

Minute of Meeting Forum for Empowering Communities

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday, 01 September 2015	16:00	Engage Renfrewshire, 1 Falcon Crescent, Paisley, PA3 1NS

PRESENT

A McNiven, Engage Renfrewshire; Lynne O'Brien, Barnardos; K Taylor, Citizens Advice Bureau; J Wilby, Paisley West & Central Community Council; S Cruickshank, Renfrewshire Access Panel; I McLean, FLAIR; and J Cram, Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership.

CHAIR

Alan McNiven presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

I Cunningham, S Graham, K Miller and S Miller (all Engage Renfrewshire); and A Armstrong-Walter, A Bradford, C MacDonald, A McNaughton, D Webb (all Renfrewshire Council).

APOLOGIES

A Fraser, Flair; S McLellan, RAMH; and J Ferrie, Engage.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest intimated prior to the commencement of the meeting.

1 MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minute of the Renfrewshire Forum for Empowering Communities held on 5 May, 2015 was submitted for approval.

DECIDED: To approve the minute.

2 ROLLING ACTION LOG

The Rolling Action Log was submitted for discussion.

DECIDED:

(a) **RF.12.11.13(6)** - timetable of Thematic Board meetings to be sent to Members in order they can schedule in a presentation to their respective Board; and Forum representative on each of the Thematic Boards to be sent a list of actions set out in each of the Thematic Board's action plans that directly relates to Forum involvement;

(b) **RF.12.11.13(9)** - to review this target; identify current youth employment programmes being delivered by the 3rd Sector; and develop and deliver further job opportunities/initiatives (eg Xmas Leavers) for young people;

(c) **RF.04.02.14(4)** – to note that as the Advice Service review had been carried out and a partnership group had been established, this item could be removed from the action plan;

(d) **RF.27.01.15(2)** – to note that more localised events, in collaboration with local groups, would be delivered throughout Autumn 2015/Spring 2016; and that a new community council had been established in the Foxbar & Brediland area with 18 members;

(e) **RF.27.01.15(4)** – to note that the use of film/media was being examined and that funding was required to develop the online directory;

(f) **RF.27.01.15(5)** – to note the actions are being progressed in relation to Streets for All report;

(g) **RF.05.05.15(3)** – to note that the format and timing of a symposium about the Community Empowerment Act and the implications for the transfer of Council assets was under discussion; and

(h) That the Rolling Action Log be approved.

3 **DIGITAL STRATEGY**

Diane Webb, Project Manager (Digital Assistance) delivered a presentation about the Digital Development Plan which aimed to ensure that everyone in Renfrewshire had the opportunity to reach their digital potential and had the means of access, awareness, skills and confidence to participate online responsibly. It was recognised that digital connectivity was now considered the 4th utility fast becoming as necessary as water, electricity and gas. There was a real risk residents who were not digitally connected could find it difficult to access public services.

The plan set out the barriers to participation and identified the most disadvantaged groups- disabled people, those over 55 years old, and those in poverty. Resources would therefore be targeted towards these groups.

It was highlighted that there was a need for Renfrewshire to have an overarching Digital Strategy to co-ordinate public, private and 3rd sector activities to develop infrastructure and accessibility, improve connectivity, deliver training, advance ecommerce, educate and innovate – with digital participation at its core.

DECIDED: To thank Diane for her presentation and to make copies available to members.

4 **UPDATE ON TACKLING POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

Annabelle Armstrong-Walter, Policy Lead (Tackling Poverty, Welfare Reform & Equalities) delivered a presentation setting out proposals to deliver the recommendations made by the Tackling Poverty Commission as set out in the Council's Action Plan. Renfrewshire Council had committed £6M towards the delivery of the Action Plan. Both the Scottish Government and national media were taking a keen interest in progress to deliver positive outcomes.

It was recognised that this Forum could play a pivotal role in scrutinising delivery of the Action Plan and strengthening community engagement to ensure resources to help tackle poverty were delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible by the full range of service providers.

The meeting discussed the need to pull together, into one coherent strategy, the various strands of work being undertaken by different agencies in order to maximise the impact of individual initiatives and the need to develop links with existing providers.

It was proposed that progress be advised as a standing item on the agenda for Forum meetings and this was agreed.

DECIDED:

(a) To thank Annabelle for her presentation; and

(b) To include a progress report on Tackling Poverty as a standing item on the agenda for this meeting.

5 CITY OF CULTURE 2021

Alan McNiven (Chair) advised that the Council had set up a Board and was expected to appoint a Director, to oversee preparation of its bid for City of Culture and now wanted to appoint a community representative. Members should be aware that applications for this role would be invited shortly from third sector agencies. More details about the role were being sought. It was recognised that the role would provide an excellent opportunity for 3rd sector agencies to provide input to the bid.

DECIDED:

- (a) To note the information and await further information about the role and the appointment of a representative to the Board.
- (b) That it be agreed that the City of Culture be a standing item on the agenda.

6 COMMUNITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2015

Anne McNaughton (Community Council Liaison Officer) invited members to publicise and promote the 4-yearly elections to community councils taking place throughout September. Community councils were the first statutory level of local democracy/representation.

Currently, 23 of the 25 community council areas were active and 283 residents were members of their local community council.

Given current low levels of membership, existing community councils in Gallowhill and Houston could struggle to obtain the required minimum number of members to form new community councils for 2015/19.

It was proposed that Engage Renfrewshire advertise membership as a volunteer opportunity. It was noted that information had been provided to ethnic and disability groups to promote participation. It was recognised that resources were required to remove barriers that prevented ethnic and disabled groups from seeking membership.

DECIDED:

- (a) To promote the Community Council elections as volunteer opportunities;
- (b) To examine the availability of resources to assist ethnic and disabled people become members of their community councils.

7 COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 2015

Alan McNiven (Chair) submitted a report advising that the Forum would have a significant role to play in ensuring that some key parts of the new Act were implemented effectively in Renfrewshire. Although guidance on implementation was still awaited, the Forum would have a key role in developing the wider Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership's response.

An appendix to the report summarised the key point for the community planning partnership and outlined the expected role the Forum could play to help deliver key elements of the Act.

DECIDED:

- (a) To note the publication of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the expected role the Forum would play in its implementation; and
- (b) To agree that the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 be included as a standing item on the Forum agenda.

8 PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING THE THIRD SECTOR

There was submitted a report from Alan McNiven (Chair) on building more sustainable community capacity in the third sector in order to help deliver the outcomes of the Community Plan.

There was scope to strengthen the third sector through specific in-kind support to build governance and operational capacity. This would, in turn, increase the level of awareness within the public sector of the potential contribution the third sector could make to achieving policy objectives. An approach could also be made to the private sector for similar support to further increase the pool of resources available to voluntary and community organisations in Renfrewshire.

DECIDED:

- (a) To agree to consult with voluntary and community sector groups on skills requirements for governance and use the results of this work to contribute to the further development of statutory partners' staff volunteering schemes as appropriate;
- (b) To agree that the Forum deliver a presentation to the Community Planning Partnership Board on practical ways for statutory partners to support local third sector organisations; and
- (c) That the Lead Officer and Empowering Communities Manager develop the presentation.

9 UPDATE FROM THEMATIC BOARDS

Feedback reports from the members who had been present at the various Thematic Boards were submitted in respect of

- Greener Renfrewshire
- Jobs & Economy
- Safer & Stronger
- Children & Young People; and
- Community Care Health & Wellbeing

DECIDED: To note the feedback provided in these reports.

10 SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT VISIT

Alan McNiven (Chair) intimated that a Parliament Day event would be held in Paisley on 21 September 2015 when the Presiding Officer (Rt Hon Trich Marwick MSP) would chair a public meeting in the Town Hall with a panel of local MSPs. This would allow MSPs to hear the opinions of local people and answer their questions. Suggestions about ways of engaging with the Parliament to make positive change possible would be welcomed.

In addition, during the day the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee will hold informal meetings looking at their 'Work, wages and well-being in the Scottish labour market' Inquiry.

More details about this event would soon become available and would be publicised by the Scottish Parliament in the local press.

DECIDED: To note the information.

11 EXPORTING PRACTICE

Alan McNiven advised that Engage had a meeting with representatives from Clackmannshire Council to discuss the joint and integrated work being carried out between the Engage and Renfrewshire Council. At the meeting Alan was able to demonstrate positive outcomes of the approach and the Forum for Empowering Communities was recognised as having a direct influence on developing future plans.

DECIDED: That the verbal update be noted.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Forum meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 11 November 2015 at 4.00pm at Engage Renfrewshire.