

REPORT TO: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GROUP ON 13 AUGUST 2009

SUBJECT: DEVELOPING COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS IN MORAY

BY: COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The report is submitted in response to a request by the Area Forums for the Community Engagement Group to consider support for the development of Community Agreements in Moray between local residents and local service providers.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Community Engagement Group supports the concept of the development of community agreements in Moray between local residents and local service providers.**

It is also recommended that support is given to working with Area Forums in Moray to organise a seminar involving key partners and stakeholders in Moray which would explore the Community Agreement concept.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Community Agreements or Neighbourhood Charters as they are known in some parts of the UK have been established for a number of years and have proved effective.
- 3.2 A Community Agreement is a voluntary partnership agreement between a community, the local authority and other service providers. It describes the service standards which local people expect from the local authority and other agencies, as well as commitments from service providers, local groups and residents themselves to help meet local community priorities. **See appendix 1**
- 3.3 A Community Agreement can give communities an opportunity for greater participation engagement with partners involved in making decisions. The Community Agreement allows local people a direct role in influencing local services, enabling them to become more active in their local communities to take on responsibilities themselves, so that they can actively contribute to improvements, rather than just being passive recipients.
- 3.4 Community Agreements could be developed in Moray through the Community Planning Partnership with other service providers, and the community, through

community level organisations such as Community Councils and Residents' Association, or collectively through the existing area forum network.

- 3.5 In 2003 the Scottish Government highlighted Foxwood Community Agreement in York as an example of good practice when developing their national guidance for Building Strong, Safe and Attractive Communities.
- 3.6 The aim of their community engagement programme has been to enable residents to become involved in decisions at a local level – decisions that are often critical to their quality of life.
- 3.7 A Community Agreement therefore, gives communities an opportunity for greater participation and genuine engagement with local authorities involved in making decisions. The Community Agreement allows local people a direct role in influencing local services, enabling them to become more active in their local communities to take on responsibilities themselves, so that they can actively contribute to improvements, rather than just being passive recipients.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

a) Community Plan / Theme Plans / Partner Plans

If agreed this will ensure community and user input to the work and planning of services through the Moray Council, Community Planning Partnership and other local agency partners. This initiative will contribute to National Outcome 11 in the Single Outcome Agreement; *"we have strong resilient communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others"* and to National Outcome 15; *"our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs"*.

b) Policy and Legal

The Local Government Scotland Act 2003 requires that the Community Partnership engage with community bodies and organisations as part of the Community Planning Process. In 2007 the British Government launched, *'Our Community Empowerment Action Plan'* the aim of which is to enable better engagement in the decision making process for communities and included a commitment to the development of more local community / charter agreements between local authorities and communities.

In Scotland the Concordat between the Scottish Government and local authorities has led to a more focussed approach in response to communities' needs at a local level. In recent years three key national initiatives have set the challenge for local authorities and Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland to respond to community engagement with communities. Local Authorities and Community Planning Partnerships will be subjected to external scrutiny by Audit Scotland and HMIE on the following standards:

- Single Outcome Agreements.
- National Standards for Community Engagement.

- Scottish Community Empowerment Action Plan – Celebrating Success: Improving Change

c) Resources (Financial, Staffing and Risks)

The costs of delivering the seminar will be approx £1800. The Moray Forum has indicated that the area forums would raise 50% of these costs. The Area Forums would require £900 to allow the seminar to take place and this could be met from existing Community Support Unit budgets.

d) Consultations

All area forum members in Moray have been consulted and have agreed to explore the development of the Community Agreement concept further. (Appendix C *Area Forum discussion paper*)

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 In order to progress the work of the Moray Forum and the Area Forums, it is recommended that the Community Engagement Group supports this initiative.

Author of Report: Ian Todd, Community Support Unit Manager (Engagement)

Background Papers:

‘Neighbourhood Agreements in Action, a 3 year case study of Foxwood.

Kendray Community Agreement.

Great Lever Neighbourhood Management