

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION ON THE CPP

Background

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.

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 objective of community representation is to ensure that the aims of an open community planning process are realised, and also to act as a “community conscience” within meetings, namely a scrutiny role. The target of 50% community representation is therefore not a pre-requisite to achieve this – the designation of the scrutiny role is more important in this respect.

Recommendation

The Management Committee has discussed the above and recommends that:

1. The CPP change the basis of community representation from one that focuses on 50% representation to one that focuses on a designated scrutiny role for any community representative.
2. That the Management Committee be given responsibility for developing this further.