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**Report to: Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date: 2 December, 2010**

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**Subject: Local Community Planning**

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**Report by: Head of Strategy & Customer Services**

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## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 A report to the Scrutiny Focus Group on community planning stated that Group's opinion that community planning in Clackmannanshire appeared to operate on a "top down" as opposed to a "bottom up" basis.
- 1.2 The Committee, subsequently, requested further information on local community planning and this paper provides a briefing on the subject.

## **2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes this report.

## **3.0 Background**

- 3.1 In Clackmannanshire there is no collectively organised local community planning structure or model where specific geographic communities produce local community plans which set out those communities' ambitions for their areas.
- 3.2 Other community planning partnerships do, however, have formal and structured local community planning and some examples are as follows:

### Falkirk

- 3.3 Falkirk community planning partnership has four local plans as follows:
  - *Larbert and Stenhousemuir* covering Larbert, Stenhousemuir, Torwood, Carron, Carronshore and the Forthside villages of Airth, Letham, Dunmore and South Alloa (population covered around 24,000);
  - *Grangemouth* (population covered around 17,000)
  - *Denny and District* covering Banknock, Bonnybridge, Denny, Denny South, and Herbertshire (population covered around 22,000)
  - *The Braes* encompassing Avonbridge, Brightons, California, Laurieston, Limerigg, Maddiston, Polmont, Redding, Reddingmuirhead, Shieldhill,

Slamannan, Standburn, Wallacestone, Westquarter and Whitecross  
(population covered around 26,000)

3.4 There are also associated local forums.

#### East Lothian

3.5 Local community planning in East Lothian is organised around six local areas, largely corresponding with the multi-member Council wards.

3.6 Local community planning is focused around Local Area Forums which bring together community representatives and public service providers.

3.7 There are, currently, area plans for Musselburgh (population around 23,000) and Dunbar (population around 13,000).

#### West Lothian

3.8. Locality Plans have been produced for each of the nine multi-member wards in West Lothian. Examples of these are:

- Linlithgow (population around 14,000)
- Bathgate (population around 16,000)
- Armadale & Blackridge (population around 14,000)
- Broxburn, Uphall & Winchburgh (population around 20,000).

3.9 Local Area Committees have been established in every ward and provide a forum through which local issues can be discussed

#### Stirling

3.10 There are seven Area Community Planning Forums in the Stirling Community Planning Partnership, clustered as follows:

- Breadalbane Area Network (Balquhidder, Killin, Strathfillan and St Fillans National Park)
- Trossachs Area Network (Callander, Gartmore, Kilmadock, Port of Menteith, Strathard, Thornhill & Blairdrummond and Trossachs)
- Rural South West (Arnprior, Balfron, Buchanan, Buchlyvie, Carron Valley & District, Croftamie, Drymen, Fintry, Gargunnock, Killearn, Kippen and Strathblane)
- Dunblane
- Wallace (Braehead & District, Bridge of Allan, Cambuskenneth Causewayhead, Cornton, Mercat Cross, Raploch, Riverside)
- Borestone, Broomridge, Cambusbarron, Kings Park and Torbrex

- East Stirling Community Forum (Bannockburn, Cowie, Hillpark & Milton, Plean, Polmaise and Throsk)

3.11 Some of these area forums have actions plans, others do not. In addition, some locales within the wider areas have plans (usually at community council level).

### Clackmannanshire

3.12 There is no formal local community planning structure in Clackmannanshire, which is not to say that planning at local community level does not take place and influence partners. Local community planning in Clackmannanshire has tended either to emerge organically from communities or at the behest of one of the partners in relation to a specific initiative.

3.13 One of our community councils, Muckhart, is developing an area plan and undertook a questionnaire in 2009 to gather community views, primarily to provide Muckhart's core contribution to the Clackmannanshire Local Development Plan. Other local groups (whether community councils, tenants, residents or other neighbourhood organisations) are involved in a range of other issues.

3.14 Some examples of specific locality planning include: the Tullibody Healthy Living Initiative, the Alloa South & East Social Inclusion Partnership, the Community Improvement Zone and Bowmar Masterplan. These have tended, however, to have a specific focus, usually related to significant resource investment and have not necessarily derived organically from local communities *per se*.

3.15 There has not been any significant body of opinion coming forward to the Alliance from community groups or partners, either individually or collectively, to establish a formal locality planning framework under the auspices of community planning.

3.16 Local community planning has been discussed from time to time by the Joint Community Councils' Forum but has not been formally pursued.

## **4.0 Discussion**

4.1 Community planning partnerships tend to use local community planning models which, relative to the size of Clackmannanshire, cover large geographic or demographic areas. In some areas (e.g. Aberdeenshire, Edinburgh), populations of around 40-50,000 make up locality planning areas; in other (mainly rural) localities, very large physical areas tend to be covered.

4.2 Common features of local community planning models are that:

- local plans are drawn up with statutory support and input
- local plans describe local priorities as well as action to be taken locally
- there is a multi-agency forum/partnership for steering the development of the local plan and for monitoring delivery
- the exercise to gather information on local community needs is resourced by the community planning partnership

- local area forums are part of the community planning structures.
- 4.3 These local community planning models are broadly 'mini' community planning partnerships which deal with localised information and are concerned with delivery on the ground
- 4.4 Strengths of such local community planning models can include:
- it can be a developmental process for the community as well as a community planning partners
  - the local plan and action implemented under it can be evidence that the local community is influencing service providers
  - the local community plan should have community ownership and can serve the other purposes and interests of the community group, for example to lever funding, and gives the community partner 'partnership-working' credentials
  - there can be an opportunity for elected members to play a more active role in local partnerships
  - the process can be seen as 'bottom-up'.
- 4.5 Drawbacks can include:
- it can create additional tiers of community planning which have to be managed, resourced and staffed
  - it can add bureaucracy
  - it can lead to unrealistic and unfulfilled expectations
  - it can be overly driven/supported by partners other than community representatives
  - unless desired and driven by the community, it is not really "bottom up".
- 4.6 The Muckhart example in Clackmannanshire is interesting on two counts: firstly, it covers a very small area (both geographically and in terms of population); secondly, it has emerged organically from the locality rather than being part of a formal "community planning" structure.
- 4.7 The community council has undertaken and resourced the exercise itself. Its work has fed into the Local Development Plan and is viewed by the community council as assisting it, and others, to respond to future issues in Muckhart.
- 4.8 Our experience is that local community planning tends to be most effective when there are specific issues which ignite a response in a locality or which bind a community. In the case of Muckhart, these issues are very clearly expressed in the mission statement which is:

*"To retain and enhance the outstanding beauty of the area and its attractive residential communities, with the Conservation Area providing a strong focal point for these unspoilt settlements.*

*To maintain and strengthen the community and associated infrastructure through managed development, whilst still retaining the attractiveness of the area for residents and visitors who enjoy Muckhart and surrounding countryside."*

4.9 While formal structures can facilitate and support local community planning, they cannot in themselves create effective and meaningful local community planning.

## 5.0 Conclusions

5.1 To date, the development of a formal local community planning structure across Clackmannanshire has not been a priority for the Alliance and no representations from community groups have been made to it to establish such a structure. This is substantially to do with the small geography and population of the county which means that there is a relative ease with which local communities and communities of interest can engage with partners and be engaged by them.

5.2 There is, however, no bar to any communities which wish to develop a more structured approach to locality planning adopting the model followed by Muckhart community council. Eight areas across the county have community councils and there are also very active residents and tenants groups in a number of other areas which are involved in community planning (albeit not in a formalised locality planning structure).

5.3 There are aspects of good practice in other areas of Scotland and if the partnership wished to pursue local community planning, this could be drawn on and adapted to suit the contexts of Clackmannanshire.

## 6.0 Sustainability Implications - N/A

## 7.0 Resource Implications

*Financial Details* - there are no implications for the Council's budgets arising from this report

*Staffing* - there are no implications for the Council's establishment arising from this report

## 8.0 Exempt Reports

Is this report exempt? No

## 9.0 Declarations

9.1 The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

**Our Priorities 2008 - 2011** (Please tick )

The area has a positive image and attracts people and businesses

Our communities are more cohesive and inclusive

People are better skilled, trained and ready for learning and employment

Our communities are safer

Vulnerable people and families are supported

Substance misuse and its effects are reduced

Health is improving and health inequalities are reducing

The environment is protected and enhanced for all

The Council is effective, efficient and recognised for excellence

**Council Policies** (Please detail)

Corporate Plan

**10.0 Equalities Impact**

Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations? N/A

**11.0 Legality**

11.1 In adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

**12.0 Appendices** - none


**13.0 Background Papers**

Muckhart Community Council: Muckhart Area Questionnaire, 2009, Results

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**Approved by**

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