

# Review of Community Level Governance



**Consultation Paper**

**#ourRenfrewshire**

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# Summary

We would like peoples' views on the proposals for changing community level governance arrangements (currently, these are known as Local Area Committees). The proposals cover five themes; function, membership, boundaries, meetings and grants. The proposals are summarised below.

## Function

- To have new key aims, including; making connections between community groups and the wider community; identifying, setting and sharing goals for the local community; listening to, consulting and representing local communities; and distributing grants to support local activities.
- For the meetings to change from being 'committees' to being partnerships. The new partnerships could be named locally and would become part of the Community Planning Partnership, rather than a formal committee of the council

## Membership

- To extend voting rights to other community representatives, not just elected councillors.
- To have officer representatives at the meetings, from the Council, Police Scotland, Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership and Engage Renfrewshire.
- To have more local people involved with the partnerships, either directly through events or through being fed back to by a local attendee.

## Boundaries

- To move from 5 area meetings based on ward boundaries, to 7 area meetings, based on community council boundaries.

## Meetings

- To make meetings more accessible and participative, by having a balance of items on the agenda, improving reports and presentations, ensuring meetings are in good and accessible venues and that they are the right length.

## Grants

- To have local grants for smaller local projects and a separate fund for projects that will run across the partnership areas.
- To support areas to use participatory budgeting in allocating grants and start by allocating the Youth Challenge Fund in this way.



# Introduction

**In 2016, Renfrewshire Council agreed changes to the governance arrangements for the Community Planning Partnership, and as part of this work it was agreed that a review of community level governance would be carried out.**

When we talk about Community Level Governance, we mean the formal structures by which local communities engage with the Council and other public services. Currently in Renfrewshire, this is done through a structure of committees called 'Local Area Committees' (or 'LACs') which were established as formal committees of the Council in 2007.

We have reviewed our current system of Local Area Committees to understand how well they work, as well as looking at other models across Scotland. In particular, the review has explored how Local Area Committees might best meet the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, and provide an enhanced role for communities to engage with the wider Community Planning Partnership.

Following what we have learnt from the review, we have developed a series of proposals for a future model of community level governance. This consultation sets out the proposals we have developed, and seeks views on whether **(a)** people agree with the direction of these proposals and **(b)** how we should put these proposals into action.



## Why we are consulting?

**The proposals outlined in the consultation paper have been developed following engagement with a range of stakeholders, but we recognize that in order to develop a model that works, we need to talk to a wider range of people.**

Fundamentally, community level governance is about what works for communities. For this reason, it is essential that we work together with communities to design and deliver a model that meets their needs. Our aim is to have a model of community governance that reflects the views and requirements of communities, and in turn, that this encourages people to be more involved.

The consultation will inform the paper which will go to Council and Community Planning Partnership with details of a new model to be agreed. If this model is approved, then it would be implemented in 2018/19 and this would be done in partnership with a range of community led organisations.

As a Council, our Local Area Committee system is a formal committee of the Council. As structures are currently part of our Standing Orders, changes to this system need to be approved by Council. We have also proposed moving our community level governance arrangements into the Community Planning Partnership structure, so if these proposals are taken forward they will also need to be agreed by the Community Planning Partnership.

## How we will consult?

**We have already done some engagement with people as part of our review of current arrangements. We will build on this engagement in our full consultation.**

As is standard, a consultation paper will be produced with information about the proposals, and consultation questions as detailed in this document. It will be possible to respond to this online, via email or using a paper copy.

In addition, a series of consultation events will be held during the consultation period, which will be carried out in community locations across Renfrewshire.

Key stakeholders include elected members, community councils, current Local Area Committee attendees, community organisations with a local interest, community anchor organisations, and organisations supported or funded through the existing Local Area Committee structures.

In addition to those currently engaged in existing arrangements, the consultation will seek views of those who are not currently engaged, such as wider community members and organisations.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks from 22nd January to 15th April 2018, to allow sufficient opportunity to carry out a range of consultation events and for people to respond to consultation questions.

## Some terms used

### Community Empowerment

Community empowerment is about communities being supported to do things for themselves and people having their voices heard in the planning and delivery of services.

### Community Planning Partnership

Community planning is about how public bodies work together and with local communities to design and deliver better services. Partners work together to improve local services, ensuring that they meet the needs of local people, especially for those people who need those services most.

### Local Area Committee (LAC)

This is the current local governance arrangement. Local Area Committees are formal committees of the Council. Anyone can attend a LAC, but only elected councillors can vote on decisions, including funding decisions.

### Participatory Budgeting

This is when community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget.

### Stakeholders

People and organisations affected or involved.

### Standing Orders

Standing Orders are the written rules of a Council. Many of these rules are needed by law, but others are decided locally by the full Council.

## The proposals

There are nine key proposals that are being consulted on, across five key areas;

**Function**

**Membership**

**Boundaries**

**Meetings**

**Grants**

# Function

Currently, the aims of Local Area Committees are to promote active citizenship, to advance community wellbeing by shaping services around residents' needs, to provide local scrutiny of public services and to allocate delegated funds to fund local projects.

## Proposal one: Refresh the aims

Initial engagement indicated that current arrangements do not fully meet their current aims, and that many people feel the aims of community level governance are broader than their current function. While grant giving is an important part of the arrangements, we recognise there is significant potential value beyond grant-giving, and that current arrangements might not be fulfilling that potential.

Proposed key aims for new arrangements include:

- **Make connections and networks between community groups and the wider community**

Community level governance offers an opportunity to bring together elected members, public sector organisations, community councils and other community led organisations across an area. This has a clear purpose in terms of achieving social connections, networks and partnerships across a local area—and this should be a more explicit aim of the new arrangements.

- **Identify, set and share local community priorities**

Groups should then work with each other, their memberships and wider community to identify and share the priorities for the local area. This should be a focused set of priorities, which can be ambitious for the area but still achievable—rather than a 'wish list' for communities. In response, these priorities should be recognised by the Council and its partners, and should have a material impact on how public services are delivered.

- **Listen to, consult and represent local communities**

Community level governance should engage local stakeholders and communities around their views, needs and aspirations for a local community – which should be part of a two-way information flow between them and local public services. Public services should work with groups for formal consultation activity, but more broadly should seek local insight through these structures. Likewise, community issues could be raised through this structure.

- **Distribute grants to support local activities**

Grant assistance should remain an important function, to allow locally controlled allocation of resources to community groups. Further proposals relating to grant funding can be found at section nine.

## 1a) Do you agree with the proposed aims of new arrangements?

Strongly Agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

## 1b) Do you have any additional comments on the proposed aims?

Please include your answer here:

## Proposal two: Move from 'committees' to partnership

It is proposed that 'Local Area Committees' are not continued in their current form and are replaced with 'Local Partnerships' in order to reflect changes to function and remit. This emphasises the core purpose of the groups as working together and partnership, rather than a committee style function. New partnerships would work together to identify an appropriate name that reflects the geographical area covered by their partnership.

Community level governance should be owned by the community, rather than a committee function of the local authority. For this reason, it is proposed that the new partnerships become part of the Community Planning Partnership structure, and no longer function as formal committees of the Council.



## 2a) Do you agree with the proposed approach?

Strongly Agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

## 2b) Do you have any additional comments on the proposals?

Please include your answer here:

# Membership

Currently, Local Area Committees are chaired by an elected member within the area, and supported by a lead officer from the Council at Head of Service level. While formal membership of Local Area Committees is reserved to the elected members within the relevant area, Local Area Committees are comprised of a number of constituted community and voluntary sector organisations, and are also attended by other community planning partners such as the Police, and Health and Social Care Partnership. They are open to all constituted community organisations within the relevant local area, and are held as public meetings.

## Proposal three: Voting rights extended

Engagement indicated that some groups feel disempowered by the lack of voting rights, while others feel it is proper for decisions to be made by elected members with a clear democratic mandate.

It is proposed that membership of new arrangements is widened to include equal numbers of elected members and community representatives, which would include representatives from relevant Community Councils operating in the area.

It is further proposed that new arrangements should seek to achieve decision making by consensus, but in areas where a decision is required, voting should be extended across the formal membership of the group.

It should be noted that where this decision relates to a function of the Council (i.e. the distribution of grant funding) this would be a recommendation which would require formal 'approval' from either a Council board or an officer with sufficient authority.

### 3a) Do you agree that voting rights should be extended?

Strongly Agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

### 3b) Do you have any additional comments on the proposals to extend voting rights?

Please include your answer here:

## Proposal four: Other public services play a greater role

Where public services regularly attend Local Area Committees, their role is valued. However the presence and input of public sector partners is varied, and there are opportunities to maximize the role of the Council and its partners and use community level governance arrangements as an opportunity across the partnership to engage, consult and for two way information sharing with communities.

It is proposed that key partners have officer representatives in the new arrangements, and provide an active and open channel of communication between communities and their wider organisation. Based on our engagement, it is proposed that these key organisations are the Council, Police Scotland, Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership and the third sector interface, Engage Renfrewshire. Other Community Planning Partners could be called in to participate in meetings where this was relevant.

### 4a) Do you agree that partners should play a greater role?

Strongly Agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

### 4b) Do you have any additional comments on the proposals on public service involvement?

Please include your answer here:

## Proposal five: Wider engagement with the community

If community level governance has an increased role in representing the voices and ambitions of communities, then it is increasingly important that governance arrangements are representative of their communities, and able to hear a range of voices from within their networks and the wider community.

It is proposed that formal members of the new arrangements will have a responsibility to engage their wider membership and/or network to inform their participation on the group and also to disseminate information on the groups behalf. Wider meetings should be considered in more of an 'event' style which encourage wider attendance and facilitate local connections and networks to be established. This could be achieved through wider publicity of meetings and activities, and include presence on social media and digital channels.

### 5a) Do you agree that partnerships should engage more with the wider community?

Strongly Agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

### 5b) How do you think wider engagement with communities would be best achieved?

Please include your answer here:

**5c) Do you have any additional comments on the proposals to widen engagement with the community?**

Please include your answer here:



# Boundaries

There is a current requirement to review Local Area Committee boundaries, following the establishment of an additional ward prior to the 2017 local elections. Since this time a temporary 'fix' has been in place to allow LACs to continue to function, but they now have an uneven spread of population and elected member representation and need to be revised.

## Proposal six: Move from 5 areas based on ward boundaries to 7 based on community council boundaries

We have looked at redefining community level governance boundaries using Community Council boundaries, as opposed to Ward boundaries as these are more representative of physical communities and settlements, and in many cases the ward boundaries run counter to natural communities.

Feedback from engagement indicated that equal populations between areas were the fairest, and whatever boundaries are in place should recognise the distinction between urban and rural issues.

The proposals that have been developed are also based on similarities within areas, rather than differences. For example, areas might have shared physical features, or similar types of regeneration activity planned.

The proposals also expand the number of areas to 7 from 5, recognizing the current Local Area Committee areas are very large and wide ranging in some places. It is recognised that this may represent an increase in resourcing for the areas.

The 7 new areas are proposed to be:

1. Renfrew
2. Inchinnan, Erskine, Bishopton and Langbank
3. Houston, Bridge of Weir, Brookfield, Kilbarchan, Lochwinnoch and Howwood
4. Johnstone, Linwood and Elderslie
5. Paisley North, Gallowhill, Ferguslie, Paisley West and Central
6. Paisley East, Ralston, Hawkhead/Lochfield, Hunterhill and Charleston
7. Foxbar/ Brediland and Glenburn

The proposed new boundaries are shown on the map overleaf.

A move away from ward boundaries means that elected member representation in the proposed arrangements would be more complex, with some elected members' wards spanning two areas.

We appreciate that boundaries can often be controversial, and welcome comments on the proposals.

## Proposed new boundaries in Renfrewshire



### 6a) Do you agree with the proposed move from ward boundaries to Community Council boundaries?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree             | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agree                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree nor disagree |  |

### 6b) Do you agree with the proposed groupings?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree             | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agree                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree nor disagree |  |

**6c) What do you think the advantages of the proposed boundaries are? (Please tell us if you're answering in relation to a specific area)**

Please include your answer here:

**6d) What do you think the disadvantages of the proposed boundaries are? (Please tell us if you're answering in relation to a specific area)**

Please include your answer here:





# Meetings

Business at Local Area Committees is comprised of predominantly officer reports and presentations from the Council and its partners around local performance, service changes and consultation. There is an open session on every agenda where communities can raise local issues. The first two meetings in the cycle (typically May and August) are usually predominantly focused on considering grant applications and awarding LAC funding

## Proposal seven: Meetings should become more accessible and participative

Feedback from early engagement indicated that while many value the professionalism and formality of Local Area Committee meetings, some consider them too formal and intimidating for people who are new or unfamiliar with the Council committee system.

Moving forward, it is proposed that meeting arrangements are adjusted to become more accessible and participative. There are a number of practical measures that have been suggested through early engagement, and as such it is proposed that the following are reviewed:

- balance of items on the agenda
- quantity and quality of formal reports and presentations
- venue choices and room layout
- length of meetings
- the accessibility of meetings for disabled people



## 7a) Do you agree with the proposals about meetings?

Strongly Agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

## 7b) What else could be done to support more accessible and participative meetings?

Please include your answer here:

## Grants

Local Area Committees have a delegated budget, totalling £675,510 across the five areas. Any constituted community organisation in the relevant area can apply for a grant from the LAC for local projects and activities. Organisations serving citizens across several LAC areas can apply for funding from multiple LACs where appropriate. LAC funding is comprised of funding from relevant Common Good funds, Youth Challenge funding and General fund, and applications are considered under the appropriate fund.

## Proposal eight: Local grants for local projects

It is proposed that grant funding is offered through Local Area Committees, aligned to local priorities and awarded for activities which are unique to that local area. These grants should remain easy for small local community organisations to apply for.

Currently, Local Area Committees allocate a significant level of their funding to applications that cover a number of different Local Area Committee areas. Early engagement indicated that this process can be long-winded and unpredictable for organisations applying, and some LAC members feel that applications

are not always relevant to their local area. It is proposed that multi-area applications are moved to a central grants process administered by Council officers.

Engagement also indicated that more structure could be applied to the grants process to improve both the process, and the funding outcomes. It is proposed that a series of improvements are made to the grant application process to make sure that decisions are well informed and the process runs smoothly and efficiently.

### 8a) Do you agree that funding should be focused on local projects, in line with the community priorities that have been identified and agreed?

Strongly Agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

### 8b) Do you agree that 'multi-LAC' applications should be administered through a central grant fund?

Strongly Agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

## 8c) Do you have any additional comments relating to the grants proposals?

Please include your answer here:

## Proposal nine: Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting is a way for local people to have a direct say in how, and where, public funds are spent. The approach is recognised internationally and the Scottish Government is asking local councils to allocate more of their funding through participatory budgeting. By 2021, at least 1% of local government budgets in Scotland will need to be spent in this way. This method is being used more and more across Scotland as part of wider approaches to Community Empowerment.

It is proposed that local areas have the choice to deliver their grant funding through participatory budgeting, and that this would be supported by the Council.

It is also proposed that the Youth Challenge Fund should be distributed via Participatory Budgeting, where young people would decide on which projects should be funded for young people. This would allow young people the opportunity to influence and decide youth activities across the area but would also bring young people closer to civic participation and decision making.

**9a) Do you agree that new arrangements should give choice for participatory budgeting?**

- Strongly Agree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree

**9b) Do you agree that young people should decide on the allocation of the Youth Challenge Fund through a participatory budgeting exercise?**

- Strongly Agree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree

**9c) Do you have any additional comments on the use of participatory budgeting as part of community level governance?**

Please include your answer here:

## Next steps

The consultation period is due to run from 22nd January to 15th April 2018. Following this, responses will be collated and analysed, and a model for Community Level Governance arrangements presented to Council and Community Planning Executive Group for approval in May 2018.

# About you

We'd like to ask you some questions about yourself, so we can see if there are any trends in people's experiences, and to make sure we've reached a range of different people with our survey.

The survey is completely anonymous, and we keep the information in line with the requirements of Data Protection Act.

If you don't feel comfortable answering any of the questions, you can pick 'Prefer not to say'.

## Postcode

What is your postcode?.....

## Age

Please tell us your age in years: .....

Prefer not to say .....

## Gender

Male.....

Female.....

Other .....

Prefer not to say .....

## Transgender

Have you ever identified as being transgender?

Yes .....

No .....

Prefer not to say .....

## Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes.....

No .....

(A disability is a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities—lasting or expected to last longer than a year.)

Prefer not to say .....

## Ethnicity

### Asia, Asian Scottish, Asian British

Indian .....

Pakistani.....

Bangladeshi.....

Chinese.....

Any other Asian Background, please write here:

.....

**Black, Black Scottish, Black British**

Caribbean.....

African.....

Any other Black Background, please write here:

.....

**Mixed**

Any other mixed background, please write here:

.....

**White**

White Scottish.....

White British .....

White Irish.....

White Polish.....

White Gypsy Traveller.....

White other .....

**Other**

Other ethnic background, please write here:

.....

Prefer not to say .....

**Religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief**

Do you identify with any of the following belief systems?

None.....

Church of Scotland .....

Roman Catholic .....

Other Christian .....

Buddhist.....

Hindu.....

Muslim.....

Jewish.....

Sikh.....

Pagan.....

Prefer not to say .....

**Other**

Other Religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief, please write here:

.....

**Sexual Orientation**

Heterosexual/ Straight.....

Gay/ Lesbian .....

Bisexual .....

Prefer not to say .....

**Please send your responses to Community Planning, Renfrewshire Council, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1WB by 15th April 2018**

This survey is also available online at:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/communitylevelgovernance>

If you would like to request the survey in another language or format please telephone

**0141 618 4168** or email your request to [communityplanning@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:communityplanning@renfrewshire.gov.uk)

