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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Inverclyde Council</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>10 April 2025</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital &amp; Customer Services and Corporate Director Education, Communities &amp; Organisational Development</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>LS/028/25</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Peter MacDonald</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 712618</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Community Council Update Report</b>		

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## **1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

1.1  For Decision  For Information/Noting

1.2 The purpose of this report is to update the Inverclyde Council on the development of community council activity in the period since completion of the 2023 Review of the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils in Inverclyde (the Scheme) and the completion of the 2024 Community Council Election process (the CC Elections) on 12 February 2024.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 the Council notes the terms of this report, both in relation to activity to date and proposed actions of officer.
- 2.2 the Council approves the holding of future interim elections as detailed in the body of the report seeking to establish community councils for the following community council areas, namely: (i) Greenock Central; and (ii) Holefarm and Cowdenknowes.
- 2.3 the Council appoints the Chief Executive to act as Returning Officer in such interim elections and delegates authority to them to administer these elections (including but not limited to all necessary decisions in relation to the timing, form and process of elections and related polls and counts) on the Council's behalf.

**Lynsey Brown**  
Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital  
& Customer Services

**Ruth Binks**  
Corporate Director Education,  
Communities & Organisational  
Development

### **3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

- 3.1 At the Special Meeting on 1 December 2022, the Council resolved officers should commence a review of the Scheme. That process, involving a number of rounds of consultation and Special Meetings of the Inverclyde Council to consider same, was completed on 7 December 2023 when the current Scheme was approved and adopted by the Inverclyde Council
- 3.2 At the 7 December 2023 meeting, the Council also:
- approved a proposed process and appointment of Returning Officer for the CC Elections; and
  - remitted to officers to bring this update report to the Council on the developments of community council activity, following the review of the Scheme and the CC Elections.
- 3.3 The CC Election process was completed on 12 February 2024. All the previously established community councils re-established at that time, namely:
- Gourock Community Council;
  - Greenock South West Community Council;
  - Greenock West and Cardwell Bay Community Council;
  - Inverkip and Wemyss Bay Community Council;
  - Kilmacolm & Quarrier's Village Community Council (previously Kilmacolm Community Council);
  - Larkfield, Braeside and Branchton Community Council; and
  - Port Glasgow West Community Council.
- 3.4 In addition, the following community councils were established for areas where prior to the CC Elections there had been none formed, namely:
- Greenock East Community Council; and
  - Port Glasgow East Community Council.
- 3.5 This means that of a possible 11 community councils, 9 were established or re-established in this process. None of them had more nominations than the maximum number community councillors and so no ballots were required. More detail on the number candidates elected is set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.6 This also means community councils were not established in two of the areas that did not have them prior to the CC Elections, namely:
- Greenock Central Community Council; and
  - Holefarm and Cowdenknowes Community Council.
- Again, more detail on the number of nominations received in these areas is set out in Appendix 1. Under the Scheme, no community council can be established or re-established where less than 5 valid nominations were received.
- 3.7 Since the completion of the CC Elections, officers from Community Learning and Development have engaged with all the established community councils, by way of offers of support and training and attendance at community council meetings. An assessment of the activity of and current position of each of the community councils is set out at Appendix 2.
- 3.8 As Members will be aware both from the information in the Appendix 2 and from the recent report to the Policy and Resources Committee, an interim election has recently been completed for the Greenock West and Cardwell Bay Community Council, as since CC Elections their membership had dropped to 3. The interim election process completed was completed by publication of the Declaration of Results on 4 March 2025. 5 Community Councillors were elected in this process bringing their membership up to 8.

## 4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 Community Learning and Development staff will continue to provide ongoing development support to the existing 9 Community Councils. This support will be tailored to the needs of each council and may vary in scope. Some councils may receive assistance with general operations and functioning, while others may receive more specialised support, such as guidance on office bearer roles and responsibilities. By offering customised support, we aim to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of each Community Council, ultimately benefiting the communities they serve.
- 4.2 Following the previous Community Council election, Community Learning and Development officers have provided support to community groups in the two areas currently without Community Council representation, specifically:
  - Greenock Central; and
  - Holefarm and Cowdenknowes.
- 4.3 In the Greenock Central area, support has been given to the Broomhill Tenants and Residents Association (TARA) and the Greenock Central Residents Action Group. These two groups were formerly a unified entity representing a broader geographical area. However, the membership elected to divide the original group into two distinct bodies, each focusing on a smaller, more localised area, to facilitate more effective issue identification and resolution. Officers are currently facilitating discussions between these two groups to explore collaborative approaches in supporting the town centre. The focus of these discussions is to determine whether a unified approach would enhance resident engagement.
- 4.4 In the Holefarm and Cowdenknowes area, support has been provided to the Cowdenknowes Residents Association, which remains active and provides a voice for the community but has expressed no interest in transitioning into a community council. Officers will engage with this group to explore the benefits of becoming a community council and also explore opportunities to engage with the wider community, in particular (as referred to in Appendix 2) to identify and resolve any disconnect between that wider community and “Holefarm and Cowdenknowes” as the name of the community council area.
- 4.5 In collaboration with our corporate communication team, a publicity campaign ran from February to March to promote Community Councils across Inverclyde along with the interim election for Greenock West and Cardwell Bay Community Council. This involved promotional material via social media and face to face engagement via community groups and the various warm spaces. Currently, there appears to be a lack interest in establishing a Community Council in these areas when there are established groups that provide a platform for the community to have a voice. Council Officers will continue to promote community councils across the two highlighted areas.
- 4.6 The Association of Community Councils was originally established as an informal arrangement to facilitate the review of community councils and the 2024 community council elections. Community Learning and Development staff have facilitated various meetings with the members, with the objective of transitioning the association into a formal group.
- 4.7 This transition is now well underway, and the association is progressing towards becoming a constituted group. Their next planning meeting is scheduled to take place on 27 March with the aim of having their inaugural meeting in May 2025. Moving forward, the Association of Community Councils will continue to operate with support from Council officers, ensuring that they receive the guidance and resources necessary to function effectively and efficiently. This formalisation aims to enhance the structure and governance of the association, thereby strengthening the overall network of community councils and their ability to serve their respective communities.

- 4.8 The aspiration of both the 2023 Review and the CC Elections was to have Community Councils established throughout the Inverclyde area, and clearly this has not been achieved. Nevertheless, we have moved from 7 to 9 of the areas with established community councils. The process has also stimulated interest in the activity of the Association of Community Councils and brought new membership into a number of the existing community councils.
- 4.9 It is therefore the view of officers that the 2023 Review has been a successful process, and it would not be the recommendation of officers that any further formal review be undertaken at this time.
- 4.10 Where established community councils encounter difficulties with falling membership numbers, officers will work with them on recruitment and recruitment options. This is an ongoing part of the Council support to the community councils.
- 4.11 The fact that there are still 2 areas without an established community council needs to be viewed in the context that, as indicated in previous reports and above, it can be that there is no expressed appetite for the establishment of a community council within a community. As indicated above, officers will continue to work in the areas without established community councils with a view to stimulating interest in the establishment of a community council. It may be that such interest will not be forthcoming, however officers also intend to hold interim elections in those areas in or around September/October of this year, issuing a further call for nominations at that time, to ascertain if there is sufficient interest at that time. The appointment of the Returning Officer in that process is therefore sought in this report.
- 4.12 Flexibility is sought for the Returning Officer to determine the appropriate timeline for such a process, allowing officers to have regard to the views of individuals or groups of individuals who may come forward as prospective candidates, and the impact of other relevant matters, for example local holidays or availability of suitable meeting venues. An indicative timeline of an interim election process is however included at Appendix 3 for Members' information.
- 4.13 Formal notices will be posted on the Council's website, in local Council libraries, and in the Customer Service Centre. Nomination Forms will also be made available online and at these locations. Completed nomination forms (signed by a qualifying nominee, proposer and seconder) will require to be submitted to the Returning Officer by the finalised date for Close of Nominations for that area. As part of this process, Officers will liaise with colleagues in corporate communications on an appropriate strategy to publicise these interim elections and encourage participation.
- 4.14 In terms of the Scheme, if, following close of nominations in the elections for each of these areas, there are:
- a) less than 5 validly nominated candidates, no community council will be formed for that area;
  - b) 5 or more validly nominated candidates, but not more than the maximum number of members for that area (11 for Greenock Central and 8 for Holefarm and Cowdenknowes) then the election for that area will be uncontested, and all the such candidates will be elected as members of the community council; and
  - c) if there are more validly nominated candidates than the maximum numbers detailed above, then the election for that area will be contested and a ballot will be arranged by the Returning Officer.

- 4.15 Officers recognise, and Members should be aware of, the lack of expressed interest in community councils in these areas, and that this process may not produce established community councils. Nevertheless, it is considered appropriate to follow this course of action at this time. Without this approach, the next opportunity for community council elections in these areas under the Scheme would **either** be in response to a pro-active approach from a number of members of the relevant community **or** in the next round of regular community council elections in 2028.
- 4.16 In terms of the Scheme, to be nominated as a member of a community council, or to act as a proposer or seconder on a Nomination Form, an individual must:
- be resident in the community council area;
  - be named on the Electoral Register for the community council area;
  - be aged 16 or over; and
  - not currently be elected as a Member of IC, or of the Scottish or UK parliaments.
- 4.17 In terms of the Scheme, to vote in a community council election, an individual must:
- be resident in the community council area;
  - be named on the Electoral Register for the community council area; and
  - be aged 16 or over.
- 4.18 Any poll will proceed by way of secret ballot and voting in person. The election will proceed on a modified first past the post system, in that:
- voters will be allowed to make a number of votes (up to the maximum number of members for that community council) on one ballot paper; and
  - each vote will be of equal ranking.

## 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		X
Legal/Risk	X	
Human Resources		X
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	X	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights & Wellbeing		X
Environmental & Sustainability		X
Data Protection		X

### 5.2 Finance

Any one off or recurring costs arising from the recommendations in this report will be contained within existing budgets.

### 5.3 Legal/Risk

The Legal and Risk implications are dealt with in the body of this report.

### 5.4 Human Resources

None.

## 5.5 Strategic

The Inverclyde Partnership Plan encompasses the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the Inverclyde Community Learning and Development 3 year plan has Community Empowerment as a key strategic priority. Supporting and engaging community councils is key to achieving this priority. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 gave rights to community bodies and duties to public sector authorities, and as the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland, Community Councils bridge the gap between local authorities and communities and help to make those authorities aware of the opinions and needs of the communities they represent.

## 5.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

### (a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

	YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required.
X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required. Provide any other relevant reasons why an EqIA is not necessary/screening statement.

### (b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty for the following reasons: Provide reasons why the report has been assessed as not relevant.

### (c) Children and Young People

Has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children's rights.

## 5.7 Environmental/Sustainability

Summarise any environmental / climate change impacts which relate to this report.

None.

Has a Strategic Environmental Assessment been carried out?

	YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.
X	NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented.

## 5.8 Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

## 6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Corporate Management Team and the Community Council Champion have been consulted on the contents of this report.

## 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

Appendix 1

**Details of Valid Nominations Received and Community Councils Established in the 2024 Community Council Elections**

<b>Community Council</b>	<b>Valid Nominations</b>	<b>Max No Permitted</b>	<b>Established</b>	<b>Ballot</b>
Gourock	11	11	Yes	No
<i>Greenock Central</i>	1	11	No	No
Greenock East	8	11	Yes	No
Greenock Southwest	7	9	Yes	No
Greenock West and Cardwell Bay	5	11	Yes	No
<i>Holefarm and Cowdenknowes</i>	1	8	No	No
Inverkip and Wemyss Bay	6	10	Yes	No
Kilmacolm and Quarrier's Village	6	9	Yes	No
Larkfield, Braeside and Branchton	8	10	Yes	No
Port Glasgow East	8	10	Yes	No
Port Glasgow West	10	10	Yes	No



## Summary of Community Council Activity from CLD Engagement as at January 2025

### **Gourock**

#### **Meetings**

Gourock Community Council holds regular meetings with growing attendance and has introduced an action tracker to monitor and record actions. With a greater focus on social media, the council is expanding its community engagement. Meetings primarily address issues in response to community feedback like public transport, roads and ferry services.

The Community council has also submitted a parking petition and is tackling other issues such as the town centre shop fronts/housing and road safety. They have developed a communication and engagement plan and have planned and funded the Gourock Garden Party.

#### **Membership**

Full membership of 11 active Community Councillors.

### **Greenock East**

#### **Meetings**

The newly formed community council has been highly active, organising various public meetings on themes such as housing and anti-social behaviour, road safety. They also hosted a hustings event for the recent UK elections.

The community council has established a strong relationship with RCH, who have participated in public meetings, thereby improving communication between the housing provider and the community. Collaborations with elected members have led to initiatives like upgrading the playpark adding more dog bins. Additionally, the council has bins within the area, they have also installed suggestion boxes in local community centres to encourage community feedback.

Recognising the importance of development and community engagement, and continued development of their own internal practices and procedures as a newly established community council, the community council plans to dedicate time to these areas as a key focus in 2025.

#### **Membership**

Currently, there are 6 active elected members, with two community members considering being co-opted.

### **Greenock Southwest**

#### **Meetings**

The community council is experienced and holds regular public meetings. One significant achievement has been working with the community, elected members, and RCH to push forward the demolition of the Neil Street flats. The Community Council is highly active in community engagement, partnering with the Greive Rd committee to host and facilitate a weekly community drop-in, which attracts approximately 70 community members each week from a diverse range of demographics.

## **Membership**

Currently, the community council has 7 active members and is exploring ways to encourage more community members to get involved.

## **Greenock West and Cardwell Bay**

Greenock West and Cardwell Bay Community Council had experienced a transitional period in membership. Five community councillors were elected; however, one had to resign after moving out of the area, and another was successfully elected as a local councillor. An interim election process has now been completed with a further five members being elected to the community council, bringing them up to eight members, with an additional community member due to be co-opted in April, bringing the membership to nine.

Additionally, the Community Council is looking to change its regular meeting schedule and explore rotating venues. They remain active on social media to support community engagement.

## **Inverkip and Wemyss Bay**

### **Meetings**

An experienced community council that hold regular meetings on a monthly basis. The community council have been active both online and at community events such as gala days, using this as an opportunity to engage with the community. The community council are also engaging with the local primary schools and have facilitated a project in which the young people could enter a competition by designing a new logo for the community council. Community issues such as Traffic management, Dunrod repairs, speed limits in the villages, dog litter bins have been a key focus.

### **Membership**

6 members that are active

## **Kilmacolm and Quarriers**

### **Meetings**

An experienced and well organised community council that host Regular meetings focusing on planning and licensing aspects. Community issues such as Community safety concerns, particularly regarding speeding and parking, have also been discussed and taken forward as actions. Additionally, the issue of poor 5G connectivity has been raised by community members

### **Membership**

Membership numbers are stable, and efforts are being made to co-opt a new Community Councillor. Currently, there are six elected members with the possibility of one additional co-opted member.

## **Larkfield, Branchton and Braeside**

### **Meetings**

Regular meetings are held, and the community council is enhancing engagement through social media. For example, they have facilitated a survey regarding the location of a new playpark, which has been a goal for the past few years. They are also supporting community engagement related to the installation of this new playpark. Additionally, the Community Council has been addressing issues such as environmental upkeep and the pricing for schools to access Ravenscraig Stadium for sports days.

### **Membership**

The community council has 8 elected members and membership is stable.

## **Port Glasgow West**

### **Meetings**

Regular monthly meetings cover a wide range of topics, including health and wellbeing and community safety. These meetings often feature guest speakers from various services and support groups in Port Glasgow. Additionally, the Community Council is working on a plan to upskill existing Community Councillors so they can take on office bearer roles.

### **Membership**

10 elected members and membership numbers are stable.

## **Port Glasgow East**

### **Meetings**

As a newly formed Community Council, the initial period after the election was dedicated to group development, supported by Community Learning and Development. This allowed the Community Councillors time and space to develop their knowledge and skills in relation to their roles. The group has also set up a bank account and accessed their grant funding. The Community Council now hosts monthly public meetings focusing on issues in the area such as housing, anti-social behaviour, and environmental/green spaces. RCH has also agreed to attend each public meeting.

### **Membership**

The election of 8 Community Councillors has led to a stable membership, although two member is considering stepping back due to other commitments

## **Association of Inverclyde Community Councils**

The Association of Community Councils was originally established as an informal arrangement to facilitate the review of community councils and the 2024 community council elections. Community Learning and Development staff have facilitated various meetings with the members, with the objective of transitioning the association into a formal group.

This transition is now well underway, and the association is progressing towards becoming a constituted group. Their next meeting is scheduled to take place on the 13th of February.

Moving forward, the Association of Community Councils will continue to operate with support from Council officers, ensuring that they receive the guidance and resources necessary to function effectively and efficiently. This formalisation aims to enhance the structure and governance of the association, thereby strengthening the overall network of community councils and their ability to serve their respective communities

## **Areas Without Established Community Councils**

### **Greenock Central**

There are two active tenants and residents groups in the Greenock central area, staff have been supporting the development of these groups. Broomhill continue to focus on housing issues and continue to hold regular public meetings providing a platform for residents to raise any community issues, for example housing, community safety. Greenock Central residents action group are meeting on a regular basis to plan out their events, they held an event in September 2024 looking at town centre regeneration and a further public meeting on the 25 February 2025 to discuss community issues raised. At the moment the members are happy staying under the current governance structure as opposed to becoming a community council, they feel that the wish to solely focus on the small area that they represent as opposed to a larger Community Council area.

### **Holefarm and Cowdenknowes**

The Cowdenknowes Residents Association remains active and has expressed no interest in transitioning into a community council.

The Cowdenknowes Residents Association continues to engage with local issues, providing a platform for residents to voice their concerns and collaborate on initiatives that enhance their community such as community litter picks. There has been feedback that there is a disconnect between the communities in this community council area and the "Holefarm and Cowdenknowes" name, due primarily to changes in housing in the area and the school estate. Officers are exploring the extent to which this is an issue and solutions for same.

### Indicative Timeline - Interim Election

