

**REPORT TO: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GROUP ON 13 AUGUST
2009**

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY SUPPORT UNIT UPDATE

BY: COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 The report seeks to inform the Community Engagement Group on the progress in establishing a Community Support Unit within the Moray Council.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Community Engagement Group note the progress of the development of the Community Support Unit.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 At a meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 10 March 2009 it was agreed to establish a Community Support Unit.

3.2 The new unit will provide support to community groups and organisations by providing community capacity building support to community groups and organisations (**see appendix 1**).

3.3 Following consultation with staff at which it was indicated that the majority of staff were keen that the process of consultation was not dragged out, and that work to engage with learners, community organisations and other providers to ensure that services were not affected, should be implemented.

3.4 A decision was taken to move the process forward and the unit was officially established on the first of August.

3.5 It was proposed that the new unit should focus their work during the transitional period from August to October in making contact with community groups, learners voluntary organisations and others to establish the level of need from the community, the exact nature of the support required and to ensure that the unit complements and avoids duplication of the work carried out by other providers of community capacity building support.

- 3.6 The Community Support Unit will provide support and capacity building assistance to area forums, community councils, village hall committees and other community groups and organisations. It would also support new community based initiatives. It is essential that the new unit works closely in partnership with a wide range of community planning partners e.g. MVS0 and the Planning & Development section of the Moray Council to ensure improved support and sustainability to community groups.
- 3.7 It is also essential that the process is inclusive and that the process of engagement goes beyond the “usual suspects”. The Community Support Unit staff identified in this report have the necessary skills and have demonstrated in their approach and practice that they can provide communities with the skills, confidence and knowledge to participate and engage.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

a) Community Plan / Theme Plans / Partner Plans

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 Planning Partnership engage with community bodies and organisations as part of the Community Planning process. In April 2008 the Scottish Government (SG) and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) issued a joint statement of commitment to community empowerment.

c) Consultations

Consultations with staff and trade unions have taken place and the process of consulting with the wider public is underway.

5. CONCLUSION

Following the consultation with staff and Trade Unions the Community Support Unit is now established and is going through a transition phase in which the wider community and partners will be consulted.

Author of Report: John Ferguson Community Planning and Development Manager

Background Papers:

Ref: