces initiative – the Council has committed over £100,000 to date support 60 different community-led warm space initiatives and 24 public facilities are operating as warm space.
- Food security – the Council has committed an additional £200,000 of funding to community-led emergency food provision and warm packs. Over 60 bids have been agreed, providing support for food provision through foodbanks, larders and other groups, as well as the creation of warm packs for individuals and households. Warm packs are created and distributed by the organisations themselves, but typically include items such as blankets, hand warmers and other products which can help people stay warm in their own home.

#### Examples of preventative approaches

- Social prescribing is delivered through the Council, NHS Tayside and the Health and Social Care Partnership together with the local leisure Trust, with 6 social prescribers across the area, covering a number of GP practices.
- HomeFirst is our approach to combating preventing homelessness in Perth and Kinross involving the Council, Scottish Government, Registered Social Landlords and the Health and Social Care Partnership to develop a Common Housing Register and Common Allocations Policy, ensuring that service users are supported effectively and quickly to find a settled home. This has achieved significant reductions in homeless presentations in Perth and Kinross because people are effectively supported to sustain a tenancy wherever possible.

### **3. What are the challenges faced by CPPs to the effective planning and delivery of their outcomes? How has the Act changed how community planning partners deliver their services?**

In our experience the key factors which impact on quality of community engagement and participation through the CPP are:

- Realism is needed about levels of community capacity and appetite to get directly involved in planning and delivering local initiatives and services. We saw very high levels of community mobilisation and engagement during the pandemic, but this has declined in some localities since the pandemic eased and as cost-of-living factors have impacted on people's ability to volunteer their time.
- Socio-economic challenges faced by some communities can be highly complex and generational. Co-produced solutions between communities and public services require long-term trust relationships to be built (for example in Letham) and a sustained leadership, resourcing and delivery focus by both communities and public services.
- Multiple initiatives from central and local government (for example Participatory Budgeting, urban and town centre funding programmes) can be challenging for communities to respond to and to sustain their input over time.
- Understanding and using different local democratic tools: representative democracy (the role of elected Councillors and Community Councillors

participatory democracy (wider community voices and representatives involved in local decisions) and deliberative democracy (e.g. Citizens Panels to provide input to large complex policy questions). Understanding where and how different democratic tools are best suited to different contexts and purposes is important for building long-term trust with communities to co-design local public service solutions.

The Act has provided greater clarity on the collective statutory duty which rests on the CPP and on individual partners: this is helpful for the Council which, under the Community Planning provisions of the 2003 Local Government (Scotland) Act, held the lead coordination role. However, despite comprehensive public service reform legislation and guidance which has emerged over the last decade, delivery challenges remain for CPPs.

CPPs operate in an increasingly complex policy and delivery landscape and within a legislative framework which is broader than the 2015 Act alone. Key challenges include:

- Performance frameworks and accountability lines for individual CP partners remain complex despite previous Audit Scotland recommendations to Scottish Ministers that these could be streamlined. Demand pressures and individual accountabilities (for example acute care, adult and child protection) can override longer-term CPP partnership priorities, exacerbated as public finances continue to shrink.
- The inspection and scrutiny regimes for CPPs have not substantially evolved to ensure evidence is gathered, assessed and triangulated to understand local partnership working in the round. Direct observation of practice, face-to-face engagement with key players at all levels in the CPP and gathering community perspectives/insights are all key to understanding CPP impact and efficacy.
- The extent to which national bodies with a statutory role in Community Planning engage in CP at local or regional level is highly variable and local partners including Councils cannot compel them to participate. The role of SG Place/Location Directors, which can also be variable, is important in this context.
- Joint resourcing remains a significant challenge when all partners face significant budget pressures and have different accountability lines for delivering national and local targets. In Perth and Kinross, our current JR focus is on rationalising/maximising use of the public estate.

#### **4. What role did your CPP have in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic? What has the legacy of the pandemic been to approaches to community planning?**

Key examples:

- Improvements to CLD provision, accelerated during the Covid pandemic. In Spring 2022 Education Scotland conducted a thematic review of the role played by CLD in Perth and Kinross to support post-Covid recovery in communities

and how partnership practice was evolving in response. This highlighted significant strengths in relation to supporting/growing volunteer capacity, continued through the Volunteer Upskilling Fund which enables volunteers and community groups to access a wide range of training opportunities.

- The CPP response to the Two Sisters Covid outbreak in Coupar Angus in August 2020. Two Sisters is a meat processing factory in a locality with significant socio-economic challenges driven by a low wage economy and other factors. It has a multi-national workforce (largely East European, 17 different languages), living in Perth and Kinross, Dundee and Angus. Within two weeks of the first case, over 10% of the Coupar Angus population was infected with Covid resulting in the factory closure and all workers had to self-isolate. There were significant challenges around communications, food and welfare needs and tensions within some parts of the local community. Joint working between the Council, NHS Tayside, Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Services (PKAVS) and partners from elsewhere in Tayside resulted in:
  - Effective information and advice to all affected households in multiple languages, supported by a strong communications plan which transmitted key messages across social media. Interviews with employees in different languages were recorded and shared online encouraging people to follow the guidance and attend test centres.
  - In line with SG directives food supplies and welfare checks were completed on all affected households within 48 hours.

This work was underpinned by our existing partnership relationships particularly with community groups across the area including foodbanks/food larder initiatives and our volunteer registration scheme, which gave volunteers accreditation and other support to help them in their work. The CPP developed a GIS database of key community groups across Perth and Kinross to match vulnerable people with the closest/most appropriate support network in their area. At the height of the pandemic this was vital.

## **5. Does the existing guidance for Community Planning Partnerships need to be updated?**

See question 3 – current legislation and guidance is comprehensive enough. However more consideration/understanding is needed in central government of the underlying issues and barriers to effective community planning as demand pressures grow and public finances shrink. Those involved in CP understand why these are precisely the reasons which should drive integrated working through the CPP; however day-to-day realities and pressures can make this difficult to sustain in practice.

Additional initiatives ranging from City Growth Deals, various town and rural regeneration funding schemes, Period Dignity etc are hugely valuable and welcome in their intent but add to the complexity of delivery requirements for CPs.

Also as stated in q 3, consideration should be given to the future shape of inspection and scrutiny. CP is currently audited by Audit Scotland through the Best Value regime which reinforces the pre-2015 position which placed Councils in the lead CP

role. The role of Local Audit Networks in developing more holistic, practice-focused inspection approaches is key.

## **6. How does community planning align with other strategies and planning requirements?**

The CPP is actively engaged in delivering the Perth and Kinross Offer. The Offer is re-calibrating the relationship between local communities and local public services with a focus on co-producing solutions to local issues and delineating more clearly where local communities can step into the lead to deliver local projects and initiatives. This enables the Council and CP partners to target resources at more vulnerable communities of geography and interest, and on longer-term preventative work.

The Council's new Corporate Plan (approved in December 2022) and the new Local Outcomes Improvement Plan, (approved by the CPP and the Council in September 2022) are both central elements of a more streamlined approach to strategies and plans in place across Perth and Kinross. The LOIP focuses only on 'added value' partnership and collaborative activity rather than 'business as usual' which is core work for individual CP partners. The Council's Corporate Plan and the LOIP share the same overarching aim to make Perth and Kinross the best place in Scotland to live life well, free from poverty and inequality. Other key area-wide strategies and plans including the Policing Plan and Regional Transport Strategy are all 'stress-tested' through the CPP Board.

## **7. Do partners in your CPP contribute resources to enable the delivery of outcomes?**

Resource commitments by individual CP partners to deliver the LOIP are set out in the LOIP Annual Action Plan.

## **8. Whether inclusion as a planning partner has changed the way your organisation works, spends its budget and makes decisions?**

As a local authority, the Council has always played the key coordination role in Community Planning and as stated LOIP priorities are closely aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities.

## **9. Does the statutory membership of Community Planning Partnerships need revisiting?**

Given the current focus on cost of living and climate change, we would suggest Social Security Scotland and Scottish Water are given specific duties in relation to Community Planning and their active participation.

A number of the bodies currently listed in Schedule 1 do not actively contribute in sustained ways (see q.3), but the quality of input from partners currently stands or falls on the quality of local relationships rather than a legislative requirement. Ministerial direction in this regard would need to be enforceable on a practical level as well as demonstrably transparent and fair.

The success of Community Planning at area-wide and locality level relies on consistent input and joined-up thinking on the major issues which affect positive outcomes for local people and communities. For example, economic wellbeing (where Scottish Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland are key partners); physical and mental health; affordable housing; public transport as a means of accessing jobs, childcare, education and skills/vocational training.