

# PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

## Kinross-shire Local Committee

24 August 2023

### KINROSS-SHIRE LOCAL COMMITTEE: INDEPENDENT EVALUATION FINDINGS

**Fiona Robertson, Head of Culture & Communities Services**

(Report No. 23/229)

#### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report summarises key findings from an independent evaluation of the Local Area Committee (LAC) model piloted in Kinross-shire from 2021-2023. It sets out next steps for the Kinross-shire LAC following a development session on 2 August 2023

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- Notes the key findings of the evaluation report summarised in para 5
  - Approves the proposed responses to each recommendation, summarised in Appendix 3 and following a Development Day on 2 August 2023;
  - Approves the SWOT analysis in Appendix 4;
  - Notes the wider issues for Perth and Kinross Council, now being considered within the current Transformation Review of community engagement, with final recommendations due to Council in February 2024; and
  - Notes that, following additional funding to the Kinross-shire Local Committee approved by Council in February 2023 it will continue operating until 31 March 2024. Future operating arrangements will be considered by Council in February 2024 as part of the wider Transformation Review.

#### 3. STRUCTURE OF REPORT

- 3.1 This report is structured over the following sections:
- Section 4: Background
  - Section 5: Summary of Key Messages
  - Section 6: Next Steps
  - Section 7: Conclusion
  - Appendices
    - i. Iconic Consulting Evaluation Report (executive summary)
    - ii. Iconic Consulting Evaluation Report (Full report)
    - iii. KLC responses to the recommendation in the Evaluation Report
    - iv. SWOT analysis from the Development session on 2<sup>nd</sup> August

## 4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In September 2021, the Council approved a Scheme of Administration for a new [pilot Local Committee](#) in Kinross-shire as a means of devolving more Council decisions to a local level. The Kinross-shire Local Committee (KLC) started work in January 2022 and comprises the four ward Councillors, and representatives of each of the six Community Councils who sit within the ward. Voting rights were limited to ward Councillors. During the pilot period the KLC has operated alongside the Local Action Partnership for Kinross-shire. LAPs were established in 2015 across Perth and Kinross in response to the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The KLC has focused on local infrastructure issues as defined in the Scheme of Administration, and the LAP has focused on equalities issues, as required by the 2015 Act.
- 4.2 In 2021/22 Council allocated £40,000 to support the work of the Committee, including an independent evaluation of its work. The evaluation was tendered and awarded to Iconic Consulting with the following brief:
1. How KLC discharged its powers and any barriers/enablers to effectiveness
  2. The impact of KLC on strengthened local decision-making
  3. Any wider impact of KLC on local democracy
  4. The wider resource and structural implications for the Council
- 4.3 The evaluation methodology included studying key documents and reports, attendance at KLC meetings, structured interviews with stakeholders at inception, mid-point and towards the end of the initial 12-month pilot period. It also included some benchmarking with comparative structures operating elsewhere in Scotland. Iconic Consulting submitted their final report in June 2023; an interim report was prepared and discussed with ward Councillors in early 2023.
- 4.4 In February 2023 Council approved budget to extend the Local Area Committee model in three other localities from 2024/25 onwards. The evaluation findings of the KLC are important learning for the future success of the model, and in the context of our wider commitments to strengthen community empowerment and improve community engagement area-wide.

## 5. KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

- 5.1 These are as follows in relation to the four requirements of the brief:
- 5.2 **Powers and Effectiveness**
- KLC did not use the majority of its powers during the pilot period, although it was unlikely to deploy them all in this timeframe.
  - The proactive approach of the Convener and ward Councillors in planning business items and agendas was noted as a key success factor.

- The importance of officer support, including the appointment of a Lead Officer from April 2023, which improved its effectiveness as the pilot progressed.
- Key barriers to progress, which included changes to elected members and the Convenor role; and limited officer capacity to support the KLC and all the issues raised in Committee meetings; and more time required to forward-plan agendas and business items. The time-bound nature of the pilot itself was also perceived as a barrier by some.

### 5.3 Local Decision Making

- Decisions taken by the KLC were chiefly:
  - funding decisions on the Community Investment Fund and Kinross Common Good Fund;
  - approving early work on a proposed Community Asset Transfer of a former Primary School at Blairingone;
  - use of discretionary funding to improve local sports facilities.
- However, the evaluation noted that these decisions were relatively limited, and could have been made by existing Council Committees
- The evaluation noted that KLC largely operated consensually, with members working together on local priorities without bringing wider political agendas into play.
- Community Council representatives mostly felt the KLC was broadly inclusive and their views were respected and encouraged although they did not have voting rights.

### 5.4 Local Democracy

- The evaluation noted that community participation and awareness of the KLC was limited to the participant Community Councils. More support and information for participants, and wider promotion of the KLC by ward Councillors and the Council would have helped address this.
- Hybrid meetings encouraged greater involvement/attendance, although technical problems impeded this on occasion
- Some Community Councillors raised questions about how funding decisions were reached and what other funding priorities had been considered before these decisions were reached.

### 5.5 Resource & Structural Implications

- Approximately 200 hours of officer time were required to support KLC in total during the first 14 months. There were no other significant indirect costs associated with the pilot.

## 6. IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS FOR KLC

- 6.1 Members of the KLC met on 2 August to discuss improvement actions in light of the evaluation findings. A SWOT analysis was carried out and improvement actions are summarised at Appendix 3. These include changes to meeting administration and timings to maximise attendance.

6.2 Funding for the KLC until 31 March 2024 was approved as part of the Council budget in February. Wider recommendations on the future shape of local democratic forums in Perth and Kinross are being developed as part of the Transformation Review of community engagement and will be submitted to Council for consideration in February 2024.

## 7. WIDER CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL

7.1 The evaluation of KLC raises a useful opportunity for the members of the local committee, whilst at the same time offering some important learning and considerations for the Council in considering the wider roll-out of the Local Area Committee model, already agreed by a decision of Council, as well as informing its other engagement structures and processes, including Local Action Partnership and Community Action Planning and its wider Community Planning Partnership activities. A number of themes are highlighted in the report which Council will be interested in considering, whilst allowing the operation of the Kinross Local Committee to be determined locally by its members. These themes are seen to include:

- **Community representation, voting and decision-making:** The evaluation noted that although the Convenors and elected members involved in the KLC were clearly, and remain, committed to an inclusive and collegiate approach, decision-making is currently limited to ward Councillors and community awareness of the KLC beyond its membership was relatively limited. The KLC is considering the question of ongoing membership and will determine this locally however the report highlights the need to consider the make-up of further Local Area Committees and/or any other engagement structures.
- **Governance and resource implications:** the KLC has considered the report in its recent development day and the evaluation notes the current governance and structure of PKC as important context for understanding the impact the KLC was able to make, including the learning about the relationship between the KLC and the wider governance of the Council and its structures.
- **Engagement and empowerment:** the KLC pilot has been a useful way of exploring how Council decisions can be effectively devolved to localities to support community empowerment, in this context it is one of a number of mechanisms for engagement, including the previously mentioned Local Action Partnerships, Community Action Plan Groups and support for such initiatives as new Development Trusts. Within whatever structures exist, there is the need to consider important factors for community empowerment to be genuine and successful include building community skills and capacity; participation initiatives like Participatory Budgeting and community asset transfers; and how decisions on wider local public services such as policing and health are shaped by local community views. The learning from the evaluation, whilst being considered by the KLC itself, is something which also offers learning more widely as the Council undertakes its transformation programme on community engagement and empowerment.

7.2 The next phase of the Transformation Review of community engagement is to consider the future shape of local democratic forums, based on experience to date from the KLC pilot, the Local Action Partnerships and structures in place elsewhere in Scotland. This will include how the Local Area Committee model piloted in Kinross-shire and in other areas to be rolled out, might be enhanced through extended community representation, as highlighted in the evaluation. Public engagement on future options for local democratic forums will be carried out in autumn 2023 and findings included in the final Review recommendations to Council in February 2024.

## 8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The Kinross-shire Local Committee was established as a pilot to test a new approach to local decision making. Independent evaluation of the pilot has identified some key findings and recommendations for the KLC itself, and wider considerations for the Council.

### Authors

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### Approved

| Name            | Designation                     | Date           |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Fiona Robertson | Head of Culture and Communities | 18 August 2023 |

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

| <b>Strategic Implications</b>                       | <b>Yes / None</b> |
|---|-------------------|
| Local Outcomes Improvement Plan                     | <b>Yes</b>        |
| Corporate Plan                                      | <b>Yes</b>        |
| <b>Resource Implications</b>                        |                   |
| Financial   | <b>None</b>       |
| Workforce   | <b>None</b>       |
| Asset Management (land, property, IST)              | <b>None</b>       |
| <b>Assessments</b>                                  |                   |
| Equality Impact Assessment                          | <b>None</b>       |
| Strategic Environmental Assessment                  | <b>None</b>       |
| Sustainability (community, economic, environmental) | <b>None</b>       |
| Legal and Governance                                | <b>None</b>       |
| Risk  | <b>None</b>       |
| <b>Consultation</b>                                 |                   |
| Internal  | <b>None</b>       |
| External  | <b>None</b>       |
| <b>Communication</b>                                |                   |
| Communications Plan                                 | <b>None</b>       |

### 1. Strategic Implications

#### Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

1.1 The work of the Kinross-shire Local Committee impacts on the following aspects of the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

- (i) Poverty and cost of living
- (ii) Mental and physical wellbeing
- (iii) Digital participation
- (iv) Skills, learning and development
- (v) Employability

#### Corporate Plan

1.2 The work of the Kinross-shire Local Committee impacts on the following priorities withing the Council's Corporate Plan:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

## 2. Resource Implications

### Financial

2.1 None.

### Workforce

2.2 None.

### Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 None.

## 3. Assessments

3.1 The report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

(i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA.

### Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

3.3 The report has been considered under the Act and, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report. This is because the Committee are requested to note the contents of the report only and the Committee are not being requested to approve, adopt or agree to an action or to set the framework for future decisions.

### 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. Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 the Council also has a duty relating to climate change and, in exercising its functions must act:

- in the way best calculated to delivery of the Act's emissions reduction targets;
- in the way best calculated to deliver any statutory adaptation programmes; and
- in a way that it considers most sustainable.

3.5 The report does not contain any proposals that will impact on the Council's Principles for Sustainable Development.

Legal and Governance

3.6 None.

Risk

3.7 None.

**4. Consultation**

Internal

4.1 None.

External

4.2 None.

**5. Communication**

5.1 None.

**2. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

2.1 No background papers were relied on in preparing this report.