

Community Planning Partnership

Management Committee

15th December 2010

Report on Community Engagement – Argyll Voluntary Action

Contexts

These are the interim results from a LEADER funded project of participatory engagement undertaken by Argyll Voluntary Action from April 2010. Work has been undertaken targeted at the harder to reach groups and those who for a range of reasons would not participate in public meetings.

Thematic Feedback

To work constructively groups and individuals were encouraged to think about action relative to the topics they felt were important to them, rather than highlighting areas of concern in isolation. The broad headings were Community Life, Public Realm, Built Environment and Employment and Training.

What mattered: improved community spirit, local newsletters which gave positive image and better information on a range of public services and events. More litter bins, stricter enforcement of underage drinking, better street cleaning and height barriers to prevent overnight 'free' camping were perceived as low cost improvements. Fewer holiday homes and better standard b and b's which would support increased tourism.

Better care of property (domestic and commercial) as well as less development on the fringes of small communities were felt important. Suggested incentives (eg rate relief) to encourage small businesses or a voucher scheme to support local businesses were mooted as supporting economic development..

Employment/training suggestions included local businesses to engage with schools, affordable childcare, and outsourcing soft skills allowing schools to concentrate on academia.

Longer Term Actions: Within community life many people were realistic with support for fewer schools **if** those remaining were 'flagship' or centres of excellence which could encourage inward migration. Community resources were cited as better run by the community.

Traffic management continues to be an issue in Oban and Helensburgh although no one was sure how this would be addressed. Recycling opportunities, community garden initiatives and a transfer of park management to the community were also popular.

People did want their local community or town centre to be somewhere to be proud of which meant tackling vacant property, transferring assets and again less second and holiday homes.

They did not think that public sector learning opportunities were always what people wanted and different providers should be considered and could reduce costs.

Wind Farms. The split between support and negative comments were balanced with most people more concerned to be involved and engaged albeit with some specific questions.

Budget Consultation

Brief Summary (figures are from total of 169 possible responses)

Topic	Reduce/ do differently supported	Maintain/increase supported
Education	49	91
Roads and Transport	23	115
Planning	132	44
Culture and Sport	129	26
Social Care	91	29
Supporting People Services	35 (not fully understood)	27
Environmental Services	58	63

Some notable suggestions were made which included: reorganising bus travel on a hub and spoke model in partnership with community buses and reducing routes which were often empty. Operating some services only in term times was thought to be an option.

Having fewer but 'excellent' schools was a positive and could influence people to move into the area. A definite view not to compromise safety on the roads. Closing public toilets and 2 weekly refuse collections was acceptable and support for recycling was high.

Museums, libraries and swimming pools could all be passed to social enterprise or voluntary sector. Most people perceived Councils as having too many front line staff, duplicating services and being more expensive a service provider than alternatives.

People from OLI area would reduce or restrict CHORD. A lot of thought was given to funding of voluntary sector. Funds for specific projects were not, overall, seen as Council responsibility; instead people felt if the support was available funds could be raised elsewhere and a dialogue was needed on this subject. That there should be support for the most vulnerable of our society was clear – however, the Supporting People budget section was the least clearly understood and its correlation with social care confusing.

A number of people wanted to make it clear that the current situation if explained would mean that cuts or changes could be supported – 'give us credit for understanding the situation' .

Of the total number 109 would be willing to pay more council tax and 84 to pay more for some services. Given that some services were statutory people still felt Councils could move from providers to procuring authorities – but preferably to local organisations.