

**REPORT TO: NEIGHBOURHOOD RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE –
8 SEPTEMBER 2003**

REPORT ON: SETTING STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

REPORT BY: HEAD OF COMMUNITIES

REPORT NO: 580-2003

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To brief the City Council on proposals that Dundee take part in a national standards development project funded by the Scottish Executive.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

2.1 the City Council notes the proposal that Dundee take part in the national standards development project for community engagement.

2.2 the Head of Communities leads a small working group of representatives from the City Council and its community planning partners to support implementation of this project as part of the local commitment to community engagement.

2.3 the outcomes of the Standards Project be fed back to community groups, the City Council, Community Planning Partnership and other stakeholders in addition to any national reporting which may take place.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There will be little or no additional costs to the Local Authority for participating in this initiative.

3.2 The direct costs for evaluators/researchers and any seminars etc will be met by the Scottish Executive.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Agenda 21 highlighted the importance of meeting local needs locally. This project is focused on the commitment to developing civic participation as an essential tool of modern government. It is a direct response to the Policy Memorandum accompanying the Local Government Scotland Bill (2002) which states: "community planning is about involving communities themselves and agreeing priorities and how these priorities can be delivered" (para 40).

4.2 The Bill itself (Part 2, Section 26, para 1a(ii)) sets out the requirement that provision and planning of public services takes place: "after consultation... with community bodies.... as is appropriate".

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 From their inception the Scottish Parliament and Executive have emphasised the importance of effective participation. The report of the consultative steering group on the Scottish Parliament stated: "civic participation is an essential tool of modern government". It argued that: "inclusiveness in the policy making process is a key principle at the core of the modernising government agenda".

5.2 In their publication "Civic Participation" the Scottish Executive Policy Unit argued that "better policy, building ownership and consensus around some policy outcomes"... will come from improved community engagement.

6.0 BACKGROUND

6.1 Following work undertaken by the Scottish Social Inclusion Network, a two-year research project has been funded by Communities Scotland to develop and pilot standards for community engagement for Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland.

6.2 The successful contractor for this project is the Scottish Community Development Centre.

6.3 While community planning provides the momentum for the proposal, there is a wide range of current partnerships and participation initiatives in which standards guidance is expected to be beneficial. Examples of partnerships that require to demonstrate community engagement include:

- Social Inclusion Partnerships
- Better Neighbourhood Services Fund Initiatives
- Community Learning Partnerships
- Community Care Planning
- Community Safety Partnerships

7.0 RESEARCH PROJECT

7.1 The programme of work to develop standards for community engagement is to be conducted in two phases.

7.2 Phase one is currently underway and will conclude around Christmas 2003 – this focuses on:

- investigation of the issues to be addressed within the standards
- development of draft standards and guidance
- consultation on the draft standards and guidance, and
- revision to enable working drafts to be completed.

7.2 Phase two will take place over 15 months and will commence around December 2003 and will:

- apply and test standards in six selected areas of Scotland
- in the light of experience, revise standards and accompanying guidelines
- present a final set for the endorsement by key public and community agencies.

7.3 The Neighbourhood Resources and Development Department was asked to host one of 10 focus groups, taking place across Scotland during June 2003. This group was well attended and the facilitators observations confirmed the maturity of understanding on the part of community representatives and support workers in relation to the task of developing and extending community engagement.

7.4 Dundee has now been invited to be one of the six Scottish pilot areas for the development of standards.

8.0 BENEFIT TO DUNDEE

8.1 The Standards Project has the potential to build on the experience already gained in Dundee and enable this experience to influence national standards which, subsequently, will be used to evaluate the performance of community planning partnerships and other mechanisms, where the Scottish Executive has an expectation of community engagement.

8.2 The additional benefit is that the participation should enable the existing discussions on a community involvement strategy for the Community Planning Partnership to be more sharply focused and more rigorously applied.

9.0 SELECTING PIECES OF WORK FOR SCRUTINY

9.1 The choice of which pieces of work are the subject of scrutiny will come down to the City Council and its community planning partners.

9.2 The selection process should be based on voluntary participation by those involved and agreement by the host community. Selection should reflect:

- different contexts, ie regeneration priority areas/areas with no additional funding
- thematic and geographic initiatives
- public and voluntary sector lead
- community involvement in projects/service delivery/policy development.

10.0 CONSULTATION

10.1 The City Council Management Team has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

10.2 The proposal that Dundee takes part in the pilot phase of the Community Engagement Standards Project was endorsed by the Dundee Focus Group on 27 June 2003.

10.3 At its meeting on 11 July 2003 the Dundee Community Planning Partnership gave their endorsement to the project.

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.

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1 September 2003