

## Feedback from S Lanarkshire Community Planning Conference 9/12/19

### Background

Janet attended a Community Planning Conference organised by the S Lan Community Planning Partnership. Various CCs, community groups, council officers and other organisations from the Partnership attended.

The event consisted of a welcome from Cllr Maureen Chalmers, a plenary session from Dr Claire Bynner (Glasgow Uni), a series of small group “community conversations” which ran in parallel, and Q&A session with members of the Partnership and closing remarks from Cllr Chalmers.

Unfortunately the acoustics in the venue were poor, and the microphones did not work properly. During the community conversations noise spilled over from one group to another and it was almost impossible to hear some of the presentations. The groups leading these conversations did not appear to have been briefed on what AV equipment would be available, and some were trying to show presentations to groups of around 12 people on laptops.

Community Engagement Plenary Claire Bynner is leading the [What Works Scotland project](#). This has highlighted good practice in community engagement across the UK and overseas and flagged some useful techniques which have been shown to work for community consultation. Key points were:

- Communication should be multi-channel (online, face-to-face, paper questionnaires etc)
- Consultation should be inclusive and deliberative. All demographics should be involved, and time should be taken to understand different perspectives, listening to and assessing evidence and coming to a reasoned judgement.
- Community empowerment should give communities real influence so that they feel that their views will have real consequences.

Scottish Government have specified that 1% of local authority expenditure will be administered by communities.

Decision making structures such as “mini-publics” (aka Citizen’s Juries/Assemblies) can be useful. These assemble a group of 20 – 30 people which is representative of the demographics of the community. The group participates in a learning phase where information is made available, and is then asked to make decisions. To be effective these groups need support to ensure that everyone is able to participate. This may include payment for group members’ time, help with transport and childcare costs etc.

Community Conversations. These were really mini-presentations rather than conversations. Time was very limited, and there wasn’t much opportunity to ask questions or discuss anything.

- i) Asset transfer. Blantyre Soccer Academy described the community buy out of their premises for £1. The asset transfer process only applies to publicly owned assets. SLC have a register of land and buildings which they own. This is available on their website, although at present it is not very easy to find (I couldn’t find it in a quick search!). Community groups can apply to the council for any land or buildings they feel they could make better use of, and SLC must consider these requests seriously. They can request ownership, lease or other rights.
- ii) A group from Rutherglen (I think) had done something which grew out of a litter pick. Unfortunately I could hardly hear any of this discussion and did not follow the detail of the project.
- iii) The Machan Trust from Larkhall described their work with young people. They run breakfast clubs, youth clubs and holiday clubs and have a large number of funders.
- iv) The Hamilton Churches Drop-In Centre described their work provide meals and clothing to people in need.
- v) Cambuslang Community Council’s vice Chair Michelle Farmer described the process of developing their local action plan. This was a really useful session. Cambusland started their action plan process in 2015 and spent two years developing and understanding of local issues via an online and face-to-face survey which had 1,100 responses. This survey had seven

questions to identify issues based on asking people what they liked about their community, what they didn't like and what could be improved. The survey also helped to identify "social capital" in the community (local groups and networks and how people invested in their community in non-monetary ways).

In 2017 a survey of local businesses was undertaken which looked at the issues which they faces as well as identifying the number of jobs within each business, its turnover and future plans.

In 2016-17 some quick hit actions were taken to improve the look of Cambuslang High St with planters etc these helped people to feel that something was happening as a result of the action Plan. This was rolled out to other neighbour centres in Cambuslang.

During 2017 – 18 Cambuslang CC campaigned on some of the more challenging issues identified e.g parking provision. This involved lobbying elected representatives and council officers, petitions, checking SLC data and local media and social media articles. The campaign to improve parking was successful, but the campaign to retain banks on the High St did not prevent bank closure, although the issues have been taken up by Scottish Government.

Since 2018 Cambuslang CC have been working with SLC to develop a strategy to improve the town. A Cambuslang Futures group as been meeting month for 18 month, and the strategy has gone through a couple of iterations before final sign-off by SLC. The strategy contains a 25 point action plan with time targets for completion of each action. A communications strategy has also been developed to keep the community informed of progress. This involves a newsletter sponsored by local businesses, social media channels, local press items and a video showing the issues. The video has proved to be extremely useful for influencing decision-makers and local politicians.

[Cambuslang CC's Action Plan](#) is available on their website. [Michelle's presentation is also available](#). Cambuslang CC would be very happy to talk with other CCs about how they developed their Action Plan.

- vi) The Autism Resource Co-ordination Hub (ARCH) described their work to support people with autism in SLan.

#### Q&A Session

Owing to difficulties with the microphones and acoustics this was completely inaudible, but might have been useful if attendees had been able to hear the questions and answers.

Overall, while this event was well-intentioned, it was very poorly organised. No agenda was circulated in advance, and there were issues with audibility in the venue. Running six community conversations simultaneously in one room with poor acoustics did not work. It was unclear, even after attending the event, what it's intended purpose was. However, the sessions on community engagement and Cambuslang CC's Action Planning experiences made attendance worthwhile.

**Requested Action** BCC to note the content of this report.