

To: Council

On: 3rd May 2018

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Support to Community Organisations

1. **Summary**

- 1.1 This paper outlines a proposed approach to supporting community organisations, following the paper agreed by Council in December 2017.
 - 1.2 The proposed approach aims to improve the consistency of the support the Council does provide and better align this to the Council's strategic objectives.
 - 1.3 The paper also provides key findings from engagement carried out with a number of community organisations and Council services, providing insight into key opportunities and challenges in this area.
 - 1.4 It is proposed that this approach is piloted throughout 2018, with officers working alongside community organisations to develop a more detailed framework of activity. This would include developing detailed principles for the Council's engagement and support, and creating a process which is more efficient for the Council, and transparent for community organisations. It should be noted that there are a number of emerging developments such as the review of community level governance and the introduction of the Community Empowerment funding which are closely linked to the proposed approach.
-

2. **Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Note findings from the engagement activity carried out at section 4 of the report
- Approve the proposed process to be piloted as outlined at section 5 of the report
- Note a further paper will be brought to Leadership Board in June with further detail on the Community Empowerment Fund approved by Council on 2nd March.

3. Background

- 3.1 There are a wide range of community groups and organisations across Renfrewshire at different levels and at different stages of achieving their objectives. These include Community Development Trusts and Community Anchor Organisations with a desire to effect change and contribute to the regeneration of a place, alongside organisations working with specific groups of people or on specific areas of interest or disadvantage. It is recognised that organisations often have different and distinct needs, and those needs are reflected in the range of supports that are requested of the Council.
- 3.2 There are a number of emerging statutory requirements from the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, along with a number of new developments within the Council which require a consolidated approach. These include the review of community level governance arrangements and the introduction of key investments such as the Community Empowerment Fund.
- 3.3 A paper was approved at Council in December 2017 asking members to note that a review would be undertaken of Council support to community groups, including engagement with community groups on their views and experiences, and that the outcome of this review and associated recommendations will be submitted to a future Council meeting for consideration.
- 3.4 There are a number of ways which the Council supports different Community based organisations and groups, including but not limited to:
- Advice and guidance – Teams across the Council services offer ad hoc advice and guidance to a range of community organisations, and often on an informal and service specific basis.
 - Support to access funding – There are a number of teams across the Council, and funded by the Council, which offer support to community organisations to access external funding sources. In addition, there are occasions where the

Council has acted as a 'custodian' for larger funding amounts so they can be drawn down by community organisations.

- Asset transfer – There is currently a Community Asset Transfer process set up to enable community organisations to take on community assets (land or buildings) to deliver community benefit. This was previously part of the Council's own Community Asset Transfer Policy, but is now done in accordance with the provisions of the Community Empowerment Act.
- Direct funding support – the Council directly funds a wide range of community organisations through grants and other funding arrangements. This is mostly delivered through well established grant funding mechanisms, but there are examples of grants being made available on an ad-hoc basis.
- Partnership led activity – there may be further examples where the Council enters into a partnership with community organisations in order to deliver projects or services for community benefit.

3.5 There are also a number of existing processes within the Council which the review must be cognisant of. These include the Community Asset Transfer process, Participation Request process, Community Level Governance arrangements which are currently being reviewed and a variety of community grants offered across the Council.

4. **Feedback from engagement activity**

4.1 As part of the review of community level governance arrangements, a significant period of consultation was undertaken over a twelve-week period between January and April 2018. This consultation involved working with a number of community organisations across Renfrewshire, and aligned to this conversation there was significant feedback from community organisations about the working relationship they want with the Council, and how the Council can best support them as individual organisations and as a sector.

4.2 Key themes emerging from this engagement include:

- The size and complexity of local authorities can make engagement with the Council difficult to navigate for community organisations. It can be difficult to find the correct point of contact and difficult to navigate complex organisational structures. For example, individual Council services often have their own approaches and processes reflecting their service priorities.
- Council processes can be complex and there can be a lack of clarity on what information the Council requires and why, for example, with Community Asset Transfer. Organisations would value more support with identifying available sites, likely costs and the development of business plans.
- A number of organisations felt there are big opportunities for joint working, collaboration and co-production. Organisations are keen to have up-to-date information on Council and partnership priorities in order to enable them to identify these opportunities and support them.

- Many groups talked about support needed to find and apply for funding. This included higher level support for organisations to become self sustaining, so they do not need to depend on annual grants. Many respondents had ideas about what support would be most helpful, for example, finding other funding sources; support to complete funding forms; having a central office to support grant applications; and help specifically for those for groups who don't currently receive funding.
- A group respondent reflected that the Council could factor evidence of outcomes and social return on investment better into funding decisions. It was felt that a more transparent process would be helpful for seeing who receives funding and why. It was also felt that there should be clearer guidelines about the eligibility for funding, for example what a constitution should look like. Some also felt that the Council should be aware when external funding is being attracted into the area. People also raised the Empowering Communities Fund and the Villages Fund and how they could be supported to access these.
- Some organisations want to be supported to engage meaningfully with Council processes, with ongoing consultation and involvement between the Council and community organisations

4.3 In addition to community engagement, work has been undertaken across services in the Council understand the opportunities and challenges that exist from a service perspective. Key themes emerging from this engagement include:

- Recognising the key role communities play in supporting the delivery of strategic outcomes and priorities
- Recognition that the Council have significant resources which can help communities deliver projects and apply for funding, but could provide better guidance on what the Council can collaborate on and the type of resources that can be shared
- The importance of supporting organisations with different levels of capacity, and developing that capacity at all levels - from supporting smaller organisations to start and grow, to partnerships with well-established organisations.
- Supporting organisations to become more sustainable, while recognizing the challenges to sustainability created by current funding availability
- Recognition there is a need to revisit policies and procedures which make to make them more straightforward for community organisations and council officers to use

5. **Proposed approach**

- 5.1 It is proposed that a central point of contact for community organisations is introduced within the Council. The purpose of this role would be to understand the organisation's request and then signpost and direct organisations to relevant officers and services that can assist them, and to track and monitor support offered to community organisations. The aim would be to provide a process which is more efficient for the Council, and transparent for community organisations.
- 5.2 The officer would have an initial discussion to understand the community organisations aims and ambitions, and signpost and direct to relevant officers and services. This might include officer advice and guidance, support to access funding or advice on asset transfer requests. In cases where there is clear alignment to the Council's strategic priorities, this might also include direct or in-kind support, or a more formal partnership arrangement such as a Strategic Partnership Agreement.
- 5.3 It is recognised that one of the key issues for community organisations is 'navigating' the Council, and this role would be able to identify key officers across the organisation that are able to support the community organisations as well as navigating Council governance requirements where relevant. This would allow the Council to have clarity on service level delivered to community organisations and provide an escalation point for community organisations where this is not met.
- 5.4 This would also allow officers to identify and assess where community organisations are closely aligned to strategic priorities within the Council and Community Plans, and to explore opportunities for collaboration and partnership working in a more structured way.
- 5.5 This would also allow the Council to better understand the level and extent of support for community organisations across services, and provide a more efficient and corporate response. It would also enable the Council to monitor the range and levels of support being provided corporately (for example, officer time and in-kind support).
- 5.6 The role of formal partnership agreements could also be explored where the work of an organisation has clear strategic alignment to Council or Community Planning priorities, and requires specific political oversight or agreement. This could be trialled as part of existing partnership working arrangements such as those currently in place.
- 5.7 In addition to working with current practice, it is recognised that this process needs to dovetail with future work, for example, any centralisation of grant funding or the development of the Empowering Communities model.

- 5.8 The single point of contact would be within the Partnerships Team within the Chief Executive's Service. This would be a new post, and supported across the wider Partnerships Team to make sure there would be suitable capacity to support the proposed approach.

6. **Next steps**

- 6.1 Council approved a £1.5mil Community Empowerment Fund on 2nd March 2018, to run over the next 5 years. This fund will be developed over Spring 2018, with a more detailed paper in June about how the fund will operate. This fund would be developed as part of the proposed pilot at section 5, and closely aligned to the process and framework being proposed above.
- 6.2 The consultation on the review of Community Level Governance is now complete, with proposals for a future model presented to the May Council meeting for consideration. If approved, the new partnership model provides a key fora for locally focused community organisations to work with each other and the wider Community Planning Partnership.
- 6.3 As part of the review of Community Level Governance, significant changes have been proposed to the distribution of grants undertaken by the current Local Area Committee structure. This involves realigning local grants to priorities set by communities, moving Renfrewshire wide grant applications to a centrally distributed grant process and introducing participatory budgeting. These proposals have been developed with significant involvement from community groups.
- 6.4 In order to develop this process, further work will need to be done across Council services to understand the current offer for communities from a range of services, and any existing policy or practice in place to manage these requests. As well as working with Council services, engagement will need to be carried out with community organisations themselves to understand how the process would need to work in practice.
- 6.5 The proposal has associated resource requirements which would need to be considered in line with existing resources and available funding to support community organisations.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – The proposal has associated resource requirements which would need to be considered in line with existing resources and available funding to support community organisations.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – Not applicable

3. **Community/Council Planning –**

- This approach supports the fulfilment of the Council’s requirements under the Community Empowerment Act, and therefore underpins the delivery of a number of priorities within the Community Plan, particularly the ‘Principles’ agreed in the 2017 -2027 plan.
- The approach supports the ‘Building strong, safe and resilient communities’ priority within the Council Plan, which makes explicit reference to the community empowerment agenda within Renfrewshire.

4. **Legal** – It is anticipated that the proposed approach will support the delivery of the Council’s requirements under the Community Empowerment Act

5. **Property/Assets** – None

6. **Information Technology** - None

7. **Equality & Human Rights** - It is anticipated that the proposed approach would have a positive impact on equality and human rights by providing a more transparent and accessible approach for community organisations to seek Council support.

8. **Health & Safety** – None

9. **Procurement** – None

10. **Risk** - None

11. **Privacy Impact** - None

12. **Cosla Policy Position** – None

List of Background Papers

(a) Background Paper 1 N/A

Author: Annabelle Armstrong-Walter (Strategic Partnerships and Inequalities Manager) 0141 6185968

