

To: Cross Party Sounding Board

On: 7th December 2017

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Review of community level governance arrangements

1. Summary

- 1.1 The aim of the review is to assess the Local Area Committees as a model of community level governance, and make recommendations for future models.
- 1.2 The paper outlines the key findings of the review of the current Local Area Committee arrangements.
- 1.3 A number of proposals for a future model of community level governance have been developed for discussion by the Cross Party Sounding Board.
- 1.4 It is proposed that feedback on the consultation, along with proposals for a future model of community level governance are discussed at Council on 21st December 2017, and Council will be asked to approve a consultation on these proposals.
- 1.5 Following consultation, detailed proposals for a new model will be brought back to Council for approval. It should be noted that as formal committees of the Council, Council will be asked to make relevant amendments to the Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation.

2. **Recommendations**

2.1 Elected members are asked to:

- Consider the findings of the review into current Local Area Committee arrangements, and the options developed for consultation
- Note that Council will be asked to approve a consultation on a set of proposals for a future model of community level governance on 7th December 2017

3. **Background**

3.1 In 2016, Council agreed changes to the governance arrangements for the Community Planning Partnership, and as part of this work it was agreed that a review of the Local Area Committees (LACs) would be carried out.

3.2 The aim of the review is to assess the Local Area Committees as a model of community level governance, and make recommendations for a future model. The review included the form and function of Local Area Committees, along with the Local Area Committee grant funding.

3.3 In particular, the review has explored how Local Area Committees might best meet the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, and provide an enhanced role for communities to engage with the wider Community Planning Partnership. In particular, it explores the relationship of Local Area Committees to existing and imminent statutory requirements such as Participation Requests, Community Asset Transfer and Participatory Budgeting.

3.4 Process and key activities:

- Benchmarking has been undertaken to assess the range of models across other Scottish local authorities.
- Engagement activities have been undertaken throughout the review, including: presentations at Local Area Committee meetings, a survey, a series of focus groups and individual interviews with organisations. This has included a range of people regularly involved in Local Area Committee meetings, alongside organisations who have been both successful and unsuccessful in gaining grant funding from Local Area

Committees, and a number of organisations from the wider third sector who are not currently engaged with LACs.

- A Community Council Local Area Committee sub-group was also set up.
- Analysis of grant funding applications and awards across all five Local Area Committees for the last three years

4. **Function and remit**

4.1 Local Area Committees have the following key aims; to promote active citizenship, to advance community wellbeing by shaping services around residents' needs, to provide local scrutiny of public services and to allocate delegated funds to fund local projects.

4.2 Engagement activities indicated that many people feel the grant funding function of the Local Area Committees is often seen as the primary function of Local Area Committees, with limited evidence that the other aims such as promoting active citizenship and public scrutiny are totally fulfilled.

4.3 There were a significant number of responses indicating that LACs should have a wider function, and a clear indication that LACs could have significant wider value for communities as well as public services.

4.4 Proposals within the consultation paper detail a renewed set of aims, and a specific proposal for a primary aim of the new arrangements to be identifying, setting and sharing local priorities. The consultation would also seek views on 'rebranding' Local Area Committees, moving the focus from a committee function to a partnership function.

5. **Boundaries**

5.1 There is a current requirement to review Local Area Committee boundaries, following the establishment of an additional ward prior to the 2017 local elections. Since this time a temporary 'fix' has been in place to allow LACs to continue to function, but they now have an uneven spread of population and elected member representation and need to be revised.

5.2 There has been some discussion about whether LAC boundaries are representative of physical communities and settlements, and in a number of cases the ward boundaries run counter to natural communities. The two most common messages emerging from the engagement exercise were about (a) recognizing the distinction

between rural and urban communities, and (b) that population distribution was the fairest way to calculate different boundaries.

- 5.3 Proposals within the consultation paper detail a proposal to move from using Ward boundaries to Community Council boundaries, and will seek views on a proposed model which moves to 7 areas instead of 5.

6. **Membership**

- 6.1 Local Area Committees are chaired by an elected member within the area, and supported by a lead officer from the Council at Head of Service level. While formal membership of Local Area Committees is reserved to the elected members within the relevant area, Local Area Committees are comprised of a number of constituted community and voluntary sector organisations, and are also attended by other community planning partners such as the Police, and Health and Social Care Partnership. They are open to all constituted community organisations within the relevant local area, and are held as public meetings.
- 6.2 Engagement activities indicated that some groups feel disempowered by the lack of voting rights, while others feel it is proper for decisions to be made by elected members with a clear democratic mandate. It is important to note the limited voting rights of other community members is a direct result of having LACs established as formal Council committees, in order for decision-making to be fully devolved to the local level.
- 6.3 Concerns were also raised that LACs are not very representative of the communities they serve, particularly with regard to young people. Feedback was also received that LACs should be representative of a range of different community led groups across each local area.
- 6.4 Involvement from partner organisations at Local Area Committees is a valued part of the current arrangements. However, feedback indicated that the relationship between a range of partner organisations and community groups could be strengthened through the LAC arrangements, with a number of suggestions that LACs should seek to achieve a better two-way information flow between the community and public services.
- 6.5 Proposals within the consultation paper include widening voting rights within the new partnership arrangements, and a greater role for

relevant partner organisations. The consultation would seek views on proposals to move from formal committees of the Council to part of the Community Planning Partnership structures.

7. Meetings

- 7.1 Business at Local Area Committees is comprised of predominantly officer reports and presentations from the Council and its partners around local performance, service changes and consultation. There is an open session on every agenda where communities can raise local issues. The first two meetings in the cycle (typically May and August) are usually predominantly focused on considering grant applications and awarding LAC funding.
- 7.2 Feedback from the consultation indicated that while many value the professionalism and formality of Local Area Committee meetings, some consider them formal and intimidating for people who are new or unfamiliar with the Council committee system.
- 7.3 Proposals within the consultation paper focus on how meetings can become more accessible and participative, and the consultation would seek views on how this could be best achieved.

8. Grants

- 8.1 Local Area Committees have a delegated budget, totalling £675,510 across the five areas. Any constituted community organisation in the relevant area can apply for a grant from the LAC for local projects and activities. Organisations serving citizens across several LAC areas can apply for funding from multiple LACs where appropriate. LAC funding is comprised of funding from relevant Common Good funds, Youth Challenge funding and General fund, and applications are considered under the appropriate fund.
- 8.2 It is noted that the LAC funding has become increasingly oversubscribed. Funding mechanisms that were originally intended to provide an easy application process, and a method of local and transparent decision making are now no longer able to provide enough structure for fair assessment of grant applications.

- 8.3 There are an increased number of grants being sought across multiple LAC areas, with a minority of grants in the 17/18 cycle being sought for local activities solely within that Local Area Committee area. This is particularly controversial point during engagement activities, and the process for assessing and supporting these applications requires review.
- 8.4 In the 2017/18 round of LACs to date, there has been significant discussion about the role of feedback and monitoring for grant applications. LAC members are keen to see how grant funding has been spent in their communities, and many community organisations are keen for an opportunity to share what their organization has delivered.
- 8.5 Participatory budgeting is recognised internationally as a way for local people to have a direct say in how, and where, public funds can be used to address local needs. By 2021, at least 1% of local government budgets in Scotland will be subject to participatory budgeting, and the methodology is increasingly being used across Scotland as part of wider approaches to Community Empowerment.
- 8.6 Proposals within the consultation paper focus on refocusing locally distributed grants on local projects (and aligned to local priorities), and providing an alternative process administered by officers for Renfrewshire wide proposals (which is aligned to Community Planning priorities). The consultation would also seek views on a proposal to carry out a participatory budgeting exercise with money allocated to the Youth Challenge fund.
9. **Consultation arrangements**
- 9.1 It is proposed that the consultation would last for 12 weeks, starting from late January 2017.
- 9.2 It should focus on engaging the wider community in addition to those who are engaged in the current local area committee system. The consultation would involve a range of methodologies to seek views from a range of stakeholders.
- 9.3 Work is also Consultation Institute to make sure the consultation is designed and implemented following best-practice standards.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – It is possible that the administration of new arrangements could have financial implications for the Council. These will be developed and presented as part of any changed proposals presented to future Council meeting.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – There are no HR implications arising from this report. There may be organisational development implications for a future model, as it is possible that there will be training requirements for officers as part of the transition to any new model.
3. **Community Planning / Council Plan –**
4. **Community Plan - Our Renfrewshire is well** – This priority of the Community Plan explicitly refers to the review of community level governance, and in particular that communities are best place to support themselves and articulate their own needs.

Council Plan - Building strong, safe and resilient communities – A key priority within the Council plan is to ‘Strengthen existing community networks and empowering local people to become more involved in their area and the services delivered there.’
5. **Legal** – Any future change to Local Area Committee arrangements would be likely to have governance implications for the Council. These will be developed and presented as part of any changed proposals presented to future Council meeting.
6. **Property/Assets** – Not applicable
7. **Information Technology** – Not applicable
7. **Equality & Human Rights** – The proposals discussed within the paper should improve participation and representation of communities and enable groups to have more voice and influence in the shaping and scrutiny of public services.
8. **Health & Safety** – Any health and safety implications would be considered in the delivery of the consultation, and moving forward in any new arrangements developed.

9. **Procurement** – Not applicable.
10. **Risk** – Not applicable
11. **Privacy Impact** – Not applicable
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – *Participatory budgeting and local governance*

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Review of Community Level Governance

Consultation Paper

Contents

Contents	2
Introduction.....	3
Why we are consulting?	3
How we will consult?.....	3
The proposals	4
Function.....	4
Proposal one: Refresh the aims.....	4
Proposal two: Move from ‘committees’ to partnership	5
Membership	5
Proposal three: Voting rights extended	5
Proposal four: Other public services play a greater role.....	6
Proposal five: Wider engagement with the community	6
Boundaries.....	6
Proposal six: Move from 5 based on ward boundaries to 7 based on community council boundaries	6
Meetings.....	7
Proposal seven: Meeting should become more accessible and participative	7
Grants	8
Proposal eight: Local grants for local projects	8
Proposal nine: Participatory budgeting.....	8
Next steps	9

Introduction

In 2016, Renfrewshire Council agreed changes to the governance arrangements for the Community Planning Partnership, and as part of this work it was agreed that a review of community level governance would be carried out.

When we talk about Community Level Governance, we mean the formal structures by which local communities engage with the Council and other public services. Currently in Renfrewshire, this is done through a structure of committees called 'Local Area Committees' (or 'LACs') which were established as formal committees of the Council in 2007.

We have reviewed our current system of Local Area Committees to understand how well they work, as well as looking at other models across Scotland. In particular, the review has explored how Local Area Committees might best meet the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, and provide an enhanced role for communities to engage with the wider Community Planning Partnership.

Following what we have learnt from the review, we have developed a series of proposals for a future model of community level governance. This consultation sets out the proposals we have developed, and seeks views on whether (a) people agree with the direction of these proposals and (b) how we should put these proposals into action.

Why we are consulting?

The proposals outlined in the consultation paper have been developed following engagement with a range of stakeholders, but we recognize that in order to develop a model that works, we need to talk to a wider range of people.

Fundamentally, community level governance is about what works for communities. For this reason, it is essential that we work together with communities to design and deliver a model that meets their needs. Our aim is to have a model of community governance that reflects the views and requirements of communities, and in turn, that this encourages people to be more involved.

The consultation will inform the paper which will go to Council and Community Planning Partnership with details of a new model to be agreed. If this model is approved, then it would be implemented in 2018/19 and this would be done in partnership with a range of community led organisations.

As a Council, our Local Area Committee system is a formal committee of the Council. As structures are currently part of our Standing Orders, changes to this system need to be approved by Council. We have also proposed moving our community level governance arrangements into the Community Planning Partnership structure, so if these proposals are taken forward they will also need to be agreed by the Community Planning Partnership.

How we will consult?

We have already done some engagement with people as part of our review of current arrangements. We will build on this engagement in our full consultation.

As is standard, a consultation paper will be produced with information about the proposals, and consultation questions as detailed in this document. It will be possible to respond to this online, via email or using a paper copy.

In addition, a series of consultation events will be held during the consultation period, which will be carried out in community locations across Renfrewshire.

Key stakeholders include elected members, community councils, current Local Area Committee attendees, community organisations with a local interest, community anchor organisations, and organisations supported or funded through the existing Local Area Committee structures.

In addition to those currently engaged in existing arrangements, the consultation will seek views of those who are not currently engaged, such as wider community members and organisations.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks from 22nd January to 15th April 2018, to allow sufficient opportunity to carry out a range of consultation events and for people to respond to consultation questions.

The proposals

There are nine key proposals that are being consulted on, across five key areas; function, membership, boundaries, meetings and grants.

Function

Currently, the aims of Local Area Committees are to promote active citizenship, to advance community wellbeing by shaping services around residents' needs, to provide local scrutiny of public services and to allocate delegated funds to fund local projects.

Proposal one: Refresh the aims

Initial engagement indicated that current arrangements do not fully meet their current aims, and that many people feel the aims of community level governance are broader than their current function. While grant giving is an important part of the arrangements, we recognise there is significant potential value beyond grant-giving, and that current arrangements might not be fulfilling that potential.

Proposed key aims for new arrangements include:

- Make connections and networks between community groups and the wider community

Community level governance offers an opportunity to bring together elected members, public sector organisations, community councils and other community led organisations across an area. This has a clear purpose in terms of achieving social connections, networks and partnerships across a local area – and this should be a more explicit aim of the new arrangements.

- Identify, set and share local community priorities

Groups should then work with each other, their memberships and wider community to identify and share the priorities for the local area. This should be a focused set of priorities, which can be ambitious for the area but still achievable – rather than a 'wish list' for communities. In response, these priorities should be recognised by the Council and its partners, and should have a material impact on how public services are delivered.

- Listen to, consult and represent local communities

Community level governance should engage local stakeholders and communities around their views, needs and aspirations for a local community – which should be part of a two-way information flow between them and local public services. Public services should work with groups for formal consultation activity, but more broadly should seek local insight through these structures. Likewise, community issues could be raised through this structure.

- Distribute grants to support local activities

Grant assistance should remain an important function, to allow locally controlled allocation of resources to community groups. Further proposals relating to grant funding can be found at section nine.

1a) Do you agree with the proposed aims of new arrangements? (Y/N)

1b) Do you have any additional comments on the proposed aims?

Proposal two: Move from 'committees' to partnership

It is proposed that 'Local Area Committees' are not continued in their current form and are replaced with 'Local Partnerships' in order to reflect changes to function and remit. This emphasizes the core purpose of the groups as working together and partnership, rather than a committee style function. New partnerships would work together to identify an appropriate name that reflects the geographical area covered by their partnership.

Community level governance should be owned by the community, rather than a committee function of the local authority. For this reason, it is proposed that the new partnerships become part of the Community Planning Partnership structure, and no longer function as formal committees of the Council.

2a) Do you agree with the proposed approach? (Y/N)

2b) Do you have any additional comments on the proposals?

Membership

Currently, Local Area Committees are chaired by an elected member within the area, and supported by a lead officer from the Council at Head of Service level. While formal membership of Local Area Committees is reserved to the elected members within the relevant area, Local Area Committees are comprised of a number of constituted community and voluntary sector organisations, and are also attended by other community planning partners such as the Police, and Health and Social Care Partnership. They are open to all constituted community organisations within the relevant local area, and are held as public meetings.

Proposal three: Voting rights extended

Engagement indicated that some groups feel disempowered by the lack of voting rights, while others feel it is proper for decisions to be made by elected members with a clear democratic mandate.

It is proposed that membership of new arrangements is widened to include equal numbers of elected members and community representatives, which would include representatives from relevant Community Councils operating in the area. Meetings would continue to be chaired by an elected member from the Council's administration group.

It is further proposed that new arrangements should seek to achieve decision making by consensus, but in areas where a decision is required, voting should be extended across the formal membership of the group. It should be noted that where this decision relates to a function of the Council (i.e. the distribution of grant funding) this would be a recommendation which would require formal 'approval' from either a Council board or an officer with sufficient authority.

3a) Do you agree that voting rights should be extended? (Y/N)

3b) Do you have any additional comments on the proposals to extend voting rights?

Proposal four: Other public services play a greater role

Where public services regularly attend Local Area Committees, their role is valued. However the presence and input of public sector partners is varied, and there are opportunities to maximize the role of the Council and its partners and use community level governance arrangements as an opportunity across the partnership to engage, consult and for two way information sharing meaningfully with communities.

It is proposed that key partners have officer representatives in the new arrangements, and provide an active and open channel of communication between communities and their wider organisation. Based on our engagement, it is proposed that these key organisations are the Council, Police Scotland, Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership and the third sector interface, Engage Renfrewshire. Other Community Planning Partners could be called into participate in meetings where this was relevant.

4a) Do you agree that partners should play a greater role? (Y/N)

4b) Do you have any additional comments on the proposals on public service involvement? (Y/N)

Proposal five: Wider engagement with the community

If community level governance has an increased role in representing the voices and ambitions of communities, then it is increasingly important that governance arrangements are representative of their communities, and able to hear a range of voices from within their networks and the wider community.

It is proposed that formal members of the new arrangements will have a responsibility to engage their wider membership and/or network to inform their participation on the group and also to disseminate information on the groups behalf. Wider event should be considered in more of an 'event' style which encourage wider attendance and facilitate local connections and networks to be established. This could be achieved through wider publicity of meetings and activities, and include presence on social media and digital channels.

5a) Do you agree that partnerships should engage more with wider community? (Y/N)

5b) How do you think wider engagement with communities would be best achieved?

5c) Do you have any additional comments on the proposals to widen engagement with the community?

Boundaries

There is a current requirement to review Local Area Committee boundaries, following the establishment of an additional ward prior to the 2017 local elections. Since this time a temporary 'fix' has been in place to allow LACs to continue to function, but they now have an uneven spread of population and elected member representation and need to be revised.

Proposal six: Move from 5 based on ward boundaries to 7 based on community council boundaries

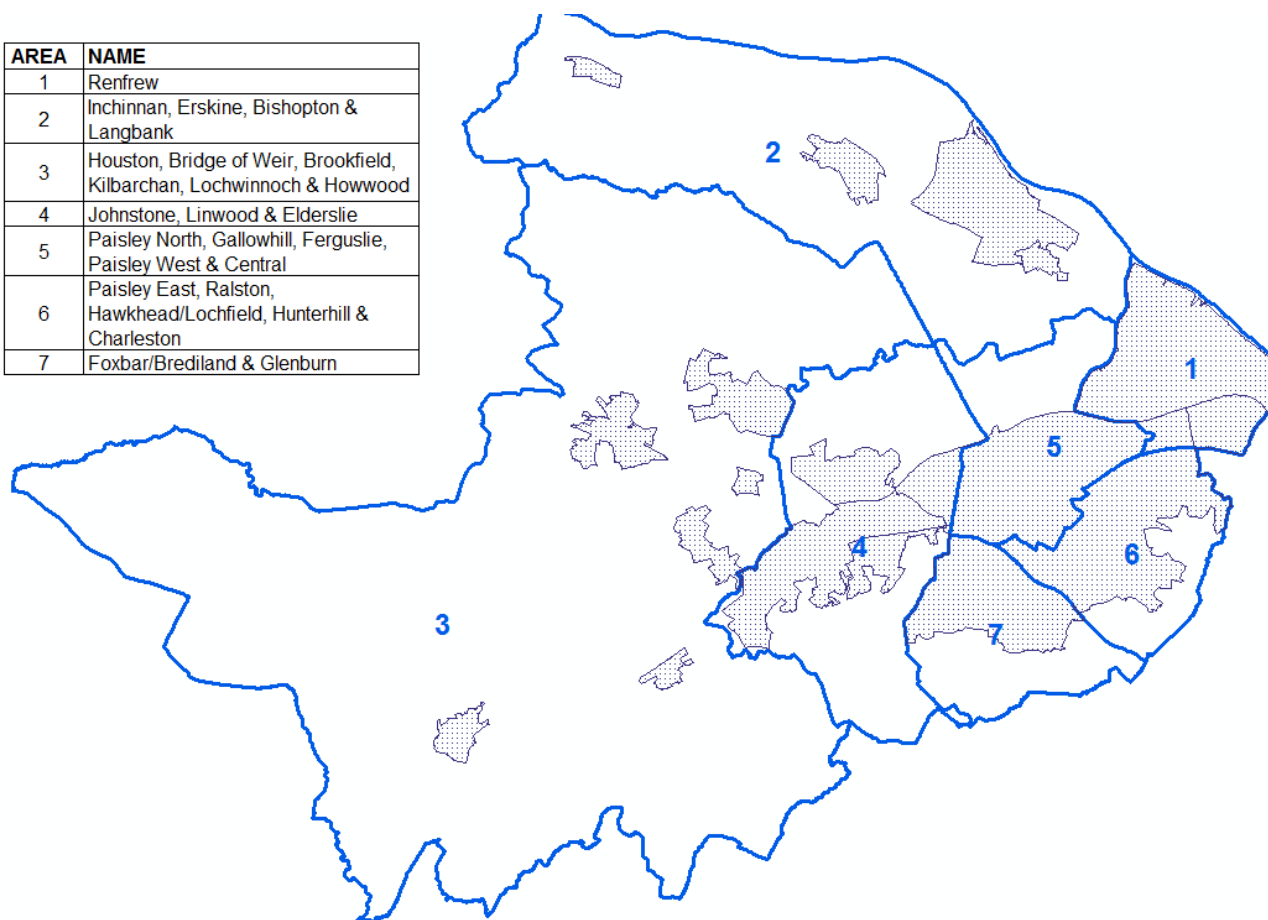
We have looked at redefining community level governance boundaries using Community Council boundaries, as opposed to Ward boundaries as these are more representative of physical communities and settlements, and in many cases the ward boundaries run counter to natural communities.

Feedback from engagement indicated that equal populations between areas were the fairest, and whatever boundaries are in place should recognise the distinction between urban and rural issues.

The proposals that have been developed are also based on similarities within areas, rather than differences. For example, areas might have shared physical features, or similar types of regeneration activity planned.

The proposals also expands the number of areas to 7 from 5, recognizing the current Local Area Committee areas are very large and wide ranging in some places. It is recognised that this may represent an increase in resourcing for the areas.

AREA	NAME
1	Renfrew
2	Inchinnan, Erskine, Bishopton & Langbank
3	Houston, Bridge of Weir, Brookfield, Kilbarchan, Lochwinnoch & Howwood
4	Johnstone, Linwood & Elderslie
5	Paisley North, Gallowhill, Ferguslie, Paisley West & Central
6	Paisley East, Ralston, Hawkhead/Lochfield, Hunterhill & Charleston
7	Foxbar/Brediland & Glenburn



A move away from ward boundaries means that elected member representation in the proposed arrangements would be more complex, with some elected members' wards spanning two areas.

We appreciate that boundaries can often be controversial, and welcome comments on the proposals

6a) Do you agree with the proposed move from ward boundaries to Community Council boundaries? (Y/N)

6b) Do you agree with the proposed groupings? (Y/N)

6c) What do you think the advantages of the proposed boundaries are?

6d) What do you think the disadvantages of the proposed boundaries are?

Meetings

Business at Local Area Committees is comprised of predominantly officer reports and presentations from the Council and its partners around local performance, service changes and consultation. There is an open session on every agenda where communities can raise local issues. The first two meetings in the cycle (typically May and August) are usually predominantly focused on considering grant applications and awarding LAC funding.

Proposal seven: Meeting should become more accessible and participative

Feedback from early engagement indicated that while many value the professionalism and formality of Local Area Committee meetings, some consider them formal and intimidating for people who are new or unfamiliar with the Council committee system.

Moving forward, it is proposed that meeting arrangements are adjusted to become more accessible and participative. There are a number of practical measures that have been suggested through early engagement, and as such it is proposed that the following are reviewed:

- balance of items on the agenda
- quantity and quality of formal reports and presentations
- venue choices and room layout
- length of meetings
- the accessibility of meetings for disabled people

7a) Do you agree with the proposals about meetings? (Y/N)

7b) What else could be done to support more accessible and participative meetings?

Grants

Local Area Committees have a delegated budget, totalling £675,510 across the five areas. Any constituted community organisation in the relevant area can apply for a grant from the LAC for local projects and activities. Organisations serving citizens across several LAC areas can apply for funding from multiple LACs where appropriate. LAC funding is comprised of funding from relevant Common Good funds, Youth Challenge funding and General fund, and applications are considered under the appropriate fund.

Proposal eight: Local grants for local projects

It is proposed that grant funding is offered through Local Area Committees, aligned to local priorities and awarded for activities which are unique to that local area. These grants should remain easy for small local community organisations to apply for.

Currently, Local Area Committees allocate a significant level of their funding to applications that cover a number of different Local Area Committee areas. Early engagement indicated that this process can be long-winded and unpredictable for organisations applying, and some LAC members feel that applications are not always relevant to their local area. It is proposed that multi-area applications are moved to a central grants process administered by Council officers.

Engagement also indicated that it was felt that more structure could be applied to the grants process to improve both the process, and the funding outcomes. It is proposed that a series of improvements are made to the grant application process to make sure that decisions are well informed and the process runs smoothly and efficiently.

8a) Do you agree that funding should be focused on local projects, in line with the community priorities that have been identified and agreed? (Y/N)

8b) Do you agree that 'multi-LAC' applications should be administered through a central grant fund? (Y/N)

8c) Do you have any additional comments relating to the grants proposals?

Proposal nine: Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting is recognised internationally as a way for local people to have a direct say in how, and where, public funds can be used to address local needs. By 2021, at least 1% of local government budgets in

Scotland will be subject to participatory budgeting, and the methodology is increasingly being used across Scotland as part of wider approaches to Community Empowerment.

It is proposed that local areas have the choice to deliver their grant funding by participatory budgeting approach, and that this process and approach would be supported by the Council.

It is further proposed that the Youth Challenge Fund should be distributed via a Participatory Budgeting exercise, where young people would decide on which projects should be funded for young people. This would allow young people the opportunity to influence and decide youth activities across the area but would also bring young people closer to civic participation and decision making.

9a) Do you agree that new arrangements should give choice for participatory budgeting? (Y/N)

9b) Do you agree that young people should decide on the allocation of the Youth Challenge Fund through a participatory budgeting exercise? (Y/N)

9c) Do you have any additional comments on the use of participatory budgeting as part of community level governance?

Next steps

The consultation period is due to run from 22nd January to 15th April 2018. Following this, responses will be collated and analysed, and a model for Community Level Governance arrangements presented to Council and Community Planning Executive Group for approval in May 2018.