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# ARGYLL AND BUTE COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

3 October 2007

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## Future arrangements for the Citizens' Panel

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### 1 Key points

The contract the CPP has with IBP, the consultancy responsible for carrying out the Citizens' Panel surveys, ends with the current (thirteenth) questionnaire.

Revised arrangements need to be in place by March 2008, for future surveys.

We have identified three alternatives for how future contracts could be organised:

1. Try to extend the current contract with IBP. (Eddy Graham has verbally expressed a desire to continue administering the surveys or tender for the next contract as appropriate.)
2. The CPP puts the citizens' panel contract out to tender.
3. A community planning partner with suitable research expertise takes on responsibility for the Panel, and manages or implements the surveys on behalf of the partnership. The CPP will still need to fund this activity.

We would like partners to discuss the various options and make recommendations accordingly

### 2 The current contract

The current contract has run for a three year period, covering surveys 8 (February 2005) to 13 (September 2007) inclusive.

The current contract encompasses the following activities:

- Refreshment of one third of the panel on an annual basis.
- Maintaining and updating of the database of panel members.
- Administering two questionnaire surveys a year
- Analysing the surveys' results
- Reporting on, and providing additional feedback for, each survey
- Recruiting of focus groups from the panel's members for additional consultation activities, if required. (The Council has recently used this facility to help with the development of its Corporate Plan. Other CP partners may wish to use the panel in similar ways.)

### 3 Future contracts

Depending on partners' views as to how the panel should be administered in

the future, partners may be asked to:

- Contribute more money to allow continuation of the panel as at present
- Change the programme of surveys to fit available resources.

#### **4 Response rates and panel membership**

After three years of using the current panel, response rates are declining. This may be due to a variety of factors including:

- A failure of some questions to catch the imagination of respondents. (Anything riddled with jargon or seen by panellists as being remote from their everyday experiences are likely to reduce response rates.)
- A growing level of consultation fatigue. (A failure to refresh panel membership since 2005, will have contributed to this.)

Declining response rates highlight the need for more active refreshment of the panel. The CPP will need to make sure that the next contractor understands the need to keep response rates high.

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