



Internal Audit Report

FINAL

Chief Executives

Review of Community Engagement

March 2011

1 INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared as a result of the Internal Audit review of Chief Executives – Community Engagement as part of the 2010 - 2011 Internal Audit programme.

The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 (the Act) provides a statutory basis for Community Planning in Scotland. There is a duty under section 15 of the Act that requires Local Authorities to initiate, facilitate and maintain the Community Planning process.

The Act made Community Engagement a statutory responsibility of all partner agencies. It shifted the responsibility for participation, requiring agencies to engage with the community rather than asking the community to engage with them.

The Council aims to work with its Community Partners to identify a clear set of priorities that meet the needs of the community. To be successful, the Council must have a plan that sets out key priorities to clearly demonstrate that it is meeting the community's needs in the short term; working together to achieve a joint vision for Argyll and Bute.

The principle focus of our review is the work carried out by the Council in partnership with community groups to ensure they participate in decision making for their communities.

2 AUDIT SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

The broad objectives of the review were to;

- Review the organisational set-up of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) and the arrangements for providing appropriate administrative support;
- Review the process for monitoring the work of Partnerships in relation to the action outcome agreements; and
- Ensure that there are adequate reporting arrangements for the CPP.

3 RISK ASSESSMENT

As part of the audit process and in conjunction with our Systems Based Auditing (SBA), Internal Control Questionnaire (ICQ) approach, the risk register was reviewed to identify any areas that needed to be included within the audit.

SR09 Failure to progress CPP.

SR13 Failure to comply with new legislation, regulations or statutory responsibilities.

SR14 Failure to implement the Single Outcome Agreement.

4 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

There are no Corporate Governance issues to be reported as a result of this audit.

5 MAIN FINDINGS

As part of the Council's commitment to Community Planning Partnership (CPP) the Council has set up 4 Local Area Community Planning Groups (LACPGs) as well as 3 Community Planning Partnership Thematic Groups.

The Council has a Community Engagement Action Plan which is reviewed and updated and this is reported to the Community Planning Partnership Management Committee.

The Management Committee, LACPGs and the Thematic Groups report to the CPP on a regular basis.

Argyll & Bute CPP and Single Outcome Agreement Annual Reports are also submitted to the CPP.

The Management Committee agreed to the formation of a 3rd Sector and Communities CPP Sub-Group to ensure that Community Engagement was given the same strategic guidance and monitoring as the other CPP Thematic Groups.

The first meeting of this group was held on 22 February 2011 to establish the Outcomes of the group.

'Forward together' events have been held in each of the Council's 4 administrative areas.

The Council has recently been involved in consultation with the public and community groups regarding the 2011/12 budget and is currently in consultation with various groups over the proposed school closures.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

No recommendations were identified as a result of the audit.

Internal Audit considers that, in an effort to improve the quality of information, monitoring and control, the recommendations should be implemented in accordance with the agreed action plan. Management have set achievable implementation dates and will be required to provide reasons to the Audit Committee for failure to implement within the agreed timescale. Where management decides not to implement recommendations it must evaluate and accept the risks associated with that decision.

A system of grading audit findings, which have resulted in an action, has been adopted in order that the significance of the findings can be ascertained. Each finding is classified as fundamental, material or minor. The definitions of each classification are set out below:-

High - major observations on high level controls and other important internal controls. Significant matters relating to factors critical to the success of the objectives of the system. The weakness may therefore give rise to loss or error;

Medium - observations on less important internal controls, improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of controls which will assist in meeting the objectives of the system and items which could be significant in the future. The weakness is not necessarily great, but the risk of error would be significantly reduced if it were rectified;

Low - minor recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of controls, one-off items subsequently corrected. The weakness does not appear to affect the ability of the system to meet its objectives in any significant way.

7 AUDIT OPINION

Based on the findings we can conclude that good progress is being made with Community Engagement within Argyll and Bute Council. This is reinforced by the formation of the 3rd Sector and Communities CPP Sub-Group and the fact that there are 4 Community Development Officers, one for each of the administrative areas.

Recommendations arising from the audit work should be implemented by the nominated responsible officer within the agreed timescale. Recommendations not implemented will require explanation to the Audit Committee. This could lead to findings being reported in the Internal Control Statement produced by the Council in support of the Annual Accounts.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the Community Planning Manager and the Service Officer, Community Regeneration & Voluntary Support for their assistance.

Argyll & Bute Council's Internal Audit section has prepared this report. Our work was limited to the objectives in section 2. We cannot be held responsible or liable if information material to our task was withheld or concealed from us, or misrepresented to us.

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