Research and Library Service
Briefing Paper

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Planning Systems and Vulnerable Group Engagement

Introduction

This papers looks at the how vulnerable groups are represented in the planning systems of other jurisdictions i.e. England, Scotland, Wales and Republic of Ireland. Local authorities in all four jurisdictions have developed a range of processes and structures to enable community engagement. In most cases these are supported and facilitated by community planning support or networking organisations in the community and voluntary sectors, and this paper will also look at some examples of this.

Scotland

The 1994 Local Government Act introduced a Statutory right of consultation for Community Councils. According to information supplied by Community Places[1], there

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[1] Community Places advises community groups and individuals on planning issues; supports Community Planning; facilitates community consultation and research; and advises community building projects. http://www.communityplaces.info/

are 1200 Community Councils across Scotland. Each receives a weekly list of planning applications and the Planning Authority must consult with them. There is an agreed procedure in place in each case.

The Community Councils receive professional planning advice and support from Planning Aid Scotland (PAS) which also provides free advice to disadvantaged people. It employs 11 staff and is funded by the Scottish Executive's Planning Division.

PAS offers:

Advice

By providing a free, impartial advice service to people to aid understanding and assist engagement with the planning system. The service is provided by volunteers, who are all fully qualified and experienced planners based throughout Scotland.

Advice is given on any planning issue, from home extensions, wind farms, schools, public spaces, new shopping centres and roads, how to support or object to planning applications, how to get planning permission and how to get involved with Development Plans. It also deals with questions about planning appeals, enforcement etc.

Training

PAS offers a range of training programmes for a range of people from those with no experience in planning to those who are experts in the field (communities, developers and professionals). Training is delivered by professional planners, communications specialists, legal experts, community artists and others, on weekdays and Saturdays.

Training and advice service leaflets have been circulated all over Scotland to planning offices, libraries, community venues, Citizens Advice Bureaux, community groups, MSP constituency offices etc.

Education

PAS offers education programmes for young people aged 8-25 years. These projects are specially designed for all young people, from primary school age through to young adults. For more information visit
http://www.planningaidscotland.org.uk/page/122/Education.htm

Mentoring

The Planning Mentoring Scheme is a new programme, funded by the Big Lottery Fund[2] and Supporting Voluntary Action (SVA)[3], linking Planning Aid for Scotland (PAS) with

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[2] http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/

[3] http://www.scvo.org.uk/SVA/Home/Home.aspx

Community and Voluntary Service (CVS)[4] organisations and third sector "Interfaces". This provides planning advice and guidance to community led development projects across rural Scotland.

Key to the Planning Mentoring Scheme is the PAS role in helping empower people in an independent and impartial way. The scheme has been designed to guide and provide technical expertise to community led projects across rural Scotland at different stages of their development. The PAS network of volunteers provides guidance and advice, demonstrating how communities can shape their own neighbourhoods.

The programme provides for sustained collaborative working by all stakeholders to facilitate active engagement by CVSs in the planning system. It assists in developing projects that are put forward by community groups and CVSs, and owned by them, to enhance their asset base and leave transferable skills in communities.

The scheme demonstrates how the Interface organisations and others can use their creativity and ideas to create sustainable and lasting legacies in their communities.

The Planning Mentoring Scheme has four key aims:

1. Demonstrate how community groups and CVSs can participate in shaping their environment and achieve positive outcomes by working closely with PAS over a longer period of time.
2. Provide an opportunity for planning professionals to increase awareness and understanding of how to best engage with CVSs.
3. Help community groups and CVSs to enhance and deepen their understanding of how to work positively with the planning system and deliver their objectives.
4. Link planning mentors with community groups and CVSs to build capacities and share knowledge across Scotland. [5]

PAS reaches out to most excluded in Scotland

On the 4th November 2010 PAS, with the support of the Scottish Traveller Education Programme, facilitated a seminar which aimed to bring together planning professionals and organisations who work with Gypsy/Travellers or Gypsy/Traveller issues in Scotland. The aim was to share experience and good practice, and to discuss key learning points for taking forward in their work, along with encouraging participants to work together more effectively and to understand where to access relevant advice and information. The objectives of the seminar were to enable:

- A better working relationship between Gypsy/Traveller support organisations and planning professionals.

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[4] http://www.scvo.org.uk/cvsnetwork/Home/Home.aspx

[5] For more information visit http://www.planningaidscotland.org.uk/page/117/Mentoring.htm

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- A greater understanding of the needs of Gypsy/Travellers among planning professionals and how best to engage with Gypsy/Travellers on planning issues.

- A greater understanding of planning and the opportunities to engage with the planning system among Gypsy/Travellers and the organisations which seek to support them.[6]

Wales

According to Community Places, in Wales there are 735 community and town councils which are normally consulted on planning issues. Planning Aid Wales is funded by the Welsh Government to provide advice and support to disadvantaged communities and individuals and to support their involvement in planning processes.

England

Parish Councils have a statutory right to be consulted on planning applications. Under the Localism Bill the coalition Government is proposing that neighbourhood forums and parish councils be empowered to put forward projects for Neighbourhood Development Orders. The Planning Authority will be required to approve these projects where 50% of local people support them. The coalition Government has established a new Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning Fund to provide support for communities' engagement in planning.

Republic of Ireland

Community places informed that in 2006 the Government established a Taskforce on Active Citizenship. Its 2007 report found that barriers to inclusion and involvement included an absence of meaningful opportunities for participation. Its recommendations included capacity building for local and excluded communities, and lifelong learning programmes.

Local and Community Development Programme

The House of Oireachtas highlighted the use of the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) in Ireland, which is a programme initiated at State level but carried out by Local Development Companies at community level. The programme is targeted at: the unemployed, low income families, people with disabilities, disadvantaged young people, older people, early school leavers, and

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[6] For more information visit http://www.planningaidscotland.org.uk/news_more.asp?news_id=29&current_id=1

homeless people among others. The programme has a set of 4 aims, of which goal 4 and its objectives is of particular interest:
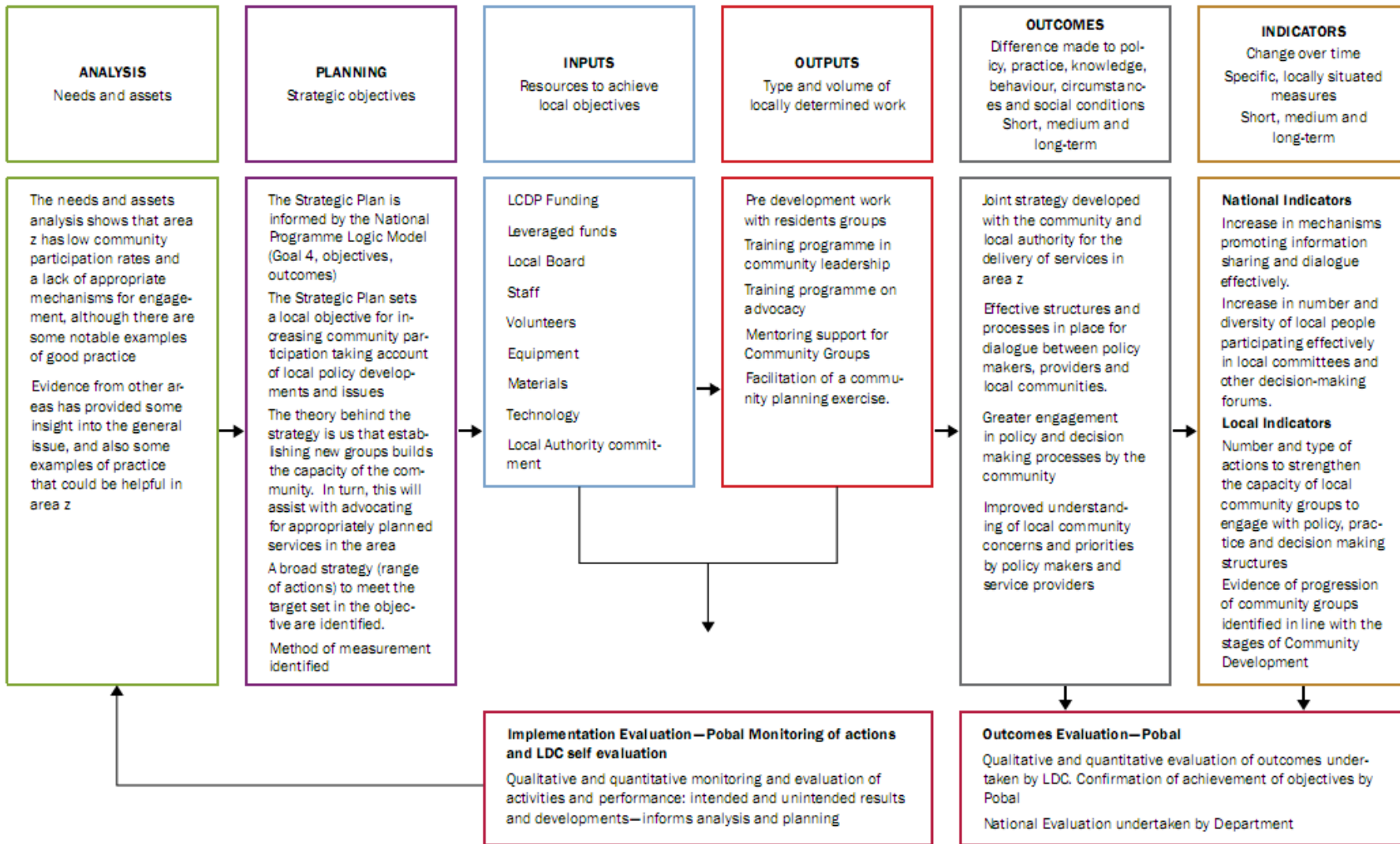

The programme identified the types of actions that would be necessary to achieve Goal 4:

- In house surveys and the compilation of data in relation to the needs and situation of particular target groups, these to include gender disaggregated data where appropriate;

- Actions focused on the mentoring processes of community development and enhancing community leadership;

- Training in management and organisational skills, including management training for community ownership of buildings and other assets;

- Training in negotiation, conflict resolution, representational and lobbying skills;

- Education/ Information on policy and decision-making structures;

- Provision of accessible information covering a range of development issues (see also goal one);

- Actions designed to promote equality and to combat discrimination, including positive action initiatives, health promotion initiatives, anti-racism actions etc;

- Actions to support volunteering; and

- Actions to support networks, and collaborations to support the achievement of strategic objective. Figure 10 shows how these actions can be applied[7]

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[7] Local and Community Development Programme Guidelines p.33)

Figure 10. Example area logic model for Goal 4

To support the development of capacity and coherence of the community of z in order to influence the planning of services in the area by the end of 2013

ANALYSIS Needs and assets	PLANNING Strategic objectives	INPUTS Resources to achieve local objectives	OUTPUTS Type and volume of locally determined work	OUTCOMES Difference made to policy, practice, knowledge, behaviour, circumstances and social conditions Short, medium and long-term	INDICATORS Change over time Specific, locally situated measures Short, medium and long-term
The needs and assets analysis shows that area z has low community participation rates and a lack of appropriate mechanisms for engagement, although there are some notable examples of good practice

Evidence from other areas has provided some insight into the general issue, and also some examples of practice that could be helpful in area z | The Strategic Plan is informed by the National Programme Logic Model (Goal 4, objectives, outcomes)

The Strategic Plan sets a local objective for increasing community participation taking account of local policy developments and issues

The theory behind the strategy is us that establishing new groups builds the capacity of the community. In turn, this will assist with advocating for appropriately planned services in the area

A broad strategy (range of actions) to meet the target set in the objective are identified.

Method of measurement identified | LCDP Funding

Leveraged funds

Local Board

Staff

Volunteers

Equipment

Materials

Technology

Local Authority commitment | Pre development work with residents groups

Training programme in community leadership

Training programme on advocacy

Mentoring support for Community Groups

Facilitation of a community planning exercise. | Joint strategy developed with the community and local authority for the delivery of services in area z

Effective structures and processes in place for dialogue between policy makers, providers and local communities.

Greater engagement in policy and decision making processes by the community

Improved understanding of local community concerns and priorities by policy makers and service providers | **National Indicators**

Increase in mechanisms promoting information sharing and dialogue effectively.

Increase in number and diversity of local people participating effectively in local committees and other decision-making forums.

Local Indicators

Number and type of actions to strengthen the capacity of local community groups to engage with policy, practice and decision making structures

Evidence of progression of community groups identified in line with the stages of Community Development |

Implementation Evaluation—Pobal Monitoring of actions and LDC self evaluation

Qualitative and quantitative monitoring and evaluation of activities and performance: intended and unintended results and developments—informs analysis and planning

Outcomes Evaluation—Pobal

Qualitative and quantitative evaluation of outcomes undertaken by LDC. Confirmation of achievement of objectives by Pobal

National Evaluation undertaken by Department

Engagement in Community Planning

The Rural Community Network in Northern Ireland has studied the concept of community planning throughout the UK and Republic of Ireland. According to their report 'A tale of two villages: Considerations for rurally sensitive community planning' in some parts of the world community planning is seen as a description for community involvement in physical and land use planning. In the UK and Republic of Ireland it is accepted as being loosely based around the concept that local people should be actively involved in planning the provision and delivery of public services that are tailored to meet the specific needs of their community.[8] Community planning can therefore be considered as an effective system to ensure complete community engagement that reaches out to all vulnerable, disadvantaged and socially excluded groups. The following section looks at examples of community planning from other jurisdictions.

Scotland

Community planning was one of three core elements within the Local Government in Scotland Act and as such became a statutory duty for local government.

Under the Local Government Act, statutory guidance on' Community Planning' was produced[9]. According to the guidance, under section 15 of the Act, equalities objectives[10] must be mainstreamed by local authorities and bodies into their involvement with community planning.

The guidance makes reference to a document prepared by the Scottish Equalities Co-ordinating Group detailing how to mainstream equalities. The guidance suggests the following action points: [11]

- Know the composition of the community the council serves. Are some groups over or under-using particular services?

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[8] RCN (2010), *A tale of two villages: Considerations for rurally sensitive community planning.* For more information see
http://www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org/publications/publicationlist.aspx?pub=R

[9] The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 Community Planning: Statutory Guidance
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47237/0028845.pdf

[10] In the guidance the term 'equalities' is used in its widest sense and would encompass not only gender, race, disability and sexual orientation but also individuals and groups facing discrimination on the grounds of age, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions [from definition of equal opportunities provided in Scotland Act 1998].

[11] Guidance on Equalities, Best Value, Community Planning and the Power to Advance Well-Being
www.cosla.gov.uk/attachments/publications/bvequalitiesguidance.pdf (p.15/16)

- Review existing methods of consultation, particularly in regard to whether equalities groups are under-represented and take action to redress any imbalance.

- Find more innovative ways to consult those individuals and groups who do not respond to the more traditional consultative mechanisms which take account of their needs and interests.   For example, the use of new technology in reaching housebound and other severely disabled people.

- Consider setting up specific forums for equalities groups.

- Work with existing community consultative bodies and advocates to strengthen their representativeness and their capacity to work in partnership with the council.

- Ensure all leaflets and publicity material is written in plain English, supported by graphics and available in ethnic minority languages, British Sign Language, Braille, large print, tape etc.

- Provide interpretation facilities and communications support services (eg sign language, interpreters and lip speakers) where needed.

- Organise consultation meetings at times and places which help those with caring responsibilities and/or provide crèche facilities, are accessible to disabled people etc.

Advice notes

Under the Scottish Executive's more detailed 'Community Planning advice note'[12] (to be read in conjunction with the statutory guidance), one of the principals for effective community engagement is 'Reaching Out'.

This involves reaching out to socially excluded communities and groups, such as people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and young people. In line with this, the Scottish Executive has produced a consultation toolkit to encourage and facilitate participation of young people in the decision making process. (For more information see the advice notes p.62 -65 http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47237/0028842.pdf)

Another key step[13] suggested is the identification of key barriers to engaging with communities and working out how these should be addressed, for example, through training and development work among staff or support for community groups or representatives. See, for example, Supporting Community Representatives: a discussion paper, Community Planning Task Force, 2001. (http://www.communityplanning.org.uk/documents/cptfwg3-community-reps.pdf)

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[12] Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 Community Planning: advice notes
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47237/0028842.pdf

[13] For further information on key steps for councils and their community planning partners see p.66 of the advice note.
(http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47237/0028842.pdf)

The advice note continues to suggest that community planning at the local level, linked to the Council-wide Community Plan, will play a particularly important role in helping to close the opportunity gap that exists between disadvantaged and better off communities. See Scottish Executive (2002) "Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the Gap"[14], and Scottish Executive 2003, "Community Regeneration Statement: implementation of Action Plan".[15]

According to RCN, one of the effects of the commitment to community planning through the Local Government in Scotland Act has been the creation of Community Planning Partnerships within all of Scotland's 32 local authority areas. RCN draws attention to a review of Community Planning carried out in 2006 by Audit Scotland. Audit Scotland was of the opinion that "community planning can add value to existing joint working by providing a local strategic framework and building a culture of co-operation and trust". However, the report also highlighted that there were ongoing difficulties with community planning in relation to differing geographic boundaries; the lack of clarity on community planning priorities; and ongoing challenges around ensuring that community engagement is sustained and systematic.

Single Outcome Agreements

As a further tier to the community planning structures within Scotland has been the creation of Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) in 2007 due to the establishment of a concordant between the Scottish Executive and Local Government. These are the mechanisms that enable the 32 Community Planning Partnerships to set and agree the strategic priorities for their local area. The SOA also details the responsibilities of individual community planning partners in making the SOA outcomes a reality and sets out how the local priorities contribute to the national outcomes of the Scottish Government. [16]

England and Wales

Within England and Wales, progress on community planning has had a similar focus to Scotland in that the emphasis is on public bodies identifying the needs of the communities they operate in and then looking to respond to these needs in an effective way. The promotion of wellbeing has been central to the moves around community planning within England and Wales and these powers were enshrined within the Local Government Act 2000. The Act has seen a requirement being placed on county and county borough councils to prepare 'community strategies' for promoting or improving

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[14] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/social/bcis-00.asp

[15] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/social/crsi-00.asp

[16] Scottish Government, Single Outcome Agreements http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/local-government/SOA

the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their areas and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK.'[17]

Sustainable Communities Strategy

The need for widespread community consultation and engagement is central to how sustainable community strategies are to be developed. In effect, the sustainable community strategy is a ten to fifteen year plan which sets out '…*the overarching long term strategy for the local authority area and all its population based on a thorough analysis of needs and priorities, and opportunities for addressing them'*.[18]

Local Area Agreements

More so within England than Wales, there is also an additional mechanism employed known as the Local Area Agreement (LAA), which is effectively a means to define, implement and monitor the partnership working required to fulfil the aims of the sustainable community strategy.[19]

In its People, Plans and Partnerships - A National Evaluation of Community Strategies in Wales (2006) report, the Welsh Assembly, for example, recognised that '*Engaging with people and communities requires a plurality of methodologies appropriate to involve people in different roles; techniques need to be more creative and innovative particularly in the context of those sections of the community who are disengaged with formal political processes; there needs to be a better understanding of the tensions between representative and participatory democracy, a more seamless, continuous, co-ordinated and transparent approach to public involvement; and lastly a commitment to funding the process.*'

According to RCN, with the publication of the 'Communities in Control –Real People, Real Power' White Paper in July 2008, England and Wales have displayed a commitment to community planning as a means of improving local services and as a mechanism for building community capacity and engagement.

Republic of Ireland

Within the Republic of Ireland, the community planning function currently falls under the remit of the County or City Development Boards.   In June 1998, the Irish Government

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[17] RCN, 'A tale of two villages etc'

[18] Local Vision. Statutory Guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government on developing and delivering community strategies, 2008.
http://wales.gov.uk/publications/accessinfo/drnewhomepage/governmentdrs/Governmentdrs2008/localvisionstatguidance mar08/?lang=en

[19] RCN, 'A tale of two villages etc'

established an Interdepartmental Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems, chaired by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government. The Report of the Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems (August 1998) was subsequently approved by Government. One of the key recommendations emerging from the report was the creation of the County Development Boards (CDBs) which were established in each county and city in Ireland in early 2000.

There are currently 34 CDBs (29 county councils and in each of the five major cities) led by local government and they are representative of local development bodies together with the State agencies and social partners operating locally. For the first time, CDBs brought together the key players at a local level to engage in a process of long-term planning for each county or city.[20]

Each CDB:

- Is required to prepare and oversee the implementation of a ten year county/city Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development. This plan provides the template guiding all public services and local development activities locally.
- Is made up of representatives from the four key sectors of local government, local development, the social partners (business and trade unions) and state agencies. Immediately prior to the creation of the CBDs, Community Forums were also created in each of the County/City areas to identify potential community representatives for the CBDs.

Further Examples

The following information was supplied by Community Places, detailing examples of Local authorities that have developed a range of processes and structures to enable community engagement. In most cases these are supported and facilitated by community planning support or networking organisations in the community and voluntary sectors.

Fife uses the following processes:

- Community Councils- These are made up of people who live in local areas. If a community council were set up in every area of Fife, there would be 104 councils. The council must consult with other community councils on planning applications. They are set up under a scheme called the scheme for the establishment of community councils in Fife which shows:

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[20] RCN 'A tale of two villages etc'

- the area each community council covers
- how the community councils should operate and
- how community councillors should be elected[21]
  - People's Panel- This is a group of people that will be used by members of the Fife Partnership to consult with on a variety of public issues.   Consists of around 3000 members who will reflect the Fife Adult (over 16) Population in terms of age, gender, working status and geographical location.[22]
  - Young People's Panel
  - Various events for engagement
  - Local Community Plans[23]
  - **Fife Council for Voluntary Services** is the support organisation for engagement[24]

Dumfries and Galloway has:

- Community Councils (100)
- 'Xchange Network' for public involvement -
  - brings together members of the public in Dumfries and Galloway who are interested in taking part in or commenting on local services;
  - provides people with the opportunity to be trained in public involvement skills and to take part in changing and developing services; and
  - is supported by the Council and the NHS.[25]
- Local Community Plans (4)
- Local Rural Partnerships –

  4 Local Rural Partnerships (LRPs) were established in Dumfries and Galloway, as a means of providing effective links between Strategic Policy developments and planning and grass roots voluntary and community organisations involved in service

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[21] For more information visit http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/topics/index.cfm?fuseaction=subject.display&subjectid=C5FE66E7-C9E1-11D5-909E0008C7844101

[22] For more information visit http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/topics/index.cfm?fuseaction=faq.display&subjectid=A91694C8-4BE0-425E-92E1767D59C85550&faqid=D205135C-E7FE-C7EA-0CFA8803FB7B9945

[23] For information on the Fife Community Plan see http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/topics/index.cfm?fuseaction=subject.display&subjectid=A91694C8-4BE0-425E-92E1767D59C85550

[24] **CVS Fife** is the **Council for Voluntary Service Fife** which promotes local community and voluntary action. We provide voluntary, community, social enterprise and charitable organisations with advice, information and one-to-one support. We also help the Voluntary or Third Sector to network, and to take part in Community Planning processes. We can provide access to training and a range of information resources. For more information visit http://www.cvsfife.org/

[25]Dumfries and Galloway Community website http://www.dgcommunity.net/DGCommunity/MiniWeb.aspx?id=72&menuid=8288&openid=8287

delivery. The Scottish Executive and Dumfries and Galloway Community Planning partners jointly fund the four LRPs. Each of them has representation from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Each LRP has their own individual work plan which varies according to local circumstances and need. Included in each work plan is a programme of capacity building which is tailored to meet local need. The LRPs are now actively involved in addressing cross cutting issues such as social inclusion, health improvement and economic regeneration. This should ensure a Community Planning approach is in place to deliver creative solutions at a local level.[26]

Sunderland

Citizens' Panel -

Community Spirit is Sunderland's citizens' panel, a group of over 2000 residents from all parts of Sunderland. It gives residents a chance to say what they think about important issues (such as crime and clean streets) and ask for action and feedback from the people responsible.

The panel was established in April 2002 when 20,000 Sunderland residents were randomly selected to become members. More residents were invited to join in June 2004, September 2005 and September 2006. The membership period lasts for 3 years.

Panel members are invited to complete up to 3 planned questionnaires per year. They may also be invited to attend consultation meetings and other activities. Participation is entirely optional.

Significant efforts have been made to remove barriers and assist panel members to take part.   Members were asked to indicate which, if any special arrangements would help them to participate and how they would like to take part.   In particular, the following arrangements are being provided:

- provision of information in large print, audio tape and other languages
- completion of questionnaires by post, telephone and the Internet
- assistance with travel arrangements[27]

Cardiff

Ask Cardiff Consultation & Engagement Framework -

On 1 October Cardiff Council's Executive formally approved the adoption of the new Ask Cardiff Consultation and Engagement Framework. This has introduced a new

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[26] For more information visit http://www.dgcommunity.net/dgcommunity/miniweb.aspx?id=149

[27] http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2789

Consultation and Engagement Strategy for the Council and set out a number of supporting mechanisms that will need to be put in place to support these new approaches. These include:

- The new Ask Cardiff website;
- An Annual Citizen Engagement Programme;
- Enhanced support for the Council's Citizens' Panel;
- Online e-learning resources;
- The Consultation Excellence Scheme;
- A Local Consultation Management Board;
- Shared Public Sector Consultation Resources; and
- Interdepartmental and multi-agency data analysis.[28]

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[28] http://www.cardiff.gov.uk/content.asp?nav=2872,3257,5423&parent_directory_id=2865&id=8609&Language=