

John McLuckie 0:20

Hello and welcome to this episode of the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Podcast. I'm John McLuckie, Partnerships Lead for Community Planning in Argyll and Bute, and in this episode, I'm delighted to be talking to the new Chair of the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership, Police Scotland Chief Superintendent for Argyll and Bute and West Dunbartonshire, Gary I'Anson. Gary, welcome to the podcast.

Gary I'Anson 0:40

Delighted to be here. Thank you.

John McLuckie 0:43

Gary, can I start off just by asking you to tell us a bit about your role within Police Scotland and how that links with community planning in Argyll and Bute?

Gary I'Anson 0:50

Thanks. So, I'm coming up on 30 years' police service, I thoroughly enjoy the job. I've been doing this particular role as divisional commander, as you said, for the last two years and partnerships has always been something that's been really close to my heart throughout many years in policing. As I've said, whether it's been, previously I worked in Glasgow, Ayrshire, Lanarkshire, often in partnership roles, kind of a mix of that and specialist roles such as armed policing. But, I suppose specifically, to answer your question, I see it really sits as part of that kind of wider responsibility. I suppose as a senior leader, within Argyll and Bute, I was kind of really keen that I played my part and took on a responsibility. So, I suppose it fits very much in the policing role in terms of how do we keep people safe and improve community wellbeing, spread right across Argyll and Bute. So, I would say very much police have got a key role to play as part of that partnership and I was keen personally to take over from Pippa, who did a great job after Joe doing a great job for so many years.

John McLuckie 1:48

That's fantastic, thanks very much for that and really interesting background in the different geographic locations where you've been based as well.

Gary I'Anson 1:57

I come from Ayrshire and I thought when I was policing different outlying parts of Ayrshire that that was kind of remote and rural communities and then when I hadn't worked in Argyll and Bute or West Dunbartonshire prior to this role, I find it really, really interesting, but I really am impressed with the partnership approach, particularly around logistics, particularly when you go into more outlying areas. There's a whole cast of examples if you like, but I find it a really interesting place to work and particularly, I think the teamwork, that can do partnership approach, is superb at all levels and the Community Planning Partnership being a case in point.

John McLuckie 2:32

Excellent, and you mentioned the Community Planning Partnership there. Over the past year, you've become the chair of the CPP. How have you found that move into a community planning leadership role in this area?

Gary I'Anson 2:43

Really good in a number of ways. I suppose, really helpful taking over from Pippa, who had done it, and then Joe prior to that, and a kind of long history of that, so you've got big shoes to fill if you like, but an exciting opportunity, and I really enjoy the fact of it is the best coordinated and supported Community Planning Partnership that I've been involved in, without causing offence to other areas I've been. But, it's a really exciting time, I would say, and I know probably we're going to talk about it later, but in relation to the in-person sessions last year, and then moving into this delivery phase, it's actually a really exciting time to be part of it, and so much for me to learn because there's so many different areas that I don't know about or aspects of community planning that I still don't know. So, I'm actually thoroughly enjoying and looking forward to that continued personal journey behind the scenes of it, and getting more up to speed with how community planning works in Argyll and Bute.

John McLuckie 3:31

Yeah, brilliant, and just on your first point there, I think we're maybe the only Community Planning Partnership that has a podcast. So, whatever you say is absolutely fine in terms of the best organised and that kind of thing.

Gary I'Anson 3:43

Yeah, that's right.

John McLuckie 3:45

So, you were mentioning there the development of the priority outcomes that the Community Planning Partnership has been looking at, particularly over the past year, taking forward the three priority outcomes of transport infrastructure, housing and community wellbeing. Do you have any initial highlights or reflections over the past year on the partnership work that has led to where we are now, which is about to start delivering the actions.

Gary I'Anson 4:13

Yeah, what I really liked was the whole tone and style of approach that was taken to it. So, I really liked the fact that it had three different in-person sessions taking each priority in turn. I really having a thematic meeting about transport infrastructure to take that priority and then the way it was so inclusive. So, you managed to invite as many people from community planning partners, but actually many people who had specialist knowledge, you know, CalMac, other experts into the room, but then it enabled everybody to have a say. So, these three priority areas have been really well consulted upon and have been really well thought through to be the priorities and then the method in which you did, it in the sense of having different stations or different parts of the 3 Villages Hall, where in groups you could go round, you could take one aspect of transport infrastructure, for example, one of the actions and then work it through. I found it really interesting to hear what different people were saying, different views, and

then at the end of that day, to actually bring it all together to have a comprehensive delivery plan for transport infrastructure and then doing the same for the other two, I thought was really inclusive. I thought it gave everybody an opportunity to have their say, but give that local perspective and that expert knowledge as well. And then, the fact that as a coordination team, you did what you said you were going to do, in relation to, we'll bring us all together and then we'll sense check it with yourselves again. So you had the moving into this year, the three Teams sessions taking each priority in turn, just to check is there anything further that anybody wanted to say or refine, which then brought us into our most recent community planning meeting, again up at Arrochar, where actually there was a comprehensive pack for each of the transport, housing and community wellbeing, here's the way forward and a draft delivery plan, which then was consulted upon and agreed upon by partners in the latest meeting. I think when we move into the delivery phase, we're really sure-footed and this is the exciting part with that traction, as part of that kind of prioritisation matrix that you devised John and I think you're doing it so you're well-founded, and actually putting a lot of time and energy collectively into things that we know have been really well consulted and included. So, I suppose we're going to be collectively spending a lot of time and energy on the things that actually really do matter to local communities, because that's the route at which it has come in.

John McLuckie 6:29

Yeah, yeah, it's felt like quite a detailed process to get where we are now, but in speaking to a lot of partners, the themes that come out that communities raise as their highest priorities are consistently the same. So, I think the journey the Community Planning Partnership has been on, where it is now, that the actions are about to commence, these are still the priorities for communities.

Gary I'Anson 6:53

And you feel as if each of them, transport, housing, community wellbeing, it touches you as an individual, you know, living and working in a particular community, but it also touches you professionally, individually within each organisation these things really matter, as well as collectively, they really matter actually, so I suppose you can see even at a high level, how these are things that actually are really important, because I know sometimes I would worry if there hadn't been that depth and breadth of

consultation and working through, that sometimes you can be caught up in partnerships actually where there's a lot of time and energy spent, where actually that's not quite the priority area or the important things that communities would say are.

John McLuckie 7:24

So, the Community Planning Partnership has agreed a number of actions under the three priority outcomes and Police Scotland will be involved in a number of these actions, some to a greater extent than others. I just wondered if we could have a chat about how Police Scotland might be involved in each of these areas. For example, for transport infrastructure, one of the actions is to establish a transport integration working group. I would just be interested in your thoughts on how Police Scotland will contribute to that area of action for the CPP.

Gary I'Anson 7:54

Thanks, John, and yes, you know across all three of these priority areas, Police Scotland would be really interested, you know, as an organisation, over and above myself personally, with colleagues we'd be really interested in contributing. So, if we took as you say the first one, the transport infrastructure, we'd be really keen that we were involved in an integration working group, because there's so much of policing that depends on having as good a transport infrastructure as we can across Argyll and Bute. Even for day-to-day policing, for example, you know, we would be able to contribute to discussion at the working group, sharing data and information and working knowledge of, for example, how long it takes to actually get to particular incidents. In particular, in Argyll and Bute, you're travelling, as all services are, you can be travelling great distances to either get to a call to help an individual or deal with a crime that's ongoing. You're also travelling long distances to actually get to the neighbouring office, if you have to. With resourcing being so tight, it might be that you might start your duty in Campbeltown, but there's a need for you actually as an officer to get up to Lochgilphead to join a colleague there in order to patrol. So, you're also aware of road crashes and road safety and the impact that infrastructure can have on that, i.e. it's, you know, shown across the country that the better the transport infrastructure, that can really contribute to having less accidents, you know, less things that happen, and I say that because there's such a community impact in most of Argyll and Bute of any prolonged road closure. So, if a serious accident happens, it needs to be investigated,

but that can mean a prolonged road closure as you do everything that you require and also maybe specialist road policing coming up to that incident.

But then you're conscious that the diversions that are put in place can often take, you know, members of the public or haulage companies onto roads that you wouldn't otherwise want to travel on long diversions, so it's a big impact which all links back to actually us as Police Scotland making sure we're fully contributing to everything we can, amongst that integration working group, we'd work really well to combine all our respective knowledges.

John McLuckie 9:52

That's really interesting and a lot of points that people will be very familiar with in Argyll and Bute, some of the impacts of closures, as you say, and I guess similarly for housing, a couple of the actions relate to our strategic partner land and assets and public sector land and assets and what has the opportunity to be looked at in terms of repurposing and change of use into housing. So, it's getting an idea of where all our partners may have opportunities for that.

Gary I'Anson 10:20

Yeah, I mean, that's so important, particularly in the current financial climate to make sure that from the finance point of view we've got a joined up approach to things and also just to improve the service to local communities by co-location between police and other partners. You know, it's vital, and even to take some parts of that, when I think of, on a day-to-day basis, space that we have available in certain offices, that we could make accessible to local community groups if they needed to hold a meeting or house anything, you know. Some of our police offices have got good meeting facilities, such as say Campbeltown, for example, it's got a good big conference room that could be used that we'd be keen to facilitate, or if you look at Rothesay Police Office just now, it's currently going through a major refurbishment, but as part of that we've built in a kind of wing of the new office, with a separate entrance and separate security that would enable a partner to come in and work out the office, and at the same time, us being able to work with them more closely. So, and then if you took Oban police office, work is underway to get a new police office where we're very much looking to work in partnership with a couple of key partners already in a new facility, but I think having everything in a single place or us having a greater awareness of our respective assets

that we've got in terms of being able to respectively use each other's existing buildings in a particular area, or when we're looking to build new or refurbish, we've very much got that partnership need in mind, which you can only do with that far greater awareness, such as that land and assets working group, would be terrific.

John McLuckie 11:44

Yeah, that's excellent, and you've covered into some of the aspects of community wellbeing as well, some of the actions that sit under that outcome, like collaborative working on assets and services. I guess there's an element of data sharing within that as well with partners. One of our actions under community wellbeing also relates to data sharing between partners and with the community, and I know that happens at the moment through the Area Community Planning Groups, for example, so it may be how can that be expanded to the wider community, and then looking at social and volunteering opportunities within communities as well.

Gary I'Anson 12:20

Thanks John, I know there is so much overlap, and picking up on community wellbeing, there is a community wellbeing aspect to Police Scotland's legal obligations and duties, which we are keen to be part of, so it's part of our overall purpose and vision, and so we're very much sure-footed in wanting to contribute more in that area. And also, somewhere like Argyll and Bute, the vast majority of our officers live and work within that community, so it's what I've noticed is so good, is actually about the way officers speak about things that they're doing in the community outwith work or jointly with partners, wanting to make their local community, which they're very much a part of, better, but I know that sometimes we can be guilty, kind of reflecting myself, of actually getting up and running with a new initiative, such as like one of say our youth engagement officers, last year had set up a running group for young female runners, some of which were vulnerable, it was really good feedback. But, when I was sharing that in discussion at one of the sessions we had last year up at the Three Villages Hall with a partner, they were saying, going, that's really good, but we weren't aware of it. In Dunoon, for example, this particular one was, and I find there's so much day-to-day data we need to share to help people, but also so much of ongoing initiatives, ongoing work that actually, the synergy we could get from actually working together could be so much more.

There's also opportunities and I suppose it's sharing the different opportunities such as let's say our Police Scotland youth volunteers, which is a great group and groups across Argyll and Bute are going from strength to strength, but I know sometimes it can be a challenge over availability of adult volunteers in order for a group to run. So, I suppose there's volunteering opportunities to offer to the wider community and vice versa. There would be a lot of similar type approaches that people are needing volunteers to come that actually officers if they were aware of, could look to get involved in. So, I really think that the Living Well programme and looking even wider into community wellbeing, there's so much to be gained from a more joined up approach.

John McLuckie 14:13

Yeah, yeah, absolutely, absolutely.

And we were talking a lot there about the three priority outcomes, but the Community Planning Partnership also has, I think we've termed in the past as cross-cutting themes. So, areas like climate change and the volume of work that's gone into the discussions and the formation of the action plan and the strategy to support that as well. So, that's been a considerable piece of work and the work that the CPP has done in Community Wealth Building as well. So, all over the past couple of years, these areas have come together into framing what happens next with them. I know Community Wealth Building may be slightly different in that there's an Act which has just passed through the Scottish Parliament now, but it's been a fascinating range of discussions that the partners have been involved in.

Gary I'Anson 14:53

No, no, it really has, and you learn a lot actually by listening to different partners in relation to the particular area of their expertise or a particular experience that they've got, and I know taking one of the aspects, climate change, I know Andy's done a power of work, working really inclusively with people to get a climate action plan and then I know we're moving to be a climate ready region looking forward, but I also liked, if you took climate change for example, being realistic, challenging in terms of the aspirations, but realistic and focusing on practical things such as resilience, community resilience in relation to the impact of climate change and things. So, I really liked that being part of the strategy in terms of being tangible and it's something that you really get behind.

John McLuckie 15:31

Yeah, yeah, definitely. So, just I guess a question for yourself as Chair. What would you be looking forward to most over the next year do you think, given where the Community Planning Partnership is at this moment?

Gary I'Anson 15:42

A number of things, actually. One, kind of really looking forward to actually being able to join some of the Area Community Planning Groups, which I think will be really helpful for me to get a really good feel and understand within each of the areas within Argyll and Bute. I really enjoy learning and understanding and I think that will help inform myself as Chair and I'm also looking forward to the whole series of meetings that are associated with the different work streams to get to our next meeting in June and then, collectively we will be able to feel that things are moving, that actually you know, going in that direction in line with that programme of delivery. So, I personally really enjoy getting traction on things, and I think with all the work that's been done, this will enable that, and I know that's a view shared by many people. But, I think it's quite exciting in a way, actually, you know, in terms of the traction and then being able to deliver and then, in the fullness of time people will be able to see the difference coming out of it. What I really like about Argyll and Bute in particular is the amount of people that are really heavily invested and trying to make communities better, and the added value that the Community Planning Partnership can give us to help in that coordination and actually really that synergy, aligned with that. So, I suppose making sure we're building on all the good work and adding value as opposed to getting in the way or going contrary. So, I think the way that this is going about that, that avoids that.

John McLuckie 16:55

That's fantastic, and yes, exciting times, a lot of good work ahead and collaborative work, certainly in the next year and beyond that, with the Outcomes Improvement Plan running until 2034. There's the sort of initial set of actions that have been agreed and then actions that might follow thereafter. So, very interesting times, yeah.

Gary I'Anson 17:17

I couldn't agree more, John, because it feels that we've got kind of clear direction of travel and I know there's such a willingness for partners to be involved, over and above their natural area of responsibility, so I suppose with myself taking on the Chair, I'm just mirroring what a lot of people are doing in terms of coordinating or facilitating or chairing particular groups or work streams or subgroups or different programmes of activity. It's really heartening, I suppose, to see people's willingness to say right, what do I need to do here to help over and above their own organisation, for example.

John McLuckie 17:44

Yeah, fascinating stuff and I think we're all looking forward to getting the actions underway and seeing what the Community Planning Partnership can do collectively to meet the priority outcomes.

Yes, so fantastic, Gary, thanks so much for joining me for this episode of the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Podcast. Thank you.

Gary I'Anson 18:0

Thanks very much. Thank you.