

Local Governance Review – Feedback from the Big Listen Events in Bute and Cowal

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The programme for Scottish government 2017-18 set out the intention to “decentralise power to a more local level in Scotland and launch a comprehensive review of local governance ahead of a Local Democracy Bill later in this Parliament”. The Scottish Government’s local governance review consultation was launched 28 May 2018 and entitled ‘Democracy Matters’ and will close 14 December 2018.
- 1.2 The first phase is aimed primarily at communities to better understand how decisions and their impacts are best taken at community level. The second stage of the consultation is aimed primarily at Community Planning Partnerships and public sector organisations who are encouraged to offer proposals for improved governance arrangements at their level of place.
- 1.3 In preparation, the Chief Executive embarked on an extensive engagement programme with communities across Argyll and Bute and online to inform the Council’s response which will be considered by the Council at its meeting on 27 September 2018.
- 1.4 This report sets out the background to the consultation and more explicitly provides a narrative on the key themes and comments captured at our event on the Isle of Bute and the online webchat session.
- 1.5 It is recommended that the Bute and Cowal Area Committee:
- a) Notes and considers the content of this paper and the views expressed by local communities in relation to the local governance review consultation;
 - b) Notes and considers that an overarching report which will contain a draft response to the Scottish Government consultation ‘Democracy Matters’ will be submitted for consideration by the Council on the 27 September 2018.

Local Governance Review – Feedback from the Big Listen Events in Bute and Cowal

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The programme for Scottish government 2017-18 set out the intention to “decentralise power to a more local level in Scotland and launch a comprehensive review of local governance ahead of a Local Democracy Bill later in this Parliament”.
- 2.2 The first phase is aimed primarily at communities to better understand how decisions and their impacts are best taken at community level. The second phase of the consultation is aimed primarily at Community Planning Partnerships and public sector organisations who are encouraged to offer proposals for improved governance arrangements at their level of place.
- 2.3 In preparation, the Chief Executive embarked on an extensive engagement programme with communities across Argyll and Bute and online to inform the Council’s response which will be considered by the Council at its meeting on 27 September 2018.
- 2.4 This report sets out the background to the consultation and more explicitly provides a narrative on the key themes and comments captured at our event on the Island of Bute, Dunoon and the online webchat session.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that members of the Bute and Cowal Area Committee:

- 3.1 Notes and considers the content of this paper and the views expressed by local communities in relation to the local governance review consultation;
- 3.2 Notes and considers that an overarching report which will contain a draft response to the Scottish Government consultation ‘Democracy Matters’ will be submitted for consideration by the Council on the 27 September

2018.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The programme for Scottish government 2017-18 set out the intention to “decentralise power to a more local level in Scotland and launch a comprehensive review of local governance ahead of a Local Democracy Bill later in this Parliament”. The Scottish Government and COSLA jointly announced the consultation in December 2017 and it was launched in May 2018. Entitled ‘Democracy Matters’, the consultation is in two phases and will close 14 December 2018.
- 4.2 The first phase is aimed primarily at communities to better understand how decisions and their impacts are best taken at community level. The second phase of the consultation is aimed primarily at Community Planning Partnerships and public sector organisations who are encouraged to offer proposals for improved governance arrangements at their level of place.
- 4.3 Given the significant importance of this consultation to the future of public services in Scotland, in preparation the Chief Executive committed to an extensive programme of engagement across Argyll and Bute with communities to inform the development of the Council response. Initially entitled the ‘Future of Public Services – Your Voice’, it received the additional title of ‘The Big Listen’ to reflect the focus on hearing the views of residents within our communities.
- 4.4 Between April and June 2018, Council officers hosted evening engagement events in Coll, Campbeltown, Lochgilphead, Helensburgh, Mull, Islay, Bute, Dunoon and Oban. In addition a ‘webchat’ event followed to allow anyone unable to attend one of the above events to participate in a session online. A final event was held on Jura at the end of July 2018.

4.5 Format

Each event commenced with a one hour ‘open doors’ session where people could drop in for an introduction to the event, have an informal discussion, meet council staff and raise issues relevant to their communities. The formal event commenced immediately afterwards and lasted two hours commencing with a short presentation to set some context before the topics were considered in detail through a series of focus groups. Each group was facilitated by council staff but the focus was on the views of attendees. At the end of the session, feedback was provided from each group so that all attendees were party to the points raised within other groups. Each group worked through 5 key themes aligned to the focus of the Democracy Matters

consultation as set out as follows;

1. How would you want to contribute to making decisions for your local community? And what would help you to become more involved?
2. How effective are arrangements for making decisions about your public services? What could be improved? Is it more influence over decision making by public bodies, is it the transfer of services and budgets to community control or something else?
3. Would you support community control over any services? If so, which ones? Are there any areas where community control should not be considered? If not, why not?
4. How should organisations that run public services be accountable for the decisions taken to those who reside in our communities? Who should monitor performance of those services?
5. What would you like public services to look like in Argyll and Bute in 5 years' time?

4.6 For each event, a summary of the key points and view expressed has been prepared in a narrative form – the summary for the events held within Bute and Cowal are attached as appendices to this report. Also appended is a short overview of the webchat session. Over the events over 220 residents participated in an in depth consideration of the issues which will assist with forming a council response. The eleven event reports are being used to inform an overarching report to be considered by the Council on the 27 September 2018 as the Council's response to the national consultation.

4.7 It is unknown at this stage what the proposed Local Democracy Bill will look like however it is noted that it has the potential to have a long term impact on how decisions are made affecting our communities in Argyll and Bute. It also has the potential to generate organisational or structural change or introduce the transfer of powers between or from spheres of government and communities. It is important that the Council (and any other public organisation, community group or individuals from the area) makes a full submission during this consultation phase to influence the best possible outcome for our communities.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The programme for Scottish government 2017-18 set out the intention to “decentralise power to a more local level in Scotland and launch a comprehensive review of local governance ahead of a Local Democracy Bill later in this Parliament”.
- 5.2 In preparation, the Chief Executive embarked on a programme of engagement with communities across Argyll and Bute and online to inform the Council’s response which will be considered by the Council on the 27 September 2018.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy; none at this stage.
- 6.2 Financial; none at this stage
- 6.3 Legal; none at this stage
- 6.4 HR; none at this stage
- 6.5 Equalities; none at this stage
- 6.6 Risk; none at this stage
- 6.7 Customer Service; none at this stage

Chief Executive; Cleland Sneddon

For further information contact: Stuart Green, Business Manager, Chief Executives Service, Tel 01546 604253, E mail: stuart.green@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Date; 10 August 2018

Appendices:

1. Future of Public Services – What You Said on Bute 12 June 2018
2. Future of Public Services – What You Said in Dunoon 13 June 2018
3. Future of Public Services – What You Said via the Webchat 18 June 2018

Appendix 1

THE BIG LISTEN Future of Public Services – Your Voice What You Said on Bute 12 June 2018

Nineteen residents turned out for the event at Rothesay Joint Campus and key themes that emerged were communications, central information hubs and the provision of an 'honest broker'.

The first theme to emerge at one group was communications or rather the perceived lack of communications from the public sector. A separate and related challenge that was highlighted was difficulties in navigating through the public sector organisations to get the right person.

One communication example given by an attendee was recent pot hole filling on a specific road on the island. One resident was not aware that the machine that does this specific job was coming to Bute and was led to understand that the specific road that was being maintained had to be done on a specific number of calendar years in order to secure funding from an external source. This is not the case.

It was suggested within the group that this was a typical 'myth' that was created in the absence of clear information on how decisions are made with regards to public expenditure. At the request of the group, the facilitator outlined how decisions on roads maintenance are made by the Council which is essentially a risk based approach using data which takes into account the condition of roads, its priority as a route, types of traffic etc. The applied methodology using data supports officers in creating a capital and maintenance programme for future years which is then submitted to elected members for consideration and the eventual approved programme is then rolled out.

One attendee was of the view that if this logic was articulated publicly in the same way (i.e. plain English), residents would have a more natural understanding on how decisions on public expenditure are made. This was an example of the type of communications that could greatly improve understanding, reduce confusion and improve the reputation of the public sector which currently is perceived by some to have a habit of using complex language unnecessarily.

A comment from a separate focus group suggested that prior notifications should be issued to communities of significant decisions the public sector is considering which would have an impact on community life.

With regards to communicating information to residents on Bute, one group had

mixed opinions on the best medium e.g. social media, local newspaper, information boards etc. Attendees at a separate focus group advised there was no source of local news anymore which reflected changes in the local newspaper with one suggestion that a community based website or other social media may be useful.

Contributing to making decisions is important and having an accessible online decision making tool was viewed by a member of one group as a great way to engage, especially for busy lives. The example given was the council's recent participatory budgeting pilot. This relies on picking the right individual topics and asking for preferences or a straight choice.

One attendee advised that councillors of Glasgow City Council have dedicated Facebook sites which promotes dialogue and this was suggested for Argyll and Bute with councillors responsible for posting their own content.

One group agreed that a single point of contact was required with public sector organisations and there was a longer discussion as to what this would look like before a consensus was reached that it was a combination of both a location and a person.

With regards to location, it was agreed that the library in Rothesay is a good source of information and many public services already use it to promote public information; in addition the staff were always very helpful in this regard. However, the regularity of this information was intermittent and if all public services used the library as an automatic default to provide information (i.e. this event), it would grow to become a key information hub and increase communications and understanding.

With regards to the existing local council office Eaglesham House, there was multiple comments that its location is too remote and difficult to access (i.e. top of a steep hill). Closure of the customer service point for the afternoons was noted by more than one person as unacceptable and that a central information hub in a single accessible location involving all key partner agencies would be welcome.

When considering a person as a single point of contact, this should be an 'honest broker' funded by but not employed by the public sector organisations and definitely not a volunteer as this would be unsustainable. This individual would be well connected and would play a key role in filling gaps in information. For example, the post could be hosted within the community organisation Bute Island Alliance. Such a post used to exist on the island funded via the Highlands and Islands Strengthening Communities programme and hosted by Bute Island Alliance.

However, the concept of a single point of contact appeared to receive no support at a separate group discussion where it was proposed this is the role of elected councillors and furthermore that all council officers should be available, accessible

and accountable to communities.

More than one resident suggested that local government needs to be more 'local' with one attendee suggesting there was a feeling of centralisation with council business being delivered 'top down', local offices closing, staff covering increasingly large areas and an increasing number of the senior managers based at the headquarters.

One attendee suggested that for Bute, an ideal local government model would be for the 3 ward members to have powers over spending decisions and would be supported by officers to undertake the administration, supply of information etc.

Since 1975 when the County Council of Bute was abolished to create the district of Argyll and Bute and furthermore the creation of the unitary authorities in 1996, residents feel increasingly distant from where decisions are made about services on Bute. In the new local government model suggested by the one attendee described above, ward members would make decisions about local priorities and would have a role to play in attracting additional funding to support allocated resources.

With regards to the suggestion of communities controlling local services, one group discussed vulnerability caused by a lack of resilience e.g. a community run waste collection service and what happens if the transport breaks down and the resource is not available to secure a replacement whereas with the public sector and due to current economies of scale, would be in a more favourable position to move resources about or ultimately to replace the vehicle if even only temporarily.

Another attendee was of the view that the transfer of services to be run by a community group creates a false economy as more posts would need to be created to monitor performance.

One attendee was of the view that communities could control non critical services but not health care or education. Another attendee was of the view to maintain the status quo i.e. residents pay taxes, vote for elected representation and it is for the public sector to run services and if you don't like decisions made by your councillor, don't vote for them at the next election.

One group recognised that amenities within Bute, such as maintenance of soft landscaping and fencing, could have local ownership and that this would involve getting resources and access to materials quickly and safely. It was suggested that a local budget be made available to do repairs and amenity works with a group of stakeholders who can make decisions on distributing that budget out as local people can be best placed to advise on maintenance issues.

It was suggested that ultimately the council should continue to retain the budget and for the community to agree what the priorities should be for that spend. Having a transparency of work programmes and ability for the community to influence emotive subjects such as bins being emptied would help people to adjust to change.

One attendee suggested that Third Sector groups should undertake bulky waste services in some areas. It was recognised by the group that it doesn't have to be the same solution everywhere and that the scale of delivery is challenging in Argyll and Bute.

It was put forward by one attendee that having budgets at a more central level allows more flexibility and that often what is difficult is that public sector finance model doesn't work because it's often one year funding. Co-production of spending plans over longer periods (i.e. 3 years) could be a key and growing area of local engagement and influencing decisions which would greatly support communications.

One group agreed a need to continue to have education managed centrally, and rights and policies such as access to education, housing etc should be created more centrally

It was put forward within one group that for groups to deliver work locally they may need support to work together and collaborate. To find out how much things cost to deliver locally would take some work and funding needs to be put into this. Partnership working with the council is a good model for accountability.

Within one group there was a suggestion that the strategic priorities of different organisations are not always aligned and the example provided were those of the two newest organisations – Live Argyll (an arm's length libraries and leisure trust created by the Council in 2017) and the Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership. It was proposed that the health and wellbeing priorities of these organisations are not compatible.

One group discussed the one community council on Bute and there was mixed opinion on the effectiveness of the previous one (2013 - 2018). At one time in the past it was an effective community council with 16 members of which many had a portfolio and would regularly provide updates along with representatives from public sector organisation e.g. police. A wholly new community council had recently been elected and there was optimism from some attendees in one group that once constituted that this was an opportunity for positive change.

One resident had passionate views about involving young people and suggested that this event should be taken into schools for direct engagement with young people. The same resident was also of the view that there was an opportunity for young people to learn skills from experienced workers before these skills were lost.

Another suggestion was accessing the wealth of information, data and studies that exists within the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) to support communities. The understanding here is that UHI academics and students have studied many relative subjects that accessing this information would be helpful for communities to find local solutions for local issues.

When exploring what public services may look like in 5 years' time, there was clearly a range of views with some seeking the status quo to be maintained. Others sought changes to the existing position including more 'local' government (as described above) and a central information hub in an accessible location in the town.

Improved communications including both improved online communications and non-online and ensure individuals are not marginalised. One example is the perceived challenge for individuals without digital literacy skills to access Universal Credit.

Single attendees asked for more public sector employment on Bute, improved monitoring of building works on Bute and more live streaming of council meetings.

With regards to caring for the elderly, one attendee was of the view that there should be more publicly owned care homes to reflect an ageing population.

Another attendee believes there should be a better mechanism for the Scottish Government to be made aware of the specific needs of local communities.

Only one view was slightly extreme and that is for the Isle of Bute to move to Inverclyde Council, the reasons for which were not clear.

To summarise, there was clearly varying views on whether to maintain public services as they currently are, increase local powers synonymous with the old County Council or more moderate improvements. The range of views demonstrated the varied appetite for communities to have more control over local services.

One area that did appear to have a consensus across the room is that communications in general could be improved. The last comment captured here is that when this report is made public via the Area Committees and online, it should be stored at the local library where those seeking traditional sources of information about local services can find this easily and let others know by word of mouth.

Appendix 2

THE BIG LISTEN Future of Public Services – Your Voice What You Said in Dunoon 13 June 2018

Despite a very wet and windy night, fifteen community representatives braved the elements to attend the Big Listen event in Dunoon. Key themes from Dunoon that emerged over the evening included a sense of apathy in the community, need for more community engagement skills, public participation and a desire for change.

When considering how to grow community contributions to decision making or how to get more involved, one attendee was certain that the issue was a double edged sword in that a) the public sector often (but not always) lacked skills to engage communities and b) communities (in Dunoon) are not engaging with either public sector organisations or even with each other. This latter point was also expressed as a frustration within the other focus group where it was concluded by some attendees there is too much apathy in the area which appeared to be a consistent feeling in the room.

Some attendees advised that the public sector has a tendency to ‘talk at’ rather than engage communities and people ‘switch off’ if they consider they are not being listened to. The opinion was put forward that people are often happier to complain but often not willing to come up with solutions for local issues. Another attendee was of the view that it is a cultural thing in Scotland that you don’t put yourself forward, don’t step on toes and don’t stick your head up above everyone else’s.

The Council’s Community Development team was praised by one attendee as one service that engages well with communities and received further praise for the recent participatory budgeting pilot. It was agreed that more investment should go into community planning and particularly community development with their engagement skills in order to develop and harness the potential power of the community.

However, at a separate table, there was confusion on how to engage with Community Planning. This was explained well by an attendee very familiar with community planning and it was agreed within the group the need to capture these types of explanations in an easy to digest way e.g. a podcast, booklet, online or via local press. It was commented that information was available but not everyone took the time to look for it.

Within the same focus group the local press was singled out for criticism for apparently promoting negative headlines to sell newspapers thereby perpetuating a negative ‘feel’ about the town. This argument was balanced with the acknowledgement that the local press get revenue from advertising and they can’t be

expected to promote local events for free. A different approach proposed was to improve the relationship with local press to encourage the publication of good news stories and promote the area. This would potentially lead to more people living or investing in the area which in turn could boost the newspaper's readership.

When exploring how effective existing arrangements for making decisions are, it was suggested that the vast geography of Argyll and Bute and our demographics (reducing and ageing population) was too challenging to deliver services at a time of great strain on the public sector. One attendee is of the view that currently the public sector lacks accountability and does not learn lessons when things have not gone well.

One attendee expressed a frustration that the council is risk averse and does not provide enough support for community development opportunities and expects communities to lead on developments. The question was posed: in many of our communities there are very able people, how can we get them involved so that they can influence decision making and also turn (social media) engagement into actions?

It was suggested that the public sector is too process driven, slow and bureaucratic whilst a different attendee suggested that the public sector needs to be better at providing information. There was a discussion about how much of the information is publicly available online and the challenge is finding it or just knowing where to look. With regards to public sector consultation, there was a suggestion within one group of potential consultation fatigue although conversely there is a feeling that people are more open to consultation than they used to be. A specific request is that there is an improved feedback on the outcome of consultations.

Another attendee suggested that the public sector needs a more business approach and the council should consider investing in new technologies and other ways of promoting and growing the economy e.g. dark skies, marine national park etc. Notwithstanding the significant investment into the Queens Hall Project and the Dunoon Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme provided by the Council, more money needs to be invested in the area to ensure the right infrastructure is in place.

One attendee expressed dissatisfaction with the Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface in its dual role as both an umbrella organisation providing support to all of the third sector and as a direct and competitive provider of services and applicant for funding.

Community councils were discussed and one attendee felt that the current system does not work, that community councils are too small (in geographical terms) and councillors can be parochial. It was felt that not all community councillors understood their role or were representative of the full demographics of their community.

Community councils should receive resources to support community development in a new and expanded role but there was no suggestion where this should come from. A suggestion was for community council caucuses to start operating again?

With regards to community control over public services, a particular challenge for community led projects is capacity and capability to ensure plans are sufficiently developed. It was noted that there is expertise within the public sector that should be easily accessible to support these initiatives.

Two attendees in one group represented a community environmental group who make a difference to where they live for the benefit of their communities. Despite 14 years of success and ambition, they have been unable to secure an objective of growth. Their aspiration to take on a derelict property in private ownership which it was felt has an adverse impact on the amenity of the area and to date the group have been unable to secure satisfactory advice on how they could take this forward including accessing funding. This is exacerbated by a sense that local community groups are competing with each other for the same funding.

One area of optimism was 'The Dunoon Project' (a community initiative to secure land asset from the forestry commission to deliver an ambitious tourism project which will bring investment and jobs to the area) using the provisions of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

One particular group had difficulty in imagining how things could be designed differently for tomorrow without deferring back to existing structures and existing (perceived) failings/ shortcomings. As a theoretical exercise, the facilitator suggested viewing it as a blank sheet of paper and encouraged views on redesign. The group very quickly agreed and described a set of principles of what an ideal world may look like with regards to making decisions at a local level.

The first of these was the creation of a (smaller) single public body solely for the whole of south Cowal on which sat elected representatives whose first priority is the creation of a holistic single draft plan within which draft priorities are developed in relation to economic growth and delivery of services. The elected representatives would be from a reduced number of community councils that cover larger geographical areas than at present.

The selection of priorities would be by vote via participatory budgeting with resources sourced from the disaggregation of resources from the previous (larger) public bodies.

This model assumes that due to increased public participation and ownership of responsibilities that there will be a growth of community energy that could be converted into action which would be coordinated along with the financial

resources/assets of the new authority to deliver the objectives as agreed in a consensus led process. Issues of accountability and resilience were raised as potential obstacles that would need to be addressed.

Building on this theme, one attendee advised that a particular challenge is moving (where appropriate) from voluntary activity to a social enterprise really making a difference. Another attendee suggested a key missing skill is change management, both within the public sector and communities. This relates to anything from voluntary groups growing to become a social enterprise, public sector organisations supporting (or not) community development. Community engagement skills were further expressed as needed for this.

In a separate focus group, with regards to communities running services, there was felt to be significant challenges with this and a nervousness although one attendee suggested that collectively more needs to be done to protect buildings/assets and perhaps the community would be willing to do that? This may include greater transfer of assets to the community although one attendee advised that previous experience can make for negative views of the asset transfer process in some communities.

With regards to what public services could look like in 5 years' time, a number of principles were proposed as follows:

That the public sector will be better at using people and assets, partnership working and working smarter and coordinated possibly through a central information hub in Dunoon. The public sector will be in a better financial position and have the resources to deliver and maintain a high quality of public services. The public sector will promote itself better and be much more proactive at engaging with communities at a time when participatory budgeting will be mainstream and budgets more transparent.

The public sector will be proactive on advising communities on what they can do and opportunities open to them and share best practice of what is happening elsewhere e.g. The Strachur Hub which was established two years ago with the aim to engage with older members of the community. It has now grown to include social activities, lunch clubs and exercise classes. The success of the model has resulted in the Health and Social Care Partnership looking to replicate it across the Argyll and Bute area.

Local managers will have more autonomy and confidence to respond to issues in communities and employees will be multi skilled to provide a more flexible workforce e.g. school janitors trained in building maintenance.

Cowal will develop a sense of identity and build on recent optimism in the area. There will be no more antipathy towards the public sector, everyone will be working together for the good of the area with a positive focus on economic growth including promoting our good quality food and drink, improved digital connectivity and more employment encouraging the retention and return of our young people.

In summary despite some initial negativity, with many comments on apathy in the area, there was agreement that both communities and the public sector collectively needs to improve on engaging and working together. Community planning and community development was seen as a positive force and there appeared to be an appetite for change if the conditions are right. There is good practice happening in Cowal and if this is shared, along with improved communications and different models of decision making, there is opportunity to learn lessons and for community groups to meet their aspirations to grow and possibly the local press will be more positive.

Appendix 3

THE BIG LISTEN Future of Public Services – Your Voice What You Said via the Webchat 18 June 2018

The online webchat was held on the 18 June 2018. Key themes to emerge from the conversation may be summarised as follows. A big challenge to communities is a sufficient local labour market to support employers and sufficient affordable housing. These two are interlinked not only to encourage young people to stay but also to increase in-migration into the area.

One participant was of the view that through small interventions, communities can make big differences which can play a key role in improving demographics. Examples included communities' development of care services for early years, supporting the maintenance of good health of residents as a preventative measure and the development of outreach services.

Other activities communities can participate in were suggested as including the provision of exercise facilities, eco/environmental issues, road safety, providing young people with a 'voice' and meals for the elderly if village halls had good community kitchens. However, one participant raised concerns over liabilities which discourages willing and enthusiastic residents to taking on public service activities and concerns they might be sued. 'Accountability' was viewed as a scary word as it puts people off voluntary activity which may need to be covered by codes of practice. Another contributor suggested a different view which was that this should not prohibit or curb community activities and can be dealt with by careful consideration of insurance and other measures.

This raised the suggestion of jargon free guidance and a help line to support communities in becoming empowered to 'take stuff on themselves' and utilise skills available from within the community. It was noted that there is existing guidance on the Council website in relation to community empowerment and could be a starting point.

The participants appeared to agree that, whilst there is enthusiasm for increasing community control with small interventions, communities would not want control over regulated activities but do want to increase influence. Looking ahead to 5 years' time, one participant suggested that the council should continue to be responsible for core activities (e.g. protection, security and emergency activities) surrounded by a softer outer ring that could be entirely outsourced to business and/or enabled by community partnerships delivering statutory services. All of this would hang on a core set of principles around 'livability' i.e. making the area attractive for young people and families. Added to this is measuring activity against

a 10 year impact plan and clear messages from the community on what shall be delivered and who shall do it.

One comment received was that success in maintaining community involvement is the evidence of results and a perception they are being listened to; this takes time and commitment. Key messages need to be embedded within the community. A separate comment was that people need to see the point of getting involved and understand that communities can collectively make lives better for themselves but that education is often required as people are unaware of possibilities.

The online webchat demonstrated a willingness by community representatives to engage in a dialogue on doing things differently that allows communities to be empowered in a measured manner to support improving outcomes for communities. Whether this is 'doing things for themselves' or increasing influence over more statutory activity, it requires an element of education to ensure everyone are aware of the opportunities that fit their circumstances, evidence of the benefits, and time and commitment.