

**To:** Council

**On:** 21<sup>st</sup> December 2017

---

**Report by:** Chief Executive

---

**Heading:** Support for community organisations

---

**1. Summary**

- 1.1 This paper outlines a proposal to review Renfrewshire Council's approach to supporting community organisations, to improve the consistency of the support the Council does provide and better align this to the Council's strategic objectives.
- 1.2 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 empowering communities approach.
- 1.3 It is proposed that a review of support to community organisations is carried out to provide:
- (a) an assessment of the extent and consistency of support to community organisations offered across the Council
  - (b) the views and experiences of community organisations seeking support from the Council
- 1.4 Following this review, it is proposed that a framework is developed which clearly outlines the principles for the Council's engagement and

support, and create a process which is more efficient for the Council, and transparent for community organisations.

---

## 2. **Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to note:

- a) that a review will be undertaken of Council support to community groups, including engagement with community groups on their views and experiences, and
  - b) that the outcome of this review and associated recommendations will be submitted to a future Council meeting for consideration.
- 

## 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 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.

- **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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 It is recognized that the size and complexity of local authorities can make engagement with the Council difficult to navigate for community organisations. In addition, individual Council services often have their own approaches and processes reflecting their service priorities.

## 4 Strategic Context

- 4.1 The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 is intended to empower community bodies through the ownership or control of land or buildings and by strengthening the voice of communities in the planning and delivery of public services.
- 4.2 There are eleven parts to the Act in total. These cover National Outcomes, Community Planning, Participation Requests, Community Rights To Buy, Asset Transfer Requests, Delegation of Forestry Commissioners' Functions, Football Clubs, Common Good Property, Allotments, Participation In Public Decision-Making and Non-Domestic Rates.
- 4.3 Different parts of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 require different guidance and, in some cases, secondary legislation. This means that some parts of the Act have come into force while others have still to be enacted.
- 4.4 Key parts of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 that strengthen community empowerment in terms of ownership of assets and involvement in public services concern Participation Requests and Asset Transfer Requests.

- **Participation Requests** put in place a process for community bodies to put forward ideas about how their involvement in the planning and delivery of public services could result in improved outcomes for communities. Once a participation request is submitted to a public service by a community body, there is a statutory timescale for responding to this request. The legislation states that the public service must respond positively and accept the participation request unless there is a reasonable case for not doing so. If the participation request is refused, the reasons for this have to be stated. Community bodies would also have recourse to appeal to Ministers on refusal of a participation request.
- **Asset Transfer requests** provide a process to enable community bodies to purchase, lease, manage or use land or buildings belonging to public services or the Scottish Government. All public services are required to maintain a public register of their land and assets. With very few exceptions, all public service assets are eligible for community asset transfer. Community bodies can request the transfer of land or buildings owned by public services, whether these are currently in use or not. The purpose of use must be stated and must be to the benefit of the wider community. Asset transfers are not presumed to be free of charge. Part of the process involves the community body stating the sum that it would be willing to offer the public service for transfer of the asset. The presumption of the legislation is that asset transfer requests will be agreed by the public service, unless there are reasonable grounds for refusal. As with participation requests, the reasons for any refusal must be explained and there is an appeals process.

4.5 In addition to specific statutory requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, there are a number of Council developments underway which are designed to support the wider aims of community empowerment.

4.6 Community level governance arrangements are currently being reviewed to assess how they can facilitate engagement from local communities. In particular, the review has explored how Local Area Committees can 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. Part of this review will also assess the grant support which is delivered through the current Local Area Committee system.

- 4.7 In December, Leadership Board approved proposals for an 'Empowering Communities' approach that will seek to transform the relationship of the Council with the communities it serves, including the development of a new Empowering Communities frontline service model. Over the next 2 years the Empowering Communities approach will start to:
- Strengthen the Council's ability to act as an effective partner for communities
  - Build community capacity in all of Renfrewshire's communities
  - Increase community ownership of service delivery and assets
  - Improve Council support for communities: providing resources & specialist skills; grant funding; decentralised budgets and participatory budgeting
  - Share power more equally between communities, individuals and professionals
  - Invest in and develop community potential, community assets and social networks
- 4.8 It should be noted that a new Council Plan and Community Plan have been agreed in 2017, setting out the strategic priorities for the Council. This offers an opportunity to ensure council support is now aligned to its strategic priorities
- 5. Next steps**
- 5.1 The current landscape of support to community groups is complex, both in the range of current practices and new and emerging developments and processes.
- 5.2 It is proposed that a review of community group support is carried out to provide:
- (a) an assessment of the extent and consistency of support to community groups offered across the Council
  - (b) the views and experiences of community organisations seeking support from the Council
- 5.3 This would involve working across a range of Council services to identify examples of community support, and identify good practice and lessons learnt. In addition, engagement would be carried out with a range of community led organisations to understand community perceptions and experiences of how the Council supports them.

- 5.4 It is also proposed that key processes referred to in this paper, such as Asset Transfer and Participation Requests, are also assessed in order to establish how the Council might streamline the processes that it already has in place.
- 5.5 From this review, it is proposed that a framework is developed which clearly outlines the principles for the Council's engagement and support, and creating a process which is more efficient for the Council, and transparent for community groups.
- 

## **Implications of the Report**

1. **Financial** – There are no financial implications of this report.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – Not applicable
3. **Community/Council Planning** – The review will seek to align support to community groups more closely to the priorities outlined within both the Council Plan and Community Plan.
4. **Legal** – A renewed process for support Community Groups will support the Council's adherence to processes and principles within the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act.
5. **Property/Assets** - Not applicable
6. **Information Technology** - Not applicable
7. **Equality & Human Rights** – The review will take into consideration the views of equalities led community groups across Renfrewshire. A full Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out on any new arrangements developed as a result of the review.
8. **Health & Safety** - Not applicable
9. **Procurement** – Not applicable
10. **Risk** - Not applicable
11. **Privacy Impact** - Not applicable
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – Not applicable

---

**Author:** Annabelle Armstrong-Walter, Strategic Partnerships and Inequalities Manager, 0141 6185968, [annabelle.armstrong-walter@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:annabelle.armstrong-walter@renfrewshire.gov.uk)