

REPORT TO: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GROUP ON 13 AUGUST 2009

SUBJECT: DOCUMENT STATUS

BY: THE MORAY FORUM

1. REASON FOR REPORT

This report is submitted to the group in order to consider how documents are presented by the partner agencies to community groups and smaller voluntary organisations.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Community Engagement Group considers the attached discussion paper (appendix 1) and instruct the Implementation Group to prepare draft guidelines for the labelling and presentation of documents to community groups.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 At the Moray Forum meeting held on 29 June 2009 there was a discussion on the way partner agencies present documents to community groups particularly when these documents may be marked confidential. It was agreed that this should be raised at the Community Engagement Group for discussion.

3.2 As community engagement becomes more developed, partners are involving more community groups in engagement exercises and in consultations. As this develops more and more documents from a variety of sources are sent or given to community groups and their representatives.

3.3 This has been welcomed and while the community and voluntary sector would wish to encourage and commend partners for seeking to engage and consult, it is felt that consideration needs to be given to the nature of the documents sent out. Often these documents are of a technical nature and many people reading these documents may not be clear about the protocols and procedures in place around the document.

3.4 Two issues have emerged from discussion and that is around confidentiality and whether a report or document is draft or a final version.

3.5 In the attached discussion paper which highlights the issues, it also offers some suggestions on how confusion can be alleviated. It is suggested that improved labelling of all documents and a standard label could be developed for across the Partnership that could improve understanding by community organisations of expectations from a document and improve the quality and flow of feedback and input from the wider community on a variety of consultations and issues.

- 3.6 The Community Engagement Implementation Group is currently developing the community engagement action plan. It would be appropriate to request that as part of their work they are asked to address this issue and to prepare draft guidelines for consideration that could be applied and provide a practical means to improve engagement.

4 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan

The Single Outcome Agreement has identified outcomes, which include increasing the influence that the people of Moray have over decisions, which affect their communities and lives and their active participation.

(b) Policy and Legal

Community Planning has a clear statutory basis under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. The Local Government Scotland Act 2003 requires that the partnership engage with community bodies as part of the community planning process which reinforces the fact that community engagement is now central to the running of government. In particular, the Act places a duty on local authorities to work together with all public bodies and '*with such community bodies or persons as is appropriate*' in developing a community plan. Statutory Guidance from the Scottish Executive on community planning describes it as having the aim of "making sure people and communities are genuinely engaged in the decisions made on public services, which affect them". The "Voluntary Sector Compact", which was agreed between the voluntary sector and the community planning partners, ensures that policy or procedural changes, which impact on the voluntary sector, are taken into account during the decision-making period.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

There are no financial risks, staffing or property issues arising from this report.

(d) Consultations

The Moray Forum have discussed the issue at their meeting held on the 29th June 2009

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1. **That there are a number of issues surrounding the presentation of documents by Partner agencies to community groups and the Community Engagement Group is asked to consider and to refer the development of draft guidelines to the Implementation Group.**

Author of Report: Rebecca Kail Moray Forum Representative and John Ferguson
Community Planning & Development Manager