



Renfrewshire  
Council

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**To: Leadership Board**

**On: 6 December 2023**

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**Report by: Chief Executive**

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**Heading: Local Partnerships – Update on Consultation and Engagement Exercise**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the findings from a recent consultation exercise to support the further development of Local Partnerships in Renfrewshire.
- 1.2 Since their establishment in 2019, much progress has been achieved in terms of developing this model of community level governance, however it is recognised that further resource and effort requires to be targeted to support their further development.
- 1.3 The recent consultation exercise was completed in November 2023, and focused on identifying improvements which could be taken forward as part of the next phase of the Development of the Partnerships. Section 4 of the report provides an overview of the consultation methodology used, whilst section 5 provides an overview of key findings.
- 1.4 The feedback gained provides a significant opportunity for officers to work with all stakeholders to develop and strengthen the Local Partnerships further. As previously advised, a Local Partnerships Officer role is currently being recruited to support the next phase in the development of the Local Partnerships during 2024.
- 1.5 Section 6 sets out next steps for this programme of work, and it is proposed that a report is now prepared by officers for members, outlining recommendations and actions to be agreed to support the launch of next phase of the development of the Local Partnerships. The report will be submitted to the Leadership Board for consideration on 21 February 2024, and will also include updated grant guidance and governance documents for agreement.
- 1.6 In the intervening period officers will complete a consultation with grant applicants in order to identify and put into place required improvements to grant administration processes. Scheduled work to refresh the core Local Partnership membership will also be undertaken in early 2024.

## **2. Recommendations**

2.1 It is recommended that members of the Leadership Board note:

- the findings of the recent consultation exercise undertaken in relation to the development of Local Partnerships in Renfrewshire
- that further consultation will continue to be undertaken in relation to the administration of Local Partnership grants ahead of grant guidance being finalised in February 2024.
- that a detailed action plan to launch the next phase of the Local Partnerships will be submitted to the Leadership Board on 21 February 2024, alongside updated grant guidance and governance documents.

## **3. Background**

3.1 Local Partnerships were established during 2019 following an extensive programme of consultation. Seven Local Partnerships were created, replacing the previous Local Area Committees that had been in place for many years.

3.2 This new model of community level governance was viewed as being critical to the Council changing the way in which it works with local communities, providing opportunities for communities to have a say on what matters at a local level and working together to achieve these ambitions.

3.3 Each Local Partnership initially identified its own priorities, with a view to these guiding local actions and activities and the allocation of grants.

3.4 It was initially intended that the operation of the Local Partnerships would be reviewed after a period of 12 months, however due to COVID and wider resource pressures, the review was postponed at that time.

3.5 In June 2023, Leadership Board was advised that a process of engagement and consultation would be undertaken to inform the next phase of development of the Local Partnerships. The process commenced in late September 2023 and has been lead by the Partnerships and Inequalities team, with a key focus on identifying what needs to happen to build on the existing strengths and potential opportunities which the Local Partnership model provides.

## **4. Overview of consultation and engagement exercise**

4.1 In September 2023, an update was provided to elected members on the proposed scope of the exercise which would focus on identifying options to:

- Enhance participation in Local Partnership meetings
- Facilitate greater engagement from Council services and partner organisations on issues which impact Local Partnership areas
- Develop meaningful local priorities and action plans
- Identify options for improving the grant allocation process

4.2 A key aim of the consultation exercise was to provide a variety of different opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback on the operation of the Local Partnerships. This included:

- A consultation survey which was issued to all current local partnership participants (21 responses received)
- One to one engagement sessions with Local Partnership Chairs and Lead Officers
- A joint engagement session with current Lead Officers
- Two online engagement sessions offered to elected members (17 participants)
- Two online engagement sessions offered to community representatives (5 participants)
- An online engagement session for partners and wider stakeholders (7 participants)

4.3 It was important to offer a range of different opportunities for stakeholders to participate recognising that a survey alone was not the most accessible or indeed preferred way for some people to provide feedback. It is also recognised that further engagement may be required to explore some of the developments proposed within this paper in further detail. This includes in relation to grants, where a separate consultation process is underway with Local Partnership grant applicants on the processes around application and payment and how these procedural aspects can be improved.

4.4 Section 5 of this paper provides an overview of the consultation and engagement findings received to date, whilst section 6 sets out proposed next steps in terms of responding to the feedback received.

## **5 Consultation and engagement findings**

5.1 Through the exercise undertaken, officers gathered a range of diverse views and opinions from stakeholders about the way in which Local Partnerships work currently, and how things could be improved moving forward.

5.2 Overall there was consensus that the Local Partnerships have created a new community level governance model which had moved on considerably from that which previously operated under the Local Area Committee model. The efforts of officers in supporting the establishment of the Local Partnerships and their ongoing operation was strongly recognised by participants, particularly during COVID. There was however some concern that since they were introduced the pace of the transition had been one of more gradual evolution, which some participants had found frustrating given the potential that Local Partnerships are felt to have.

- 5.3 The majority of participants were supportive of the further development of the Local Partnerships, and identified a range of improvements that could be explored to support and strengthen the work of the Local Partnerships to ensure they are vibrant and valued mechanisms for community engagement and collaboration.
- 5.4 A key consideration expressed throughout the consultation was that any improvement actions flowing from the consultation must not impact on the ability of each Partnership to work flexibly and to respond to the needs of its membership, albeit in line with governance arrangements.
- 5.5 The broad themes emerging from the consultation can be summarised as follows:
- Local partnerships are generally working well, but there could be a better balance of input with more opportunities for the community voice.
  - Adjustments may be required to ensure greater participation of Local Partnership members/groups facing barriers.
  - Local representation could be strengthened in terms of ensuring that all membership spaces are filled and that there is a spread of representation across communities and with different groups such as young people.
  - Council services and partner organisations need to review the way in which they engage with Local Partnerships to ensure this is tailored and focused on what matters to each Local Partnership.
  - Local Partnerships represent a significant opportunity – they should not be solely about grants, and all opportunities to strengthen their role should be progressed.
  - There is strong support in relation to Local Partnerships refreshing their priorities and developing local action plans – but this needs to be meaningful and there needs to be resource in place between meetings to make things happen and to join the dots.
  - Local Partnerships need support to reach out into communities and to communicate what is happening at a local level through the collaboration that is taking place.
  - Grants allocation guidance and support for applicants needs to be strengthened
  - Information on grant applications could be further strengthened to support decision making. A stronger focus needs to be placed on reporting back impact at a local level.
- 5.6 Detailed feedback in relation to each of the broad themes of the consultation are provided in the remainder of this section of the report.

#### 5.6.1 Enhance participation in Local Partnership Meetings

Enhance participation in Local	Existing Strengths	Areas for Improvement
	Local Partnerships have good representation from across	There was a strong view expressed that the membership of Local Partnerships should be

<b>Partnership meetings</b>	communities although the extent of this may have varied over time	reviewed and refreshed in order to ensure all gaps in representation were addressed
	Survey feedback indicates meetings take place regularly and at broadly the right frequency	A regular process should be put into place to support Local Partnerships to address any emerging gaps in representation.
	Most participants confirmed that they felt able to participate in the meeting	Local Partnerships should review participation on an ongoing basis to address any barriers that may be experienced due to factors such as a disability or childcare responsibilities, or due to the meeting arrangements themselves at venues or online. This should include reminding participants that support for attendance and travel costs can be provided. Support for ICT access should also be considered as it was noted that this could be challenging and interrupt the flow of meetings
	Local Partnerships had adapted meeting arrangements during and following COVID – some partnerships have met face to face which had supported connections to develop whilst other participants in other partnerships highlighted the benefits of hybrid or online meetings	Agendas for local partnership meetings should provide opportunities for community representatives to engage and offer insight into work being undertaken across communities within local areas.
	Local Partnerships members provided examples of where gaps in representation had been targeted and addressed e.g to ensure certain localities/communities were represented. New arrangements to involve young people in the Renfrew Local Partnership were highlighted as a positive development	Local Partnerships could consider how to link out across communities to promote the work they are doing and to encourage groups and organisations to work with the Local Partnership on any shared priorities e.g community councils, TARAs, equalities groups
	Information provided at meetings was useful and supported participation	Support for new community representatives should be provided.
		Involve wider Partnership in setting of agendas/meeting programme over the year.
		Some participants queried whether regular meetings which did not involve grant decision making required to be recorded. It was suggested that this could encourage more informal approach to meeting.

## 5.6.2 Engagement with Council services / Partner Organisations

Facilitate greater engagement from Council services and partner organisations on issues which impact Local Partnership areas	Strengths	Improvements
	Information and papers provided by the Partnerships team were of a good quality and supported the discussion on agenda items	Participants across all engagement mechanism felt that the balance of partner engagement within meetings was not yet quite right
	Majority felt items raised at Local Partnerships were generally of interest to them	It was suggested that items from partners such as Police and Health would be valued by members of the Local Partnerships, but these need to be tailored to each local area.
	Information and papers provided by Team	It was suggested that when there is input from officers and partners this should also very targeted and focused in terms of the time allocated on the agenda.
	Tailoring content has worked well in some Local Partnerships where there have been presentations on major infrastructure projects within the locality	A number of participants talked about an opportunity to be more imaginative with the agenda – there are local groups and organisations that could also feed into this as partners rather than statutory agencies.
		More than two thirds of survey respondents said they wanted to hear more about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement in enhancing the local environment</li> <li>• Opportunities for local people to engage in consultation exercises</li> <li>• Involvement in partnership working to address issues like poverty</li> </ul>

## 5.6.3 Local Priorities and Action Plans

Develop meaningful local priorities and action plans	Strengths	Opportunities for improvement
	A number of participants noted that that the development of the original local priorities at the inception of the Local Partnerships had supported decision making, particularly in relation to grant allocations	There was a strong consensus that local priorities should be reviewed – although these may not change significantly it represents an opportunity to engage across partnerships and to support collaboration
	Evidence was provided that some Local Partnerships had started to undertake targeted activities inline with these priorities eg road safety, engagement with young people	Developing local priorities and plans was important, but only if it is a meaningful exercise. It was suggested there needed to be a resource in place which supported work to take place outside

		of meetings and to ensure progress was tracked and reported back to meetings.
	Some participants noted that it had been helpful to review local priorities within the Local Partnerships during and subsequent to the pandemic	If local plans are developed there needed to be consideration on how Local Partnerships could involve the wider community in developing these. There should also be regular communication with communities on what is happening
		Participants also suggested that local priorities should more closely be linked to the grant allocation possible wherever possible.

#### 5.6.4 Improving the grant allocation process

<b>Identify options for improving the grant allocation process</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Improvements</b>
	Participants provided examples within communities of where Local Partnership grant funding was benefiting local people and making a difference	Although grant guidance was widely recognised as being clear and concise, it was suggested that greater support could be provided to applicants to assist them with the process.
	Survey feedback and that gained through the wider exercise indicates that grant guidance provided is clear and easy to follow for participants	It was suggested through all parts of the consultation undertaken that grant criteria could be reviewed and strengthened in relation to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The requirement for all applications to evidence links to local priorities set by each Local Partnership or local criteria that would be applied</li> <li>- Multi area applications</li> <li>- One off community events such as Christmas lights and gala days</li> </ul>
	Positive feedback was provided on the support that is provided by the Partnerships team around the grant allocation process – in terms of supporting all arrangements and preparation of paperwork which was recognised as being resource intensive	An annual grants prospectus should be developed and maintained by the Partnerships team and communicated across all community and third sector networks. This would ensure organisations seek funding from alternative sources to Local Partnerships, particularly for organisations that apply each year for funding and may require wider support around financial sustainability and support with business planning.

	<p>The Celebrating Renfrewshire participatory budgeting programme was suggested by a number of participants as being very successful in Renfrewshire as a process and in</p>	<p>It was suggested that given the demand for Local Partnership funding, each applications should be limited to a 5k cap, recognising that this would still be higher than other small grant funding opportunities offered eg Community Food Fund, Winter Connections etc</p>
		<p>There was consensus that much more information needed to be gathered and reported back to Local Partnerships on the impact that funding had had. It was suggested that this should be a core requirement of any funding award, and if not fully met would impact the allocation of future funding.</p>
		<p>It was suggested that reports back on impact should not be a significant burden for those awarded funding. Officers should consider opportunities to highlight impact through short videos or newsletters.</p>
		<p>It was recognised that Local Partnerships have significant potential and should not be solely associated with the grant allocation process. It was suggested that each Local Partnership should have 2-3 regular meetings each year and the grant meeting should be denoted as a special meeting on the calendar</p>
		<p>A small number of participants suggested that Local Partnerships could explore participatory budgeting opportunities given the success of the Celebrating Renfrewshire programme.</p>
		<p>Consider opportunities for applicants to be able to present their applications if required.</p>
		<p>Review information provided to Local Partnerships to see if this can be strengthened to support decision making. This could include building more time into the assessment process to allow all Local Partnership members time to review application materials and to request information prior to the grant allocation meeting taking place.</p>



## General Feedback

General	Strengths	Opportunities for improvement
	Links have been made between some of the strategic agendas being progressed by the Council and its partners and Local Partnerships. A positive example of this engagement in relation to the Net Zero agenda.	Officers should explore further opportunities to align some of the strategic work being progressed by the Council to the Local Partnerships if this strengthens their role going forward
		The provision of support for 7 Local Partnership meetings within a single cycle over a 3-4 week period is resource intensive. It was suggested that engagement with Local Partnerships could be undertaken to consider whether a smooth of the meeting timetable over the course of the year could allow for support from officers to be strengthened, although it is recognised that this would not be possible for grant meetings which would be required to take place over a concentrated period of time before the summer recess.
		Lead officer role descriptions should be developed to support the governance arrangements of the Local Partnerships.

## 6 Next steps

6.1 The feedback gained through the consultation exercise represents a significant opportunity to work with all stakeholders to strengthen the role and operation of Local Partnerships in Renfrewshire and to launch the next phase of their development in 2024.

6.2 As previously advised, a Local Partnerships Officer role is currently being recruited to support the next phase in the development of the Local Partnerships during 2024, with a key focus on

- supporting partnerships to develop local plans and priorities,
- strengthening links between Local Partnerships and wider council services and partner agencies; and
- supporting the development of work programmes and agendas for each Local Partnership, ensuring all opportunities are maximised to link to the local community and with wider strategic programmes of work which are relevant to local areas.

- 6.3 It is proposed that a report is prepared by officers for members, outlining recommendations and actions to be agreed to support the launch of next phase of the development of the Local Partnerships. The report will be submitted to the Leadership Board for consideration on 21 February 2024, and will also include updated grant guidance and governance documents for agreement.
- 6.4 In the intervening period officers will finalise a consultation with grant applicants in order to identify and put into place required improvements to grant administration processes. Scheduled work to refresh the core Local Partnership membership will also be undertaken in early 2024.
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### **Implications of the Report**

1. **Financial** – none
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none
3. **Community/Council Planning** – as outlined within the content of the report.
4. **Legal** - none
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** - none
7. **Equality and Human Rights** –
8. **Health and Safety** - none
9. **Procurement** – none
10. **Risk** – none
11. **Privacy Impact** – none
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – none
13. **Climate Risk** – none

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