

**Report on SCVO / Voluntary Sector Discussion Day
19th February 2007, Lochgilphead**

The purpose of the day was to strengthen the relationships between the CPP and the voluntary sector in Argyll and Bute.

There exists a network of Voluntary Sector organisations that represent the 'interests' of the voluntary sector on the CPP. They are:

- Argyll CVS
- Argyll and Bute Volunteer Centre
- Bute Community Links
- Islay and Jura CVS
- MICT

Representatives from these organisations along with me and Andrew Campbell (CPP Chair) met to discuss whether the current arrangements were fit for purpose and recommend improvements to ensure better communication and representation. The process was facilitated by Margaret Wilson of SCVO.

When discussing the current situation the following issues were raised:

- No standard setup for whole of A&B
- No formal setup for feedback either among federation members or to wider sector
- No formal prior arrangements to feed issues to rep either from federation or sector
- Meeting of whole partnership did not lend itself to feedback because it was a round of reports
- Regeneration areas had more support, but tiny areas
- No formal link among the different structures e.g. district groups, Cowal Peninsula + Bute group, citizen panel etc.
- Islands are different because of geography, often have closer and more informal links with local groups, and informal networking methods
- Mainland area difficult due to size and transport issues.
- Mismatch of perceptions re how well services are delivered in A&B, and how well people are engaged
- Mismatch of perceptions re current communication systems e.g. minutes on website, email list that is not working for everyone
- Agreement that the sector needs and deserves to be supported to engage
- Recognition of the high level of activity among voluntary organisations, without whom the community would be the poorer
- Mapping the sector work still to be completed

After lengthy discussion the following commitments were agreed by the group:

- The ten standards for community engagement will be re-circulated to all 26 CP partners, plus link to website documents. A training day may be needed to refresh people's awareness and knowledge. Performance against these standards can be audited – how to do this

may need more thought and other agencies may be able to help with this.

- Awareness of Community Planning will be raised within communities using websites, publicising the 10 standards for Com Eng, printed material about the new plan etc. It was recognised that different methods can be used and still people will disclaim knowledge of things, but CPP can only do its best and keep working. Good idea to use success to advertise idea of getting involved.
- Reps from the voluntary sector – CVS and others – should now use feedback form sent into a central point to be used to inform the sector – see section on Federation
- All agreed that the goal should be increased engagement at local level.
- All agreed that all partners need to improve follow up when issues have been raised and taken forward. E.g. when issues are brought to the new style CPP meetings, there must be an agreed way of reporting on how the issues has been resolved/progressed without meetings turning into old style reporting sessions.
- The community portal can be developed to have a Community Planning page for information, and a BLOG to allow people to post their views and responses to CP issues.
- Explore ways of exerting influence on national agencies, e.g. Scottish Enterprise, Communities Scotland, Scottish Executive, Scottish Parliament etc.
- Local newspapers can be useful conduits of information about current issues and events.
- The voluntary sector should put measures in place to engage with elected Councillors after the May 07 election.
- CPP will become more focussed, making decisions on what gets done
- Contact email addresses should be widely circulated so that group have easy access
- AGMs can be useful events to raise awareness of what CPP is doing, and how groups can engage.

The Network has been invited to contribute to the Biennial Conference by presenting a picture of the voluntary sector in Argyll and Bute. This has been agreed in principle by the majority of the group and it is hoped that the presentation will give them the opportunity to better inform CP partners of the work and value of the voluntary sector.

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