

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION ON THE CPP

At its Review Day in June 2003, the Community Planning Partnership agreed a revised structure to enable communities to be more pro-actively involved at all levels of the Community Planning process.

Principles of the Revised CPP Structure

The following principles underpinned the new structure:

- Wider community involvement by aiming for 50% community participation at all levels
- Having an area as well as a thematic focus
- Use existing forums where possible (perhaps with wider remits)
- Abolish as many meetings as we create

Various issues and concerns were raised at the Review Day regarding the more general/practical aspects of the proposed new structure and more specifically regarding the proposed target of 50% community representation. It was agreed that although the target of 50% community representation at all levels of the proposed structure was commendable, it was felt that the target would be difficult to realise. Concern was expressed regarding the following aspects, namely:

- How the community representatives would be selected (elected or appointed)
- Whether they would be truly representative of the wider community or whether they would “be in it for their own self-interest”
- How one would ensure that “hard to reach” groups were fully represented and that dominance by “pressure groups” was avoided.

Implementation of 50% Community Representation Target

While it is not disputed that the community should be at the heart of community planning and that communities should be involved at all levels of the revised CPP structure, achieving and implementing this target remains a challenge. The issues mentioned above as well as some of the more practical aspects such as doubling the size of meetings, etc. is cause for concern and has hampered progress in this regard.

The participation of communities in the delivery of services is, however, a prerequisite for good governance and essential for an effective Community Planning process. The community can participate in the process in the following ways:

- As “watchdogs” of organisations providing services (a “community conscience” or scrutiny role)
- As development partners (active participation)

A participatory Community Planning process allows communities to play both these roles and more specifically, it allows local communities and their representatives to have a say in shaping the future of their area. It serves to note that the 50% community representation target is not a pre-requisite to fulfil either of these roles.

In order to progress the matter, the CPP recommended the following course of action at its meeting on 5 November 2004, namely that the basis of community representation be changed from one that focuses on 50% representation to one that focuses on a designated scrutiny role for any community representative and that the Management Committee be given the responsibility for developing this further.

It was, however, agreed that the approach taken should be flexible enough to allow for different approaches to community engagement at the various levels of the revised CPP structure.

Proposed Way Forward

In view of the above, the following is proposed:

- 1) That active community participation be sought at the Community Assembly (Review Day), Theme Group and Local (Bute & Cowal Pilot) levels of the revised CPP structure as a more “hands-on” approach to community involvement is deemed more appropriate at these levels.
- 2) That a scrutiny role be sought at the full Partnership and Management Committee levels of the revised CPP structure as a “community watchdog” approach to community involvement is deemed more appropriate at these levels.
- 3) That the number/percentage of community representatives on the various levels of the revised CPP structure be flexible to reflect the different approaches taken to involve communities.

Recommendation

- 1) That the proposed way forward as outlined above be adopted for obtaining community representation on the various levels of the revised CPP structure.
- 2) That as a general principle, it be agreed that community representatives be sought from sectors that reflect the main priorities that the Community Planning Partnership is trying to address.
- 3) That each level of the revised CPP structure decides how best to involve the community in terms of the specific roles outlined above, and reports progress in identifying appropriate representatives at the next meeting.
- 4) That the Management Committee decides if additional community representatives are needed to fulfil the “scrutiny” role on the Management Committee and full Partnership, and if so, which sectors they should represent.

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