

To: Villages Local Partnership

On: 18th April 2024

Report by:
Chief Executive, Renfrewshire Council

TITLE:
Local Partnerships review and launch of 2024 Development Programme

1. Summary

- 1.1 In 2019, Renfrewshire Council approved a new model of community level governance through the launch of 7 new Local Partnerships. The partnerships have continued to develop and grow over this period, promoting community empowerment through the identification of the initial local priorities, local grant making and the nationally recognised youth participatory budgeting process Celebrating Renfrewshire.
- 1.2 The pandemic has impacted some of the planned developments in relation to the Local Partnerships, and a consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken in late 2023 to learn from the work that has been undertaken to date and to identify options for building on this as we move forward. The findings of the consultation exercise were reported to Renfrewshire Council's Leadership Board in September 2023.
- 1.3 Local Partnerships have a huge amount of potential to strengthen community empowerment and capacity in Renfrewshire, and to harness this potential it is proposed that next phase of their development is now progressed. With a focus on "*Local Plans, Local Priorities and Local Voices*", a range of development actions are now proposed, as set out in Section 4 of this report.
- 1.4 Subject to the approval of the board, this development programme and related campaign will commence from the end of February 2024. A key focus in 2024 will be around enhancing communications in relation to Local Partnerships activities, refreshing

partnership membership and supporting a review of current priorities for each Local Partnership.

- 1.5 Local Partnership Grant Funding guidance has also been refreshed for 2024 in response to the consultation exercise feedback received and was approved by the Council's Leadership Board in February 2024.

2. **Recommendations**

2.1 It is recommended that members of the Villages Local Partnership:

- Note the launch of a new campaign to relaunch the Local Partnerships which will be implemented from end February 2024
- Note the refreshed Local Partnership Guidance for 2024

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 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. In September 2023, officers commenced a consultation and engagement process to inform the next phase of the development of Local Partnerships, with a key focus on building on existing strengths and identifying further opportunities for the Partnerships to grow.

3.4 Specifically the process focused on identifying opportunities 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

- 3.5 A detailed report on the consultation findings was presented to Leadership Board in December 2023. Overall there was consensus that Local Partnerships have created a new community level governance model which has moved on considerably from that which previously operated under the Local Area Committee model. One of the key strengths identified was that current model supports Local Partnerships to develop their own identity and to work flexibly in line with local requirements and that this was a very important feature to be protected.
- 3.6 Extensive feedback was provided on what is working well and also on opportunities to develop the model even further. Key findings were highlighted as being:

Summary of findings:

- 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.

4. Next Phase of Local Partnerships – Local Plans, Local Priorities, Local Voices”

4.1 In response to the findings from the consultation and engagement findings, officers have been working to develop the next phase of the Local Partnerships, and subject to approval of the board, this will be launched from late February 2024. Under the banner of a “Local Plans, Local Priorities and Local Voices” campaign, we will work with partners and communities to implement the following elements:

- Local Partnership membership refresh exercise to be undertaken to ensure strong and representative **Local Voices** inform their activities
- To further strengthen representation the Community Learning and Development team will work with young people to develop proposals on how to involve young people more meaningfully in the work of the Local Partnerships.
- Support will be provided to each Local Partnership to review current **Local Priorities during 2024** to ensure these remain fit for purpose: - these will be used to develop a future work programme of activity through a **Local Partnerships Plan**
- Work will be undertaken to enhance communication on the work of the Local Partnerships – through newsletters, email and social media channels: - showcasing impact of activities and positive opportunities to get involved in local activities.
- A Local Partnership Development Officer will be recruited who will co-ordinate all related activities including the review of local priorities and development of the Local Partnership Plans
- A new meetings schedule for Local Partnerships will be implemented – 3 core meetings per year to focus on taking forward Local Partnership Plans, with one special meeting per annum in May/June each year to consider grant awards.
- Refreshed grants guidance will be launched early March 2024 – making it clearer for grant applicants and Local Partnership members to participate in the grant making process, and with a much stronger emphasis on evidencing the difference or impact that grant funding has made in a local area.

- A Council grant prospectus will be developed and promoted - ensuring there is visibility and enhanced awareness of all available Council grant funding, with Local Partnerships focusing on funding small and locally focused projects.

5. Launch of Local Partnerships Funding

5.1 Extensive feedback was provided through the engagement process on the current Local Partnerships grant funding process. Respondents recognised that Local Partnerships needed to continue to develop to focus on other activities beyond grant awards, however the grant award process itself could be strengthened moving forward. Local Partnership funding is heavily oversubscribed, and it was recognised that applicants may need more help to ensure their applications are strong and tailored for consideration on a small grants basis.

5.2 Key points raised within the consultation and engagement exercise were:

- Continuing to improve the support provided to grant applicants on the process as well as to direct to other sources of funding which may be appropriate to the requirements of a community organisation, or to the project/initiative seeking funding
- The need to review grant criteria to make this clearer on the process and funding criteria – strongly reinforcing the requirement for applicants to evidence links to Local Partnership priorities and to provide evidence of impact.
- A requirement to review the levels of grant funding available through the Local Partnerships Grant Funding – specifically including the provision of a cap on application values given that the funding is significantly oversubscribed.

5.3 Existing funding guidance has now been reviewed and refreshed Local Partnerships Guidance 2024 was approved by Leadership Board in 2024. In updating the guidance, officers have aimed to incorporate the key suggestions and points made through the engagement exercise, including the implementation of maximum funding levels in line with other small grant funding opportunities offered eg Community Food Fund, Summer of Fun and the Winter Connections programme.

6 Next steps

6.1 The consultation and engagement exercise highlighted the strong progress that Local Partnerships have made, moving to a community level governance model which is much more strongly rooted in community voice and representation. The launch of the second phase of the Local Partnerships represents a significant opportunity to move forward and strengthen the potential impact that these can have across Renfrewshire's communities.

6.2 Regular updates on the implementation of Phase 2 – *Local Plans, Local Priorities and Local Voices* will be provided to both Local Partnerships as well as Renfrewshire Council's Leadership Board within 6 monthly update reports.

Author:

Annabelle Armstrong-Walter, Strategic Partnerships and Inequalities Manager, 07483 957 115