
Report To:	Regeneration Committee	Date:	7th May 2009
Report By:	Corporate Director – Regeneration and Resources	Report No:	RC/09/05/14/SJ/ WW
Contact Officer:	Head of Economic and Social Regeneration	Contact No:	01475 715555
Subject:	Scottish Community Empowerment Action Plan		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Members of the implications for Inverclyde of the new national policy on community empowerment and to seek approval of the recommendation at paragraph 3 below.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Scottish Government and COSLA launched the Scottish Community Empowerment Action Plan on 23rd March 2009.
- 2.2 The Action Plan defines community empowerment as “*a process where people work together to make change happen in their communities by having more power and influence over what matters to them.*” The Action Plan aims to provide clarity on what community empowerment is, why it is important and how communities can get involved. A range of best practice examples from across Scotland are set out, providing information and inspiration for people who want to have a say in the decisions affecting their communities. There is also information on the variety of grants that are accessible to community groups, providing potential investment of around £180 million from a range of government sources.
- 2.3 The Action Plan highlights how partners can contribute to the success of the Action Plan. For example:
- Local authorities can provide strategic leadership in promoting and supporting community empowerment.
 - Highly skilled practitioners are essential to improve community capacity in disadvantaged communities (of geography and interest).
 - Community Planning Partnerships are encouraged to promote and support joined up approaches to community capacity building as both the foundation of a sustainable approach to community empowerment and a means to help communities work on their own issues.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the Regeneration Committee remits the Head of Economic and Social Regeneration to take forward a report to the Policy and Resources Committee in respect of the actions highlighted in the report, and as set out at paragraph 5.4 below, and report back within 6 months with an update report on progress.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 A report was submitted to the Regeneration Committee in January 2008, advising Council Members of the national drive to develop a strategic approach to community empowerment.
- 4.2 Since that time, the Scottish Government and COSLA have undertaken a series of consultation events which have been used to inform a Scottish Community Empowerment Action Plan, which has recently been launched. A full copy of the Report can be downloaded at the following link:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/264771/0079288.pdf>

5.0 DETAILS OF THE ACTION PLAN

- 5.1 The Action Plan commits both Scottish Government and Local Authorities to invest in the development of community empowerment as a key element in helping to achieve a more successful Scotland and in delivering shared outcomes.
- 5.2 As part of its commitment to the Action Plan, the Scottish Government will ensure that;
- the benefits of community empowerment are understood across its portfolios
 - references to the part community empowerment can play in achieving its Strategic Objectives will be made in appropriate policies
 - it will promote the benefits of community empowerment across a range of partners
 - it will continue to develop policy in partnership with others to help to further develop culture change.
- 5.3 The Action Plan asks that, at a local level, Councils will;
- in particular through their elected members, have a key role to play in promoting the benefits of community empowerment
 - articulate how communities themselves can help to deliver outcomes set out in Single Outcome Agreements
 - help to drive a further culture shift which will see community empowerment as a process which can help to deliver a range of local outcomes
 - support and develop the community groups which are the backbone of the community empowerment process
- 5.4 Community Planning Partnerships are also seen as being important by ensuring that joined up approaches to community capacity building are encouraged at local authority level and by ensuring that community empowerment is embedded in community planning. Some ways that this can be achieved include:
- Assessing community strengths and responding to gaps in community infrastructure
 - Ensuring access to the basic operating requirements of community organisations, such as accessible places to meet and childcare
 - Mapping community capacity building support, in terms of its reach to the communities that need it most, as well as its capacity to support community groups through various stages of development from formation to managing assets if they choose to
 - Ensuring accessibility of community capacity building support, for example through appropriate information, and referral arrangements across partners for groups seeking support.
 - Continuing to build upon current work to support community engagement
 - Self-evaluating current processes for Community Planning in terms of their impact on community empowerment
 - As part of developing new initiatives and processes, think about the part that communities themselves can play in delivering outcomes
 - Providing leadership to Community Planning partners in making their individual processes empowering for communities.

5.5 The Action Plan sets out the reasons why Community Empowerment is important because;

- it will help Councils and Community Planning Partnerships deliver on the outcomes that they have set out in our Single Outcome Agreements
- it will invigorate democracy by actively involving Scottish people in the democratic life of the country
- improve quality of life by increasing confidence and skills of local people; increasing the numbers involved in volunteering work; higher satisfaction levels in local neighbourhoods

5.6 The Action Plan defines Community Empowerment as “...a process where people work together to make change happen in their communities by having more power and influence over what matters to them.” It sets out that by community it means both communities of geography and communities of interest and it also makes clear that the process of community empowerment must be about everyone living in a community having the opportunity to get involved.

5.7 The Action Plan recognises that there is no single model for taking this process forward and that each area will have its own implementation model. 12 examples of community empowerment are given in the Action Plan.

5.8 The Action Plan also sets out the link between community capacity building and community empowerment. It recognises that highly skilled practitioners are required for what is a complex process. It also recognises that partners must be prepared to invest time, money and skills into the support that will be required around community capacity building if they are to be serious about community empowerment. It further highlights that the partnerships around Community Learning and Development will be crucial to taking this issue forward.

5.9 Activities stemming from the action plan will include;

- a new model and code of conduct for Community Councils which will enable consistency in the operation of community councils
- promoting, in the right circumstances, the community ownership of assets
- working with the Local Government Improvement Service, the Scottish Government will fund a new training programme on community empowerment and engagement for elected members across the country.
- developing a range of learning and network opportunities to ensure people have the right skills to make community empowerment happen
- working with COSLA to support a pilot that will give local people more direct control over budgets that are aimed at tackling anti-social behaviour
- working with other partners to measure the impact of community empowerment.

6.0 LOCAL STRUCTURES

6.1 Within Inverclyde there are a number of established structures which are well placed to take forward the issues highlighted in the report.

6.2 The Community Development Sub Group is comprised of partners that have community development practitioners and has responsibility for taking forward issues relating to community capacity building. The Sub Group reports to the Community Learning and Development Strategy Group and from there to Inverclyde Council or the Inverclyde Alliance as appropriate.

6.3 The Community Engagement Network is comprised of Inverclyde Alliance partners and has responsibility for taking forward issues relating to community engagement. This group also reports to the Community Learning and Development Strategy Group, Inverclyde Council or the Inverclyde Alliance as appropriate.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Finance: No financial implications are identified at this stage. The review of resources highlighted at paragraph 5.4 above will inform a future report which will include detailed financial implications.

Financial Implications – One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
					n/a at this stage

Financial Implications – Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (if Applicable)	Other Comments
					n/a at this stage

- 7.2 Human Resources: The future review of resources identified at paragraph 5.4 above will highlight Human Resource implications
- 7.3 Legal: None anticipated at this stage
- 7.4 Equalities: An Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed on the implementation of the Community Empowerment Action Plan. Any implications will be reported as part of the follow up report.

8.0 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 All Inverclyde Alliance Partners will be consulted on the implementation of the Action Plan.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 Scottish Community Empowerment Action Plan – Celebrating Success : Inspiring Change (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/264771/0079288.pdf>)