

**ARGYLL AND BUTE COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP  
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
28 JUNE 2006**

**EVALUATION OF THE BUTE AND COWAL LOCAL COMMUNITY  
PLANNING PILOT**

**1. SUMMARY**

This report outlines the recommendations from the Bute and Cowal Local Community Planning Pilot on the future operation of a localised structure to implement the duties of Community Planning as contained within the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Note the content of the report
- Consider the recommendation of the Pilot to the CPP Management Committee to continue the operation of a localised CPP structure for a further year as outlined in section 6 of this report.
- Agree next steps for the Pilot with a view to the need to develop local community planning structures in the other areas of Argyll and Bute

**3. ORIGINAL OBJECTIVES**

The original objectives of the Area Partnerships were set out as:

- To translate local priorities contained in the Local Area Action Plan into realistic and comprehensive “Themed” Area Strategies supported by appropriate Investment Plans and Outcome Agreements
- To scrutinise implementation plans of agencies/other partnerships/initiatives to avoid duplication
- To identify funding sources
- To implement Area Strategies
- To monitor progress and feed progress and issues back to the wider CPP through the Management Committee

To be achieved via an Area Partnership supported by local forums.

**4. EVALUATION PROCESS**

The Community Planning Manager undertook interviews as part of the evaluation process of the Bute and Cowal Local Community Planning Pilot. Interviews were scheduled for the week of 10 to 14 April 2005 to discuss the evaluation of the Pilot with partner agencies and community representatives.

Unfortunately, not many people were available during this time and interviews could therefore only be conducted with the following people:

- Alan MacDougall, Fyne Homes
- Jim McCrossan, Community Regeneration and Learning, Argyll and Bute Council
- Geoff Calvert, Strathclyde Fire and Rescue
- David Dowie, Communities Scotland
- Alan Milstead, Argyll and the Islands Enterprise
- George McKenzie, Pilot Co-ordinator
- Margaret Johnston, Community Representative for Dunoon ADG and the Elderly Forum
- Iain MacInnes, Community Representative for Lochgoilhead Community Council and Trust and the National Park Community Partnership and Area Network

Interviews were not conducted with the Chair of the Pilot, the police and NHS representatives or the Council's link director for Bute and Cowal.

## **5. FINDINGS**

As a result of these interviews the following comments were made:

- Pilot had achieved very little and it was only now starting to "find its feet". Due to the "teething" problems experienced, it was in some instances felt that an evaluation at this stage was premature and that the Pilot should run for another six months to a year (depending on when the new Co-ordinator was in post) before a proper judgement could be made as to its future.
- Major strengths were cited as the level of community representation, motivation of the Co-ordinator and networking opportunities that the Pilot presented. The independent role of the Co-ordinator was also seen as a strength.
- The fact that the Pilot lacked direction and focus was seen as a major weakness as well as the fact that, despite operating for a year and eight months, no real projects or priorities had been identified.
- This was attributed to the lack of resources (financial, time, support) allocated to the Pilot which in turn led some partners to question the commitment of the CPP as a whole to local community planning. It was argued that if the CPP really saw local community planning as a priority, then more time and resources would be allocated to enable the Pilot to operate more effectively.
- In order to enable it to function effectively, the Pilot needs clear guidelines as to what it is trying to achieve.

- It, therefore, needs to develop an action plan with clear objectives and an accompanying investment plan as initially envisaged in the remit of the Area Partnership and job description of the Area Co-ordinator. However, this can only be achieved if more resources are allocated to the Pilot.
- It was suggested that the lessons learned from this evaluation be discussed at a future meeting of the Pilot and that George be drawn into these discussions.
- Another identified weakness was the fact that agencies are not making the necessary links to other initiatives in which they are involved and are, therefore, not bringing their experiences to the table (there is no information flow). This was, however, not seen to be the case with the community representatives who were in fact bringing community issues to the table.
- It was felt that training was an issue that needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The question was asked “do the agencies and community representatives really know why they are sitting around the table?”
- It was felt that the purpose of the Pilot needs to be made clearer as there did not seem to be enough understanding of the way in which it was meant to operate. For instance, having the agencies and community representatives sitting around the table was for the purposes of consultation and not lobbying. It was felt that training should be a standing item on the agenda - this would then reinforce the message, especially due to the fact that meetings were only being held every two to three months.
- It was also felt that the Co-ordinator was “thrown in at the deep end” without sufficient training and the opportunity now presented itself to offer the new Co-ordinator proper training as to the background of community planning and the Pilot and what it was trying to achieve.
- To date the Pilot has not made any difference to the way in which partner agencies conduct their business and has also had no effect on the way in which budgets are allocated (except for staff time in some instances).
- With regard to the structure of the Pilot, it was agreed that the Co-ordinator was the key to the success of the Pilot and the importance of a dedicated full time member of staff to co-ordinate the Pilot was unanimously agreed. It was felt that without this commitment in terms of time and resources, the Pilot would not be able to gain the necessary momentum (as has been the case to date) and would ultimately fail.

- It was felt that a dynamic Chair was paramount to the success of the Pilot and essential to give direction and steer to the Pilot. It was agreed that the Chair should be rotated, but that care should be taken to ensure that the necessary links were in place to ensure that information forthcoming from the Pilot was able to be fed back into the Council's structure (possibly via the Link Director). In other instances it was felt that the Chair should be an independent person – possibly a prominent business person in the area who understood economic issues and opportunities. It was felt that by having Council employees as the Co-ordinator and Chair was to the detriment of the Pilot as it was seen as a Council-led initiative and not partner-wide initiative.
- It was agreed that the right level of partner involvement had been achieved (the only aspect of the initial structure that was actually implemented), although the absentee partners need to be encouraged to attend. It was, however, felt that there was not enough business/private sector involvement in the Pilot. It was agreed that the community representatives were making a valuable contribution and added a certain dynamism to the way in which the Pilot operated. It was agreed that community representatives should be identified in areas where they are currently lacking and that the involvement of young people was also crucial. It was mentioned that the Kintyre Youth Forum was hosting a two day seminar on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> June which is looking at how young people wish to engage in community planning. It was agreed that the outcome of this seminar should be fed back to the Pilot in order to pursue the issue of active youth involvement.
- It was agreed that the Pilot needs to deliver something to give it validity and that more manageable projects need to be identified that suit all parties involved.
- Other comments were that the whole CPP structure is cluttered and it is unclear where responsibilities lie. There are also no clear links between the Strategic Theme Groups and the Pilot. There are no real local structures feeding into the Pilot and closer links need to be established with the ADG's and possibly even the local Community Safety Fora and Anti Social Behaviour Orders as well as initiatives such as Drivesafe which can possibly be pursued more effectively at a more local level through local community planning structures. Reporting mechanisms between the Pilot and the CPP Management Committee and full Partnership also need to be more robust (current verbal updates are inadequate – detailed reports are necessary). It was also felt that elected members need to be more involved in order to get community ownership of the Pilot. More communication regarding community planning in general was also needed.
- Although it was unanimously agreed that local community planning is essential and that some form of structure is necessary in all areas for people to tap into, there were, however, differing opinions as to how this should be achieved. On the one hand it was felt that it was too

soon to say how the Pilot should be rolled out to other areas and that we should not rush trying to replicate it at this stage although it was agreed that the Pilot needed to be “refreshed”. On the other hand, however, it was felt that valuable lessons had been learned as how not to run the Pilot and what the reasons for the shortcomings were (no clear direction and a lack of resources) and no more time should therefore be wasted in trying “to flog a dead horse” and local community planning should therefore be rolled out to other areas as a matter of urgency. There were also differing views as to the optimum size of the Pilot area. On the one hand it was felt that the Bute and Cowal area seemed manageable as an area and if the Pilot is to be co-ordinated by the Council’s Area Corporate Services Manager then it makes sense not to split the area up. On the other hand it was felt that the area was far too big to make a meaningful impact on service delivery and that the Pilot should be broken down into much smaller more manageable areas.

From the comments highlighted through the interviews the Community Planning Manager suggested the following way forward options:

**Option 1: The Pilot should continue as it is for a longer period of time**

As initial “teething” problems associated with the Pilot hampered early progress, it is too soon to make an informed judgement regarding the future of the Pilot and therefore the Pilot needs to continue for a period of six months to a year before a meaningful evaluation can be made as to its future and how, if at all, it should be rolled out to other areas.

**Option 2: The Pilot should continue for a longer period of time but with some significant changes**

The sentiment expressed in Option 1 is echoed. However, the Pilot should not continue in its present form and lessons learned from this evaluation should be taken on board with the following changes proposed, namely:

The Pilot needs a strong driver to take it forward (both in the role of the Co-ordinator and Chair) and it also needs a clear action plan and associated investment strategy if it is to deliver something meaningful. The opportunity to get it right the second time around has presented itself in the fact that the new Co-ordinator can start with a “clean slate”. It is strongly recommended that the original job description and associated tasks be used by the new Co-ordinator to give clear direction and focus to the activities of the Pilot. Proper training is, however, essential if the Pilot is to succeed.

The “new look” Pilot should then run for a set time (to be determined by the members).

Consideration needs to be given as to whether the “new look” Pilot should be run in the same area (Bute and Cowal wide), or whether it should perhaps be tried in a much smaller area such as a few communities within the National Park, for instance, or whether it should be tried in a totally different area such

as Campbeltown, for example, where there are already initiatives underway that can be brought in under the banner of local community planning.

**Option 3: The Pilot should be rolled out to other areas as a matter of urgency**

As there is general consensus that local community planning is essential, the necessary structures and mechanisms need to be put in place in the Council's other three administrative areas as a matter of urgency. Valuable lessons have been learned with the Bute and Cowal Pilot. We know what the strengths and weaknesses are. We know why the Pilot has not worked and we know how to address these issues. The critical piece of the puzzle, however, lies in how committed the Community Planning Partnership is to local community planning and whether the Partnership values it enough to try to make it work in a more meaningful manner.

Not losing sight of the fact that resources are scarce, the following scenarios are proposed to implement local community planning in other areas as a matter of urgency, namely:

*Scenario 1:* Appoint four independent Area Co-ordinators to implement local community planning in the Council's four administrative areas according to a clearly defined action plan and investment strategy.

*Scenario 2:* Make use of the Council's four Area Corporate Services Managers to implement local community planning in the Council's four administrative areas according to a clearly defined action plan and investment strategy.

*Scenario 3:* Split the Council's four administrative areas in two for the purposes of local community planning, namely Helensburgh and Lomond and Bute and Cowal as one area and Oban, Lorn and the Isles and mid Argyll, Kintyre andIslay as the other area and appoint an independent Co-ordinator for each of the two areas. If two independent posts cannot be created, then create one post which is staffed by two part time Co-ordinators. Initiatives such as Drivesafe and others can then be pulled in under the banner of local community planning and be implemented by the Co-ordinators within these two areas.

**Option 4: The Pilot should be disbanded**

As the Pilot has not achieved anything in the last year and eight months due to a lack of resources it is not worthwhile continuing the Pilot unless resources are forthcoming. However, if no further resources are forthcoming and the Pilot is disbanded, then what? The CPP then needs to consider how it will fulfil its obligation to engage with local communities in terms of the Local Government in Scotland Act.

## 6. DISCUSSION AT BUTE AND COWAL PILOT

As not all of the partners had the opportunity to be interviewed as part of the evaluation process the scheduled May 2006 CPP Pilot meeting considered the findings of the evaluation interviews and the CPP Manager's suggested options. This meeting involved:

- Brian Chennell, Argyll & Bute Council
- Douglas Hendry, Argyll & Bute Council
- Alan Milstead, AIE
- Alan McDougall, Fyne Homes
- Adam Kerr, Strathclyde Police
- David Dowie, Communities Scotland
- Geoff Calvert, Strathclyde Fire and Rescue
- Jim Clinton, Bute Community Links
- Harold Spear, Bute Community Links
- Margaret Johnston, Community Representative
- Ian MacInnes, Community Representative

With facilitation of the discussion by Lynn Smillie (interim co-ordinator) and Brian Barker (Policy and Strategy Manager)

The CPP Pilot commented on positive outcomes of the Pilot as it had enabled networking; being able to put a face to a name; involved the right people to make decisions; had good level of community representation; assisted to help raise local issues with the "right" partners; and, everyone showed a willingness to participate in delivering localised community planning.

However, there was also a general feeling that the frustrations were due to the lack of clarity of purpose of the pilot; there was nothing to decide upon; no businesses participated as only one attended and; partners who were invited never attended e.g. NHS, Cal Mac. In addition the level of resourcing and support to the Pilot was seen as being vital as the actual input was seen as being restricted and inhibited the development of the function/role/purpose of the CPP Pilot. As well as perceived confusion by the public as the purpose of the CPP Pilot and how it related to other established area structures

The CPP Pilot concluded that they were still of the view that a localised CPP structure was still a vital way forward in undertaking Community Planning at a local level to enable communities to engage with statutory bodies in order to influence decisions. The Pilot was clear that their role was not about going out and looking for things to do but to influence partners to prioritise issues enabling resources to be targeted to address local issues, and/or influence choices on what was going to be delivered by the partners in the Bute and Cowal area.

The CPP Pilot agreed that the following recommendations be submitted to the CPP management committee for consideration:

- 1) To continue the pilot for up to another year with amendments to pilots working arrangements (reviewed again in December 2006)
- 2) Pilot partners and community representatives need to clarify the purpose of the pilot (within the framework as previously agreed)
  - o Setting objectives and timescales
  - o Formalising an action plan by October 2006
- 3) Support arrangements of the Pilot Co-ordinator need to be clearly defined by September 2006
- 4) CPP Pilot meetings need to be structured to facilitate understanding of localised Community Planning and the sharing of service delivery information (including operational arrangements such as the rotation the chair and the structure of agendas)

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The evaluation of the Pilot has highlighted a need for change if the original objectives are to be achieved. The members of the Bute and Cowal Area Partnership have made recommendations based on discussion of an initial evaluation report prepared by Lolita Lavery.

The Management Committee need to agree a way forward for the process of local community planning in Argyll and Bute in the context of the comments from the Pilot partnership, the appointment of a new Area Corporate Services Manager for the area and a new Community Planning Manager together with the wider strategic considerations of the different partners.

Lolita Lavery, Community Planning Manager  
Lynn Smillie, Interim CPP Co-ordinator  
Brian Barker, Policy and Strategy Manager

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