Harnessing the Potential of the Third Sector to Help Achieve Council Objectives

A Demonstration Project

Argyll and Bute Council in partnership with Community Planning Partners and the Big Lottery Fund

October 2010
Harnessing the Potential of the Third Sector to Help Achieve Council Objectives

Board Members

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Foreword from Councillor John Semple

Councillor John Semple Spokesperson for the Third Sector

The Harnessing the Potential of the Third Sector to Help Achieve Council Objectives Demonstration Project (Demonstration Project) was established following a meeting between Council Leader, Dick Walsh and the then Head of the Big Lottery Fund in Scotland (BLF), Dharmendra Kanani. It is a record of the work that Argyll and Bute Council is undertaking to help develop and maintain sustainable communities, working jointly with community, voluntary and social enterprise organisations, collectively known as the Third Sector.

In 2007 Kate Braithwaite of the Carnegie UK Trust was invited to speak at the Community Planning Partnership Biennial Conference in Rothesay. This meeting led to an informal partnership between the Trust and the Council, and in March 2008 Kate and Councillor Walsh delivered a joint paper to the Convention of the Highlands and Islands in Inverness. This paper laid down the challenges for local authorities in ensuring the sustainability of rural communities, and it is these challenges, found in the Carnegie UK Trust’s Charter for Rural Communities, June 2007, that encapsulate the Demonstration Project work programme.

The Council recognises that the role of the Third Sector is critical in enabling communities to achieve their potential and wishes to see an equitable spread of access and support across the area. We recognise our role within the wider partnership in creating the necessary procedures to facilitate this. To ensure the Council’s commitment to this, I was appointed as the first Council Spokesperson for the Third Sector.

All local authorities are looking at significant cuts in budgets over the next three years, and in order to continue to deliver the services valued by the communities in Argyll & Bute our Council will have to think differently. We need to work in partnership with voluntary, community and social enterprise groups, as well as working more collaboratively with other public bodies and stakeholders, in order to find solutions that will allow us to continue to deliver the services that people need.

There are ways to do this. We have opportunities for change through single outcome agreements which give local authorities more latitude to decide for themselves what is required locally. We have the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) with a remit to work with local communities and partners to deliver what is needed locally. We have a Third Sector Partnership which aims to provide a voice for the Third Sector in Argyll and Bute.

Our CPP is developing local structures, building partnerships and increasing our knowledge of what our communities need to become sustainable. These and many more partnerships provide no shortage of challenges and opportunities for this piece of work which will focus on identifying and challenging the barriers which prevent change.

The work identified in this report aims to harness the potential of the Third Sector to help achieve our corporate objectives, and I look forward to working with partners on this journey.
Introduction - what we did

Argyll and Bute Council wants to improve the way it works with the Third Sector. To do this, we’ve been speaking to community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises to find out what we can do better, and we’ve been working with our partners in the Community Planning Partnership such as NHS Highland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, to see what they think about our plans for improvement.

We’ve focussed our work around five main themes:

**Third Sector Access to Council Support**

Making sure that community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises know who to go to for the right information, for training and skills development, and that they get the right answer quickly.

**Funding**

Making Council funding simpler and more focussed on Council plans.

**Assets**

Making it easier to find out about purchasing or leasing Council buildings and land.

**Procurement**

Making sure those working for the Council appreciate that voluntary organisations and social enterprises can bring extra value when they deliver services on our behalf and making sure that these organisations and social enterprises know how to bid to deliver services.

And finally...

**Training and Skills**

Co-ordinating training and events across the area with our partners in the sector.

We’ve already started making the changes you suggested. We’ve made it easier for organisations to get grants across the whole of Argyll and Bute with one funding stream rather than three. We’ve produced a simple guide of typical leasing or purchasing terms and conditions for land and buildings so groups know the potential obligations and responsibilities; we are helping groups buy things at discount through Scotland Excel; and where appropriate we are offering groups the opportunity to come together to bid to deliver services. It doesn’t stop there. There are plenty more things that we are working on and more information on these is in our Action Plan. This will be updated regularly to make sure we’re getting it right.

This document details how we consulted on our work with the Third Sector, what we found, what changes we recommended and what we’ve done to improve.

This report and a summary report are available on line on the Argyll and Bute Council website - www.argyll-bute.gov.uk from October 2010.
Where we are

Argyll and Bute is bounded by the urban areas of Helensburgh and Dunoon along the Clyde, Loch Lomond to the East, the Mull of Kintyre to the south, Atlantic Islands to the west, and the Sound of Mull and Appin to the north.

The area’s population of 90,040 is spread across the second largest local authority area in Scotland. Our area has the third sparsest population density of the 32 Scottish local authorities, with an average population density of just 0.13 persons per hectare.

17% of Argyll and Bute’s population live on Islands. Forty-five % live in settlements of 3,000 or more people; conversely, 55% of Argyll and Bute’s population live in settlements smaller than 3,000 people, or outwith settlements altogether. 80% of Argyll and Bute’s population live within one kilometre of the coast.

Argyll and Bute has 25 inhabited islands, including Bute, Islay, Jura, Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree, more than any other local authority in Scotland. The area is also home to Loch Awe (at 41 kilometres, the longest freshwater body in Britain) and several long sea lochs, which bisect the landscape. The physical geography of the area has limited development of the road network in the area, and leads to high levels of reliance on ferries for travel.

The importance of the natural environment is indicated by the 117 Sites of Special Scientific Interest that have been designated within the area. Combined, these cover almost 10% of Argyll and Bute’s land area. Additionally, almost 30% of the

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park area falls within the local authority’s boundaries.

The changing demographic profile of the area presents one of the area’s greatest challenges. Over the 25 year period from 2008, the proportion of 0-15 year olds is projected to fall by almost 14%, working age population by almost 14%, and the proportion of the population of pensionable age to increase by 20%.

Average gross weekly pay for full-time workers is lower in Argyll and Bute than in Scotland (£452.90, compared to a Scottish average of £472.20). An estimated 15% of jobs in Argyll and Bute are tourism-related. This compares to 9% of Scottish jobs.

Service sector jobs account for 86% of all employee jobs in Argyll and Bute, compared to 82% across Scotland. 40% of employee jobs in Argyll and Bute are in ‘public administration, education and health’. This compares to 30% for Scotland.

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2009 identified 10 data zones in Argyll and Bute as being in the 15% most overall deprived data zones in Scotland. These 10 are all located in towns (Helensburgh, Dunoon, Rothesay, Campbeltown and Oban). None of Argyll and Bute’s rural data zones fall into the 15% most overall deprived data zones in Scotland.
Harnessing the Potential of the Third Sector to Help Achieve Council Objectives - A Demonstration Project
Methods

3.1 Key points

• This chapter describes the research methods used in Stage 2 of the Demonstration Project.

• We have used a qualitative research approach, using workshops and questionnaires as tools for data collection. Responses have been subject to content analysis.

• Consultation activities focused on three stakeholder groups: stakeholders internal to the Council; CPP organisations that work with the Third Sector; Third Sector organisations and their representatives.

• Data collection ran over a four and a half month period, with the first, internal, workshop being held on 30 March. The external dialogue ran from mid-May to mid-August.

• Over the course of the consultation, we received contributions from sixty-two organisations drawn from the Third and public sectors. The 51 Third Sector organisations who responded, either through attendance at the workshops or by questionnaire, included wholly voluntary organisations, social economy organisations and social enterprises.

• Findings of the consultation were verified by Atlantis Leisure, a successful social enterprise that has been operating for some years in Oban, and a partner with the Carnegie UK Trust in their rural research project.

• Complementary research has been carried out by Team Leaders, focusing specifically on their themes.

3.2 Introduction

The Demonstration Project seeks to improve the relationship between Argyll and Bute Council and the Third Sector. In order to do this, we need to:

• Understand how the relationship currently works, and its current strengths and weaknesses.

• Identify opportunities for improvement, and check that such changes would be workable and acceptable to the various stakeholders involved.

• Develop recommendations and an implementation plan to carry this work forward.

To date, the Project has completed two broad stages. These have used desktop research
and a range of consultation tools to gather the opinions of various stakeholders. In turn, the findings of the consultation have contributed to the development of the project’s recommendations and action plan, the implementation of which will form Stage Three of the Demonstration Project.

3.2.1 Demonstration Project: Stage One

Stage One used consultation and desktop research with a range of internal and external partners to identify and develop the four main outcomes of the Demonstration Project.

Stage One consultation included:

- A questionnaire which was posted on two partner websites: Argyll Communities and Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network. The questionnaire also distributed through the local funding newsletter, ALERT and sent out directly to known organisations.

- Contact with individual stakeholders.

- A focus group drawn from the membership of the Third Sector Steering Group, allowing discussion on issues and ideas for progress.

Findings and recommendations from the Stage One research were used to inform the material put out for consultation for Stage Two of the Demonstration Project.

3.2.2 Demonstration Project: Stage Two

Stage Two of the Demonstration Project has involved a fuller dialogue with stakeholder groups to explain, verify and further develop the findings from Stage One. To this end, dialogue materials and events have been organised to gather views from:

- Stakeholders internal to the Council.
- Partnership organisations.
- Third Sector organisations and representatives.

3.2.3 Approach taken

As the Demonstration Project has sought to identify attitudes and behaviour of respondents, we have used a qualitative research approach to data collection. This is reflected in the predominately open-ended questions that have been used both in events and in the various questionnaires that have been used. Information collected has been transcribed and subjected to content analysis.

The research process is outlined in Figure 1.
Figure 3.1:

Logic diagram outlining the research process used in Stage Two of the Demonstration Project
3.3 Stakeholders

Three groups of stakeholders were identified as being relevant to this research. These were:

• Stakeholders internal to the Council.

• Community Planning Partner organisations that work with the Third Sector.

• Third Sector organisations and their representatives.

Although memberships of these three groups overlap, the groups were seen as being different enough to require separate sets of consultation materials.

Consultation materials for the internal and CPP stakeholder groups were developed by the Demonstration Project Team. Materials for the ‘external dialogue’, which was held with the Third Sector stakeholders, were developed by the Third Sector Dialogue Planning Group, which, in addition to drawing membership from the Council, also included representatives from the Third Sector.

3.4 The consultation

Data collection took place over a four-and-a-half month period, with the first, internal workshop event taking place on 30 March 2009. The external dialogue ran for a twelve week period, from the middle of May to mid August.

3.4.1 Data collection and analysis

Workshop sessions were run by facilitators, with notes being taken by a note taker. These notes were subsequently collated with the responses from the various questionnaires.

The collated consultation responses were then subjected to content analysis, where by material was coded by topic to allow the systematic identification of areas of common ground and difference, and the identification of issues raised by the different stakeholder groups.

Material has been analysed, and results are presented, according to the five themes of:

• Communications

• Funding

• Assets

• Procurement

• Skills and training
In addition to the qualitative data collection and analysis, an electronic voting tool (PPVote) was used in two of the external dialogue events to gather a limited amount of quantitative information from respondents.

### 3.4.2 Sampling, and promotion of the consultation

Respondents from the different stakeholder groups were identified through a range of techniques, including purposive sampling and snowballing.†

In order to reach as many relevant stakeholders as possible, the three consultations, most notably the external dialogue, were publicised through a range of means (see table 3.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Sampling strategy used</th>
<th>Awareness raising through:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal Dialogue</td>
<td>• Purposive</td>
<td>• Direct invitation of Officers known to work with the Third Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Snowballing</td>
<td>• Referral via Heads of Service; line managers; word of mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cascading of emails through organisational hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP Dialogue</td>
<td>• Purposive</td>
<td>• Workshop held as part of a wider meeting of the full Community Planning Partnership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                      |                        | • Email sent to all CPP Management Committee members, inviting amplification of responses given at event, or responses from non-attendees.

† Purposive sampling sets criteria according to which potential respondents are chosen and targeted. In the case of the internal dialogue event, Council Officers who were known to work with Third Sector organisations were identified and invited to attend. Additional respondents were identified by ‘snowballing’. Snowballing works by having one contact providing details of other contacts. In addition, the external dialogue invited representatives of Third Sector organisations to respond to the consultation, thereby relying on a form of self-selection.
3.4.3 Consultation materials

The following materials were used in the consultation:

- Materials for internal consultation
  - Topic guide used at workshop.
  - Follow-up questionnaire sent to non-attendees and other contacts.

- Materials for CPP dialogue
  - Topic guide used at workshop.
  - Follow-up questionnaire.

- Materials for external dialogue
  - Leaflet (made available on Council website and as hard copy).
  - Questionnaire (made available on Council website and as hard copy).
  - Topic guides/facilitators notes used at workshops/events.

These materials are available online.

3.4.4 Consultation events

As part of the consultation activities, the Demonstration Project Team ran a series of workshops and drop in sessions, both to raise awareness of the consultation and to
collect information from stakeholders. These events fell into two categories:

- Events held by other groups, but at which the Team ran workshop slots as part of a wider agenda.
- Events organised and run by the Team, entirely devoted to the data collection process.

Copies of the external dialogue leaflet and the questionnaire were made available to stakeholders at all events.

Workshops ‘piggy-backed’ onto other organisations’ events benefitted from having a noticeably larger number of attendees, thereby reaching larger numbers of people. However, the downside to this was the shorter time frames available for data collection. Conversely, the ‘bespoke’ events enabled more detailed data collection, but the numbers of stakeholders at these events were smaller.

The details of the events are listed in Table 3.2

Table 3.2: Events and workshops run as part of the Demonstration Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Organised by another organisation/as part of another meeting</th>
<th>Organised by Demonstration Team</th>
<th>Number of attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Dialogue</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lochgilphead, 30 March 2009</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CPP Dialogue</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lochgilphead, 17 June 2009</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Dialogue</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lochgilphead, 5 June 2009</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarbert, 22 June 2009</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbeltown, 22 June 2009</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islay, 24 June 2009</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rothesay, 1 July 2009</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oban, 7 July 2009</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunoon, 14 July 2009</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lochgilphead, 15 July 2009</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helensburgh, 16 July 2009</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunoon, 13 August 2009</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4.5 **Respondents**

Twenty-five people (including Demonstration Team members) attended the internal dialogue event. Additionally, we received three questionnaires from people who were unable to attend.

Eighteen people attended the CPP dialogue event (including team members). Subsequently, we also received three questionnaires from CPP partners.

In total, we received 22 completed external dialogue questionnaires. Of these, 19 were made on behalf of organisations (see Appendix 1), and 3 came from individuals. Allowing for people who both attended events and submitted questionnaires, there were 113 distinct respondents to the external dialogue.

Fifty-one Third Sector organisations were represented at external dialogue events (see Appendix 1). Organisations came from all parts of the spectrum of Third Sector organisations (see Figure 3.2), ranging from wholly voluntary organisations, through social economy organisations, to social enterprises.

Twenty-seven attendees did not declare an affiliation with any organisation.

3.5 **Verification of findings and recommendations**

Following the completion of the consultation exercises, our findings were presented to Atlantis Leisure, a successful social enterprise that has been operating for some years in Oban, and a partner with the Carnegie UK Trust in their rural research project for comments. These presentations was used to help confirm the conclusions we had reached and to cross-check the project’s recommendations.

3.6 **Complementary research activities**

In parallel to the research activities outlined above, the four theme leaders have worked on complementary research relating specifically to their themes of:

- Funding
- Assets
- Procurement
- Skills and training
The Third Sector landscape diagram

Voluntary Organisations
- Totally voluntary
- No employees

Social Economy
- Charitable approach
- May employ staff
- Core costs covered by grants
- Grant reliant

Social Enterprise
- Business approach
- Employ staff
- Trading to be grant independent

Community Interest Company’s trading arms

Core model adapted from Colin Campbell – Assist Social Capital and Mike Geraghty – ABSEN
All Demonstration Project Recommendations

Outcome 1

Third Sector Access to Council Support - Overall Recommendations from Stage 1 and Stage 2

1.1 Create an operational group within the Council to coordinate the activities of the services that interact with the Third Sector. This group will:

1.1.1 Ensure that enquiries are effectively and quickly directed to the appropriate service (which may be provided by a Council service or another partner).

1.1.2 Ensure that information and advice is up to date, relevant and consistent.

1.1.3 Monitor processes on an ongoing basis and make changes as required.

1.1.4 Communicate regularly to ensure that people are familiar with the services provided and any changes that are made.

1.2 Provide access to information and support through a variety of entry points including website, customer service centre, direct to services and via external partners.

1.3 Economic Development Service take responsibility for Council services that provide support to developing social enterprises to create employment and wealth in local communities. Service will be provided using staff transferred as part of the implementation plan from the Best value review of Community Learning and Regeneration.

1.4 Engage with the Third Sector in a variety of ways to ensure that services meet needs – eg using CPP events (local and Argyll and Bute wide), via the Third Sector interface and potentially via membership of a coordinating steering group.

1.5 Learn from experience in other parts of the UK through the Council working with the Carnegie Trust UK.

Outcome 2

Funding - Overall Recommendations from Stage 1 and 2

2.1 Review current grant aid activity with a view to consolidating existing grant activities (Education Development, Leisure Development, and Social Welfare) into one, more strategically focused and unified system. This would ensure continued, more stable, support for priority areas of work, but would impact on lower priority activities, in some cases bringing support to an end altogether.

2.2 Focus on fewer but more strategic grant aided activities and provide guarantees of longer term
funding for these projects. This would include a shift to relationships based on a more contractual basis with longer time frames to ensure stability.

2.3 Standardise, streamline and simplify all grant applications forms, service level agreements and monitoring forms.

2.4 Ensure that any lessons from the ‘Following the Public Pound’ analysis currently being conducted by Strategic Finance are incorporated into any proposed changes in the grant aid system.

2.5 In partnership with others, broaden the number of social enterprises capable of supporting public service delivery. This may be through development of Public Social Partnerships (building on experience with the Respite Care PSP), competitive tendering for contracts and the establishment of new social enterprises.

2.6 Agree a development programme with partners to build on and consolidate existing activity to support growth of the sector.

**Outcome 3**

**Assets - Overall Recommendations from Stage 1 And Stage 2**

3.1 The Council’s Asset Management Board manage a process to provide guidance for, and implement good practice procedures for, asset disposal.

3.1.1 Provide guidance notes for the Third Sector to explain the process for applying for a surplus asset. These will also include an easy-to-follow diagram/flow chart of the process involved and appropriate contact names and numbers. These materials are available online.

3.1.2 The Council’s Estates Service publish a simple guide/glossary of typical leasing or purchasing terms and conditions so interested parties can form an early view on whether they are fully prepared for their potential obligations and responsibilities.

3.1.3 The Council provides appropriate property information is provided by the Council to support the submission of an initial expression of interest and the construction of an initial/outline business case by a Third Sector applicant.

3.1.4 The Council ensures appropriate time is available to Third Sector Groups for them to register an initial interest, plan and prepare an initial/outline business case and thereafter be assessed.

3.1.5 Ensure that all procedures to support the Third Sector are embedded within the Council’s overall Corporate Asset Management Plan.

3.1.6 Ensure that any emerging examples of good practice identified by the Development Trusts Association Advisory Board over the next 2 years are tracked by the Asset Management Board and implemented where appropriate.
3.2 Third Sector organisations are assisted to ensure that they have sufficient capability and capacity to support the sustainable use of an asset. Assessment criteria and process will be agreed by the Asset Management Board, Business Gateway, Funding Hub and Community Services. Assessment will focus on:

- Capacity to take responsibility for a property asset.
- Suitability of the asset to support delivery of the organisation’s objectives.

3.2.1 There is also likely to be a need for a capacity building role in this process. The Council will focus on support for social enterprises via Economic Development Service. Direct support for other Third Sector organisations will be more limited from the Council and these organisations will be directed to suitable sources of advice as appropriate.

Outcome 4

Procurement - Overall Recommendations from Stage 1 and Stage 2

4.1 The Council recognises that the most sustainable relationships are based on formal contracts or service level agreements with measurable benefits being delivered for all parties. The Council will work to remove any barriers to Third Sector organisations wishing to engage with the Council on this basis by:

4.1.1 Engaging in dialogue with appropriate organisations while specifications are developed.

4.1.2 Providing open and freely accessible advertising of all significant contracts.

4.1.3 Simplifying qualification and tendering processes involving standard documents and electronic delivery.

4.1.4 Providing comprehensive de-briefing information at the conclusion of each tendering process.

4.2 The Council will publish a programme of prospective contracts each year and will encourage interested organisations to develop their operations to meet the criteria to bid for these contracts. Where appropriate this could include the creation of consortiums of several independent organisations to deliver contracts.

4.3 The Council will, in developing a sourcing strategy, assess the capabilities within the marketplace and where appropriate will let the contract into geographical or functional lots to facilitate participation from smaller organisations.

4.4 The Council will examine ways in which social enterprises can improve their capacity and competence to deliver directly on Council priorities – either through planned growth or by creating new social enterprises that employ staff with the requisite skills as for example, part of the review of services.
4.5 The Council will communicate more clearly that it does not generally evaluate tenders for contracts solely on the basis of lowest price. The Council also takes into account the quality of the service delivery. In recognising the benefits that Third Sector organisations bring to communities across the Argyll and Bute area, the Council will value this formally within contracts by the use of ‘community benefits’ clauses within tender documents.

4.6 Promote the use of Social Accounting and Audit and also Social Return on Investment approaches by Third Sector organisations to strengthen their case when bidding for funds or contracts.

4.7 Contract terms will be, where possible, of sufficient length to allow organisations to enjoy a degree of stability.

Outcome 5

Skills and Training - Overall Recommendations from Stage 1 and Stage 2

5.1 CPP partners work with the Third Sector interface, once established, to identify current training provided to the Third Sector, map their training delivery plans and identify overlaps and gaps. Agree a shared approach to meeting training needs.

5.2 The Council investigates whether Corporate Social Responsibility policy could be developed to allow Council staff to mentor, job swap, work placements etc in Third Sector organisations.

5.3 The Council identifies which courses currently provided for staff could be extended to Third Sector organisations and if any charges will apply.
Third Sector Access to Council Support

Third Sector is able to easily access information and support on a range of Council Services.

Recommendations from Stage One

Responses from the First Stage of the Demonstration Project indicated that there are major issues relating to how the Council communicates with the Third Sector, and that there is a need to improve access to and dissemination of, the range of Council information and support relevant to the Third Sector on issues such as procurement opportunities and sale of assets.

The main recommendation coming from the consultation during Stage One was that:

1. There should be easy access to the range of Council information and support available to the Third Sector.

The suggestion was made that this could be improved through the establishment of a ‘Single Point Of Entry’, through the Council’s website and one person or one phone number to guide and inform organisations of the support available.

1 Background

As part of Stage Two, the Connecting and Communicating questionnaire and the external consultation events asked:

- Whether a ‘single point of entry’ would improve the way the Third Sector works with the Council.
- Advantages and disadvantages of using a ‘single point of entry’.
- What information organisations would look for through a ‘single point of entry’.
- How a ‘single point of entry’ might work.
- For any other comments.

Discussion at dialogue events focussed on communication between the Council and the Third Sector in general and not exclusively on the potential single point of entry system.

At internal dialogue events, attendees were asked:

- What support they provided to the Third Sector.
- Whether there was overlap between this and another provider.
• How they communicate with the Third Sector.
• To identify barriers in working with the Third Sector.
• To identify what support and information would help them improve for examples of best practice.
• About advantages and disadvantages of using a ‘single point of entry’.

At the Community Planning Partnership event, those who attended were asked:

• What systems they have for working with the Third Sector.
• What support they offer Third Sector organisations.
• How information could be shared to allow more effective inter-agency referrals.

2 Results of the Dialogues

Most discussion was around communication with a requirement for more and better communication - between Council Departments, between partners and most strongly between the Council and the Third Sector. Organisations commented at external dialogue events that they feel the Council does not listen properly to their views and opinions, or value the skills and expertise they have to offer.

There was not clear support for a ‘single-point of entry’ but this was clouded by a lack of understanding of what this term meant in practise. This proved useful in teasing out the main issue which is one of clarity and consistency of information rather than how information is accessed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Dialogue Events</th>
<th>External Questionnaires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There was widespread agreement that communication between the Council and the Third Sector is a big issue. However, there was no agreement that a ‘Single Point of Entry’ would be the best means of addressing this issue, due to both a number of identified potential disadvantages and also due to a general lack of clarification and agreement about what this system would entail, how this should be implemented in terms of structure and how it would operate.</td>
<td>The majority of organisations agreed or strongly agreed in external questionnaire responses that a ‘Single Point of Entry’ would potentially improve the way they work with the Council but the question may not have thrown up the issues that arose at the external dialogues which probed deeper...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1. **What support is provided to the Third Sector?**

Officers at the internal dialogue event told us that the Council provides a broad spectrum of support to the Third Sector, mainly through funding, involvement in partnership boards and networks, supporting the development of the third sector as well as information on planning, leases and a further variety of services which vary across different departments.

At the time of the consultation:

**Community Services** offered a wide variety of support to the Third Sector ranging from numerous training opportunities, leisure and development grants, involvement in the Strategic Housing Forum and the use of minibuses.

**The Chief Executive’s Unit** provided web pages with support and guidance on funding, as well as responding to queries about sourcing funding.

**Corporate Services** gave advice on leasing property from the Council, including applications for nominal rent and guidance on business plans and general terms and conditions.

**Operational Services** managed the asset register and determined building condition as well as provide information on running costs.

**Development Services** were involved with supporting the Third Sector through a variety of routes including Business Gateway, Community Transport and LEADER funding as well as local plan, town centre and core path plan consultation. They also provided direct grant assistance for running projects.

In April 2010 the Council began a restructuring process and some changes have been made to where services are managed.

Attendees at the internal dialogue event suggested that when working with the Third Sector, their departments work both individually and also with other Council Departments or partners, and this is through both partnerships and networks. Examples of these included Community Councils and Public Health Networks. The Council tends to work on a one-to-one level with Third Sector organisations on specific contracts or projects. Community Learning and Regeneration has had a more direct developmental role.

2.2. **Information and support required**

Information and support required by the Third Sector was wide ranging and included legal requirements, events, training, employment, asset management, grants, procurement and tendering issues, and funding opportunities.
2.3. **Barriers to work between the Council and the Third Sector**

Both the Council and the Third Sector perceived similar barriers to working with each other:

- Lack of clarity over who does what and the role that they play within the organisation (comments included Council job titles not matching what their role is, understanding the role Third Sector intermediaries play and what support the Third Sector can deliver).

- Access to and consistency of information. The main issue was that different sources sometimes give conflicting information or are themselves not clear.

Specifically for the Council, officers highlighted that relevant Third Sector information was not shared between departments and there had previously been no opportunities for internal networking and events regarding the Third Sector such as the Demonstration Project internal dialogue.

Third Sector organisations highlighted that the use of jargon and abbreviations by the Council meant information was difficult to understand. Examples given were CPP and SOA (Community Planning Partnership and Single Outcome Agreement).

2.4. **Improvements to work between the Council and the Third Sector**

Both the Council and the Third Sector had similar suggestions for improvements to how we work based on more and better information and communications. Some useful suggestions were made as described below:

- Clear message from the Council on what it wants to achieve in its relationship with the Third Sector.

- Who’s who (suggestions included a visual diagram of Council officers who provide information or support to the Third Sector and a directory of who represents who within the Third Sector).

- Third Sector Newsletter/Information – collated information rather than mail outs.

- Shared signposting information so we all signpost effectively.

- Develop better links between Council, CPP partner and Third Sector web pages so information is easier to find.

In addition, Council officers suggested that the Council should have:

- A framework and procedures for dealing with the Third Sector.

- A named officer with responsibility for overseeing Council policy and development regarding the Third Sector.

- A joined up approach across departments with regular events such as the Demonstration Project internal dialogue.
Our Community Planning Partners suggested that as organisational roles have recently changed, agencies should use this opportunity to make clear what they are doing. They suggested demonstrating how they are each delivering on the Single Outcome Agreement, perhaps through the Community Planning Partnership full meetings and/or through the Local Area Community Planning Groups.

2.5. **Advantages and disadvantages to a ‘single point of entry’**

Third Sector organisations put forward their views on how they felt a ‘single point of entry’ would help or hinder them in working with the Council. The main advantages were that knowing who to contact would save time and energy but only if that contact was effective. Having one contact point would allow the customer to build a relationship with the Council so that they didn’t have to repeat background information and could arrive at a solution quicker.

The main disadvantages were that a centralised system would mean ‘on the ground’ knowledge, contacts and dynamics would be lost. Also there would not be enough staff within this unit to service the breadth and diversity of the Third Sector and provide the information required – ‘too few people to know so much’ as one respondee said. If the ‘single point of entry’ does not capture the necessary information and keep up to date with developments across the Council, Third Sector and other partners, then we risk losing access to valuable information and support.

To make use of the advantages and tackle the disadvantages we need to ensure that:

- Each organisation working with the Third Sector has a clearly defined role.
- There is an effective Third Sector interface (an organisation which will represent the needs and priorities of Third Sector organisations).
- There is excellent communication between organisations involved in providing support to the Third Sector.

2.6. **How a ‘single point of entry’ could work**

In considering how to access a ‘single point of entry’ the preference is for a system with more than one entry point and in addition to using face-to-face contact, uses telephone and other methods. Though there were mixed views about whether this should be at a local or central level (most preferring local), it would be fair to extrapolate that the information needs to be held ‘collectively’ and be easy for the customer to access this information.

Both at external dialogue events and in external questionnaire responses, the idea emerged that a ‘single point of entry’ could use a ‘Case Officer’ approach. This idea was widely supported.

Videoconferencing was mentioned briefly and the comments were mostly negative.
Organisations commented that networking may be more important than the actual meeting, and this aspect is missed out through videoconferencing. It was, however, recognised that it may be beneficial for exchange of information rather than active discussion. (Given the remote and rural geography of Argyll and Bute it would be useful to further consider the use of technology in providing a more effective service.

A summary of the suggestions for a ‘single point of entry’ include:

• A Council contact for each administrative area.

• Better signposting to services within the Council, possibly using a thematic approach to do this eg assets, training and skills.

• There should be many ways for the Third Sector to contact and receive information from the Council such as e-mail, website and telephone.

• Information should be available beyond 9am - 5pm and also at weekends, and provide 24/7 availability. (At external dialogue events, some organisations commented that the Campbeltown Call Centre was not open after 5pm).

• Council officers involved in the ‘single point of entry’ should be well trained and highly knowledgeable, and have a firm and in-depth knowledge of the needs and requirements of the voluntary sector and of the Council.

• Information and support should be aligned with Third Sector and Community Planning Partners so that it is able to function across organisations – thus it needs to be developed in partnership.

• Information should be broken down into areas of interest eg village hall, etc as per signposting above.

• The ‘single point of entry’ needs to be well resourced with excellent communication and ongoing dialogue built in from the start.

• Need to maintain excellent relations with external agencies to keep up to date and ensure continuity of information and support to the Third Sector.

In conclusion, the idea of a ‘single point of entry’ is not appropriate and we need to offer a selection of routes with effective coordination between them to ensure consistency and a high quality response.

A detailed description of how we co-ordinate this work is described in Appendix 2, Third Sector Access to Council Support - Implementation. The work would be co-ordinated through a forum meeting 3-4 times per year to oversee and coordinate Third Sector contact and service delivery covering:

• Economic Development/Customer Services Centres – potential for appropriate work to be delivered through developments arising from Process for Change.

• Procurement.
• Funding – domestic and European.
• Asset management.
• Community Services – including community engagement, arts officer and grants officers.
• Third Sector representation from the interface - there is an opportunity to include such a representative to ensure that Council services aimed at the Third Sector are appropriate and fit with the Third Sector service delivery.

Lessons learned

Former Community Learning and Regeneration Officers worked with Third Sector on a ‘case load’ basis. When a Third Sector organisation did not know who to talk to in the Council the ‘case load’ officer worked with them to make sure they got the information they needed. This was cited as a good example and we will look at developing a customer management system that does this.

Grampian Caredata was suggested as a potential model, which is good at ensuring information is of high quality and is correct. It involves dedicated information resources to collect, verify, update and input information on a regular basis. We also have lessons to learn from the Argyll and Bute Advice Network which was mentioned on a number of occasions as a valuable information and communication resource.

Organisations reported often using their local Councillor as an effective point of contact for a variety of different issues.

With regards to a ‘single point of entry’, several suggestions were offered as good examples of how this system could possibly operate. The knowledge of staff operating the front desk switchboard located at Argyll and Bute headquarters in Kilmory was suggested by several attendees as a valuable resource and good example of a communication point between the Council and external organisations.
Outcome 1

Third Sector Access to Council Support - Overall Recommendations from Stage 1 and Stage 2

1.1 Create an operational group within the Council to coordinate the activities of the services that interact with the Third Sector. This group will:

1.1.1 Ensure that enquiries are effectively and quickly directed to the appropriate service (which may be provided by a Council service or another partner).

1.1.2 Ensure that information and advice is up to date, relevant and consistent.

1.1.3 Monitor processes on an ongoing basis and make changes as required.

1.1.4 Communicate regularly to ensure that people are familiar with the services provided and any changes that are made.

1.2 Provide access to information and support through a variety of entry points including website, customer service centre, direct to services and via external partners.

1.3 Economic Development Service take responsibility for Council services that provide support to developing social enterprises to create employment and wealth in local communities. Service will be provided using staff transferred as part of the implementation plan from the Best value review of Community Learning and Regeneration.

1.4 Engage with the Third Sector in a variety of ways to ensure that services meet needs – eg using CPP events (local and Argyll and Bute wide), via the Third Sector interface and potentially via membership of a coordinating steering group.

1.5 Learn from experience in other parts of the UK through the Council working with the Carnegie Trust UK.
## Funding

Funding streams are appropriate and linked to strategic plans.

### Recommendations from Stage One

Stage One of the Demonstration Project identified a number of issues relating to the funding which Third Sector organisations receive, including problems caused by short term funding, a lack of core funding and concerns over the end of ring fencing. The responses were used to develop the proposal of three main recommendations which would address these issues and another two which were for internal Council consideration.

The main recommendations coming from Stage One of the Demonstration Project were:

1. **Commitments should be made to:**
   - Develop policies which recognise the range and diversity of assistance given.
   - Develop a continuum of appropriate relationships and funding arrangements aimed at maximising the return on investments made, in terms of quality local services.

2. **Support to Social Enterprise organisations should mirror the two-tier approach taken by the Scottish Government:**
   - Investment should be made to encourage new enterprises, and
   - There should be more intensive support and investment in well established enterprises that are capable of early expansion and growth.

3. **The Council should continue to prepare for the end of ring-fenced funding.**

4. **There is a need for a further analysis of payments to the Third Sector due to the scale and complexity of the information.**

5. **Housing and Social Work are the two largest players in payments to the Third Sector and should be more involved in future discussions.**
1 **Background**

1.1 As part of Stage Two, attendees at the internal dialogue event were asked:

- What funding resources their department manages?
- When making decisions about funding Third Sector activities, to what extent are decisions driven by Council policies or strategy?
- If any of the funding given to the Third Sector comes from ring-fenced funds, what are the implications of this?

1.2 The external dialogue aimed to investigate what issues face Third Sector organisations in accessing funds from the Council and CPP partners and how this might be improved. Respondents were asked for their views on:

- Whether they think production of a local action plan influences decisions.
- The implications of the ending of ring-fenced funding on their organisation.

Although there were specific questions prepared for the funding theme, it became apparent from the dialogues themselves that discussion needed to be wider than the original questions. This is reflected in the responses.

2 **Results of the Dialogues**

2.1 **Core-funding**

The issue of core funding arose in a variety of ways which reinforced the concerns emerging from the Carnegie Rural Commission.

- There is a tension between the need to obtain essential core funding and the pressure to present a picture of innovation to meet the requirement of funders.
- A related issue was the difficulty in securing long-term funding and the impact this had on the security and sustainability of organisations, particularly in relation to staffing.
- The Council was seen as an important source of funding in that it unlocked other sources. However, it was not seen as a major funder in terms of the size of the contribution and most organisations were obtaining the bulk of their funding from more than one source external to the Council.

2.2 **Different application and monitoring procedures**

2.2.1 There was extensive comment on the processes and paperwork associated with Council funding. This concerned a lack of consistency in:
The view was that these could be standardised, streamlined and simplified across the Council, thus providing great benefits in savings to staff time.

2.2.2 Strategic Finance has undertaken a major piece of work in connection with ‘Following the Public Pound’ (FTPP) which was reviewing payments by the Council to the Third Sector. The main issues arising from this exercise were:

- Payments made under FTPP are very specific, per the Audit Scotland guidance on the subject.
- Current resource pressures mean that the Council will be happy to meet the minimum standards within this guidance as at the moment it is not possible to develop anything further (ie in terms of a corporate database for all payments, corporate assessment and application form).
- The current process (while developed through different services) is fairly consistent across the Council and generally meets the minimum criteria (ie education, leisure and social welfare grants, service level agreements with voluntary organisations).
- An analysis of all FTPP payments was undertaken at a tiered level (£0-£4,999, £5,000-£49,999 and £50,000+). This highlighted the fact that the Council has fairly robust procedures in place for payments under £50k per annum.
- It was decided that for payments of £50k+ additional review and monitoring procedures would take place. This will include a database held centrally by corporate accounting to ensure all monitoring requirements are undertaken.
- A separate account code will be set up from 1 April 2010 to which all FTPP payments will be coded.

2.3 Rural/Island issues

There was a strong feeling that funders were unwilling to take account of the higher cost of providing services in rural areas. It was also an issue that there were fewer sources of funding to offset the higher costs of transport and travel in rural areas for example to access training courses and conferences.

2.4 The end of ring fencing

The end of ring fencing has been considered in a variety of ways, and further work is still
taking place. The responses from the consultation were inconclusive with potential winners and losers and many Third Sector consultees unaffected and unaware of the issue. As the project has progressed, it has become more likely that the main issue will be a reduction in available funding due to the economic situation rather than the end of ring fencing.

2.5 Economic recession

The internal consultation highlighted major concern at the worsening financial situation which raises issues for the Council about the extent to which there will be an extension and development of funding arrangements, as opposed to severe restrictions to meet tight budget limits. This was one of the major concerns and most organisations reported increasing difficulties in attracting funding and recognised that this was also likely to affect funding from the Council.

2.6 Public Social Partnerships (PSPs)

A considerable amount of work has now been done by the Argyll and Bute Social Economy Partnership on the idea of a Public Social Partnership. This is a model designed to support the process of the Council contracting out services to the Third Sector. A number of pilots have been run in Scotland and the Scottish Government invited bids for another 10 pilot projects. A joint application submitted by Argyll and Bute Council and Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network was successful and the Council is now developing a Respite Bureau PSP.

2.7 Single Outcome Agreement (SOA)

There was concern about the general complexity of the SOA and the difficulties for Third Sector organisations in connecting with it in terms of demonstrating effectiveness and also being able to link it into their funding applications.

3 Other Issues arising from the Dialogues

3.1 Progression from grant dependence to income-generation

3.1.1 The Demonstration Project was set up to explore the potential for developing partnerships with the Social Enterprise Sector to deliver local services which might not otherwise be delivered. This requires a sustained process of capacity building and partnership working to move increasingly from a grant dependent relationship to an income based one. Clearly this is not a process which will happen quickly and the changed economic situation has implications for how this will be taken forward. The dialogue however demonstrated a willingness to move in this direction.

3.1.2 If financial aid is changed to concentrate on developing income-based service
delivery models this will require moving to a more unified grant aid model that is also more closely linked to existing service delivery/contract based models. Where an explicit aim of policy is to move to a more social enterprise focus, a consolidation of existing grant aid to ensure a more strategic return on investment clearly would have a ‘knock-on’ effect on less strategic, more local grant aid, particularly at a time of economic pressure. This would be a particularly sensitive topic and any changes would need to be carefully managed.

3.2 Cultural move to delivery of services by the Third Sector

The circumstances above can be taken as an opportunity to develop the Social Enterprise Sector as a worthwhile aim in itself given the community capacity building benefits and a possible opportunity to change the ways in which the Council delivers services that will help to meet the serious financial challenges ahead. Some work has already been undertaken (see below) on how this might be piloted. However, if this is the way forward it has to be tackled in a realistic way that recognises the need to ‘spend to save’ and the likely timescales.

3.3 Full Cost Recovery

This issue was not raised explicitly, but was implicit in many of the concerns raised, eg rising costs, reducing grants, inability to retain staff due to decreasing levels of funding. This is a topic with a growing profile nationally and Third Sector organisations need to be reassured that they are not expected to subsidise service delivery via separate fundraising activities. The Council currently expects any service provider tendering for contracts to properly cover their costs in order to ensure service stability, and the situation is no different with Third Sector providers.

3.4 Social Accounting and Audit and Social Return on Investment (SROI)

These are two systematic approaches developed in recent years to provide more objective measures of the social impact and value of projects. This is an approach which is being actively promoted by the Scottish Government and also by key funders. The Demonstration Project should consider how it can promote and support this approach within Argyll and Bute. There is clearly a connection between these issues and the one of social benefit clauses in procurement. (See Outcome 4, Procurement, page ??).

3.5 Community Learning and Regeneration Best Value Review (CL&R BVR)

This review took place during the period of the dialogue. One of the results of this review is that officers with capacity building skills will be deployed to the Economic Development Service to support social enterprise development.
Lessons learned

Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network
In terms of building capacity in the Social Enterprise Sector there has been considerable progress during the course of the Demonstration Project. The Social Economy Partnership initially took the lead in attracting a package of funding to develop the capacity of the sector and in particular, the key intermediary body, the Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network. The capacity of the organisation has developed in the course of the year to the extent that it is now the lead body in applying for funding. A devolved, local structure has been developed and the organisation has the capacity to bid for contracts.

Craignish Village Hall
When Craignish Village Hall was being built in Ardfern, the Council took on the role of Lead Applicant when European Funding was being sourced. Criagnish Village Hall commented that the Council was extremely helpful both in preparing the application and subsequently in managing the funds and this was an excellent example of the Council and a Third Sector organisation working in partnership.

Fairer Argyll and Bute Partnership
An Assessment Panel was established as a sub-group of this partnership to consider the funding allocations and distribution of the Fairer Scotland Fund. Membership of the panel was two representatives from the Council, two from Community Planning Partners, and two from the Third Sector. A scoring framework was introduced and the assessment system has been seen as a fair and open way of distributing funds and monitoring projects.

Meet the Funders
Third Sector organisations suggested that a repeat of the Council’s ‘Meet the Funders’ funding roadshows would be extremely beneficial, and indicated that they found these of great assistance and value when they were initially conducted. This was most apparent in the outlying and island communities, who welcomed agencies coming to communities.
Outcome 2

Funding - Overall Recommendations from Stage 1 and 2

2.1 Review current grant aid activity with a view to consolidating existing grant activities (Education Development, Leisure Development, and Social Welfare) into one, more strategically focused and unified system. This would ensure continued, more stable, support for priority areas of work, but would impact on lower priority activities, in some cases bringing support to an end altogether.

2.2 Focus on fewer but more strategic grant aided activities and provide guarantees of longer term funding for these projects. This would include a shift to relationships based on a more contractual basis with longer time frames to ensure stability.

2.3 Standardise, streamline and simplify all grant applications forms, service level agreements and monitoring forms.

2.4 Ensure that any lessons from the ‘Following the Public Pound’ analysis currently being conducted by Strategic Finance are incorporated into any proposed changes in the grant aid system.

2.5 In partnership with others, broaden the number of social enterprises capable of supporting public service delivery. This may be through development of Public Social Partnerships (building on experience with the Respite Care PSP), competitive tendering for contracts and the establishment of new social enterprises.

2.6 Agree a development programme with partners to build on and consolidate existing activity to support growth of the sector.
Assets

Improved community sustainability through the Third Sector’s ability to acquire assets.

Recommendations from Stage One

Responses to the first stage of the Demonstration Project indicated that organisations were interested in obtaining more information about acquiring property which is surplus to Council requirements and that improvements are needed to the manner in which information on issues relating to assets is disseminated.

The main recommendations regarding the dissemination of guidance, advice and information about assets to the Third Sector were:

1. Further guidance is required in respect of an appropriate communications strategy and information sharing procedures.

2. Guidance and good practice procedure notes should be prepared in advance of the above. This will be a matter for the Council’s Estate Service overseen by the Asset Management Board at this stage.

3. The Demonstration Project Board should consider how best to approach the perceived issue of an inconsistent approach by the Council towards allocating grant funding and financial support to the Third Sector.

1 Background

As part of the internal dialogue carried out in Stage Two, Council Officers were asked:

- How aware they were of the Council’s new property disposal procedures.
- Assuming that an assessment of the capacity of Third Sector organisations to take over property assets is desirable, who, or which, organisation would be most appropriate to carry out such an assessment?
- Would the Council’s website be the most effective tool for communicating with the Third Sector about asset transfer activities?
- For suggestions of alternative and/or additional methods of communications that could be used to communicate with the Third Sector.
Community Planning partners were specifically asked:

- Do partner organisations agree that Third Sector organisations should be assessed to determine their capacity and readiness to manage a property asset?
- Who should make this assessment, and how?

The aim of the external dialogue process was to investigate asset transfer from the perspective of Third Sector organisations. Respondents were asked for their views on:

- Whether their organisations would consider taking on a property asset, if the opportunity arose?
- How the Council can best ensure Third Sector organisations wishing to take on an asset have the capacity to do so?
- Whether Third Sector organisations should be assessed to determine their capacity and readiness to take responsibility for managing a property asset and, if so, who should conduct the assessment?
- Whether the Council’s website is the most effective method of communicating with the Third Sector with regard to:
  - The potential availability of assets
  - Related policy

2 **Results of the Dialogues**

2.1 **Awareness of the Council’s new property disposal procedures**

Attendees at the internal dialogue event were asked how aware they are of the Council’s new property disposal procedures. The majority of those at the event did not seem aware of the new procedures. Some Council officers also indicated that they were unaware of the Council’s property disposal procedures.

2.2 **Would organisations take on an asset if the opportunity arose?**

Overall, the Third Sector organisations that chose to complete the external questionnaires did not see this issue as particularly relevant to them. There were consequently a number of blank responses to questions concerning this topic. When asked for additional comments, some organisations remarked that they felt this issue was not relevant to many Third Sector groups.

Through subsequent discussions held at the external dialogue events it was established that there was a convincing level of interest in this topic. Moreover, it was established that some of the organisations represented at the dialogue events have already acquired assets.
However, the participants did not necessarily feel they were adequately informed about related policy and guidance.

There were also Third Sector organisations who suggested that they would be more likely to consider a phased approach to acquiring an asset, entering into a leasing and partnership agreement with the Council in the first stages in order to spread risk, and taking on ownership when more confident of the sustainability of the asset. This was an approach taken by Atlantis Leisure in Oban and in the developing Arrochar Pontoon and Visitor Centre.

2.3 Should the capacity of Third Sector organisations’ to take over property assets be assessed?

There was widespread agreement from both internal and external dialogue participants that Third Sector organisations should be assessed to determine their capability and readiness to take responsibility for an asset.

Those organisations who did not believe that Third Sector organisations should be assessed gave the following reasons for their disagreement:

- The Council's internal assessment procedures might cause delays.
- The decision to pursue the acquisition of an asset, in many cases, might hinge on the sustainability of future funding support. Any potential uncertainty over supporting funding in the future might render an assessment pointless.

2.3.1 Who should assess Third Sector interest in property assets?

Organisations were asked if the Council was best placed to carry out such an assessment. Both the CPP and external dialogue respondents disagreed with this suggestion.

When asked why they felt the Council was not best placed to carry out this assessment, respondents indicated that:

- They felt that the Council would be affected by a perception that the voluntary sector is not mature enough to manage its own assets.
- The Council is constrained by high levels of bureaucracy.

Respondents to the external dialogue questionnaire suggested that an independent consultant or agency might be more appropriate to carry out the assessment.

Organisations at external dialogue events suggested that those funding the acquisition of the asset may be better placed to conduct this assessment.
2.3.2 **What should be assessed?**

Dialogue participants felt that if Third Sector organisations were to be assessed to determine their capability to take responsibility for a property, an assessment should include:

- Consideration of alternative facilities.
- Overlap in Council services.
- The potential for shared ownership/joint acquisition of premises whereby Third Sector organisations could consider co-location and joint running of property.

External dialogue participants suggested that, in addition to assessing the capacity of Third Sector organisations to take on an asset, the asset itself should also be assessed. The quality of assets was a recurring theme in external dialogue event discussions, with questions being raised about the quality of assets that would be made available, and the idea that what were being described as property assets might actually be liabilities.

It was suggested at the Community Planning Partnership event that succession planning should be included in this assessment. A suggestion was also made that Third Sector organisations should submit business plans as part of the assessment process.

2.3.3 **How can the Council best ensure that Third Sector organisations who wish to take over an asset have the capacity to do so?**

Several suggestions were made as to how the Council could ensure organisations have the capability and capacity to take on a property asset. These included:

Ensuring that organisations have access to information. This information would include the potential liabilities of acquiring assets and the process of acquiring an asset.

Participants of both the internal and external dialogues suggested that Third Sector organisations should receive support from the Council throughout the process.

Two separate, but related, issues have been raised with regard to support needs:

- Organisations require support during the process of acquisition.
- Organisations identified an ongoing skills and training need after asset acquisition which could be met by social enterprise support from Business Gateway, Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and other national support bodies.
2.4 Ways to communicate with the Third Sector about asset transfer activities

While responses to the dialogues made clear that all stakeholders require access to information, there was some disagreement over the best way that this information could be most effectively disseminated.

2.4.1 The Council’s website

The external dialogue questionnaire responses indicated that organisations were split as to whether or not the Council’s website would be the most effective method of communicating with the Third Sector in terms of the potential availability of assets, related policies, procedures and guidance documents.

Discussions at the external dialogue events tended to be more negative and consistent with the views and concerns expressed on the subject of the introduction of a Single Point of Entry. The Council’s website was not seen as the most effective method of communicating with the Third Sector on issues concerning assets.

For those groups wishing to use the website, links should be provided, and information must be accessible. Also, links to the section on Assets within the Council’s website should be made with the Argyll Communities and Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network websites.

The view emerged that communication should not only be restricted to websites. There must be an option to keep people informed by other means, perhaps utilising more locally based forms of communication where appropriate and through Third Sector intermediaries.

2.4.2 Alternative modes of communication

Alternatives to the Council’s website identified during dialogues were:

- Third Sector websites, eg the Argyll Communities website.
- Email communication.
- Using Community Councils for disseminating information.
- Dissemination of information about assets through the Local Area Community Planning Groups (LACPGs).
- The provision of hard copy material through the Customer Service Centres.

A suggestion made at the Community Planning Partnership was that a register could be created to indicate not just the availability of Council properties but also surplus properties belonging to other public sector bodies. Information regarding assets potentially available to the Third Sector should be quickly and easily accessible.
Information relating to the size, nature and condition of the asset would also be very useful.

3 **Other issues arising from the Dialogues**

Other issues relating to asset transfer that arose from the dialogues were:

- **Timescales**: From both external dialogue questionnaire responses and discussion at events, a view emerged that adequate timescales are often not given for organisations to secure funding to acquire an asset, or to put in a funding bid. There should be clarification with regard to how long communities have to develop an interest in a surplus asset.

- **Assets as liabilities**: As mentioned above, there was widespread agreement that organisations should not be offered a property asset that might turn out to be a liability. Some external dialogue respondents commented that the assets offered by the Council tend to be liabilities which the Council wishes to get rid of, and it was emphasised that deteriorating buildings are of no use to organisations and are a drain on money, time and resources. It was explained that from the Council’s perspective surplus properties are regarded as no longer suitable for the delivery of front-line services. This does not necessarily mean that they are in a poor state. However, even assets regarded by some as “liabilities” can have significant latent development value.

- **Sharing an asset**: During both the internal and external dialogues, a view emerged that an asset might be more viable for the Third Sector if a number of organisations collaborated to acquire it, and that sharing premises may be a more practical approach for organisations to adopt. Several organisations working out of the same building might make the use of an asset more sustainable in the longer term. This could be true in terms of working together to submit a joint funding bid, as well as physically sharing the building space.

  A related suggestion challenged the Council to share their own properties better and offered the view that shared use of premises, such as meeting rooms, could benefit small businesses.

- **Procedures and roles requiring clarification**: Some attendees felt that the potential roles of the CPP Funding Hub and Third Sector Intermediary Organisations involved in the asset transfer process would need to be clarified.
Lessons learned

Cove Burgh Hall
Argyll and Bute Council took responsibility for the Hall after the boundary change in 1996. The Hall had failed to keep up to date with need and there was £170,000 of repairs required. A proposal to close the Hall was met with much local protest. For more than a year a local group lobbied the Council to properly maintain the Hall (now a Category B Listed Building) and effectively administer it as a public facility. The Council offered an alternative to closure - ownership and responsibility for the Hall could be transferred to a group within the Cove and Kilcreggan community. At a public meeting held in February 2000 a committee of local residents was formed to take ownership of the Hall with start-up finances - £50,000 seed corn over two years was promised to make the project viable. Today the Cove Burgh Hall continues to provide a resource for the local community.

Mid Argyll Youth Project
The continued and active interest of the Mid Argyll Youth Project in acquiring premises within Lochgilphead is regarded as another positive demonstration of Third Sector determination to pursue a co-location opportunity involving several organisations working out of one asset.

Cove Burgh Hall
Outcome 3

Assets - Overall Recommendations from Stage 1 And Stage 2

3.1 The Council’s Asset Management Board manage a process to provide guidance for, and implement good practice procedures for, asset disposal.

3.1.1 Provide guidance notes for the Third Sector to explain the process for applying for a surplus asset. These will also include an easy-to-follow diagram/flow chart of the process involved and appropriate contact names and numbers. This will be available online.

3.1.2 The Council’s Estates Service publish a simple guide/glossary of typical leasing or purchasing terms and conditions so interested parties can form an early view on whether they are fully prepared for their potential obligations and responsibilities.

3.1.3 The Council provides appropriate property information is provided by the Council to support the submission of an initial expression of interest and the construction of an initial/outline business case by a Third Sector applicant.

3.1.4 The Council ensures appropriate time is available to Third Sector Groups for them to register an initial interest, plan and prepare an initial/outline business case and thereafter be assessed.

3.1.5 Ensure that all procedures to support the Third Sector are embedded within the Council’s overall Corporate Asset Management Plan.

3.1.6 Ensure that any emerging examples of good practice identified by the Development Trusts Association Advisory Board over the next 2 years are tracked by the Asset Management Board and implemented where appropriate.

3.2 Third Sector organisations are assisted to ensure that they have sufficient capability and capacity to support the sustainable use of an asset. Assessment criteria and process will be agreed by the Asset Management Board, Business Gateway, Funding Hub and Community Services. Assessment will focus on:

- Capacity to take responsibility for a property asset.
- Suitability of the asset to support delivery of the organisation of the organisation’s objectives.

3.2.1 There is also likely to be a need for a capacity building role in this process. The Council will focus on support for social enterprises via Economic Development Service. Direct support for other Third Sector organisations will be more limited from the Council and these organisations will be directed to suitable sources of advice as appropriate.
Procurement

Procurement policies of Argyll and Bute Council and CPP partners have a clear and strategic view of the Third Sector as a service provider.

### Recommendations from Stage One

The first stage of the Demonstration Project investigated Third Sector organisations’ views on the issue of procurement. Responses suggested that Third Sector organisations interested in entering into contracts with the Council would like more information, training and support, and felt that there was a need for a ‘level playing field’ on which they could compete with organisations from other sectors.

The report of the first stage of the Demonstration Project concluded that:

- **A** Third Sector organisations believe that they deliver a quality service and provide other enhancements to the community as a whole, and wish those aspects to be reflected in any bidding process; they do not wish to compete solely on price.

- **B** While many Third Sector organisations are already capable of successfully bidding for contracts from the Council, there is also a need for specific training to be provided on the necessary bidding skills to allow the Third Sector to compete on a level playing field with commercial operations.

- **C** Not all Third Sector organisations wish to follow the route of formal contracts. However, some organisations would prefer to remain in a grant-aided or non-financial relationship with the Council.

- **D** There is a desire from Third Sector organisations to be made aware of all Council contracting opportunities.

- **E** The Council’s growing capabilities in e-trading present an opportunity for Third Sector organisations who do not wish to invest their scarce resources in administration.

- **F** The Council should examine the use of including a ‘community benefits’ clause within the specification and evaluation criteria of tender documents in a manner that is legal and complies with the best practices of procurement and value for money.
**Recommendations from Stage One**

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<tr>
<td><strong>G</strong></td>
<td>Where appropriate, the Council can specify supply chain requirements within tender documents and can also provide supply chain assistance specifically to Third Sector organisations through facilitating access to national public sector contracts.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>H</strong></td>
<td>There is both a training need and a resource implication for the Council in changing the nature of the relationship with Third Sector organisations.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I</strong></td>
<td>There is a desire from larger, well-organised Third Sector bodies to move to a contractual relationship with the Council.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>J</strong></td>
<td>It is important to engage fully with individual Third Sector organisations operating within Argyll and Bute, particularly those who have current significant financial relationships with the Council.</td>
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Accordingly, the main recommendations from Stage One were:

1. More work should be done to validate the findings and conclusions of the first stage of the consultation.
2. Contracting opportunities should include ‘community benefits’ within bidding criteria.
3. The aims, aspirations and capabilities of Third Sector organisations should be explored further, and steps taken to ensure that plans are put in place to address any gaps.

**Background**

As part of Stage Two, attendees at the internal dialogue event were asked:

- How capable they think Third Sector organisations are of carrying out services on behalf of the Council.
- If the Council should be funding development of Third Sector organisations through procurement and, if so, what support the Council should offer to enable them to tender for, and win, contracts.
- Their views on the recommendation from Stage One of the Demonstration Project
regarding the inclusion of a ‘community benefits’ clause in bidding criteria.

At the Community Planning Partnership dialogue event, those who attended were asked:

- How capable they think Third Sector organisations are of carrying out services on behalf of the partnership.
- Whether partnership organisations should be funding the development of Third Sector organisations through procurement and if so, what support they should be offering to enable Third Sector organisations to tender for, and win, contracts.
- Whether partner organisations would be prepared to use retender clauses in their major contracts.
- If their organisations currently, or if they intend in the future, to identify opportunities that the Third Sector could bid for.
- About the recommendation to include a ‘community benefit’ clause in bidding criteria.

The external dialogue aimed to further investigate organisations’ views on entering into contracts with the Council, and on the information, training and support they would like to receive regarding procurement issues. Respondents were asked their views on:

- Contracting their organisations’ services to the Council.
- Whether they felt confident that their organisation can carry out services on behalf of the Council.
- Whether they would be happy for the work their organisations do for the Council to be managed through formal contracts.
- Their opinion on whether contracting opportunities should include ‘community benefits’ within bidding criteria.

No firm conclusions can be drawn from the consultation responses with regard to either the use of retender clauses or whether CPP partner organisations other than the Council, currently identify, or intend in the future to identify, opportunities in their organisation that the Third Sector could bid for.

In terms of the quantity of information generated, the external dialogue yielded the most information.
2 Results of the Dialogues

Overall, the dialogues carried out in Stage Two confirmed the recommendations made in Stage One of the Demonstration Project. In the case of recommendation G – ‘Where appropriate, the Council can specify supply chain requirements within tender documents and can also provide supply chain assistance specifically to Third Sector organisations through facilitating access to national public sector contracts’ – it is impossible to draw conclusions from the results of the dialogue. There is little information to confirm or deny recommendations E or J.

The results of the dialogues, as they relate to the theme of procurement, are outlined below.

2.1 Relevance of procurement to Third Sector organisations

Overall, most respondents of the external questionnaires saw ‘procurement’ as being of limited relevance to their organisation. Consequently, there were a large number of blank responses to questions concerning this topic.

Of those respondents who felt this issue was relevant to their organisations, the majority indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the recommendations from the first stage of the Demonstration Project. As anticipated, there are Third Sector organisations which are not considering developing into social enterprises, thus the recommendations were not relevant to them. Some organisations felt these recommendations were relevant to social enterprises rather than the vast majority of voluntary organisations, especially smaller ones.

2.2 Ability of Third Sector organisations to carry out services on behalf of the Council

Officers attending the internal dialogue event were broadly in agreement that they were confident Third Sector organisations can carry out services on behalf of the Council. In order to ensure this is the case, however, the Council must be explicit in what they want provided.

Although some Third Sector organisations were interested in delivering services, and were confident about their ability to do so, there was some variation amongst Third Sector organisations. This variation also related to their interest in providing services in the future.

Reasons organisations gave for a lack of confidence included:

- A belief that the services some organisations provide are not currently offered by the Council. Respondents were therefore unsure how they would be able to contract for a service which the council does not provide, and questions were raised as to whether this implied the Council would begin to fund these services in the future.
• The suggestion made at external dialogue events that some organisations were unsure if they are big enough or strong enough to take on a contract, and a lack of awareness of the standards or specifications required of them before this was possible.

• Uncertainty as to how new enterprises can authenticate themselves.

2.3 Willingness of Third Sector organisations for their work to be managed through formal contracts

Third Sector organisations were asked to indicate if they were happy for the work their organisations do for the Council to be managed through formal contracts; the majority of relevant organisations indicated that they agreed with this proposal. This was supported by some discussion during the external dialogue events that contracts with the Council might help resolve some of the issues related to short-term funding and the benefits of being able to offer more secure employment.

Some organisations at external dialogue events expressed a fear that valuable services would be lost if organisations are not knowledgeable about the tendering process or are afraid to go down this route. Respondents to the dialogue also expressed a concern that they were going to be compelled to bid for contracts, and that they would have no other alternative other than going down the procurement route.

2.4 Should the Council be funding development of Third Sector organisations through procurement?

The prevailing view from officers at the internal dialogue event was that the Council should be funding the development of the Third Sector to enable them to tender for, and win, contracts. This will build capacity within the sector and potentially help to create a market for services where there is none at present.

This was reinforced by the external dialogue responses, which indicated that the majority of organisations thought an increase in training and support might help improve their confidence to bid for contracts.

2.5 What support should be offered to Third Sector organisations to enable them to tender for / win contracts?

Dialogue results indicate that there is an extensive need for support, that bidding processes must be simplified, and the stages in the tendering and procurement process must be clearly defined, as varying types of support will be required by Third Sector organisations at different stages. Voluntary organisations indicated that they require training on use of the procurement website and that there is a need to raise awareness of its existence.
Suggestions made as to how support could be offered included the following:

- Running ‘Meet the Buyer’ events. Stage One questionnaire responses suggested that sharing knowledge with Third Sector organisations through ‘Meet the Buyer’ events would assist organisations in entering into a contract with the Council. Such events could be modelled along the lines of the Council’s previous funding roadshows, ‘Meet the Funders’, which had proved to be very valuable to some organisations.

- Use of the procurement website. This would be valuable for many organisations and that the website is useful.

- Support from ABSEN, local CVS or a national body may help ensure that an organisation has adequate skills to bid for contracts.

Third Sector organisations suggested that training on tendering is required, but not at a cost to themselves.

2.6 **Inclusion of a ‘community benefits’ clause**

There was widespread agreement from both external and internal dialogue respondents and participants that community/social benefits should be included within bidding criteria, and that this would be beneficial to both Third Sector and public sector organisations.

Participants at external dialogue events agreed particularly strongly with the recommendation that community benefits should be included within bidding criteria, indicating that these may even be beneficial to them. Organisations suggested that contracting opportunities should include ‘community benefits’ as they feel they are able to competently demonstrate such benefits.

Some organisations suggested it would be detrimental to them if they could not mention such benefits when making applications. Many Third Sector organisations have grown out of need in the community, so such benefits are intrinsic within their organisation’s remits.

Organisations see the inclusion of community benefits as important in part because there is currently a misconception that the Council currently awards contracts based solely on cost criteria.

3 **Other issues arising from the Dialogues**

A number of additional points were raised through the dialogues:

- Concern was expressed over tendering of community care services, as users and
carers are excluded from developing the service specifications and the development of the tenders.

- During both internal and external dialogue events there was a suggestion that there needs to be adequate information about what is being contracted out and there is a need to clarify the available options in terms of what Third Sector organisations can tender for, and can bid for and actually contract to do.

- With regards to existing contracts, organisations at external dialogue events expressed confusion over whether these will change and have to go onto a competitive tendering process, with the implication that this needs to be clarified among those who already have a contract with the Council. A suggestion emerged at external dialogue events that perhaps several organisations working together may be able to bid for a bigger contract across Argyll and Bute.

- Attendees at external dialogue events suggested that both adequate time and expertise is required before Third Sector organisations can bid for contracts, and the Council must recognise there is a need to balance the tension between spending time tendering for contracts and continuing to provide a service locally.

- Although there is a need to ensure that service standards and quality of provision are monitored, evaluated and enforced, reporting and monitoring procedures are seen by Third Sector organisations as tedious and time consuming. Participants at external dialogue events expressed the view that the amount of monitoring and evaluation needs to be appropriate to the level of funding.

- An issue raised by Third Sector organisations concerns how community benefits will be quantified and measured. The benefits provided by organisations, such as those providing support to stroke victims, many not easily translate to tangible measures. Such groups may provide important help by simply providing social interaction to sufferers or allowing them to leave their own homes, and it is not always easy to measure these benefits systematically.

- Organisations are frustrated that although a group’s remits and outcomes remain the same, different funders have different reporting requirements. The representative of one organisation commented that three separate monitoring forms were required by the Council. The view was expressed that Community Planning Partnership organisations are all working towards similar outcomes, in the Single Outcome Agreement, so the reporting requirements of these organisations should be identical.

- Additional comments from external questionnaires on the topic of procurement suggested that there should be clear and sufficient timescales, with indicators of when the outcome of tenders will be available, and that contracts should be awarded on a 3-5 year basis. Discussion at external dialogue events also suggested that better timescales are needed, to allow for financial planning.
Organisations commented during external dialogue discussions that ultimately the Council relies on the passion and creativity of small voluntary groups, so the Council must be able to support them.

Lessons learned

We have two thriving leisure operators in our area which are powerful examples of how social enterprises can add much more to service delivery. Atlantis Leisure in Oban began with a contract to run the then Council-owned swimming pool and who now run not only the pool but a full facility which includes bouldering wall, gym, dance studio and a plethora of classes for everyone from toddlers upwards.

Stramash, once a Lottery and Council funded project, is now an independent social enterprise which has expanded from providing outdoor leisure activities to young people to providing adventures to individuals, corporate clients and families across the whole of the UK, including sea kayaking, gorge scrambling, canyoning, canoeing and coasteering!

Outcome 4

Procurement - Overall Recommendations From Stage 1 and Stage 2

4.1 The Council recognises that the most sustainable relationships are based on formal contracts or service level agreements with measurable benefits being delivered for all parties. The Council will work to remove any barriers to Third Sector organisations wishing to engage with the Council on this basis by:

4.1.1 Engaging in dialogue with appropriate organisations while specifications are developed.

4.1.2 Providing open and freely accessible advertising of all significant contracts.

4.1.3 Simplifying qualification and tendering processes involving standard documents and electronic delivery.

4.1.4 Providing comprehensive de-briefing information at the conclusion of each tendering process.
4.2 The Council will publish a programme of prospective contracts each year and will encourage interested organisations to develop their operations to meet the criteria to bid for these contracts. Where appropriate this could include the creation of consortiums of several independent organisations to deliver contracts.

4.3 The Council will, in developing a sourcing strategy, assess the capabilities within the market place and where appropriate will let the contract into geographical or functional lots to facilitate participation from smaller organisations.

4.4 The Council will examine ways in which social enterprises can improve their capacity and competence to deliver directly on Council priorities – either through planned growth or by creating new social enterprises that employ staff with the requisite skills as for example, part of the review of services.

4.5 The Council will communicate more clearly that it does not generally evaluate tenders for contracts solely on the basis of lowest price. The Council also takes into account the quality of the service delivery. In recognising the benefits that Third Sector organisations bring to communities across the Argyll and Bute area, the Council will value this formally within contracts by the use of ‘community benefits’ clauses within tender documents.

4.6 Promote the use of Social Accounting and Audit and also Social Return on Investment approaches by Third Sector organisations to strengthen their case when bidding for funds or contracts.

4.7 Contract terms will be, where possible, of sufficient length to allow organisations to enjoy a degree of stability.
## Skills and Training

Social Enterprises are able to access appropriate training and information to enable them to become sustainable in the long term.

### Recommendations from Stage One

Organisations suggested during Stage One of the Demonstration Project they would like wider access to training from the Council and would benefit from training on a wide range of issues such as business planning, funding, marketing and statutory requirements amongst others. Organisations also noted that they would like to have training made available closer to where they are, avoiding having to travel long distances.

In addition the Third Sector felt they could offer training if they had more resources to do so. The report of the first stage of the Demonstration Project concluded that there are many issues facing the Third Sector that are also experienced by the small business sector in Argyll and Bute. Where systems are in place for small business suppliers, the Third Sector should be actively encouraged to participate, and given the tools to do so.

The main recommendations coming from the Stage One consultation were:

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<td>1</td>
<td>Support should be given by the Council to the Third Sector to assist them in the coordination of advice and support, with the objective of providing a single access point for information and advice on all aspects of the Third Sector.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Business Gateway development should include a clear signposting mechanism and entry level requirements for Third Sector organisations.</td>
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### Background

As part of Stage Two, attendees at the internal dialogue event were asked:

- Whether they think Business Gateway can provide information and support to the Third Sector.
- If they provide skills training to the Third Sector and if so, what.
- To identify any areas of information support we should be providing to the Third Sector.
• If they have identified any areas of information support required, how these could best be provided.

At the Community Planning Partnership dialogue event, those who attended were asked:
• If they offer training to Third Sector or other external organisations, and if so what.

The external dialogue aimed to assess organisations’ views on what training they receive, what training they could offer, and how services such as Business Gateway may help. Respondents were asked their views on:
• Whether they have training, information and support needs that the Council may be able to assist with.
• What delivery methods best suit for training and information processing.
• Whether they offer training within their own organisation or to other third sector organisations.

2 Results of the Dialogues

2.1 Business Gateway

It should be noted that Business Gateway is a new service to most of Argyll and Bute. When the research was undertaken the Business Gateway service had not been widely promoted externally so, as expected, awareness and understanding of the support on offer was low. It is clear that Business Gateway has a key role in providing services to businesses, including social enterprises.

2.2 Existing provision from Council and CPP Partners

Although some organisations receive some training from the Council on specific issues, responses suggested that the majority of formal skills training to organisations is provided by agencies other than the Council. Some organisations receive informal guidance and assistance, or occasional training on issues such as Moving and Handling, Welfare Rights and access to professional Child Care qualifications for their staff and volunteers from Council and CPP partners.

2.3 Training Needs

2.3.1 Possible training needs that the Council could help Third Sector organisations meet were specified as:

• Health and Safety
• First aid
• Training to develop business skills
• Business development
• Business Planning
• Skills to successfully run a business
• Food hygiene training
• Training for care givers
• Tendering for contracts
• Funding support

It was suggested that many of these could be done through ABSEN and there was limited awareness that Business Gateway can also meet many of the above business-related training needs. In addition, joint training was proposed in areas such as Equal Opportunities, Data Protection and employment legislation or legislation related to statutory requirements.

2.3.2 Greater involvement from the Council in capacity building to allow Third Sector organisations to develop and grow was felt to be a key area of support provision. Assistance with funding applications is required in addition to skills training related to employment, law, finance, and health.

2.4 Training Provision

2.4.1 Training was perceived to be sporadic and ad hoc. Lack of knowledge of who is offering what training led to suggestions of co-ordinating training provided by Council, by partners and by the Third Sector as a whole. A need was identified for a coordination role to be agreed jointly.

2.4.2 Many subjects of interest to the Third Sector are already provided by the Council and the issue of shared access to training from and by the third Sector was raised. Subjects such as IT and time management were cited as examples of where this would be of particular benefit.

2.4.3 Provision of information and support on employment; tendering and procurement opportunities; and issues related to funding, including help with funding applications were all cited as examples where the Third Sector would welcome a partnership approach.

2.4.4 Methods for communicating information and support regarding training might include email, the Council, Argyll Communities and Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network websites and through the Third Sector Partnership (see box).

2.4.5 Cross-fertilization was suggested as a useful way forward, whereby Council officers might work with Third Sector organisations to learn from each other and share skills. This might be done on the basis of job swap, mentoring, etc.
Argyll and Bute Third Sector Partnership

This partnership gives a collective voice for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in Argyll and Bute and is a key player in community planning both locally and centrally. It is made up of:

- Argyll Voluntary Action
- Bute Community Links
- Islay and Jura CVS
- Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network

3 Other issues arising from the Dialogues

3.1 Distances to travel were inevitably seen as a barrier facing many organisations seeking training. The time implications for staff and volunteers and resulting childcare issues were seen to be an issue as well as the costs. Bringing trainers to Argyll and Bute, and more localised communities, instead of sending staff away on courses, was seen as a preferred option.

3.2 Recognition that training and qualifications now required by Third Sector organisations needs to be balanced with the provision of the service and tendering for contracts.

Lessons learned

Here We Are

Established at Cairndow in 2003, Here We Are is a community driven social enterprise where local people and visitors can learn. Argyll College delivers courses there. There is information on the local community council, history and culture of the local area, and it contains an Argyll and Bute Council customer service centre.

An attendee at one of the dialogue events suggested that joining the Federation of Small Businesses has been of great help to the organisation.

The Federation can give legal and employment advice on many relevant topics and can also provide access to solicitors and accountants.
Outcome 5

Skills and Training - Overall Recommendations from Stage 1 and Stage 2

5.1 CPP partners work with the Third Sector interface, once established, to identify current training provided to the Third Sector, map their training delivery plans and identify overlaps and gaps. Agree a shared approach to meeting training needs.

5.2 The Council investigates whether a Corporate Social Responsibility policy could be developed to allow Council staff to mentor, job swap, work placements etc in Third Sector organisations.

5.3 The Council identifies which courses currently provided for staff could be extended to Third Sector organisations and if any charges will apply.
What have we done so far?

**Third Sector Access to Council Support**

We have brought together Council officers who work with social enterprise under the umbrella of the Economic Development Service. This will help us to focus on supporting enterprising Third Sector organisations where the Council has an interest, so that we can be clear about what support we give and ensure that this dovetails with our partner support agencies, Argyll and Bute Third Sector Partnership and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

We are giving communities and organisations the opportunity to feed in their views on the Council’s budget process in each local area: Bute and Cowal; Helensburgh and Lomond; Mid Argyll, Kintrye and the Islands; and Oban, Lorn and the Isles.

**Funding**

We are renewing our Third Sector grants. We have amalgamated three separate funding streams to make it easier for organisations to access information and submit applications.

We are holding Funding Seminars to share information on funding opportunities and provide support. We have contracted this work to the Third Sector Partnership (lead partner ABSEN) to deliver this on our behalf.

**Assets**

We have produced a simple guide to typical leasing/purchasing terms and conditions for land and buildings, so that groups know the potential obligations and responsibilities.

A draft flowchart diagram to highlight asset transfer procedures is awaiting approval.

**Procurement**

As part of the Council’s Service Review process all project managers have been asked to consider options for the Third Sector to be involved in the delivery of services where appropriate.

We are working with our partners Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network and Carnegie UK Trust, to make the most of emerging opportunities for social enterprises to deliver Council services.

**Skills and Training**

Funding was provided to the Third Sector Partnership to deliver a training programme to ensure wider access for organisations, and to encourage coordination within the sector. A training report was produced by the Partnership and we will work with them to implement the findings.

Business Gateway is working closely with Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network, the Council’s social enterprise team and others to co-ordinate training for social enterprises.

There is increased use of Third Sector websites for dissemination of information and opportunities: www.argyllcommunities.org and www.absen.org.uk.

Joint training programme for upskilling of community development staff across community planning partners, including the Third Sector enabling and encouraging closer networking.

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**Argyll and Bute Third Sector Partnership**

This partnership gives a collective voice for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in Argyll and Bute and is a key player in community planning both locally and centrally. It is made up of:

- Argyll Voluntary Action
- Bute Community Links
- Islay and Jura CVS
- Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network
What are we going to do now?

We will continue to work with our partners to implement the recommendations of the Demonstration Project as described in this document. We have started implementing some of these recommendations, others still need to be progressed. To help us along the way we have produced an Action Plan and we will monitor this with our partners to make sure we are heading in the right direction.

We will share our learning with our Community Planning Partners, such as NHS Highland, and encourage them to work jointly with us in particular on training and consultation. In addition, we will share our learning with a wider community of interested people and organisations, helped by our colleagues in Carnegie UK Trust.

Above all, we will continue to work with our Third Sector partners to improve how we do business.

If you have any comments on how we can improve then do let us know, either by getting in touch with us at the Council or by contacting the Third Sector Partnership. Their contact details can be found at www.argyllcommunities.org.

Finally, a big thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to the Demonstration Project consultations.
Appendix 1 - External Consultees

The following organisations responded to the external dialogue questionnaire:

- Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau
- Argyll and Bute Care and Repair
- Argyll and Bute Council, Homelessness Service, Community Support
- Autism Argyll
- Bute Healthy Living / Bute Connections Ltd
- Cove Park Ltd
- Cowal Community Care Forum
- Craignish Community Company
- Crossroads (Cowal and Bute)
- Dalmally Community Company
- Dunbritton Housing Association
- East Esplanade Protection Group
- Feolin Study Centre, Jura
- Fyne Families
- Kidz Playgroup
- Lochgoil CC
- Mid Argyll Community Enterprises Ltd (trading as the Mid Argyll Community Pool)
- Mid Argyll Transport Volunteers
- Oban Community Sensory Group

The following Third Sector organisations were represented at one or more of the external dialogue events:

- Abbeyfield Kyles of Bute
- Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network
- Argyll and Bute Volunteer Centre
- Argyll Carers Network
- Access Panel
- Argyll Council of Voluntary Services
- Advocacy
- Ardrishaig Community Trust
- Argyll and Bute Women’s Aid
- Argyll Befrienders for Children
- Big Green Tarbert
- Bridgend Community Centre / Garden
- British Red Cross
- Bruichladdich Village Hall
- Bute Community Links
- Bute Connections
- Bute Forum for the Elderly
- Bute Healthy Living Initiative
- Campbeltown Community Organic Garden
- Community Enterprise Company / MacTaggart Centre
- Compass
- CATCHES (Cowal Against the Cuts in Health Services)

- Cowal Community Care Forum
- Cowal Elderly Befriending
- Cowal Locality Public Partnership Forum
- Credit Union
- Helensburgh and Lomond Carers Project
- Helensburgh and Lomond Highland Games
- Home-Start MAJK (Mid-Argyll, Jura, Islay and Kintyre)
- IDEAs (Islay Disabled Endeavours and Action)
- Islay and Jura Community Enterprise
- Islay and Jura CVS
- Islay and Jura Development Trust
- Islay and Jura Dolphins Amateur Swimming Club
- Islay Family History Society
- Islay Volunteer Development Project
- Justice and Peace Group (Cowal)
- Kintyre Community Care Forum
- Kyles Elderly Forum
- Lomond and Argyll Advocacy Service
- Link Club
- Lorn Counselling Service, Oban
- Luing Community Trust
- MS Centre Mid Argyll
- MS Group
- Mull and Iona Community Trust
- North Argyll Volunteer Car Scheme
- North Argyll Carers Centre
- Oban Youth Café Project
- Pass It On
- Quarriers Rooftops, Oban
- Recycle – Jura / Islay Group
- Route 81 Youth Project LTD
- Scottish Health Council
- Senscot
- Shop Mobility
- Social Enterprise Academy
- The Grab Trust
- Wheels of Change
- Women’s Aid

Statutory/public sector organisations represented at the external dialogue events:

- Ardrishaig Community Council
- Argyll and Bute Council
- Argyll and Bute Community Health Partnership
- Dunoon Community Council
- Strathclyde Fire and Rescue
- Strathclyde Police

(Note that a single person may have represented more than one organisation. Additionally, 27 individuals attended events but did not declare any affiliation to any particular organisation.)
Appendix 2 - Third Sector Access to Council Support Services - Implementation

Through the dialogues we undertook there was little support for a ‘single point of entry’. Our main customers, both internal and external, told us that they wished to see many entry points to information and support. Our customers include:

- Third Sector.
- Internal – officers and members working on particular projects as per corporate aims and outcomes.
- Community Engagement Team – This team will engage with the community to support the Local Area Community Planning Groups and may give rise to particular projects and information needs.

The ways that people currently contact the Council and the new ways that we propose reflect our customer’s desire for multiple points of entry. These are listed here and shown in the diagram below.

- **Entry Points**
  - There should be as many entry points as necessary to access information. Behind these there needs to be effective signposting and consistency with respect to information quality and service.

- **External calls to switchboard.**
- **External enquiries via Council owned premises.**
- **External enquiries direct to Officers.**
- **External enquiries to the Council Customer Service Centre.** We propose that low level information needs are handled through the contact centre.
- **External enquiries to the Economic Development.** This team will deal specifically with matters relating to development and growth of social enterprises.
Rather than a single point of entry our customers emphasised the need for consistency and quality of information and having a relationship with the customer ie ‘customer management’. In allowing multiple points of entry there must be a clear way to route and record enquiries. This could be achieved using the Council’s customer management system with the Customer Services Centre.

This system will allow for routine enquiries to be logged and answered with more complex enquiries directed to the most appropriate source of support (within the Council or an external partner). The diagram above shows this.
There are two main types of enquiries:

1. Simple information requests – ie providing information
2. Complex information requests – ie providing support

1. **Information** -

We propose that generic information on prescribed topics and signposting are hosted on the Council’s and partners’ websites and used by the customer service centre and Council departments, or accessed directly by Third Sector organisations. Enquiries which cannot be answered through these avenues will be directed to the most appropriate support service, these may be within the Council or external partner organisations.

2. **Support** -

Those enquiries which require ongoing support, such as applications for funding and developmental support, will be taken on as caseload by the relevant service, for example economic development for social enterprises, other council services for queries regarding assets and grant applications or partner organisations that provide support on particular topics.

**Customer Management**

The range of services and partners involved in providing support to third sector indicates that a coordinating group needs to be established. This would have an overview to ensure that:

- Enquiries are directed appropriately.
- Responses are consistent.
- Information is managed effectively to ensure consistency, accuracy and that it is up-to-date.
- Monitoring processes and making changes as required to manage contacts and deal with changing patterns of enquiries.

There are systems in place in local and national government to manage Third Sector enquiries. The Carnegie UK Trust undertook preparatory work to look at systems for ‘customer management’ that could help to inform developments within Argyll and Bute.

**Customer needs**

In looking at how we could implement a ‘customer management system’ we asked our customers what information and support they needed and considered how we could provide this information and support. The main categories of enquiries are highlighted in the diagram opposite. These are not exhaustive.

- **Skills and Training**

Skills development and training offered by different providers should be co-ordinated in partnership with Third Sector intermediaries. Opportunities for joint training or shared delivery should be considered to help improve quality, consistency and access.

- **Information on events**

Information about different events, road shows etc should be promoted alongside other information using the internet and other communications channels used by Third Sector organisations.

- **Advice and Support**

Customers that require specific information from departments to develop their projects should be encouraged to make direct contact using information provided via the internet. Where there is a risk that this will generate significant numbers of false enquiries contacts should be directed via the customer services centre.

- **Funding and Grants**

Information and support for applying for Council Grants will be co-ordinated/signposted through the Council website and would include signposting to LEADER and other European Funding Sources.
“Do you run health and safety training that I can access?

I want to run a café for families with a soft play area - who should I speak to?

I’m not sure what I need but if can talk through what I’m trying to do - you could maybe help?

Where can we get funding to develop our core paths?

I’m leading on an area for action - which 3rd Sector organisations are active in this area?

Where can I get a licence for fundraising in the street?

I want to save the monument in our village - does the Council have responsibility for it?

We want to build a play park for the kids in our village - who do we speak to?

My community want to buy the local school. Can you give me some advice?

Where can I get funding to repair our village hall?

What Council contracts can I bid for?

Information on these sources would be available on dedicated Council web pages and will include links to GrantNet searchable database of funders. These dedicated web pages will be shared/linked to Third Sector websites.

Support in identifying and applying for funding to external bodies will be given by the third sector intermediaries or Council officers for more significant projects or projects accessing European funding.
Harnessing the Potential of the Third Sector to Help Achieve Council Objectives

**Procurement**

Provide information on contracts available and training to bid for contracts organised in conjunction with partners and through Economic Development and Exchequer Services. Local procurement opportunities and information will be posted on the internet using specific websites as appropriate.

**Assets**

Information relating to the acquisition of Council assets will be made available via the Council website. Organisations requiring support to acquire an asset will be directed to the organisation most appropriate to their needs and circumstances.

**Strategic Projects**

Where a strategic project may require the involvement of a social enterprise, Economic Development will be invited to join the project team to ensure that opportunities for social enterprise are fully considered.

**ONGOING COMMUNICATION - Engagement**

We need to communicate with:

- Staff
- Partners
- Third Sector organisations
- Third Sector intermediaries and others providing support to the Third Sector (directly and through the Third Sector interface once established)
- Members
- National Bodies

Feedback from dialogues revealed an overwhelming desire for continuing to work in partnership to update and learn from each other.

We therefore propose that a main way of keeping up to date is to hold both internal and external events and training.

We also recognise that there is a need for cultural change both within the Council and in our relationships with external organisations and this will be part of our ongoing internal events and training, as well as our daily work in championing change.

Ongoing updating of information, websites and support staff will be the responsibility of each service provider and the proposed steering group will be responsible for building relationships with key staff across the Council and externally with partners.

The strong desire expressed by participants in the dialogue for a regular flow of high quality, relevant information places a requirement on all the services supporting Third Sector organisations to coordinate communications. There are a range of mechanisms available to ensure that there is an effective dialogue and joint learning. These could include:

**Websites**

All partners supporting the Third Sector use websites as part of their normal business. These can be used directly by people seeking information and support as well as by the people providing that support. Information could encompass:

- Links and contact details for the different service providers (eg Council services, CVSs, ABSEN, national bodies).
- Information on different funding opportunities including Council grants, Leader, other European funding, ALERT funding bulletin and the GrantNet funding database.
- Procurement and potential contracting opportunities.
- Training opportunities and events.
- Links to supporting background information that could be of benefit to...
Harnessing the Potential of the Third Sector to Help Achieve Council Objectives

Training and Support Programmes

**Training** – provided by a range of organisations to support effective management and development of third sector organisations. Training can also include briefings and updates on policy, legal matters and new information on funding and other similar topics.

**Support** – mentoring, job swaps, skills support in a range of tasks such as finance, HR, business planning etc.

**Events**

These may include:

- Internal briefing events in public sector partners to ensure key officers are aware of developments in the Third Sector and opportunities that may support service delivery.

- A range of broader events in local areas and Argyll and Bute wide as part of the regular communication and community engagement activities.

Third Sector Interface

Once established, the Third Sector interface will be an important part of the development and delivery of services to support Third Sector organisations.

The interface would be important in the management of regular communications to and from third sector organisations – these communications may be via briefings, e-mail updates, newsletters, items in the media etc.

Community Planning Partnership Funding Hub

To ensure joint learning/understanding of funding streams and of funding related issues and support services provided. Direct feedback to projects on developing bids provided by Hub members and opportunity for joint discussion between funders to raise and resolve issues.

Third Sector Spokesperson

- Regular contact with senior manager responsible for management of support services to the Third Sector or for commissioning services that may be provided by social enterprises.

- Links with Scottish Ministers, Scottish Rural Development Council, Carnegie UK Trust and others.

The support landscape

The Third Sector landscape is complex with many organisations of different sizes and types providing many services. The range of support available is also complex and the partners need to provide clear information to help people navigate their way to the best source of information, support or advice. This will encompass a range of service providers operating locally, regionally and nationally.
Harnessing the Potential of the Third Sector to Help Achieve Council Objectives - A Demonstration Project
Harnessing the Potential of the Third Sector to Help Achieve Council Objectives

If you would like this document in another language or format, or if you require the services of an interpreter, please contact us at the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership on 01546 602127 or email cpp.enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Ma tha sibh ag iarraigh an sgriobhainn seo ann an cànan no richead eile, no ma tha sibh a' feumachdainn seirbheis eadar, feuch gun leig sibh fios thugainn.

Gaelic

Jeżeli chciałiby Państwo otrzymać ten dokument w innym języku lub w innym formacie albo jeeli potrzebna jest pomoc Uumacza, to prosimy o kontakt z nami.

Polish

यह वस्तुतः बतो आपको किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य स्थान में बाहिरे, या आपको आनुवाद-सेवाओं की आवश्यकता हो तो हमसे संपर्क करें

Hindi

پہلی آنات رکے کو وہ میں کھڑکے ہوں ایک بار ہے، بس ہے بہتیں ٹائم اینڈ میکس کل سمجھیں ہیں، سوا کہ ہے ٹائم کی اپنے کیے کوئی سیاہی ہے۔

Urdu

日本語

本文件可以翻譯為另一種語言版本，或製作成另一格式，如有此需要，或需要翻譯員的協助，請與我們聯絡。

Cantonese
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