

John McLuckie 0:08

The Argyll and Bute community planning podcast.

John McLuckie 0:17

Hello and welcome to the first episode of the Argyll and Bute Community Planning podcast. My name is John McLuckie, Partnerships Lead for Community Planning in Argyll and Bute, and I'm delighted to welcome Chief Executive of Argyll and Bute Council and current Chair of the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership Management Committee, Pippa Milne. Pippa, welcome to the podcast.

Pippa Milne 0:36

Lovely to be here, John. Thanks for having me.

John McLuckie 0:38

Looking forward to the conversation, and I'm also joined by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Area Commander for East and West Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute, and former Chair of Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership Management Committee, Joe McKay. Joe, welcome to the podcast.

Joe McKay 0:53

Delighted to be here today.

John McLuckie 0:55

Fantastic. So if I could just start by asking you, Pippa, how long you've been involved in community planning.

Pippa Milne 1:01

Oh, gosh, I suppose, I mean, I've been involved in local government for over 30 years now. Don't count back what that age means I started in local government and I suppose, in one shape or form, since it started, I've had some involvement, but I joined Argyll and Bute Council 11 years ago, and that's when I really got heavily involved as a lead on some of the thematic areas that we were working on at the time, and really got to work closely with partners and it's a really good way of getting to know other public sector partners and communities in the area, when we all came together and worked on some of our big issues.

John McLuckie 1:52

Yes, yes. Can I ask you, Joe, how long you've been involved in community planning?

Joe McKay 1:57

Probably about 15 years' community planning. I've been involved in community planning when I was in the city of Glasgow as a group commander, previous role. And I'm involved in three Community Planning Partnerships, one with East Dunbartonshire, one with West Dunbartonshire, and obviously I was the chair for Argyll and Bute for four years as the Chair of the Community Planning Partnership for Argyll and Bute, until just recently. Very diverse areas, you know, some similarities, commonalities, but then some variances in terms of the geographical and the demographics, particularly within Argyll and Bute, you know, the remote, rural.

John McLuckie 2:33

Yeah, exactly, and I'm sure we'll talk a wee bit more about that later on. Just thinking about community planning, because there is a sort of definition of community planning that people might understand. But what does it mean to you? Pippa

Pippa Mine 2:46

I suppose it's partnership and place and I think that's why it really comes to life in in Argyll, because our geography means you have to work together to get things done, and it needs of all of us to collaborate to overcome some of the challenges. So yeah, I think even if we weren't required to do it, we would do it anyway, because it's just the best way to get the best results for our communities.

John McLuckie 3:18

Yes, absolutely. And for you, Joe, when we use the term community planning, what do you think of?

Joe McKay 3:23

In general terms, it's a group of organisations, partners, community representatives from across the Argyll and Bute community, who work together to achieve a common goal, to achieve improvements in ways which promote prevention, try and reduce and tackle inequalities and build community resilience and capacity, to improve the wellbeing of people that live, work in Argyll and Bute, and ultimately, to make Argyll and Bute a safer place to live, work and visit.

John McLuckie 3:57

That's a great description as well, and I'm sure as we go through the podcast series, will get equally fantastic descriptions, and they'll be coming at community planning from a slightly different angle, so that'll be really interesting to look at that as the episodes progress. And just thinking about your

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service role in terms of community planning, what role does your organisation play at a local level in community planning, would you say?

Joe McKay 4:21

Obviously, we've got a statutory obligation to attend and participate, because we're a public body under the Community Empowerment Act. We must work together in terms of to improve the wellbeing of our communities. Community planning, I would say, is about how organisations integrate, work together to deliver long term change, and try and improve the wellbeing of local citizens. And we do that via working together, sharing resources, sharing data, sharing buildings. You know, for example, probably going to some of the examples at the moment, obviously the Scottish Fire and Rescue, we have buildings, fire stations, but a lot other agencies and partners use those buildings. In terms of the Coastguard agencies, Police Scotland, Scottish Ambulance Service, Parole Board hearings in some of our stations. So there's lots of community partners, so they are community fire stations. So, you know, to deliver long term change and improvement, we must embrace that as an organisation and try and focus on that to try and deliver better outcomes for the communities of Argyll and Bute.

John McLuckie 5:25

Yeah, that's really interesting. And just touching on some of those comments, particularly around you're talking about sharing buildings and assets and that kind of thing. That's maybe something that a lot of people in the communities, certainly in some areas, might not be aware that that's done in other areas. So it could be kind of models for what might work elsewhere.

Joe McKay 5:42

Yeah, the more we can collaborate with partner organisations because sometimes we've got shared outcomes. So sharing resources, you know, in terms of that, sharing personnel, sharing information to protect those most at risk.

John McLuckie 5:55

And just thinking about Argyll and Bute Council as one of the, if not the, key partner in community planning, in some ways. What role do you think the Council plays in community planning?

Pippa Milne 6:06

I suppose you know there's some practical roles. So we have the team that you're part of, is a council team that we fund and resource to make sure that community planning happens, and we can all get together for the meetings, and we've got all the reports and things, and you and your team do all that really valuable work about making sure that we get all our communities' views, all the different groups represented in the outcome improvement plan. And I think we had a lot of really good engagement in that, that's really representative of all the areas and the different

demographics. And then it's also about making sure that we coordinate that work with partners and that we all come together, and we keep focused on delivering so a lot of it is that practical element of really hosting it, and obviously, I'm Chair at the moment, but we have a leadership role anyway to make sure it happens. I'm lucky enough to be in the chair right now and have that privilege to

John McLuckie 7:31

Yeah, excellent, thank you. And you mentioned partnerships and place being important elements of community planning. Why is community planning so important in Argyll and Bute particularly, do you think?

Pippa Milne 7:44

I think from a place perspective, because we're a big geographic area, we've got lots of places, and they're all very different, so it's about making sure that we link in with those communities and hear their views and our Area Community Planning chairs who are a really important conduit between our Management Committee that looks at strategic overview and making sure we hear those community views. So I think for that reason, but also, you know, we are spread out, and it's not necessarily, not every partner organisation has staff in every place to the same extent, and so we need to work together to make the best use of resources. And we were always saying again and again, achieving what we want to achieve is complex, and we need to work together. Not one organisation holds all the cards to solve those issues, so we need to come together and look at how we coordinate what we do so that we can deliver the best outcomes possible.

John McLuckie 8:56

Yeah, excellent. And thanks very much for articulating the links between the area community planning work that goes on and the strategic work through the Management Committee and Joe, it would be interesting to get your particular perspective on why community planning is so important in Argyll and Bute.

Joe McKay 9:11

Yeah. Firstly, I thoroughly, thoroughly, I'm probably changing subjects slightly. I thoroughly, thoroughly enjoy working within Argyll and Bute, and East and West Dunbartonshire. I particularly love visiting Argyll and Bute, you know, it's one of the most beautiful areas in the UK, if not the world. Some of the beaches you know, I'm probably going off script a bit, but some of the beaches

John McLuckie 9:31

I'm not going to disagree with you.

Joe McKay 9:33

Some of the beaches you know, in terms of your Coll, your Tiree. Clad on the Isle of Coll, from Carradale to Colonsay to Mull, absolutely stunning, but it's very remote and rural. It's very unique, unique in terms of its geographical mix of larger towns to rural and villages. But it's very important that we all work in partnership, you know, through the Community Planning Partnership and through the local Outcome Improvement Plan and organisations so that people have, you know, I'm probably going to explain this, so that they have lots of accesses to facilities, schools, hospitals, doctors, surgeries, etc, to try and reduce those inequalities, you know, in terms of that, so that they're available and affordable to all. If it's sports centres or any community halls, we work with partners to create reliable, accessible premises for all so that we're not discriminating. I think investing in staff as well is key to reducing inequalities and supporting those individuals most that need. And there's various ways we can participate, as Scottish Fire and Rescue to support those most in need.

John McLuckie 10:41

You've captured a lot there in terms of the overarching what community planning is, and how it almost manifests itself, the requirements for it in Argyll and Bute, in terms of, you know that dispersed geography, dispersed population, I guess, aging population as well, if we look at the last census. So that's really interesting what you're talking about there. If I could ask you to reflect a wee bit on your time as Chair of the Community Planning Partnership Management Committee, what would you say you enjoyed most about that role, and what would you say was the most important achievement during that period of time?

Joe McKay 11:16

I would probably say the launch of the new Local Outcome Improvement Plan, you know, would be the main achievement. It was a fantastic engagement, engaging with diverse populations. I think there was nearly 2000 replies back, so coming up with the new priorities, in terms of that, but one in particular would be, probably members of the Scottish Youth Parliament. During my tenure, they were members of the Community Planning Management Committee, listening, giving young people a voice, listening to their ideas, and harnessing their ideas and suggestions going forward. I'm a big advocate of supporting young people within my own organisation as well. We have youth volunteer schemes at Tobermory in Mull and Campbeltown and Helensburgh. But the most important thing about the members of Youth Parliament and the young fire service, young firefighter scheme is about having fun as well, and learn and mature and develop and learn these different skills. And the other thing, I would say, would be about living in poverty as well. You know, the work that went on through the CPP, about supporting people in in-work poverty and out of work poverty as well for young people. There was a scheme in terms of mobile phones and laptops to make sure they were connected, for that digital connectivity so they weren't missing out in education. So, you know, that's a few of the highlights I would say.

John McLuckie 12:34

Yeah, and I think it's important to say as well that a lot of your tenure as Chair was during the pandemic as well. So there was a lot of activity going on at that time around those areas you were talking about. And Pippa, since you became Chair of the Management Committee, what have you

enjoyed the most? And what would you say has been the most important achievement in the Community Planning Partnership during that time?

Pippa Milne 12:57

I think it's been around the creation of the new Outcome Improvement Plan, you know, I took on through that process, and I think the work that you and the team have done to get us some really clear priorities of housing, transport and community wellbeing and, you know, one of the really satisfying things has been while I'm chair, is when I go out and do other engagement, I constantly hear the reinforcement that those are the right things that we're working on. They still come out when we ask people, what your top issues? those still come out the same. So I think you're getting to that clarity, you know. That's no small order going out and giving 86,000 people the opportunity to contribute and get that clarity. And there really was, you know, not an absolute consensus, but there really was a, you know, broad consensus that those were the top issues. And I think you know that's quite something, and I don't claim credit, that's you guys, but that's been really pleasing to see, and that that enables us to work in a really focused way to make a difference?

John McLuckie 14:23

Yeah, absolutely. I would say it was a very much a partnership effort to undertake that engagement process, very much so. And that maybe links into asking you what you're looking forward to most, in terms of what Community Planning can sort of continue to achieve in Argyll and Bute.

Pippa Milne 14:39

I think, you know, one of the things since I've moved to Argyll and Bute and worked in this time is you can see when you make a tangible difference. And I look forward to really being able to point to the things in the period of this next plan that we've made happen as a result of working together. And, you know, I think there are lots of those things over the past 10 years, so it'll be great to see how far we come. And the other thing I would say is, you get to work with some really great, committed people, be it the community representatives or public sector representatives, and you know that I've made some real, built up really good relationships with colleagues, but I would call a lot of them friends as well.

John McLuckie 15:35

Yeah, yeah. I think that's a really positive point in terms of how community planning partners can build good working relationships and looking ahead a little bit for yourself Joe, you're obviously still very much involved in the Community Planning Partnership. I'm just wondering what you're looking forward to most in terms of what comes next for community planning in Argyll and Bute

Joe McKay 15:54

We've obviously got our three priorities in terms of that, but there's a lot of stuff that I can try and influence, you know, in terms of making sure the roads are safe. Also, one of the main things from the Community Planning Partnership is the fact that you want to give communities a voice. It's their community, you know, give them, let them be involved in collective decision making, that's key. Effectively engage with all members, diverse members, so that we're not missing out any vulnerable groups within Argyll and Bute, just ensuring that everyone is living within Argyll and Bute, they have access to safe and affordable homes. So that's some of the things I'm looking forward to, trying to prioritise those most at risk within Argyll and Bute. So yeah, lots of stuff to look forward to, and lots of work to go on with.

John McLuckie 16:43

Absolutely Joe and I'd like to thank you both very much for taking part in the first episode of the Argyll and Bute Community Planning podcast.

Pippa Milne 16:49

It's been a pleasure and a privilege. Thanks, John.

John McLuckie 16:53

Thank you.

Joe McKay 16:53

Cheers. Thanks, John, and I'll speak to you soon.

John McLuckie 17:02

The Argyll and Bute community planning podcast. You.