

**REPORT TO: NEIGHBOURHOOD RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
11 NOVEMBER 2002**

**REPORT ON: GIVING VOICE TO COMMUNITIES: EXTENDING RECOGNITION TO
NEIGHBOURHOOD REPRESENTATIVE STRUCTURES IN DUNDEE**

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT

REPORT NO: 725-2002

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report is brought forward at the same time as the new Scheme for the Operation of Community Councils in Dundee and recommends that, under certain circumstances, the recognition given to Community Councils should be extended to other neighbourhood representative organisations.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that

2.1.1 in conjunction with approving the new Scheme for the Operation of Community Councils (Report No. 790-2002), the Committee approves a process for extending recognition to other representative organisations.

2.1.2 The Committee approves the criteria for recognition of neighbourhood representative organisations, as detailed in Section 7 of this report.

2.1.3 Organisations satisfying the criteria set out in Section 7 of this report, and having received formal City Council recognition, qualify for access to support, information and consultation from all Council departments, along similar lines to that afforded to properly constituted and recognised Community Councils.

2.1.4. The Director of Neighbourhood Resources and Development be instructed to return to Committee in 12 months with a report detailing progress on the implementation of the strategy.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no direct Revenue costs arising from these recommendations that cannot be contained with the Neighbourhood Resources and Development Department's existing Revenue Budget. The additional staff time involved in extending access to information and communicating with a wider network of organisations is an opportunity cost which it is recommended should be accepted by the Council as part of its commitment to improving and extending consultation and community involvement.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The report and its recommendations address the key theme: "All sections of the community are empowered to participate in decision-making."

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Progress on increasing and extending community representation in Dundee will assist with the process of diversity and will enable a wider range of citizens to become involved in matters affecting their local neighbourhoods or communities of interest.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 The commitment to supporting “active, informed citizens” is central to the Council’s Corporate Plan and Scheme of Decentralisation and to the functions assigned to the Neighbourhood Resources and Development Department.
- 6.2 In October 2001, the City Council, in partnership with the Association of Dundee Community Councils, held a one-day seminar for community organisations, “Giving Voice to Communities”. The outcome of this seminar was reported to the Committee on 14 January 2002 (Report No. 22-2002).
- 6.3 Over the last nine months, four separate but related pieces of work have been taken forward. These are:
- Consultation and development on a revised Scheme for the Operation of Community Councils.
 - Consultation and approval of a Community Involvement Strategy for Dundee’s Community Planning Partnership.
 - Development of Dundee Partnership Protocol for Consultation
 - The development of criteria for the recognition of Neighbourhood Representative Structures.
- 6.4 Nationally, there have been further developments which reinforce the direction adopted in Dundee, and which indicate that Dundee is in the vanguard of promoting work in this field. In June this year the Government published its Neighbourhood Regeneration Statement – “Closing the Gap”. This statement places the community at the heart of the regeneration process and emphasises the need for “joined up” approaches to tackling regeneration.
- 6.5 The Local Government Bill which was brought before the Scottish Parliament on 16 May 2002 aims to improve the delivery of customer-focused public services. The Bill will formalise the status of community planning and there will be a requirement for more formalised methods of involving and engaging communities in the process of planning and monitoring service delivery.
- 6.6 The Government’s strategies for active citizenship, social inclusion partnerships, healthy living initiatives, community planning, new community schools and better neighbourhood services, all stipulate an expectation that citizens (service users) will be actively involved in determining priorities and in shaping the future direction of services.
- 6.7 This is a formal requirement for the majority of hypothecated and lottery funding for which the Council is bidding. There is also a clear expectation on the part of the Scottish Executive, and in the role given to Communities Scotland, that, as part of its role, the new Executive Agency will support and quality assure the success local authorities have in engaging with their citizens and in supporting a representative structure.
- 6.8 This report recognises that while each of these different processes have their own timetable and their own requirements, they should be viewed as part of an integrated process which has, at its heart, the objective of bringing the Council closer to its communities and strengthening both the support for, and the involvement of, active, informed citizens. The debates which underpin this process recognise the importance of ensuring democratic accountability and recognising that this accountability, and standards of efficacy are best assured by setting out a number of criteria which any organisation seeking to be recognised as a representative structure would be expected to fulfil.

- 6.9 The Council recognise that, in addition to “communities of place”, there are other communities of interest, faith etc. This report focuses on the process of offering recognition to neighbourhood based organisations.

6.10 **Innovations and Developments**

This process requires to recognise the emergence of different structures in different parts of Dundee.

Within Ardler, Mid-Craigie/Linlathen, Kirkton and the Hilltown areas, there are local networks established to formalise community input to the management of the Social Inclusion Partnership.

Earlier this year, the Committee approved the arrangements for the establishment of a Village Trust covering the Ardler area of the City (Report No. 337-2002). It would be consistent to recognise the Ardler Village Trust as a neighbourhood representative structure for that area.

Similarly, work is being taken forward by the West End Community Council to establish a Community Trust in the West End of Dundee. The Council have assisted this group to access funding for consultancy support.

The Stobswell Forum has also become formalised with charitable status, office bearers and a Constitution which sets out the purpose of acting as a neighbourhood representative structure.

In Whitfield, community organisations have come together to form the Whitfield Inclusion Network (WING), an umbrella organisation for the area. The Council has assisted this group access accommodation in the Community Services Complex.

Through a Scottish Executive funded training programme called “Working Together, Learning Together”, representatives from SIP2 communities have been brought together on six occasions over the last 15 months. This has involved 40 people in the decision-making process. The group wish to continue to meet to support implementation of SIP2.

7.0 **CRITERIA FOR RECOGNITION**

- 7.1 Prior to the City Council recognising an organisation as representative of any given community, the following criteria would require to be satisfied:

- The organisation should be constituted and have named office bearers.
- There should be a clear statement of the geographic area which the group/organisation represents. This will not normally be smaller than the area/population covered by a local authority Ward.
- There should be a clear statement on eligibility for membership.
- Accountability mechanisms should be in place, ie AGM/election of office bearers/code of conduct/ presentation of annual accounts/etc.
- The organisation seeks to ascertain and express the views of the community on any matter which may arise.
- Strategies for involvement of constituents (the community) should be described.
- The organisation should not exist to promote one political or religious opinion to the exclusion of others.

- There should be a commitment to act in a way which is consistent with accepted standards of public behaviour, i.e. on financial probity, declarations of personal interest, equal opportunities, and other aspects of the law.

8.0 THE PROCESS OF ACHIEVING RECOGNITION

- 8.1 It would be the responsibility of the Director of Neighbourhood Resources and Development to ensure that an organisation seeking recognition as a neighbourhood representative structure has achieved the standards set out in Section 7 of this report, and to bring an appropriate recommendation to the Neighbourhood Resources and Development Committee for City Council recognition.
- 8.2 Consultation mechanisms will be subject to regular review to assess their effectiveness. The weight given to views expressed will be influenced by this assessment of the effectiveness of the organisation.
- 8.3 It is the Council's intention to widen the base of community involvement and this particular strategy is intended to make the most effective use of the Council's resources and its ability to support this process. It recognises that, on a more local basis, groups will form around specific issues and, where it can, the Council will continue to support these developments. This report will not weaken any entitlements that may exist for groups operating at a scale below the level defined for recognised neighbourhood representative structures.
- 8.4 However, no two organisations will be recognised by the Council as serving the same neighbourhood. If a competitive situation ever arises, the Council will give priority to an appropriately constituted Community Council.
- 8.5 Under these circumstances, Neighbourhood Resources and Development Department would facilitate a process which would attempt to enable the community to come to a consensus.

9.0 ENTITLEMENTS

- 9.1 Any organisation recognised by Dundee City Council as a neighbourhood representative structure would have the following rights.
- a. A formal right to consultation on any matter relating to the organisation's defined area of interest, ie their neighbourhood.
 - b. Eligibility to apply to Dundee City Council for grant aid (subject to specific criteria).
 - c. The right to consultation on area plans/implementation strategies/area budgets.
 - d. A named contact within the Council who will assist and advise the group.
 - e. Assistance with access to accommodation for meetings in Council premises.

10.0 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The Chief Executive and the City Council Management Team have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.
- 10.2 The report has also been discussed by the Building Stronger Communities Theme Group of the Dundee Partnership and with the Association of Dundee Community Councils.

10.3 The report has also been discussed with community representatives involved in the "Giving Voice to Communities" process at a recall event held on 2 October 2002. This meeting generated a series of implementation issues which will be taken forward jointly by Neighbourhood Resources and Development Department, Association of Dundee Community Councils and representatives from other neighbourhood structures.

11.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

Fraser R Patrick, Director of Neighbourhood Resources and Development

Signed: 4 November 2002

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REGISTER OF RECOGNISED NEIGHBOURHOOD REPRESENTATIVE GROUPS

	TYPE OF GROUP	REPRESENTING	RIGHT TO RECOGNITION AS A NEIGHBOURHOOD REPRESENTATIVE STRUCTURE	OTHER RECOGNITION CRITERIA
1	Community Councils	Total population of a designated geographic area	Automatic	Scheme of operation for Community Councils
2	Tenants/Residents Associations	Registered tenants of a designated geographic area	Section 7 of this report	Housing Department/DFTA criteria for TA's
3	Community Associations, eg Whitfield Inclusion Network	Designated community	Section 7 of this report	Constitution, office bearers, AGM, Community feedback mechanism
4	SIP Groups – Ardler, Kirkton, Mid Craigie/Linlathen, Hilltown	SIP designated communities	Section 7 of this report	Formed in line with Dundee Partnership Criteria
5	Development Trusts e.g. Ardler Village Trust	Designated neighbourhood	Section 7 of this report	Constitution, office bearers, AGM, Community feedback mechanism