

Discussion paper: Partnership Capital Development Plan

CPP Management Committee – 9 February 2005

Background

One expectation of community planning is that partners will work more closely together than before. The debate has often focused on service provision and efforts to avoid duplication or fill gaps in coverage.

There is also scope to generate efficiencies from different assets owned by different partners. Provision of services from a jointly owned or shared facility clearly has benefits for service providers and public as service users (with the additional benefit of releasing funds if redundant assets are sold).

December's Management Committee included a presentation on the involvement of Strathclyde Police in the renewal and rationalisation of various facilities in Dalmellington in partnership with the local council and NHS.

Fife Police have also developed a joint facility with a local Post Office (allowing a station to close, but a police presence to be maintained).

This report is a suggestion on possible ways to progress the development of similar initiative within Argyll and Bute.

Factors affecting joint developments

Whilst the Dalmellington example is an excellent example of what can be achieved, the small number of other examples suggests that the process is not as easy as theory would suggest.

Factors that may affect this are:

- the top down focus to date with the suggestion of sharing capital investment plans (that contrasts with the community based approach in Dalmellington)
- the assumption that organisations have a clear asset management strategy
- the need for planned investments by different agencies to coincide in order for a development to take place
- the narrower focus on public sector organisations as the 'main players'
- the different priorities within different organisations
- issues around trust – e.g. who will own an asset, if an asset is sold as part of a joint development who benefits, who is responsible for ongoing maintenance etc

The likely consequence of a situation like this is that a good idea becomes stifled by the bureaucracy.

Whilst there are many potential hurdles, the Dalmellington example illustrates a possible way forward.

- there was a clear community need to replace several run down facilities
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- a partner wanted to replace a significant asset in a community
- the community focus allowed other potential uses to be identified

In addition, a community focus could have the potential to identify a wider range of partners than different public sector agencies collaborating with each other.

There are also examples of projects that have used buildings that have become redundant or are partly used, sometimes due to changes affecting private sector organisations – e.g. following mergers, or reductions in capacity. These also offer scope beyond the public sector focus of discussions so far.

Thoughts on how to progress this topic

These are my thoughts on how we might make progress given the very brief outline of issues above.

- a top down, sharing of capital investment plans is unlikely to yield obvious cases for collaboration
- sharing details of assets and their status could work, but is certainly not realistic for the Council at present (the Council is still developing its asset management plan and data is limited)
- a community focus on areas where facilities are desirable, or existing facilities close to or past their planned life. This would require additional research, perhaps using the Citizens Panel to identify target areas
- start small – smaller scale projects, involving fewer partners will help to build confidence, experience and trust
- consider other assets, such as mobile facilities that have a short lifetime (more replacement opportunities)
- shift the focus from one where major public sector organisations are looking for savings to one where we help capacity build (e.g. to identify premises that voluntary sector or social enterprises can share – perhaps using under utilised or redundant assets of community planning partners or commercial organisations)
- attempt to develop a more opportunistic mind-set, so that when opportunities arise partners are prepared to take a risk to make something work or are looking to involve others as they plan developments

The starting point should be to identify a ‘problem’ that could be worked on collaboratively. The issue of resources will always be difficult, but may be eased if a specific project is identified (e.g. because certain grants may be available).

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