

**REPORT TO: NEIGHBOURHOOD RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
- 10 March 2003**

REPORT ON: WORKING AND LEARNING TOGETHER TO BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT AND
DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE PLANNING**

REPORT NO: 218-2003

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report provides a summary of the main points set out in the Scottish Executive guidance note to local authorities and their community planning partners. It also summarises the views of those consulted locally in relation to this draft guidance.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee are invited to:

- 2.1 note and comment on Dundee's response to the consultation; and
- 2.2 instruct the Director of Neighbourhood Resources and Development to forward these views to the Scottish Executive.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no direct implications arising from the consultation.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Access to the skills, knowledge and information needed to enable everyone to play a full part in society is a key theme of Agenda 21 and central to the process of community learning and development.
- 4.2 Effective community learning and development work should also empower all sections of the community to participate in decision-making.
- 4.3 Many of the activities recognised by the Scottish Executive as contributing to the delivery of community learning and development also support implementation of Agenda 21 recommendations, particularly as these relate to increasing knowledge and understanding of the environmental impact of decisions; promoting diversity and protecting nature; meeting needs locally; promoting access to goods and services at affordable prices; undertaking satisfying work and diverse economy and valuing unpaid work; promoting health and ensuring people can live without fear of personal violence from crime or because of their beliefs, race, gender or sexuality.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The values set out in the Scottish Executive draft guidelines (Para 8.2) are underpinned by a commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities and anti discriminatory practice.
- 5.2 Effective community learning and development work recognises disadvantage and should have the effect of addressing inequalities.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 On 23 January 2003, the Scottish Executive Development Department published guidance which is intended to support the community planning guidance issued in October 2002, and sets out the important challenges facing Community Planning Partnerships and those public and voluntary sector organisations which support community learning and development.
- 6.2 The central theme of the guidance note is to promote closer working between partner agencies and

to encourage the targeting of resources on disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities.

- 6.3 In her forward to the document, Margaret Curran, MSP, Minister for Social Justice, states, “We want to see community learning and development playing a more central role in supporting the involvement of communities, including young people, in the community planning process. In this regard, the guidance strengthens the link between community learning and development and community planning at all levels. The guidance provides advice on local strategies and plans for community learning and development and their relationship with other planning processes, and on community involvement, quality and evaluation issues, profile-raising, professional development and management information”.

7.0 THE GUIDANCE AND DUNDEE’S RESPONSE

- 7.1 The working draft guidance is set out in four parts:

Part 1 – a statement explaining what community learning and development is, and the Scottish Executive’s main aims.

Part 2 – sets out the purpose of the guidance in the context of community planning.

Part 3 – provides advice about the processes that will be used to develop community learning and development partnerships, strategies and plans, and how these are related to wider community planning requirements and other service plans.

Part 4 – provides advice about quality, raising the profile of community learning and development, professional development of staff and management information issues.

- 7.2 The draft guidance also provides a glossary of the main terms used.

8.0 SECTION 1: DEFINING COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 8.1 The Scottish Executive defines this as “informal learning and social development work with individuals in groups in their communities. The aim of this work is to strengthen communities by improving people’s knowledge, skills and confidence, organisational ability and resources”. It is now widely recognised that this approach makes an important contribution towards promoting lifelong learning, social inclusion and active citizenship.

- 8.2 These goals are closely aligned to the work of the Neighbourhood Resources and Development Department in Dundee. The approach is based on the same principles that have informed the work of the Department since its inception in 1996:

- empowerment – increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence community circumstances
- participation – supporting people to take part in decision-making and broadening the base of involvement
- inclusion – equal opportunity and anti-discrimination, recognising that some people have more restricted opportunities and influence so should be given particular attention
- self-determination – supporting the right of people to make their own choices
- partnership – recognising that many agencies can contribute to community learning and development, and should work together to make the most of the resources available and to be as effective as possible.

- 8.3 In the first section of the revised Scottish Executive guidance, there is strong direction provided to Community Planning Partnerships (CPP’s) to target their community learning and development support on disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities, and those who are at risk of becoming disadvantaged.

8.4 The guidance also states that the Scottish Executive “want to emphasise that we do not want to restrict community learning and development support only towards disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities. Our aim is that all communities across Scotland have access to community learning and development support if they need it. However, we want to see CPP’s giving more attention to closing the inequalities gap, and tackling social justice and community regeneration priorities”.

8.5 The guidance then sets out the four national priorities for community learning and development as follows:

- to raise standards of achievement in learning for adults, in core skills of literacy and numeracy and information communications technology, and through community based lifelong learning opportunities;
- to support the personal and educational development of young people, increasing levels of personal, social and educational ability;
- to give individuals, groups and communities, the organisational skills they need to tackle issues of concern;
- to support individuals, groups and communities, including young people, to work with and influence the planning and delivery of services at local and strategic levels. The Scottish Executive’s aim is to “increase the effect the community has on planning and service-delivery decisions”.

9.0 RESPONSES TO SECTION 1

9.1 The guidelines do not resolve the difficulty faced by local authorities in terms of prioritising scarce resources on those communities, groups and individuals who may experience the greatest disadvantage while maintaining commitment to universal provision.

9.2 Despite the priority attached to this area of work by the Scottish Executive, there are few areas of community learning and development which have benefited from an additional allocation of resources. The main exception to this is literacy/numeracy. By establishing a baseline of provision and providing additional resources, the local authority and its partners have been able to clearly demonstrate to the Scottish Executive their capacity to increase both the range and scope of provision and to achieve the Scottish Executive’s goals. If this model was applied to other key areas of provision such as youth work and community regeneration, there might be less concern about the difficulty currently faced in meeting the Scottish Executive’s own targets in respect of prioritisation and universal provision.

9.3 The local consultation event in Dundee highlighted the concerns about the potentially negative effect of labelling whole communities and groups as disadvantaged. There was a strong view expressed that, in a city with high levels of poverty, it is not helpful to talk in these terms but rather to take a needs based approach and to promote models of provision for young people and adults which emphasise inclusion.

9.4 Overall, the guidance was welcomed but there was a strong feeling that there needed to be stronger connections made and perhaps stronger guidance given in relation to the integration of community learning and development within the new and emerging community planning frameworks.

9.5 The community learning and development approach has the potential to enhance the community involvement of all aspects of the community planning process.

10.0 SECTIONS 2 AND 3: COMMUNITY PLANNING AND JOINING UP THE PLANNING PROCESS

10.1 Section 2 sets out in more detail, the importance that the Scottish Executive attaches to Community Planning Partnerships adopting a community learning and development approach in the delivery of the main public service and quality-of-life outcomes. The guidance highlights that, under Section 16 of the Local Government Scotland Act (2003), Community Planning Partnerships must involve communities in the planning process.

10.2 This section also recognises the importance of establishing clear links between strategic and local plans.

- 10.3 It notes that the HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) have confirmed the value of partner agencies working together with local communities to agree strategies and plans for community learning and development and that this is reflected in their current and future inspection priorities.
- 10.4 The guidelines identify the importance attached by the Scottish Executive to the development of closer relationships between action planning related to community learning and development, New Community Schools, health improvement plans, children's plans, community guidance strategies and other planning processes, as well as the service plans of all CPP agencies.
- 10.5 The clear message coming through this section of the guidance is the desire on the part of the Scottish Executive to see a close relationship between community learning and development planning and the emergence of local strategies including those relating to lifelong learning.

11.0 RESPONSES TO SECTIONS 2 AND 3

- 11.1 The bulk of this section deals with the relationships between Community Learning and Development Partnership, Community Planning Partnerships, the role of the local authority and community and user representation.
- 11.2 While the guidance sets out to integrate community learning and development into the community planning process, the linkage needs to be made even clearer. It was suggested that a graphic or diagram might assist in representing the overlapping relationship between the localised (neighbourhood) version of the community plan and a community learning and development plan focused on the same neighbourhood. These could be one and the same.
- 11.3 The guidance makes clear the Scottish Executive's expectation that communities and users should be represented on strategic and local partnerships.

In Dundee's case, this recommendation is welcomed and reinforces the advances already made through the development of the Geographic Social Inclusion Partnership, the locally managed projects that it sponsors, the policy for supporting the development of neighbourhood representative structures across the city and the recent revisions made to the Council's Scheme for the Operation of Community Councils.
- 11.4 Dundee has gone further than many other Councils in providing a range of opportunities for its citizens to become involved with and inform public policy and service planning. However, it would stop well short of claiming that it "engages all members of a community" – in this respect, the guidance is unrealistic and should be reframed to set a more realistic goal.
- 11.5 Finally, in this section, the guidance helpfully points to the dynamic relationship between strategic goals and local priorities and the tensions which will inevitably exist in any process of priority setting.
- 11.6 Rather than view this as an area of difficulty, the Dundee consultation recognised that in fact it provided the environment within which community learning and development can really take place. Decisions about the allocation of resources and the prioritisation of work are, by their nature, contested. It is within these discussions that citizens can assist a responsive local authority and its community planning partners to address real issues.
- 11.7 While the guidance recognises the nature of this debate, it may be overly simplistic in its aspiration that "the key is that local outcomes have been agreed between the partners and communities. While we want to see all partnerships tackling the four national priorities, CPP's will have their own priorities, as will local communities" – this statement appears to contradict the earlier objective of strategic targeting and fails to recognise the very real resource pressures on the local authority as the primary delivery agency for community learning and development. It is simply not possible to adequately address all four national priorities, meet CPP's aspirations as well as those of local communities.
- 11.8 For the guidance to recognise this challenge without providing any resources to assist in meeting the challenge, has inevitably created some disappointment.

12.0 SECTION 4: QUALITY, PROFILE RAISING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

12.1 The Scottish Executive guidelines identify a number of mechanisms which will be used to evaluate the quality of delivery at a local level. These include:

- Continuing inspections by Her Majesty's Inspector of Education (HMIE)
- A renewed emphasis on the self-evaluation and monitoring activity both of individual workers and service providers
- The development of a new national framework for the collection of management information
- The promotion of in-service training opportunities based on the learning, evaluation and planning (LEAP) framework

12.2 Published at the same time as the guidelines for the delivery of community learning and development, the Scottish Executive's response to the review of training for this field of work which was chaired by Fraser Patrick, makes a clear case for a shift in training priorities and a broadening of the base of access routes into vocational posts in the field of community learning and development.

13.0 RESPONSES TO SECTION 4

13.1 The proposed arrangements for quality assurance and evaluation of the work of community learning and development are broadly welcomed and reflect current practice and areas in which field staff have identified scope for improvement.

13.2 One point that was felt to be insufficiently clear was the authority of the HMIE to inspect areas of provision which now came under the umbrella of Community Planning Partnerships and are no longer the exclusive responsibility of the local authority as the main provider.

13.3 Consultation identified that while the Scottish Executive is describing a far more integrated planning and evaluation process, in reality the different funding streams made available for New Community Schools, Better Neighbourhood Services, Social Inclusion Partnerships, Health Improvement Programmes, Literacy Action Plans etc created a situation where each national programme was subject to its own evaluation framework and there was little evidence at a national level of how these different frameworks were to be integrated.

13.4 It was suggested that in responding to the draft guidelines, the City Council and its community planning partners urge the Scottish Executive to examine critically the cost/benefit of this programme based approach to evaluation over and against the development of more integrated funding and delivery frameworks.

13.5 In terms of the continuing professional development of staff and the training of those seeking access to this field of work, the Dundee consultation highlighted the continuing difficulty being experience by providers recruiting staff with sufficient skills and experience. There is a clear case for greater focus on both the in-service training needs of professionals working in this field from a range of backgrounds and the pre-service training needs. What is not clear from the Scottish Executive's response to the review of training is whether there will be additional funding made available to address these clear training priorities.

13.6 Partnerships were invited to comment on the development of joint management information systems. A number of partners have already worked together to create joint recording systems. However, as mentioned above, each agency is still subject to its own local and national performance monitoring regimes and, no matter how integrated planning and delivery mechanisms become locally, there is little evidence of a willingness on the part of Scottish Executive agencies to integrate their existing monitoring arrangements which are driven by separate national priorities. There is clearly scope for further work at a national level to be done to complement local efforts in this regard.

13.7 Copies of the guidelines and the accompanying training review have been made available in Councillors' lounges and can be downloaded direct from the Scottish Executive's website.

14.0 SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS FROM CONSULTATION

- Better guidance needed on how communities are to be involved
- Improve co-ordination of strategies at Scottish Executive level
- Recognise specialist infrastructures already exist
- More clarity needed on how planning processes inter-relate
- Clearer definitions are needed, ie clarification of lifelong learning/community learning development
- Simplify terminology to avoid confusion
- Clarify disadvantage related issues
- Without more resources (cash, time and support) the guidance expectations are unrealistic
- More needed to achieve the full benefits of shared ownership
- Better guidance needed on targeting, ie need to find ways of targeting resources without labelling communities; celebrating strength not promoting deficit models
- need to clarify emphasis on targeting and universal provision.

15.0 CONSULTATION

15.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Director of Support Services have been consulted on the content of this report.

15.2 The Dundee consultation event organised by Communities Scotland was attended by 70 representatives from the city, neighbouring authorities, higher and further education providers, voluntary sector organisations and enterprise companies.

This response has been discussed by the staff of Dundee's Neighbourhood Resources and Development Department and by the City's Community Learning Partnership.

A number of these organisations are likely to make their own responses to the consultation.

16.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 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.

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