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## **Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee**

# **Community Planning: Post-legislative scrutiny of Part 2 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015**



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# Contents

<b>Membership</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>What is Community Planning?</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Summary of key findings</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The role of Community Planning Partnerships</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Partnership working</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Community empowerment and participation</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Tackling inequalities</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Annex A</b>	<b>37</b>

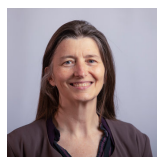
# Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

To consider and report on matters relating to local government and planning falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and matters relating to housing and tenants' rights within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and matters relating to the Local Government Boundary Commission and local governance review and democratic renewal within the responsibility of the Deputy First Minister.



[localgov.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:localgov.committee@parliament.scot)

# Committee Membership



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**Annie Wells**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**Miles Briggs**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party

# Membership

1. The following changes to the membership of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee have taken place since the inquiry was launched.

Paul McLennan MSP (SNP) was a member from 22 June 2021 until 18 April 2023.

Ivan McKee MSP (SNP) became a member on 18 April 2023

# Introduction

2. The Community Empowerment Act 2015 ('the Act') created a number of different powers, ranging from the right for communities to own land or buildings to a right for them to request they participate in decisions about local services. It's now almost eight years since the Act came into force, during which time Scotland has faced the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic and now a cost-of-living crisis, and so the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee agreed it would be timely to examine whether the ambitions of the Act are being met.
3. The inquiry is one of several by the Committee and its predecessor to examine different elements of the Act. Parts 3 (Participation Requests) and 5 (Asset Transfer Requests) were considered by the Local Government and Communities Committee in session 5, and the current Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee has carried out an inquiry on part 9 of the Act (Allotments).
4. Part 2 of the Act covers 'community planning', an important part of how local public services are delivered across Scotland. Community planning aims to improve how local organisations including local government, health boards and the police work together with other partners and communities to improve outcomes in a local area. The Scottish Government is also carrying out an informal review of Part 2 of the Act, and so the Committee hopes that its findings will constructively contribute to that work and help identify areas for improvement.

Community noticeboard, Tannahill Centre Paisley



Source: Scottish Parliament

5. The Act changed how community planning is delivered by Community Planning Partnerships ('CPPs') in each local authority. The numbers of public sector bodies involved was expanded, and CPPs must develop Local Outcomes Improvement Plans ('LOIPs') and targeted 'locality plans' for smaller areas which need more support. There was an important shift too towards ensuring that communities can fully participate in community planning, rather than just be consulted with on decisions affecting them.
6. The work that CPPs do is very wide-ranging and complex, involving numerous

partners and focusing on local issues which will vary from place to place. During the inquiry the Committee's members therefore each focused on a particular common theme:

1. The challenges facing communities
  2. Community empowerment
  3. The role of the third sector
  4. Local Outcome Improvement Plans ('LOIPs') and locality plans
  5. Measuring outcomes and using data
  6. Culture change amongst partners
  7. Leadership and accountability
7. The Committee agreed that the main objectives of the inquiry should be to look at the impact the Act has had on community planning and to explore how CPPs respond to significant events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the current cost-of-living crisis. We issued a call for evidence and a survey<sup>i</sup> asking for views on issues including;
- If the Act has led to improvements to community engagement and participation
  - Progress in tackling inequalities
  - The impact of Local Outcome Improvement Plans, and locality plans
  - The main challenges faced by CPPs
  - Revising the guidance available for CPPs
  - Alignment with other strategies and planning
  - Impact of the Act on statutory partners.
8. The Committee heard from 10 panels of witnesses representing a wide range of statutory partners in community planning, and from community organisations and representatives. Annex A provides more information on each of the panels. Committee members also visited Renfrewshire's Third Sector Interface 'Engage Renfrewshire' in Paisley and met there with local community partner organisations to hear about community planning in action. An online engagement event was also held with 37 representatives from the third sector and community organisations, where the Committee asked about their experiences of community planning. <sup>ii</sup>
9. At its final evidence session on the inquiry, the Committee then heard evidence from the Scottish Government's Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning, and from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (Cosla) about their

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<sup>i</sup> 132 responses were received to the call for views and the survey, which are published at [Community Planning inquiry - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

<sup>ii</sup> A summary of the discussions that took place at the event is available at [Community Planning Inquiry | Scottish Parliament Website](#).



positions on the issues which had been highlighted during the course of the inquiry.

10. The Committee would like to extend its thanks to the large number of organisations and individuals who have taken time to contribute to the inquiry. Their insights and expertise have been invaluable, particularly given the broad nature and complexity of community planning.
11. The Official Reports providing transcripts of the evidence sessions which the Committee held can be viewed at [Community Planning Inquiry | Scottish Parliament Website](#).

# What is Community Planning?

12. Community Planning is about organisations within communities working together to improve the lives of residents and the services they receive. The Act requires every local authority to have a Community Planning Partnership ('CPP'), which works with community bodies and brings together a wide range of partners to collaborate, to identify priorities and to share resources.
13. In his evidence to the Committee, the Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning said that community planning:
  - ” ...enables genuine partnership working and provides an ideal platform through which to address the deep-rooted and complex social, economic and environmental challenges that affect communities across Scotland.”<sup>iii</sup>
14. Community Planning was seen by the Scottish Government in 2015 to be a key part of delivering public sector reform at a local level, with its focus on the approach outlined by the Christie Commission<sup>iv</sup> in 2011 - partnership, prevention, people, and performance. The Minister told us that:
  - ” Public service reform - in particular, how we deliver effective and efficient public services - has to be supported by effective community planning. That work is key to... tackling inequalities and aiding prevention”<sup>v</sup>
15. The Act expanded the number of public sector bodies that are subject to community planning duties. The statutory partners are now:
  - the local authority
  - the Health Board
  - the enterprise agencies
  - Police Scotland; the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
  - the Regional Transport Partnership
  - Historic Environment Scotland
  - the health and social care Integration Joint Board for the area
  - a National Park authority
  - the board of management of a regional college
  - a regional strategic body under the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005

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<sup>iii</sup> [Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee 12th Meeting, 2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>iv</sup> [Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

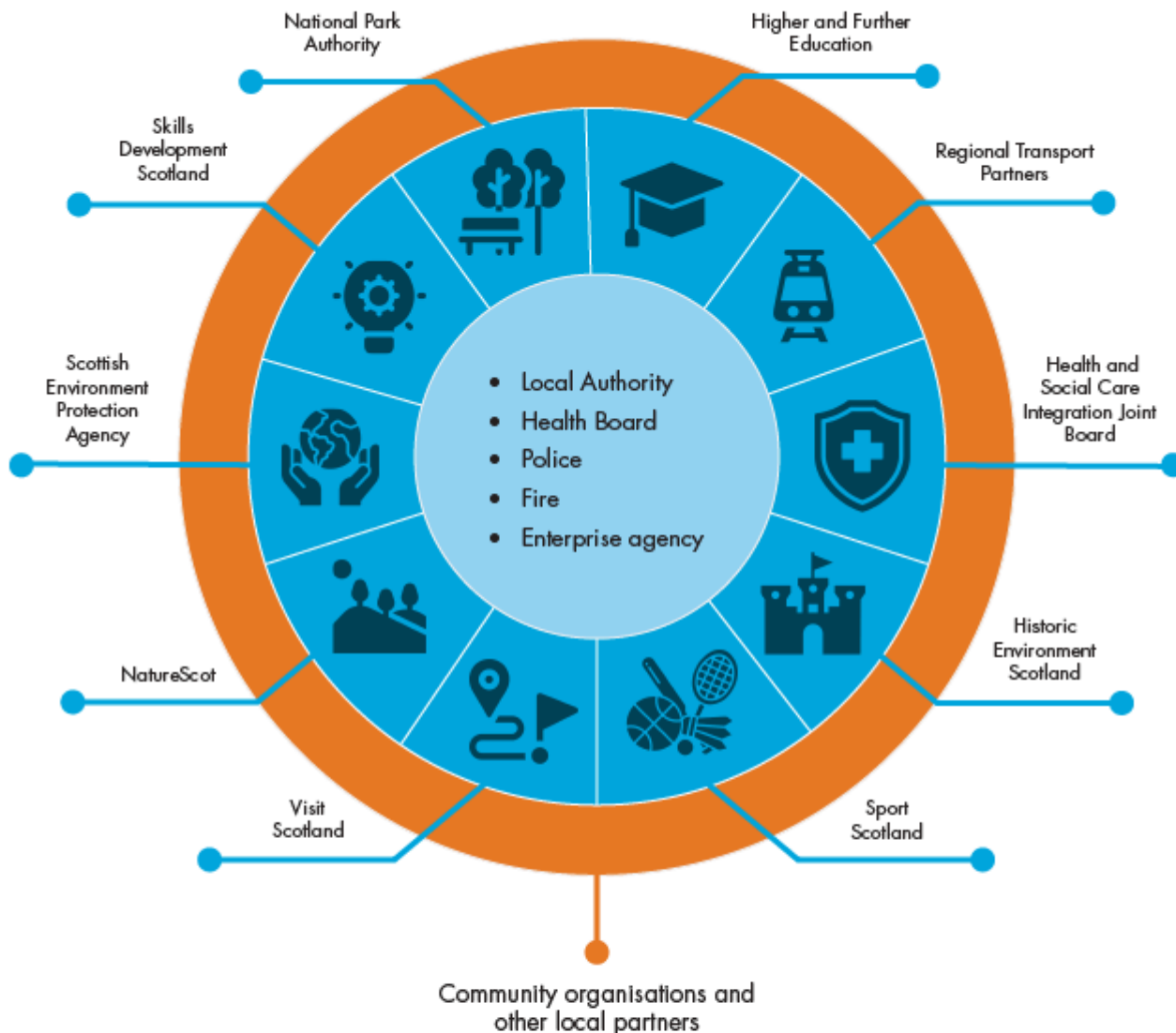
<sup>v</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/25/04/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

- Scottish Environment Protection Agency
  - Scottish Natural Heritage (NatureScot)
  - Scottish Sports Council (Sportscotland)
  - Skills Development Scotland, and
  - VisitScotland
16. Part 2 of the Act created a duty on CPPs to focus on improving outcomes for their communities. CPPs should work with those communities, ensuring they can participate in making decisions about local priorities and services. Detailed guidance<sup>vi</sup> was published in 2016 setting out how public bodies should work to comply with the Act. The Act requires CPPs to:
- Prepare and publish a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) which sets out the local outcomes which the CPP will prioritise for improvement. Those outcomes must be consistent with the National Outcomes set out by the Scottish Government in the [National Performance Framework](#).
  - Identify smaller areas within the local authority area which experience the poorest outcomes, and prepare and publish locality plans to improve outcomes on agreed priorities for these communities.
  - Review and report publicly on progress towards delivering the outcomes in their LOIP and locality plans, and keep those plans under review.
17. In practice the make-up and structure of CPPs varies according to local circumstances. Typically, CPPs will have a Board which might consist of all or some of the statutory partners, and may include additional key organisations. The Board makes the key strategic decisions for the Partnership and publishes the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and locality plans described above. Beneath the Board will often sit a Management Group which focuses on delivery of actions, with groups reporting to it with a focus on particular issues. Often there will be smaller Local or Area Partnerships set up too, particularly in very large local authority areas.

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<sup>vi</sup> [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015, part 2 Community Planning: guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

### Structure of Community Planning Partnerships



- Statutory partners with additional duties to support shared leadership and governance
- Other statutory partners
- Non-statutory members

Source: Scottish Parliament

## Summary of key findings

18. The Committee heard from many voices about the important role that community planning plays. It is clear though that in some areas they could be more effective or require more support and investment, and our key findings summarised below include recommendations for where action should be taken.
19. The Scottish Government should ensure that its current review of the Community Empowerment Act addresses the variation in performance between CPPs.
  - In future CPPs should have a clear and defined role in any national guidance on the local response to emergency situations (such as another pandemic).
  - Where there are examples of CPPs demonstrating best practice the Scottish Government and Cosla should ensure that this is actively shared across CPPs to help improve standards.
20. The Scottish Government should consider refreshing the Community Planning Guidance in view of the comments made in this report by stakeholders. In particular this should include future-proofing the guidance so that it reflects new national priorities such as Community Wealth Building and what CPPs' role will be in this, and also the increasing regionalisation of economic development.
21. The Scottish Government should consider amending the Act to require CPPs to invite the local Third Sector Interface ('TSI') and local anchor organisations to be partners.
22. The Scottish Government should consider during its review of Part 2 of the Act how CPPs can best encourage the involvement of the private sector in community planning, for example through Business Gateway which is delivered by local authorities. It should also explore how CPPs can best contribute to increasing economic regionalisation and encourage collaboration between CPPs within regions.
23. The Scottish Government's review of the Act should explore whether its ambitions for community planning are realistic without being backed up by direct investment. CPPs may have an important role to play in new priorities such as Community Wealth Building and the Scottish Government should ensure that they are sufficiently resourced before creating any additional statutory requirements. It should also explore further how community planning partners should best direct their own resources to underpin CPPs' work.
24. The Committee believes that given the important part statutory partners other than local authorities have in community planning, Audit Scotland's routine audit of them could include the effectiveness of their participation in community planning.
25. The Scottish Government should explore how the complex lines of accountability for community planning partners could best be streamlined.
26. The Scottish Government should take the opportunity during its review of Part 2 of the Act to help renew CPPs' focus on the importance of empowerment and participation through identifying opportunities to drive improvement and share best

- practice. This could include increasing the funding provided to the Improvement Service.
27. CPPs should take proactive steps to ensure that communities of interest or identity are fully included in planning processes to avoid further marginalising key groups who are already at increased risk of inequality. Their voices should for example be clearly reflected in LOIPs and locality plans.
  28. Community engagement requires a professional skill-set that cannot be met solely by busy CPP officers in local authorities who may lack experience. The Scottish Government should explore how it can support community planning by resourcing a network of local community engagement officers within local authorities, and by encouraging local authorities to ensure they have sufficient community planning officers.
  29. The Scottish Government should consider commissioning research into the impact made by CPPs in improving inequalities. This could explore how CPPs are, and should be, linking interventions with outcomes data at a local level and outlining a framework for CPPs to use.
  30. There is a need to better align outcomes across the public sector, from the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework through to local delivery by statutory partners. This would better underpin the delivery of improved outcomes at all levels and also enable the evidencing of those improvements. The Scottish Government's review of community planning should consider whether Aberdeen CPP's work to align objectives should be used a case study and incorporated into the Strategic Guidance for CPPs.
  31. The Scottish Government's review of the Act should consider how to foster more sharing of and continuity in CPP leadership, for example through minimum terms or rotating Chairs amongst partners. It should also explore what training is needed to enable effective leadership of CPPs and how this could be provided.
  32. In its development of a Community Wealth Building Bill, the Scottish Government should give early consideration to the role of CPPs in delivering the policy ambitions, whether any legislative changes to their role would be required to facilitate that, and should ensure sufficient guidance is provided to CPPs about their role in community wealth building.
  33. The work that the Scottish Government and Cosla are jointly undertaking to review Local Governance in Scotland should incorporate the role that CPPs have, and any conclusions reached should provide clarity for all partners on the importance of community planning.

# The role of Community Planning Partnerships

34. Throughout the inquiry, we heard about the wide range of work that CPPs are responsible for delivering across local authorities. Written submissions highlighted a range of policies, programmes and partnerships which CPPs have been central in delivering, particularly in areas including community justice, mental health, adult skills and food growing. We asked in particular about how CPPs had responded to the main challenges recently faced by communities - the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis - and how effective they are at taking a preventative focus.
35. Given the requirement on CPPs to tackle local inequalities we asked about other issues which communities experience, to help provide context. Respondents mentioned food poverty and inflationary pressures, access to good quality housing and jobs, mental health, and loneliness. Representatives from more rural or remote communities also highlighted the additional challenges faced there of digital connectivity, depopulation, access to public transport, and fuel poverty.

## Committee members visiting Engage Renfrewshire, Paisley



Source: Scottish Parliament

36. With CPPs being community-focused and collaborative, it is fair to assume that they would have been a critical component in responding swiftly to the impact of the pandemic. However we heard that the picture was very mixed across the different CPPs. The Scottish Community Development Centre ('SCDC') told us that in some areas the partnerships stopped meeting altogether during lockdown, and one

submission from a community council states that their CPP “played very little part in response to Covid. Most of the responses came from local people / groups working together”.<sup>vii</sup>

37. Elsewhere there was positive collaboration that built on the connections formed through community planning. In its submission East Ayrshire CPP said that:

” The pandemic response effectively mainstreamed community planning – the default response in East Ayrshire is to look for a partnership solution. The pandemic response assisted to break down perceived barriers to closer working because of scale and immediacy of need, demonstrated how effective the partnership response can be.”<sup>viii</sup>

38. In their written submissions, North Lanarkshire CPP and Argyll and Bute CPP noted that local emergency responses were supported by effective partnership between different public sector agencies.<sup>ix</sup> Argyll and Bute CPP went on to say:

” the response to the pandemic in Argyll and Bute CPP was an excellent partnership response due to the relationships that had been built through a conscious effort to build a collaborative, dynamic and 'team' of Community Planning Partnership Management Committee members, and the work of building good relationships with communities through community development approaches.”<sup>x</sup>

39. Orkney CPP noted in its submission that one cause of these variations is that the Scottish Government’s emergency planning guidance for councils makes little reference to community planning:

” CPPs have a ready-made multi-agency structure, robust governance and the capacity to lead and facilitate recovery, but had no assigned role in the emergency response. CPPs across Scotland therefore had to make ad-hoc arrangements as to how they could best contribute to the Covid response and to post-Covid recovery and renewal programmes and this resulted in a great deal of duplicated effort and a variety of different approaches, some of which have worked better than others.”<sup>xi</sup>

40. CPPs have an important role in supporting communities. This can be particularly important during times of challenge, for example the pandemic. While it is understandable that there is a difference in the approach that different CPPs take to their role based on the needs of their own communities and circumstances we are concerned that there is also a difference in their effectiveness. We are

vii [summaryofcommunity-planningcallforviews.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

viii [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

ix [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

x [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

xi [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)



concerned in particular that some partnerships may have missed opportunities to contribute to meeting local needs during the pandemic.

41. The Scottish Government should ensure that the current review of community planning addresses the variation in performance between CPPs.
- In future CPPs should have a clear and defined role in any national guidance on the local response to emergency situations (such as another pandemic).
  - Where there are examples of CPPs demonstrating best practice the Scottish Government and Cosla should ensure that this is actively shared across CPPs to help improve standards.

### Guidance for CPPs

42. The Scottish Government provides guidance for community planning partners, published in 2016.<sup>xii</sup> The call for views asked for opinions on whether this needs updating, and while there were no calls for major changes, some responses recognised that some review and updating may be required. Inverclyde CPP highlighted that:
- ” Themes such as Community Wealth Building and Wellbeing Outcomes could be reflected in new guidance, along with how it is anticipated the National Care Service implementation will interact with Community Planning.”<sup>xiii</sup>
43. Other suggestions for additions to the guidance which were made in written submissions include:<sup>xiv</sup>
- Guidance on how LOIPs and community planning more generally should align with other plans and partnerships.
  - Additional clarity on the relationships between CPPs and Community Justice Partnerships to avoid potential duplication of effort.
  - Guidance should take account of the developments in regional economic development such as City and Growth Deals.
  - More clarity on shared goals, accountability and evaluation of impact.
  - Development of outcome measures.
  - Inclusion of a community participation skills framework.

xii [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015, part 2 Community Planning: guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/community-planning-guidance-2016/pages/1-introduction.aspx)

xiii [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentary-business/consultations/citizen-space)

xiv [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentary-business/consultations/citizen-space)

44. The Scottish Government should consider refreshing the Community Planning Guidance in view of the comments made above by stakeholders. In particular this should include future-proofing the guidance so that it reflects new national priorities such as Community Wealth Building and what CPPs' role will be in this, and also the increasing regionalisation of economic development.

## Partnership working

45. Community planning requires multiple and diverse partners to work closely together, with partners bringing different areas of expertise but prioritising collective ambitions. Each partner organisation will come with its own way of working, different priorities or delivery timescales, may be responsible for various statutory requirements, and answerable to different masters. Add into the mix the importance of working closely with communities themselves to ensure that they can fully participate, and community planning is clearly very complex. Dr Oliver Escobar highlighted this in his evidence to the Committee:

” A single CPP is not a thing—it is a network of networks. There are multiple layers and different governance levels, and there are forums that are close to communities and thematic forums that sit somewhere between the local community and the strategic decision-making space.”<sup>xv</sup>

46. Under the Act, running the CPP and making sure it works effectively is a shared enterprise. Some of the partners - the local authority, NHS, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, and the enterprise agencies - have particular duties to support shared leadership and collective governance.

47. The Act sought to bring about a culture change, with its ambitions for greater collaboration. Arguably it is difficult to legislate for that, and so throughout the inquiry we asked witnesses about how effective it has been in reality. In both its written submission and its oral evidence, Police Scotland described the shift that it has seen since 2015, with partner organisations now having a better understanding of what each other does, resulting in genuine efforts to collaborate and reduce duplication.

48. We also heard however of areas where further work is needed to transform collaboration between organisations. Argyll & Bute Health and Social Care Partnership explained in its written submission that:

” Whilst CPPs are good for information sharing, there is lack of clarity about strategic purpose and actions for collaboration...More could be done to share collaboration successes and more done to horizon scan for future potential joint working. This is likely a result of the legislative limitations of Community Planning in Scotland where they often work on good will and individual commitment rather than shifting the locus of power onto the partnerships and the communities they support.”<sup>xvi</sup>

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<sup>xv</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>xvi</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

## Committee members visiting Ferguslie Park, Paisley



Source: Scottish Parliament

49. Argyll & Bute Health and Social Care Partnership's submission<sup>xvii</sup> also explained the challenges that need to be addressed: a lack of defined budgets, and a lack of clarity around what the expectations are of partners, with it being unclear what decisions CPPs can make and where governance lies. They have found this particularly challenging in the relationships between the CPP and themselves, saying “there are no lines of accountability in either direction”.
50. Similarly, Perth & Kinross CPP believes that performance frameworks and accountability lines for individual community planning partners remain complex “despite previous Audit Scotland recommendations to Scottish Ministers that these could be streamlined.”<sup>xviii</sup> Highland Third Sector Interface expressed concerns in its submission about what they view as a “seeming lack of accountability”.<sup>xix</sup>
51. Mark McAteer, representing the Community Planning Improvement Board, in turn stressed the role of Government:

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<sup>xvii</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

<sup>xviii</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

<sup>xix</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

” We exist in silos that are, ultimately, driven by a policy system that is linked to Government and to a particular cabinet secretary. That is the tram line that bodies are set on, but they are asked, at the same time, to integrate and work in partnership with others. The system remains fragmented, but there is strong evidence that despite that, a lot of strong local partnership working is taking place and there is a strong drive to integrate and share resources locally.

A lot of it still sits with the Parliament and the Government, and there are big questions and choices about what kind of public service system we wish to have in Scotland. Clarity on that and being able to resolve some of the issues might help to break down some of the silos.”<sup>xx</sup>

52. The Act requires partners to work together but a CPP in itself is not directly held accountable. The Scottish Government does not require them to demonstrate effectiveness, and whereas the Accounts Commission's 'Best Value Reviews' of local authorities do include community planning, the audit of other statutory partners does not.

- The Committee believes that given the important part statutory partners other than local authorities have in community planning, Audit Scotland's routine audit of them could include the effectiveness of their participation in community planning.
- The Scottish Government should also explore how the complex lines of accountability for community planning partners could best be streamlined.

### National and regional partners

53. We heard that it can be challenging for the national and regional bodies who are listed as statutory partners in the Act (and therefore required to engage with all or multiple CPPs), to participate in a meaningful way. Cairngorms National Park, Nestrans, Hitrans, and Skills Development Scotland were some of the bodies who referred to this.

54. Similarly, Visit Scotland describes how over time it has targeted its engagement with CPPs to areas where tourism is a particular focus. SEPA, Historic Environment Scotland and Sportscotland take a similar targeted approach. In response to this challenge, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport says it might be helpful for there to be a more explicit statement at a national level on the specific role and obligations of community planning partners and a recognition of the limits and opportunities their participation brings to the process. It said 'it might be helpful for some partners to become associate partners or as a wider virtual reference group where expertise can be drafted at certain times and on specific topics'.<sup>xxi</sup>

55. We also heard from non-statutory national organisations that they face similar challenges, as explained by Peter Kelly from the Poverty Alliance:

<sup>xx</sup> Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website

<sup>xxi</sup> SPT submission on Community Planning | Scottish Parliament Website

- ” National organisations such as ours see community planning partnerships as an important locus for influencing change at local level, but the reality is that trying to engage with 32 partnerships is just beyond our capacity.

There is no doubt that the landscape is cluttered and that it is difficult for those of us who are external to say, “This is the important place where decisions will be made.”

Unless more resources go into local community planning partnerships and the various organisations around them, we will struggle to meet some of the long-term outcomes that have been set.”<sup>xxii</sup>

56. In evidence provided by the regional enterprise agencies (South of Scotland Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise), they highlighted that increasing regionalisation needs to be reflected in community planning. In its written submission South of Scotland Enterprise said:

- ” The economic development landscape in Scotland is changing with the creation of Regional Economic Partnerships and establishment of a new economic and social development agency in the South of Scotland (SOSE). As the regional economic context evolves, the nature of local community planning and the role and remit of CPPs will have to change to take account of the opportunity to secure significant change through regional approaches, recognising that some issues are best dealt with at a region wide geography.”<sup>xxiii</sup>

### Local authority role

57. We heard that it is local authorities who are typically the lead agency in CPPs, contributing the most resources and staff. This is unsurprising given the relative size of local authorities compared with most of their partners, but Cllr Heddle from Cosla said that local authorities could do with more 'buy in' and support from their community planning partners. In its written submission, SCDC explained that local authorities' dominance makes it more difficult for partnerships to work in a holistic, coordinated and preventative way. SCDC say that CPP staff in local authorities would like to see partners step up their efforts to take a more active role, understand their role in working with communities and upskill staff for that, and to commit to continuous improvement and following best practice.

- ” It would appear on the surface that inclusion as a planning partner... has not yet had the desired effect of encouraging organisations to commit resources and change their thinking in regard to improving services collaboratively and with communities.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

58. In its written submission, Glasgow CPP made a similar point, saying that Glasgow City Council remains the 'dominant partner' in the CPP process, concluding that:

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<sup>xxii</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/28/02/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>xxiii</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

<sup>xxiv</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

” ...we have not yet achieved the shared leadership model as set out in the Act.  
xxv

## Sharing resources

59. The Act requires partners to contribute resources to community planning, which tends to be in the form of staff time and expertise rather than financial contributions (other than by the local authority) although there are exceptions to that, with Orkney CPP having a partnership support team jointly funded by the five facilitating partners, NHS Tayside contributing £20,000 per annum to delivery of community health initiatives, Public Health Scotland establishing a team of staff allocated to work with each CPP and Police Scotland contributing £10,000 to youth projects. More typically though, Kevin Anderson from South Ayrshire Council said that:

” The budget is a real challenge. My experience of community planning is that partners are very willing to share resources such as staff time, and to rearrange their staff, but actually putting money together in a pot is much more difficult. We have tried to do that a few times and, at times, it can be quite frustrating that we cannot put a small pot together, given the money that is available around the table... If we are moving toward a more locality-based model of service delivery, budgets need to align with that. In localities that have been really successful at that, there is a budget attached.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

60. Many written submissions argued that a lack of financial resources and staff availability are key barriers to the effective planning and delivery of CPP outcomes:

- West Lothian noted that because CPPs do not have their own dedicated budgets for partnership initiatives “it is increasingly difficult to deliver, as organisations themselves are operating under increasingly constrained budgets.”
- Aberdeen CPP has found that the resources deployed by each partner to community planning varies significantly across the CPP. This can be “challenging when planning for collective delivery of improved outcomes.”
- Perth & Kinross point out that joint resourcing at a local level “remains a significant challenge when all partners face significant budget pressures and have different accountability lines for delivering national and local targets.”
- Police Scotland notes that policing does not have devolved local budgets that would enable them to contribute to a shared post or initiative without central agreement.<sup>xxvii</sup>

61. An additional challenge is that funding for national priorities may not always align with those priorities identified by local communities. In their written submissions, South Lanarkshire Council said this can present competing demands for the

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<sup>xxv</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

<sup>xxvi</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>xxvii</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

partnership, and Scottish Fire and Rescue said that competing priorities can be potential barriers to the effective planning of CPPs.<sup>xxviii</sup> Cllr Heddle from Cosla told the Committee that local officers should be 'freed up' to participate more fully in CPPs, and to help partners to participate as well as just attend. He also made a similar point about the tension between ministerial priorities and CPP priorities:

” We need to be able to better balance both, with a bias or a shift towards the priorities of the community planning partnership and the place. We have the opportunity to do that through the work that is being done here and through the local governance review... the work that will be taken forward on community wealth building will also be relevant.”<sup>xxix</sup>

62. The intention of the Act was that partner organisations would jointly contribute resources to enable partnerships to deliver outcomes, but the inquiry heard this is often in a limited capacity and can be a source of frustration. Given the importance of CPPs in tackling inequalities - a key priority for the Scottish Government - it is perhaps surprising that they have not been properly resourced by the Government to enable them to deliver their ambitions. The current economic climate has inevitably squeezed resources of all kinds across CPP partners and is likely to present ongoing challenges.

- The Scottish Government’s review of the Act may therefore want to explore whether its ambitions for community planning are realistic without being backed up by direct investment. CPPs may have an important role to play in new priorities such as Community Wealth Building and the Scottish Government should ensure that they are sufficiently resourced before creating any additional statutory requirements.
- The Scottish Government should also explore further how community planning partners should best direct their own resources to underpin CPPs' work.

### Role of the third sector

63. The 2015 Act acknowledges the importance of the third sector in community planning, and throughout the evidence heard by the committee the sector was widely seen as being pivotal. Each local authority area has a 'Third Sector Interface' in place which acts as a representative for the sector, and although they are not statutory partners in CPPs, in most local authority areas they are involved in the partnerships at different levels (sometimes on the CPP Board, but more usually at delivery level). In her evidence to the Committee Jennifer Lees from North Lanarkshire Council explained they were very reliant on Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire<sup>xxx</sup>, and Michelle Crombie from Aberdeen CPP told us that:

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<sup>xxviii</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

<sup>xxix</sup> [Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee 12th Meeting, 2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>xxx</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)



” Our TSI [Third Sector Interface] is a core member of our community planning partnership. In respect of building capacity, it is a co-chair of our community empowerment group, which supports communities to thrive and be empowered to take forward action in the community. The TSI has taken a leadership role in that.”<sup>xxxix</sup>

64. Valerie Arbuckle from Police Scotland recognised both the challenges that TSIs have in engaging with CPPs because of their lack of capacity, and the importance of their role:

” They require more support, because the third sector that they represent is crucial to the work that needs to be done, particularly in the world of early prevention, given the inequalities that we see. I cannot speak highly enough of the third sector, and it needs a place at the table to drive change.”<sup>xxxix</sup>

65. The importance of the role of community organisations and charities came to the fore during the Covid-19 pandemic when they were able to rapidly respond to local need. When the formal and bureaucratic structures of local delivery were up-ended, the third sector came to be a more equal partner. However the Committee heard frustrations from the third sector in some areas where they are struggling to now be involved in community planning. During our engagement event with the third sector<sup>xxxix</sup> one attendee noted that some TSIs have stopped engaging with community planning altogether because their voice is being ignored, and Highland TSI believe the third sector is “an afterthought”, saying “our role is to be tacked on to the end of planning, our value is only in what we can bring gratis to the group”<sup>xxxix</sup>. In contrast, others suggested that at least community planning does usually give the third sector 'a seat at the table'.<sup>xxxix</sup>

66. We asked how the greater equality in CPPs which was experienced by the third sector during the pandemic but has since declined can be revived now that many areas are reverting to more usual ways of working. Attendees at our third sector event wanted there to be parity of esteem, with more than just a seat at the table but also respect for the sector and the ability to have a real influence. Also raised at the engagement event was the issue of the lack of expertise there is now in local authorities in community work. Instead that expertise lies often solely in the third sector, illustrating how vital the third sector is to delivering the ambitions of community planning.

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xxxix [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

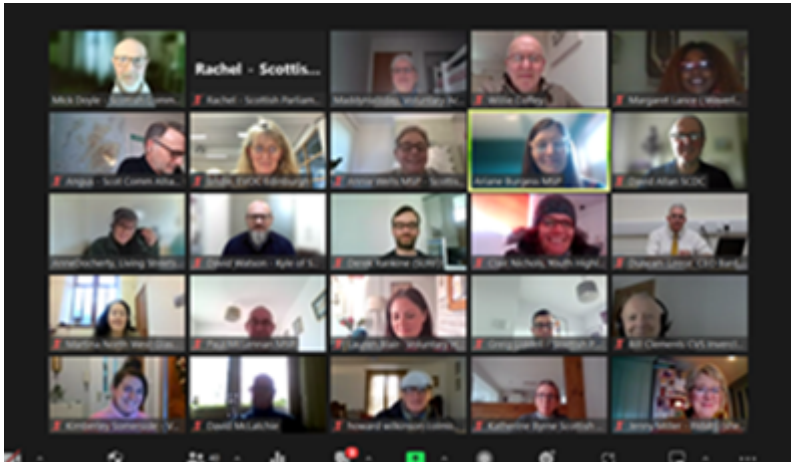
xxxix [Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee 8th Meeting, 2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

xxxix [summaryofengagementcommunityplanninginquiry.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

xxxix [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

xxxix [summaryofengagementcommunityplanninginquiry.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

### Third sector online engagement event



Source: Scottish Parliament

67. Many submissions called for the inclusion of third sector bodies in CPPs, while recognising that the Act cannot compel a non-public body to participate. NHS Lothian made the point that it might be useful to consider CPP membership in the context of the inclusion of anchor institutions and Community Wealth Building.<sup>xxxvi</sup> David Allan, from SDCD said:

” ...it is difficult to legislate for non-statutory organisations. However, TSIs have a role in community planning, and it would be well worth considering extending the right to be involved in community planning to local community anchor organisations, such as community-based housing associations, community development trusts and so on, because they have an increasingly leading role in developing and supporting community infrastructure.”<sup>xxxvii</sup>

68. Where there are strong working relationships between the CPP and the third sector there are clearly benefits. To see how this works in practice, some Committee members visited Renfrewshire's Third Sector Interface 'Engage Renfrewshire' in Paisley and met there with some of the community organisations that they work with, together with the CPP's lead officer from Renfrewshire Council. Members heard how the TSI is on the CPP's Executive Group, and leads the Forum for Empowering Communities which puts the community and voluntary sector on an equal footing with other community planning groups. The sector is resourced to lead key programmes, with seven local partnerships holding their own budgets totalling £600k. Members heard how the response there to the pandemic was a joint one, and that the third sector is able to be more 'nimble' than the public sector and take more risks. Shared responsibility and collaboration has enabled Renfrewshire in the past to put in a bid to be a City of Culture, and to create an Alcohol and Drugs Commission.

69. The Committee is concerned that the third sector still at times struggles to engage with CPPs, when it is clearly a vital part of tackling inequalities and in

xxxvi [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

xxxvii [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/28/02/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

engaging meaningfully with communities. We also heard about the importance of other key 'anchor' community organisations. As neither these nor TSIs are statutory bodies the Act cannot specify they are a statutory partner in community planning, but it could require CPPs to invite the local Third Sector Interface and local anchor organisations to be members. The Scottish Government should consider amending the Act accordingly.

## Membership of CPPs

70. We asked whether the statutory membership of CPPs needs to be revisited, particularly in view of the difficulties national and regional bodies face when engaging with multiple CPPs. The majority of submissions and the oral evidence heard said that the list of statutory members needs only minimum amendments, if at all. For example, Perth & Kinross CPP believes that the current focus on the cost crisis and on climate change would suggest that Social Security Scotland, the DWP and Scottish Water should be included. Other public body suggestions include HM Prisons and the Scottish Ambulance Service.

71. We heard too about the important role that the private sector should play in community planning, which was recognised at the outset of the Act and reflected in the guidance for CPPs. This is particularly the case in smaller, more rural areas, where businesses are key to driving employment, economic growth, and sustaining populations. David Watson from the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust explained that:

” In rural areas, businesses are a huge part of the sustainability of communities. We have to find a forum or a way of engaging businesses with community planning with a level of respect. Without the businesses, the jobs, the income and the ability of businesses to trade in our rural areas, communities cannot survive.”<sup>xxxviii</sup>

72. The Scottish Government should consider during its review of Part 2 of the Act how CPPs can best encourage the involvement of the private sector in community planning, for example through Business Gateway which is delivered by local authorities. It should also explore how CPPs can best contribute to increasing economic regionalisation and encourage collaboration between CPPs within regions.

# Community empowerment and participation

73. The Scottish Government's guidance on community planning is clear that the voices of communities themselves are integral to successful community planning, and one of the purposes of the Act was to create a culture shift away from consultation to participation.<sup>xxxix</sup> Many witnesses reiterated how important this is; Mark McAteer from the Community Planning Improvement Board for example said:

” There are a range of approaches across the country, but it is engagement at the local level and discussion with the community that provides the best insight and intelligence on what really matters to a community and on what we should think about in addressing the issues and challenges there.”<sup>xi</sup>

## Committee members visiting The Tannahill Centre, Paisley



Source: Scottish Parliament

74. Similarly, in his evidence to us the Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning, Joe Fitzpatrick said:

” The fact is that the more local engagement we have and the more communities are involved in decision making, the better will be the decisions that we make. We absolutely recognise that.”<sup>xli</sup>

## From consultation to participation

<sup>xxxix</sup> [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015, part 2 Community Planning: guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

<sup>xi</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](https://www.parliament.scot)

<sup>xli</sup> [Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee 12th Meeting, 2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](https://www.parliament.scot)

75. We asked if there is evidence that this shift from consultation to participation has happened, particularly with more disadvantaged and marginalised communities. In the evidence received from third sector and community organisations, there was wide consensus that more needs to be done by CPPs to ensure there is true community participation and empowerment. SCDC said that:
- ” we have seen scant evidence that many CPPs are making meaningful efforts to support engagement of disadvantaged and marginalised groups”<sup>xlii</sup>
76. In contrast, the majority of submissions from CPPs said the Act has led to improvements in how public bodies seek the participation of communities of place in decision making. Examples of new participation processes include:
- Argyll & Bute CPP using the Place Standard Tool bi-annually to understand community needs and shape work on outcomes.
  - Aberdeen has community-led Priority Neighbourhood Partnerships
  - Aberdeenshire has a Lived Experience Forum with 20 parents and 40 school age children
  - West Lothian recruited a panel of volunteer ‘Experts by Experience’ to provide additional scrutiny of anti-poverty activity<sup>xliii</sup>
77. During the passage of the Community Empowerment Bill in 2014, our predecessor committee highlighted how statutory organisations placed little value on community engagement at that time<sup>xliiv</sup>. Although some years later there are still wide variations in the effectiveness of community engagement, the evidence heard during the inquiry suggests that there has nonetheless been a sea change in attitudes towards it. All the CPPs responding to our call for views or providing evidence were keen to stress the importance of communities informing local actions and of working with a wide range of community partners.
78. Nonetheless at our engagement event with the third sector we heard particular concerns, including:
- There needs to be a more creative approach to hearing from the 'seldom heard', with CPPs going to communities, rather than vice versa. Disabled people in particular are sometimes excluded from the community planning process.
  - The bureaucracy that often accompanies community planning can lead to a lack of meaningful engagement. One attendee described it as seeming more like 'corporate planning'. Meetings in particular need to be more user-friendly. The language used around community planning, and the amount of documentation is not accessible.<sup>xliv</sup>

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<sup>xlii</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

<sup>xliii</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

<sup>xliv</sup> [2nd Report, 2015 \(Session 4\): Stage 1 Report on the Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Bill : Scottish Parliament](#)

79. Many statutory partners agreed that there is still improvement needed in CPPs' community engagement and empowerment. Cosla for example suggested that LOIPs could set out what will be done to better reach out to marginalised communities or communities of interest.<sup>xlvi</sup> And Argyll & Bute Health and Social Care Partnership highlighted in its written submission a lack of visibility of the CPP in the wider community, with decisions not being communicated beyond partners or understood, and a lack of clarity about purpose:

” The structures can lend themselves to a small number of people having a loud voice and this is not always representative of the views of everyone. There could be a wider involvement from communities.”<sup>xlvii</sup>

80. Similarly, some respondents to our survey highlighted an almost tokenistic approach to community engagement, with community organisations feeling that CPPs at best provide opportunities for ‘consultation’ rather than ‘empowerment’. One Glasgow community councillor stated that community engagement is seen as a ‘tick box’ exercise, and a respondent from Renfrewshire felt the community had been deliberately excluded from various initiatives. Digital exclusion was raised as an issue, with surveys and online meetings being organised under the assumption that everyone has internet access (although conversely we also heard how online meetings had sometimes improved accessibility for some people).<sup>xlviii</sup>

## Communities of interest

81. A particular issue that came up was the importance of engaging with 'communities of interest' as well as geographical communities. People within communities of interest have a shared experience or identity such such as race or disability, and so people within them may not necessarily live in one particular area. The existing guidance for CPPs highlights their importance, but SCDC said that the Act's “focus on socio-economic inequality of place means that the needs of communities of identity are probably not always being met.”<sup>xlix</sup> Kirsty McNeill from the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights told us:

” We undertook a review of local outcomes improvement plans, which showed that the majority have very little focus on race equality, despite the guidance that plans should demonstrate an understanding of local needs and circumstances.”<sup>l</sup>

82. The Homeless Network Scotland described the need for improvements to be made:

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xlv [summaryofengagementcommunityplanninginquiry.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

xlvi [Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee 12th Meeting, 2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

xlvii [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

xlviii [summaryofengagementcommunityplanninginquiry.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

xlix [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

l [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/28/02/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

- ” ...we need to put enough time, effort and expertise into meaningful engagement with people who are less likely to trust public services, people who may have experienced trauma and people who are really at the hard end, having experienced homelessness and all sorts of crises in their lives. Unless we get better at doing that, we are at risk of further marginalising people.”<sup>ii</sup>

### Community engagement expertise

83. Among the survey responses received there was a real sense in several that meaningful community engagement requires skilled organisation and facilitation to help bridge the gap between partner organisations and communities. This skill-set is not as apparent in CPP public bodies as it should be and there is a need for training for public sector staff, as well as capacity building within communities. Dr Oliver Escobar in his evidence told the Committee that community learning and development departments in local authorities have been cut over the past 10 years, with that expertise now tending to lie within the third sector<sup>iii</sup>, and one survey respondent said:

- ” There needs to be an acceptance that Community Engagement is a skilled job. Training is necessary. Even among people employed in a professional capacity receive minimal if any training.”<sup>iiii</sup>

84. The Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning noted a related issue around resourcing community planning:

- ” In relation to culture change for statutory partners, the 2015 Act places new responsibilities for participation on the bodies, but we need to go beyond that... We need to enable national agents to free up local officers so that they can participate more fully locally. That is perhaps a shortcoming and could be easily overcome.”<sup>liv</sup>

85. Effective community empowerment and participation is at the heart of community planning, but it is clear that progress is still needed across many CPPs, and there is a risk that people are still just the recipients of interventions rather than being involved in shaping them. In addition, there is a danger that the severe economic pressures on local partners' resources will further limit the investment of time and resources in this area.
86. The Scottish Government should take the opportunity during its review of Part 2 of the Act to help renew CPPs' focus on the importance of empowerment and participation through identifying opportunities to drive improvement and share best practice. This could include increasing the funding provided to the Improvement Service.

<sup>ii</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/28/02/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>iii</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>iiii</sup> [summary-of-survey-responses.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

<sup>liv</sup> [Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee 12th Meeting, 2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

87. CPPs should take proactive steps to ensure that communities of interest or identity are fully included in planning processes to avoid further marginalising key groups who are already at increased risk of inequality. Their voices should for example be clearly reflected in LOIPs and locality plans. Any review by the Scottish Government of the guidance for CPPs should take this into account.
88. Community engagement requires a professional skill-set that cannot be met solely by busy local authority CPP officers who lack experience. The Scottish Government should explore how it can support community planning through providing funding for the creation of a network of local authority community engagement officers, and by encouraging local authorities to ensure they have sufficient community planning officers.



# Tackling inequalities

## CPP Plans

89. One of the core purposes of CPPs should be to tackle local inequalities and so improve people's lives. Part 2 of the Act requires them to publish Local Outcome Improvement Plans ('LOIPs') which set the outcomes the CPP will prioritise to help tackle those inequalities. LOIPs are a key delivery mechanism for community planning, identifying local challenges which the partnership will collectively address. Fiona Robertson from Perth and Kinross Council explained that:

” The LOIP is, or should be, the foundation stone of data and evidence for understanding communities—their diversity and make-up, and what is shifting and changing. If the LOIP is right, it is based on data and evidence.”<sup>iv</sup>

90. The Act also requires CPPs to identify smaller areas within the local authority which experience the poorest outcomes, and to prepare and publish 'locality plans' which will help improve outcomes for those communities. Eann Sinclair from Highlands and Islands Enterprise explained to the Committee that that model has posed some difficulties for Highland CPP:

” In several areas of the Highlands and Islands, we have found locality plans to be less useful, because of the very small communities that we deal with, all of which tend to have expressed similar needs, pre-Covid and during Covid. So, we are increasingly looking at area plans, rather than locality plans, to encompass the fragile geographies that we deal with.”<sup>vi</sup>

91. We heard that it can be a challenge to align the wide range of strategic and delivery plans which partners in the CPP must work with, ranging from organisational and sectoral plans to local and national plans. In his evidence to the Committee, Stuart Graham from the Community Planning Officers Network said that:

” Community planning is supposed to be about being stronger when we work together and making sure that we are not pulling apart. The more separate plans we create, the greater the risk can be that we will unintentionally pull apart. We need to consider those unintentional consequences...”<sup>vii</sup>

92. Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority highlighted in a letter to the Committee the need for separate reporting regimes to align:

” It is important... to ensure that CPPs align with and are informed by other joint communication, statutory or place-based mechanisms, such as Health/Social Care Locality Planning networks, Community Councils, or community-led Community Action and Local Place Plans.”<sup>viii</sup>

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<sup>iv</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>vi</sup> [Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee 8th Meeting, 2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>vii</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/28/02/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>viii</sup> [Community Planning Inquiry letter from Loch Lomond | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

93. Michelle Crombie from Aberdeen City Council explained how their CPP had tried to address this issue through integrating different planning regimes:

” As a CPP, we were meeting our locality planning duties, but at the same time our health and social care partnership was implementing its own locality planning model—it was the same, but different—with other groups involved. As a result, communities were becoming confused about what locality planning actually was. Therefore, in 2020, we undertook a review to develop an integrated model, which I think is the only one in Scotland.”<sup>lix</sup>

94. A number of submissions advised that in their local authority areas the LOIP is seen as the key strategic document and that other plans, strategies and policies have to demonstrate how they will impact the LOIP. Looking specifically at health outcomes, ASH Scotland believes that robust action in LOIPs and Locality Plans to reduce smoking rates can play a vital role in delivering positive outcomes for communities.<sup>lx</sup>

95. We also heard about good examples of community engagement in developing plans, such as in East Dunbartonshire:

” We are currently finalising the refresh of our locality plans for our four most deprived areas in East Dunbartonshire. That has involved a consultation and engagement process with all our community planning partners and the community, which has spanned the period since the middle of 2022, in order that we reflect the cost of living and the recovery from the pandemic. That process has involved engagement, including with focus groups that we called “blether boxes”... The refresh of our LOIP will come from that process.”<sup>lxi</sup>

## Demonstrating impact

96. We heard in the evidence to our inquiry that it can be difficult for CPPs to demonstrate the impact they have, as required by the [Scottish Government’s CPP guidance](#) which asks:

” Can the CPP demonstrate it is making a difference, reducing inequalities in outcomes, applying preventative approaches and using its collective resources to get the maximum benefit for communities?”<sup>lxii</sup>

97. The Committee was told about numerous case studies across the country where CPPs are delivering programmes aimed at improving the lives of local people. The difficulty appears to be in linking CPP activity with the available outcomes data. Carol Calder from Audit Scotland noted:

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<sup>lix</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>lx</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

<sup>lxi</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>lxii</sup> [Strategic guidance for community planning partnerships: community learning and development - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

” there is still a bit of a disconnect between what is happening on the ground and how partnerships can demonstrate how all of that activity has contributed to delivering against our priority outcomes... It is hard to extract from that and crystallise those measures, but it is really important to do so, because that demonstrates the worth of planning partnerships by demonstrating what they can do.”<sup>lxiii</sup>

98. Lee Haxton, community planning team lead at Perth and Kinross Council, stated:

” We could quite conceivably make a significant impact, but could we actually attribute the cause of that to something that we had done as a community planning partnership? The data would probably not show us that but, in our gut, we would probably know that something that we had done had made that difference”.<sup>lxiv</sup>

99. Witnesses told us how the Covid-19 pandemic exposed underlying inequalities and at times widened them. There was a frustration expressed in many submissions that the main drivers of inequalities relate to external factors outwith the control of CPPs, including the pandemic, the economic context and the war in Ukraine. In his evidence to the Committee Peter Kelly from the Poverty Alliance said that:

” ...we know that, very worryingly, health inequalities are starting to widen again in Scotland. The community planning partners can make a significant contribution to reducing those inequalities, but there are processes taking place at Scotland and UK levels that are driving some of those widening inequalities.”<sup>lxv</sup>

100. Tackling inequalities through preventative approaches is a key role of CPPs. However effective actions and strategies require a long-term approach which can be challenging. East Ayrshire CPP believes that its commitment to prevention and early intervention was constrained by the need to ‘firefight’ during the pandemic and the current cost crisis.<sup>lxvi</sup> Progress they believe was previously being made has been undone by external structural factors beyond the gift and influence of local community planning partners.

101. Aberdeen takes a different approach to other CPPs. The partnership has identified a number of improved outcomes in the city, such as uptake of unclaimed benefits and increased numbers of employers paying the living wage. Michelle Crombie explained:

” Using the fundamental principles of quality improvement, we set out in our local outcomes improvement plan our 15 stretch outcomes, which identify exactly how much we want to improve and by when. We then break down those high-level longer-term stretch outcomes into specific improvement projects, with the same aims.”<sup>lxvii</sup>

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<sup>lxiii</sup> [Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee 6th Meeting, 2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>lxiv</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>lxv</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/28/02/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>lxvi</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

102. As a national organisation Scottish Enterprise works with CPPs across the country. Derek Shaw from the agency described their perspective on a lack of consistency in determining the impact CPPs have:

” what are the outcomes that we are looking to achieve, what accountability do different partners have to deliver those ambitions and, crucially, how do we measure the impact? We do not have in place a consistent framework to allow us to assess that, other than case by case or project by project... There would be benefit in looking at how we might take a more consistent and streamlined approach to measuring the impacts and outcomes of the LOIPs.”<sup>lxviii</sup>

103. Witnesses expressed their belief that more work needs to be done in this area, perhaps in the academic field or through broader impact studies. Some written submissions made similar suggestions, with SCDC calling for support to be made available to develop outcome measures.<sup>lxix</sup>

104. We also heard about the importance of using qualitative as well as quantitative data to demonstrate impact, with examples including Dumfries & Galloway CPP using case studies and personal testimonies, and East Ayrshire describing using 'story-telling mode'. Jennifer Lees of North Lanarkshire Council highlighted that:

” ...in addition to the quantitative data, it is important that we use case studies and examples of feedback from community organisations and local areas where we have worked. That does not always lend itself to numeric indicators, but it is equally important feedback on where we are improving outcomes.”<sup>lxx</sup>

105. A further issue raised was the importance of CPPs using local data to identify key issues and areas where interventions are needed. However there is not always suitable data available, and both Highland CPP and Orkney CPP noted the particular challenges of identifying and measuring inequalities in remote and rural areas where there are small populations. The Committee notes the range of local data available through the Improvement Service's Community Planning Outcomes Profiles website<sup>lxxi</sup>, with statistics on early years, older people, environment, health and wellbeing, community safety and economic outcomes being available at both CPP and ward level.

106. There can be challenges too in managing different data sources which are produced by different sectors or organisations and so are often not coterminous (for example covering different time periods or areas). Mark McAteer, representing the Community Planning Improvement Board, explained that:

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<sup>lxvii</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>lxviii</sup> [Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee 8th Meeting, 2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>lxix</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

<sup>lxx</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>lxxi</sup> [Community Planning Outcomes Profile | Improvement Service](#)

” There are still challenges around how we join up our data sets to make them more insightful and powerful in the future. We also need to think about how we make better use of big data, as opposed to public service data, the challenges are significant. Not only do data not align, but systems sometimes do not talk to each other, and trying to find a point of convergence among partners when one system might be the right one is difficult.”<sup>lxxii</sup>

107. Argyll and Bute CPP similarly noted:

” Having quality data to inform how life is being experienced in a place, based on protected characteristics, would enable an approach to addressing inequalities to be data led and informed. This requires nationally led data sets to be of a suitable quality.”<sup>lxxiii</sup>

108. The Committee heard throughout its inquiry that CPPs are struggling to demonstrate how their decisions and actions are impacting outcomes on inequalities, although they believe that they are making a difference. Yet, an understanding of impacts is necessary if public bodies are to identify the most effective interventions and therefore target limited resources. Demonstrating impact is also important for accountability, with CPPs being answerable to the communities they serve.

109. The Scottish Government should consider commissioning research into the impact made by CPPs on reducing inequalities. This could explore how CPPs are, and should be, linking interventions with outcomes data at a local level and outlining a framework for CPPs to use.

110. Local Outcomes Improvement Plans and locality plans provide the framework for delivering community planning and by setting out CPPs' priorities are a key part of demonstrating the impact which they have. It is clearly a challenge though for partners to simultaneously manage different strategic planning frameworks and there is a need to better align outcomes across the public sector. This would better underpin the delivery of improved outcomes at all levels and also enable the evidencing of those improvements.

111. Within CPPs there is scope for partners to align their objectives, as described by Aberdeen City's CPP. The Scottish Government's review of community planning should consider whether this should be used a case study and incorporated into the Strategic Guidance for CPPs.

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<sup>lxxii</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>lxxiii</sup> [Published responses for Community Planning - call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

# Leadership

112. During the inquiry we heard from a number of witnesses about how important good leadership is to effective community planning, in particular the skills that are needed to facilitate collaboration between partners. During our online engagement event, third sector organisations highlighted that CPP leaders need to be trained to engage and lead partnerships, particularly in those facilitation skills. David Watson from the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust said that:

” Often, people are promoted into roles without the necessary training in or experience of community planning. They come to it without confidence in their ability to deliver their role. They are also expected to do the community planning work on top of the job that they already have.”<sup>lxxiv</sup>

113. Carol Calder from Audit Scotland noted the shift that is needed from a more traditional leadership style:

” Leadership has changed: it is not just about managing a council, but is now about collaborative leadership. Leadership works when you leave at the door 'your silos, your logos and your egos.' ”<sup>lxxv</sup>

114. We also heard that there can be a lack of continuity in leadership of CPPs. Leaders are often drawn from the main statutory partners (for example the local authority or Police Scotland) and may be in post on the CPP for sometimes a short period of time before the responsibility is passed on to a colleague.<sup>lxxvi</sup>

115. Councillor Heddle from Cosla was clear in his evidence about the importance of collective leadership from across partners, and also the powers that are needed:

” I strongly believe that local leaders have to be invested in the partnership. Their role would be like that of directors - when they are sitting on a partnership, their obligation is to the partnership's aspirations. To be able to do that, they need to be empowered fiscally and functionally.”<sup>lxxvii</sup>

116. The Scottish Government's review of Part 2 of the Act should consider how to foster more sharing and continuity in CPP leadership, for example through minimum terms or rotating Chairs across partners. It should also explore what training is needed to enable effective leadership of CPPs and how this could be provided.

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<sup>lxxiv</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/21/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>lxxv</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/28/02/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>lxxvi</sup> [summaryofengagementcommunityplanninginquiry.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

<sup>lxxvii</sup> [Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee 12th Meeting, 2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

## Conclusion

117. This inquiry set out to examine what the impact of the Act has been on community planning and whether that is making a difference to people's lives, as the legislation intended. When our predecessor committee (the Local Government and Regeneration Committee) was scrutinising the Community Empowerment Bill in 2015, its report<sup>lxxviii</sup> described the challenges then facing community planning which have many parallels with our own findings. These included:

- Noting that CPPs were not able to show they had had a significant impact in delivering improved outcomes, and that barriers have stood in the way such as councils remaining the dominant partners.
- The need for investment in community capacity building if all communities were to take full advantage of the opportunities in the Bill.
- Local communities were not sufficiently and directly involved with CPPs.

118. In many respects, those issues are still very much relevant eight years on, which begs the question of how effective the Act has been. Our predecessor Committee's report on the Community Empowerment Bill noted that the Minister for Local Government and Planning had stated he wanted to "set the people free", and that the proposed Bill represented "the biggest potential transfer of powers to local communities since devolution."<sup>lxxix</sup>

119. From the evidence we have heard, there have been significant improvements made over the past eight years, particularly in greater collaboration and cross-sectoral understanding across community planning partners. But we heard too about the frustrations of community organisations that true community participation is often not happening, despite it being at the heart of the Act. It's also still difficult to evidence what the impact of CPPs has actually been, though we acknowledge that many local projects will undoubtedly be making a difference to people's lives.

120. Throughout the inquiry we heard from witnesses and in written submissions about the importance of community planning more broadly, as expressed by Fiona Robertson from Perth and Kinross Council:

” It is important to see the 2015 act in a broader context as part of a system within a much wider framework of legislation on public service reform, which has a thread running through it that relates to community empowerment and community participation.”<sup>lxxx</sup>

121. Clearly community planning is a key part of not only empowering and improving local communities but also has an important role in the Government's wider ambitions for the public sector and the work they are undertaking with Cosla to

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<sup>lxxviii</sup> [2nd Report, 2015 \(Session 4\): Stage 1 Report on the Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Bill : Scottish Parliament](#)

<sup>lxxix</sup> [2nd Report, 2015 \(Session 4\): Stage 1 Report on the Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Bill : Scottish Parliament](#)

<sup>lxxx</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

develop a Local Governance framework and a New Deal for local government. In his evidence to the Committee, the Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning said:

” Community planning will continue to have an important role in supporting a range of priorities, such as covid recovery, promoting population health and tackling health inequalities. However... There will increasingly be a role for community wealth building<sup>lxxxix</sup>, particularly in relation to economic development in our communities.”<sup>lxxxii</sup>

122. In his evidence to us, the Vice-President of Cosla stressed the Scottish Government's role:

” It is incumbent on ministers and agencies to direct and empower participants in the community planning partnerships.” He also said “We would like to see partnerships being more empowered in order that we can empower our places more.”<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

123. CPPs remain an important part of ensuring that local needs are met. They face significant challenges though in achieving that, including widening inequalities and ever tighter resources. The world has also changed since the Act came into force, and the Scottish Government and wider public sector have new strategic priorities such as its focus on Community Wealth Building. The Scottish Government and Cosla must not lose sight too of the importance of community planning in agreeing the long-awaited 'New Deal' for local governance in Scotland.

124. We hope that the Scottish Government's ambitions to empower communities remain as strong as they were in 2015, and that its current review of the Act reflects that. Scotland is recognised as being one of the most centralised countries in Europe, and so community planning is clearly an essential part of delivering empowerment at a local level. If community planning is to achieve the Scottish Government's ambitions it must take action to support and nurture it into the future and we encourage the Scottish Government to take account on the findings of this report in doing so.

125. The Accounts Commission's recent Overview of Local Government in Scotland<sup>lxxxiv</sup> highlighted that it is only by working more collaboratively that local authorities and their local partners, communities and the third sector will be able to provide sustainable local services and deliver national reform to tackle issues such as climate change, child poverty and inequalities. The community planning system is clearly an important collaborative platform which could help meet those challenges, and CPPs have already made significant progress since the Act came into force. There is still some way to go though, and we hope that our inquiry will contribute to engendering a more central role across Scotland for CPPs in meeting those challenges in the coming years.

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<sup>lxxxix</sup> The Scottish Government has adopted Community Wealth Building as an approach to economic development

<sup>lxxxii</sup> [Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee 12th Meeting, 2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>lxxxiii</sup> [Meeting of the Parliament: LGHP/25/04/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> [Local government in Scotland: Overview 2023 \(audit-scotland.gov.uk\)](#)



126. In its development of a Community Wealth Building Bill, the Scottish Government should give early consideration to the role of CPPs in delivering the policy ambitions, whether any legislative changes to their role would be required to facilitate that, and should ensure sufficient guidance is provided to CPPs about their role in community wealth building.
127. The work that the Scottish Government and Cosla are jointly undertaking to review Local Governance in Scotland should incorporate the role that CPPs have, and any conclusions reached should provide clarity for all partners on the importance of community planning.

# Annex A

128. The Committee heard evidence from the following witnesses during the course of the inquiry.

## [Evidence session on 28th February 2023](#)

- *Carol Calder*, Audit Director, Audit Scotland
- *Stuart Graham*, Representative, Community Planning Network
- *Tim McKay*, Deputy Chair, Accounts Commission
- *David Allan*, Deputy Director, Scottish Community Development Centre
- *Peter Kelly*, Director, The Poverty Alliance
- *Kirsty McNeill*, Policy and Research Officer, Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER)
- *Ruth Whatling*, Head of Policy and Equality, Homeless Network Scotland

## [Evidence session on 7th March 2023](#)

- *Shaw Anderson*, Partnership & Development Manager, Glasgow City Council
- *Evonne Bauer*, Executive Officer, Place and Community Planning, East Dunbartonshire Council
- *Michelle Crombie*, Corporate Strategy and Community Planning Manager, Aberdeen City Council
- *Jennifer Lees*, Business Partnership Manager, North Lanarkshire Council
- *Bernadette Monaghan*, Director of Community Empowerment and Equalities, Glasgow City Council
- *Kevin Anderson*, Service Lead for Policy, Performance and Community Planning, South Ayrshire Council
- *Lee Haxton*, Community Planning Team Leader, Perth & Kinross Council
- *Fiona Robertson*, Head of Culture and Communities Services, Perth & Kinross Council
- *Anna Whelan*, Service Manager, Strategy and Partnership, Orkney Islands Council
- *Dr Oliver Escobar*, Senior Lecturer in Public Policy, University of Edinburgh
- *Mark McAteer*, Member, Community Planning Improvement Board

## [Evidence session on 14th March 2023](#)

- *Valerie Arbuckle*, National Partnership Development Manager, Police Scotland
- *Mark McAteer*, Director of Strategic Planning Performance and Communications, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- *Pauline Smith*, Chief Executive, Development Trusts Association Scotland
- *Stephen Wood*, Head of Service Delivery, North of Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- *Caroline Warburton*, Destination Development Director, VisitScotland
- *Karen Jackson*, Director of Strategy Partnerships and Engagement, South of Scotland Enterprise
- *Sharon McIntyre*, Head of Career Information Advice and Guidance, Skills Development Scotland
- *Dave McCallum*, Head of Operations South East, Skills Development Scotland
- *Derek Shaw*, Director of Innovation and Place, Scottish Enterprise
- *Eann Sinclair*, Area Manager Caithness and Sutherland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise

#### [Evidence session on 21st March 2023](#)

- *Ellen Wright*, Community Councillor
- *Lionel Most*, Chair and Secretary, Dowanhill, Hyndland and Kelvinside Community Council
- *Louise Robb*, Chair, Largo Communities Together
- *David Watson*, Trust Manager, Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust

#### [Evidence session on 25th April 2023](#)

- *Joe FitzPatrick*, Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning, Scottish Government
- *Andrew Connal*, Team Leader, Public Service Reform and Community Planning, Scottish Government
- *David Milne*, Team Leader, Public Service Reform and Community Planning, Scottish Government
- *Councillor Steven Heddle*, Vice President, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- *Simon Cameron*, Chief Officer, Workforce and Corporate Policy Team, COSLA
- *Lucy Devlin*, Policy Assistant, Workforce and Corporate Policy Team, COSLA

