



Your Moray - Your Community

REPORT TO: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GROUP – 16 OCTOBER 2008

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE AND PROCEDURES

BY: MORAY COUNCIL, CORPORATE POLICY UNIT MANAGER

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The Engagement Group is invited to note practice and procedures in place in other Community Planning Partnerships to address the issue of community engagement.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Group notes how other Community Planning Partnerships address the issue of community engagement and considers whether there are any examples of good practice, which could potentially be adopted in Moray.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the meeting of the Community Engagement Group on 3 July 2008 it was agreed to investigate how other Community Planning Partnerships operate in the field of community engagement with a view to looking at areas of best practice, which can be considered by the Group.
- 3.2 Contact was made with all 32 Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland to find out how they are structured in relation to community engagement and seek copies of any Community Engagement Strategies, which they might be willing to share.
- 3.3 Eight Partnerships responded with information. It is clear from the responses that many Partnerships are at a transition stage in terms of addressing community engagement with new initiatives and ways of working being put in place to reflect the new political landscape and the introduction of Single Outcome Agreements. For this reason, there is a reluctance at this point in time to highlight initiatives or arrangements as examples of best practice.
- 3.4 The following represents a snapshot summary of where each Partnership currently stands in relation to community engagement.

Angus

- 'Engaging our Communities' is one of 6 key outcomes in the Community Plan (2007/12)
- A multi-agency Working Group established to support, monitor and evaluate community engagement activity
- Active Citizenship Strategic Statement in place and accompanying action plan
- Impact Assessment Surveys of community engagement initiatives now being carried out annually through Theme Groups
- 'Better Community Engagement' Training Programme now in place for relevant partner staff to recognise good practice and identify areas for future development
- Very active Citizens' Panel (run in-house) and website
- 8 Local Area Partnerships been operating for some time with variable success – comprise community group representatives, partner officials and Elected Members and meet six weekly

Aberdeen City

- Community Engagement Forum, made up of similar membership as our Engagement Group, meets bi-monthly and reports to Aberdeen Alliance (CPP)
- Sets broad outcomes for community engagement – difficult to measure
- Have 37 Neighbourhood Groups (equivalent of our Area Forums) each with own profiles and action plans
- Aberdeen City Voice (Citizens' Panel) operated for five years – 3 surveys each year

Aberdeenshire

- No equivalent of Community Engagement Group - just appointed full-time Community Engagement Coordinator
- New consultation strategy and database being developed
- 6 Local Community Planning Groups supported by p/t local officers in each area
- Citizens' Panel (externally contracted) runs similar to ours – also annual Household Survey carried out
- Organising Community Engagement Conference later in the year

North Ayrshire

- In process of setting up a Community Engagement Network, comprising partner representatives, Elected Members and community/voluntary organisation representation – will meet quarterly with very similar objectives as our Group
- Previous Community Engagement Review Group carried out self assessment checks around all 10 National Standards
- 2000 strong People's Panel – two surveys per year
- Good representation from community and voluntary sector on Thematic Groups

East Ayrshire

- Joint consultation and engagement is shared service area for the CPP
- Has Consultation and Engagement Working Group with responsibility for Residents' (Citizens') Panel and Local Community Planning Forums
- 4 area-based Forums with community, partner and Elected Member representation
- Consultation and Engagement Framework document currently being updated

Glasgow

- Guidance on Community Engagement currently out for consultation – contains pointers to good practice based around 10 National Standards
- Local Community Planning Partnerships in place across city – each has own Board with delegated decision-making powers - 4 community reps. on each (from key groups), partner officials and Elected Members – report to Glasgow Community Planning Ltd
- Team of Engagement Network Coordinators in place to support Local Partnerships produce local plan for their area
- Protocols for Community Engagement in place
- Community Reference Groups being established to encourage greater community involvement – only community members, no officials

Orkney

- Over last two years organised a series of community meetings across the islands to engage with community groups and individuals – meetings facilitated by voluntary sector
- On back of this are currently finalising Community Engagement Strategy currently being finalised

3.5 There are clearly a lot of similarities with our own situation in terms of structures, support mechanisms and engagement channels across the Partnerships, which responded. The majority have Strategic Groups in place to coordinate consultation and engagement, local forums or partnerships with varying levels of support and Citizens' Panels, or equivalent, to seek the views of the wider public in each area.

3.6 Partnerships are in the process of developing their capacity to undertake community engagement. Given that many areas have recently amended, or are in process of amending, the way in which they engage with communities, most are reluctant at this point in time to flag up what they are doing as best practice.

3.7 As mentioned in 3.3, the changing landscape makes it difficult to determine what is currently best practice. However, there are a few initiatives outlined above, which may be worth exploring further. These

include Angus's training programme to raise awareness of the practices and principles of community engagement, which has already been successfully taken up by other areas. Angus's recent introduction of Impact Assessment surveys to gauge the effectiveness of different community engagement techniques may also be worth considering assisting us in evaluating national outcome 11 of the SOA.

- 3.8 Glasgow's Guidance on Community Engagement, based around the 10 National Standards, may provide a useful model for the revision of our Partnership Community Engagement Framework.
- 3.9 In respect of Citizens' Panels, whilst the actual consultation processes are broadly similar to ours, the method of feeding back information gained is slightly different in that newsletters produced elsewhere feature information about wider community engagement activities, as well as the Citizens' Panel report. Aberdeenshire's Household Survey also highlights changing trends in the lifestyle of the local population and complements information gained through the Citizens' Panel.
- 3.10 With regard to Local Forums it is worth noting that in areas where these are operating most successfully there is ongoing involvement of Partnership officers alongside community representatives and Elected Members – at present officers only attend our Area Forum meetings, when invited to do so.
- 3.11 It is proposed that we continue to keep in contact and build relationships with other Community Planning Partnerships across Scotland and to seek out examples of best practice within the field of Community Engagement, as they are developed.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Community Plan / Theme Plans / Partner Plans

The effective engagement of communities and local people is a vital element of the successful progress of Community Planning in Moray. Appropriate methods of engaging communities should be set out in all of the above plans.

(b) Policy and Legal

'Making sure people and communities are genuinely engaged in the decisions made on public services, which affect them' is one of the two main aims of Community Planning, as set out in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003.

(c) Resources (Financial, Staffing and Risks)

There are no such implications arising directly from this report.

(d) Consultations

Other Community Planning Partnerships have been consulted on their approaches to community engagement practice and procedures

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Group is invited to note how other Community Planning Partnerships address the issue of community engagement and consider whether there are any examples of good practice, which could potentially be adopted in Moray.**

Author of Report: Roy Anderson, Community Planning Officer

Background Papers:

Ref: