

Appendix 2

Moray Community Planning Partnership initial evaluation report

Background

The Community Planning action plan identifies:

- Action 2 – *“develop guidelines for community engagement in Moray: carry out research and produce draft framework (Aug '09)”*
- Action 5 – *“benchmark with other CPPs across Scotland – Identify examples of good practice (June '09)”*
- Action 8 – *“carry out regular performance monitoring and evaluation of community engagement to ensure a culture of continuous improvement” ; carry out initial self-evaluation of current community engagement practices (end Sept '09); identify appropriate performance indicators to measure effective engagement (end Sept '09)*

Progress

In July and August 2009, research and evaluation to try to establish the effectiveness of the current community engagement framework within Moray was undertaken. This involved two main activities:

Activity 1:

A brief survey, within the Community Engagement Group [CEG], to establish the mechanisms by which: partners, senior officers and key community contacts operate their activities and relate them to specific outcomes. The survey responses were then balanced against evidence held within the current framework such as the Moray Community Planning Website; examples of activities; and historic reports by Audit Scotland on Community engagement in Moray.

Activity 2:

A draft Community Engagement Framework for Moray using the gaps identified in the survey and improvement actions contained in the Audit Scotland – “Community Planning initial review 2006”.

Activity 1: The survey: and how it was conducted

The survey was based on the “Network of Empowering Authorities (NEA) toolkit” provided by IDeA (Improvement and Development Agency) who work with local government agencies UK wide. It is worthy of note that there are currently 18 other Councils participating in this type of framework evaluation and it may be useful to compare evidence at some point in the future.

The survey consisted of the following five themes which relate strongly to the evaluation criteria for best value in community planning suggested by Audit Scotland`:

1. Mainstreaming: culture change within councils and partnerships
2. Working with communities, neighbourhoods and localities
3. The role of elected members in community empowerment
4. Building the business case and evidence for community empowerment
5. Integrating community empowerment with community cohesion, equalities and human rights

Twenty members of the Moray Community Engagement Group and the five theme group lead officers were contacted and given three options to respond to the survey. The three options were: face to face interview; telephone interview and electronic survey.

Please see Appendix 2 (a) – example of survey and invitation to participate

Responses breakdown:

- Of the twenty-four people invited, there was a 54% (46% effective) response rate to the survey and out of these responses, :
- 10 people requested a face to face interview
- 3 people requested an electronic survey
- 1 person requested a telephone survey (no longer in post) and not completed
- 10 people did not respond to the survey or reminders
- 2 out of 3 electronic surveys were returned incomplete,

Survey results summary

Theme 1 – Mainstreaming culture change within Councils and Partnerships

- clear leadership – all respondents felt that community engagement and empowerment was championed collectively by the Moray Community Planning Partnership (MCP), members of the theme groups plus area forums
- in principle, every MCP partner agreed that community engagement should be promoted as part of their every day role
- there were clear examples of activities which demonstrated active buy-in by political and officer leaders

- several responded that the structure has recently changed and the clarity of the new structure and remit of the partnership groups were at present, difficult to understand
- the SOA was cited as an example of commitment and strategic direction with tangible outcomes
- several expressed the need to move things on more quickly to maintain progress and in a few cases people felt that there had been a lack of consultation over the SOA
- there are specific action plans associated with services that have community engagement as an integral part of their values therefore it is possible to see that there is some linkage
- the knowledge and understanding of the CPP role, membership and remit is inconsistent

Theme 2 – Working with communities neighbourhoods and localities

- almost all of those who participated in the survey responded to say that their structure is accountable to communities
- some people commented regarding accountability to say that the Community Planning Board should be held more to account in terms of leadership and direction
- it is presently unclear to be sure whether the perception of community engagement is getting better.
- all respondents cited the citizens' panel as a method of obtaining feedback about the quality of community engagement
- methods of communication are wide-ranging, mainly reactive - in the form of website, responses to queries, performance reporting and newsletters
- community support for area forums is not consistently applied and this has contributed to a lack of awareness of SOA outcomes and changes in structure within the partnership
- the "Your Moray" community planning website is dedicated to the work of the MCPP and surrounding local community groups which compares well with other similar websites as highlighted in a survey in 2009
- there are some examples of inconsistency and out of date information on the website which is cited as a source of frustration for local community groups who otherwise receive no up to date information
- communication in general is reasonable within the MCPP with regular arrangements in place for the dissemination of information but, is limited again to the website for information within the public domain
- there is a lack of input to the website from outside the Moray Council and this may be seen as a potential weakness
- hard to reach communities or those who do not understand the concept of community engagement may not know or be able to access the website for information and alternative methods of communication are ad-hoc
- it has been found that other CPP experience similar problems and it is difficult to find an appropriate solution to match the needs of every community
- there is evidence of some follow-up after a few engagement activities to give feedback but on the whole information is mainly one-way

Theme 3 – The role of members in community empowerment

- many respondents felt that there had been a great deal of change in the last few years, especially since the elections
- as a result of these changes it is possibly too early to see any benefit but there is some optimism expressed
- it is apparent that the role of elected members is presently unclear
- there are mixed opinions regarding the effectiveness of elected members in leading and supporting delivery of the engagement / empowerment agenda
- there is support and resource for Members
- some respondents felt that Members are sometimes resistant to change and that this was possibly hindering progress
- in some area forums there is no representation of the administration
- feedback on community issues received from Members is not consistent or in some cases perceived to be absent
- the concept of community engagement is only understood within the partnership – this is also evidenced by the survey conducted in Identifying Priorities for Moray – Report by Craigforth Consultancy January 2009
- it is unclear whether all members have undergone community engagement training and some respondents felt that some senior managers and elected members demonstrate a wide range of ability from novice to expert in this field

Theme 4 – Building the evidence & business case for community empowerment

- the SOA is agreed to be the key vehicle for having agreed expected community partnerships empowerment outcomes
- there are local service plans which complement and feed into the SOA too
- a few respondents stated that the leadership and direction of the Community Engagement Group was lacking despite having the SOA
- several respondents (whilst recognising that there is a need for the SOA) voiced a lack of clarity concerning the outcomes
- evidence of impact on partnership outcomes is reliant on use of the Citizens' panel to get a useful insight
- performance information is widely used to demonstrate collecting and sharing of information
- the public service partners NHS Grampian, GFRS and Grampian Police all stated that information could be used in a more effective way to get valuable information which may be used to target certain community groups
- there are a few examples of feedback to the local groups relating the evidence of the impact of their involvement e.g. questionnaires, performance reports, computer models in schools, newsletters and celebration events however these are not joined up in all cases
- there is an information sharing protocol in place for the Community Engagement Group and in some partnership members' organisations this is done formally
- there is no formal information sharing protocol at a community group level

Theme 5 – Integrating community empowerment with community cohesion, equalities and human rights

- there is good evidence to demonstrate that the CPP is driving the empowerment agenda which is inclusive
- all organisations within the partnership have dedicated resource which handles equality and diversity with strong links to the SOA in line with statutory duties
- in the Elgin South and Forres Area Forums the representation of the local community profile was considered to be fair
- most Partnership members have a facility to translate services and enquiries and there is evidence of regular contact with minority ethnic groups and travelling families
- most Partnership members have a reactive service.
- there are local action groups which interact with tenant groups and support workers whenever the need arises
- there are many examples of activities aimed to promote cohesion and equality at public events and ad-hoc events using the local network as efficiently as possible
- the priority issues of equalities groups are dealt with on an ad-hoc basis however, the equalities forum is beginning to establish an effective dialogue between the partnership and the representatives of local community groups

Overall, there is evidence to suggest that the MCPP has made some good progress since the initial review of Community Planning by Audit Scotland in February 2006. Senior management of partner bodies and political leaders are clearly committed to community planning and a more joined-up approach is evident. The MCPP is a highly complex structure having been through several changes in membership, role and remit within the last two years. Unfortunately, the effect of this change has been to leave many members of the partnership and local community groups confused about the identity and purpose and direction of the MCPP. The introduction of the SOA and a comprehensive performance management framework has enabled key objectives to be brought together under one strategy however; the deployment of the actions required is still being developed and it is too early to tell whether or not the objectives will be met.

Areas for improvement:

Recent activity within the MCPP board and CEG implementation group suggests that the issue of clarity within the structure is well recognised and there are action plans in place to address this. As a result of this survey and feedback in area forum groups it is most important that the structure, scope and membership of strategic groups within the MCPP are clearly laid out, communicated and monitored until stability is achieved in order to avoid lack of progress.

Recommendations to be considered:

1. Create a simple design or layout that can reflect the structure of the Community Engagement Partnership and other strategic / theme groups which shows the levels of hierarchy and decision making and management arrangements. A good example of such can be found on the Angus Council Community Planning website at: <http://www.angus.org.uk/about.cfm>
2. Implement a co-ordinated re-launch to explain and clarify changes which should include area forums and community councils. Specifically, the role, remit and context of the Community Support Unit could have a key role to play for a positive benefit

3. Ensure consistent support to area forums and community engagement structures at all times
4. Continue the work currently underway on the "your moray" website content management plus the use of traditional and alternative methods of communicating information.
5. Implement a common mechanism for gathering community engagement activities that can be used [1] for demonstrating objective evidence of community engagement and [2] for communication purposes. VOiCE is the recommended tool however access is an issue
6. undertake an annual community impact survey to monitor progress and inform the partnership for self-assessment purposes
7. Develop benchmarking:- Angus Community Planning Partnership have been approached and are keen to be involved in benchmarking with MCPP directly plus other communities of best practice are on-line
8. Establish community engagement training needs by all partners and provide a range of training opportunities from novice to expert as required(The current better community engagement pilot could provide a solution to this)

References:

Audit Scotland, Audit of Best Value and Community Planning report for the Moray Council February 2006
Audit Scotland, Community Planning: an initial review
Better Consultation toolkit - ODS consulting
Grampian Fire & Rescue Service – safety policy education
Grampian Fire & Rescue Service – Three Year Plan 2009
Grampian Police Community Engagement SOP june 2007 v2
Grampian Police Force plans –
www.grampian.police.uk/about.aspx?id=289&pid=30;31;315
Identifying Priorities for Moray – Report by Craigforth Consultancy January 2009
JCC Community Planning reports 02/09 and 08/09
Moray Community Engagement Partnership documents – minutes and papers 2007 – 2009
Moray Community Plan
Moray Council Community Engagement Action plan – 2009
Moray Council performance reports
Moray Single Outcome Agreement 2009/2010
Moray Social Inclusion Strategy
Moray Vision 2020
Voluntary Sector Partnership Moray (VSPM) consultation documents and information packs 2009