



Supporting Involvement in Community Planning - Guidance Note



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As set out in the Local Government in Scotland Act (2003), the effective engagement and involvement of local communities is fundamental to the long-term success of Community Planning. However, it has long been accepted that there are many barriers to be overcome in facilitating and supporting that effective engagement and involvement.
- 1.2 In an attempt to address this crucial issue, the Moray Community Planning Partnership (MCP) set up a short-term Task Group in September 2006. The Task Group comprised partner representatives, including Volunteer Centre Moray, MVS, The Joint Community Councils of Moray, HIE Moray and The Moray Council. The Group was chaired by Mark McClelland-Jones, Chief Officer of Volunteer Centre Moray.
- 1.3 The Task Group has met regularly over the past year in seeking to fulfil its remit. Its initial task was to instigate research into existing and perceived barriers to the involvement of volunteers. This research is summarised in **Appendix 1**.
- 1.4 Following the research, the Group agreed a set of key principles, governing the way in which volunteers, involved in Community Planning activities, are supported in practice. These principles, and best practice arising from these, form the core of this Guidance Note.
- 1.5 In producing this Guidance Note and in implementing the principles contained within it, the MCP is promoting itself as a model of good practice. To this end, an indicative policy statement has been added as Appendix 2, seeking to clarify the financial implications of implementing the principles.
- 1.6 The Guidance forms part of a suite of guidance and policy documents produced by the MCP under its Community Engagement Framework.
- 1.7 The Framework itself reflects the National Standards for Community Engagement, produced in 2005, which set out the key principles governing such engagement. It also links to other national policy documents, including the Scottish Volunteering Strategy and the Scottish Compact.
- 1.8 The diagram in **Appendix 2** seeks to illustrate these links and place the Guidance Note within the relevant national and local context.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICE

2.1 The following key principles and practice should be adopted and adhered to by all groups convened by the MCPP in facilitating and supporting the voluntary involvement of individuals in activities relating directly to the business of the MCPP. The main groups convened by the MCPP include:

- Steering Group
- Theme Groups
- Area Forums
- The Moray Forum
- Task Groups

2.2 To provide an environment for volunteers which operates within the context of the Universal Declaration on Volunteering

Within the context of the MCPP it should be recognised that the Declaration states that volunteers and the organisations and communities, which they serve, have a shared responsibility to:

- create environments in which volunteers have meaningful work, which contributes to achieving agreed results
- define the criteria for volunteer participation, including the conditions under which the organisation and the volunteer may end their commitment and develop policies to guide volunteer activity
- provide appropriate protection against risks for volunteers and those they serve
- provide volunteers with appropriate training, regular evaluation and recognition
- ensure access for all by removing physical, economic, social and cultural barriers to their participation

2.3 To build the capacity and develop the skills of individuals to enable them to participate more effectively

A range of options should be given to individuals to enable them to take up opportunities, convenient to their life situation. These options should include:

- training courses, offered at different times of day and at weekends.
- informal awareness sessions organised during group meetings
- induction training for new members of groups
- on-line training opportunities

All of the above options should be made as accessible as possible and offered in locations throughout Moray. Every effort should be made to advertise and promote the various options available as widely as possible, using a variety of media, including local press, flyers, posters and websites.

2.4 To make information about all aspects of Community Planning accessible to everyone in Moray

In providing information about Community Planning processes and activities, the following points should be observed:

- where possible, it should be delivered face-to-face and interpreted to aid better understanding and appreciation of what is being communicated
- it should be provided within agreed timescales
- it should be available in a variety of formats, including hard copy and online, with provision of additional support needs, such as Braille and language translation
- it should be available through different media, including the local press, radio, community newsletters and websites
- it should be compiled in language which is easily understood and jargon-free
- it should be tailored to specific audiences and be sufficient for the purpose for which it is intended

2.5 To provide opportunities for individuals to take part in activities to build their confidence and self-esteem with a view to encouraging their future involvement in Community Planning processes

A flexible approach, tailored to individual needs, and, if necessary, cutting across agency boundaries, should be adopted in providing such opportunities. Individuals, known to Community Planning partner agencies and local groups, should be offered relevant support, which could include confidence building courses and/or learning, educational and improved health and lifestyle opportunities. Arrangements should also be put in place about transitional support for individuals beyond this stage to enable them to get fully involved in Community Planning processes. Community Learning and Development staff, Area Forum Workers, other partner support staff and community members already involved in the Community Planning process, will have a crucial role in providing this support.

The current Area Forum Action Groups should also be seen as a valuable mechanism in building the confidence and self-esteem of individuals moving into the Community Planning process. These groups tend to be small, less formal, focussed on particular issues and more relevant to the individuals involved.

2.6 To provide those taking part in Community Planning groups and activities with a clear understanding of their role and the responsibilities associated with that role

A set of Protocols and Guidelines has been drawn up setting out the roles and responsibilities of those taking part in Community Planning structures. This document also seeks to clarify the relationship between the various stakeholders involved.

The roles and responsibilities of office bearers of Community Planning related groups should be clearly defined. Guidance can be obtained from a series of

'governance' leaflets produced by Moray Voluntary Service Organisation (MVSO) or through attending a joint MVSO/Volunteer Centre Moray Governance training course.

It may be useful to produce a basic induction pack to assist new members of Groups in their understanding of their roles and responsibilities within these. Specific information about issues relating to the support of volunteers can be obtained from Volunteer Centre Moray.

2.7 To encourage and facilitate a range of ways to contribute to Community Planning processes, which will maximise the opportunities for individuals to get involved, as suits them best

The range of opportunities presented should include the following:

- Attending and participating in organised meetings on a regular basis
- Attending and participating in occasional meetings
- Contributing views and opinions through consultations initiated by MCPP, including the Citizens' Panel and Area Action Plans
- Contributing views and opinions through involvement with local groups and organisations, which are then fed into appropriate Community Planning forums
- Keeping in touch with local issues and concerns through local newsletters and websites with the opportunity to feed in views through these

2.8 To involve communities in decision-making processes from the outset

The involvement of community individuals and groups should be placed at the heart of decision-making processes within Community Planning. In order to achieve this, such involvement has to be planned and built in to such processes from the outset. In this way, communities will feel better able to exert genuine influence on decisions taken and not simply engaged or consulted for the sake of it.

2.9 To allow a reasonable amount of time to respond to consultation documents, which takes account of meeting cycles and existing demands on individuals' time

All strategy and policy documents, on which the views of community groups and individuals are being sought, should be circulated, giving groups ample and realistic timescales, in which to respond. This will vary depending on how often the groups meet and the methods used by the group to make their responses meaningful.

In cases where the preferred timescale for feedback cannot be met, perhaps because of national or funding time pressures, this should be discussed with the community groups. The limitations of this should also be explained and joint agreement reached on the most appropriate way to report back within the time available. Prior discussion should always take place on the value of the consultation, if time is limited. If it is concluded that the consultation would be

seriously limited then this should be conveyed to the agency/organisation responsible for setting the timescales.

2.10 To provide appropriate expenses, covering travel to and time spent at meetings, thus ensuring that individuals are not 'out-of-pocket' as a result of their attendance

A set of procedures should be drawn up, clearly defining the meetings and events, for which individuals can claim expenses. These would normally include meetings of the core group, of which the individual is a member and sub-groups, as determined by the core group. Attendance at consultation events and annual 'gatherings' would also be included.

The expenses provided should help meet the cost of travel to and from such events, whether by car or public transport. Where possible, car-sharing should be encouraged and facilitated, together with appropriate insurance arrangements. Any car-parking charges incurred should also be reimbursed.

The cost of childcare, required to enable individuals to attend meetings and events, should be met, as well as dependant care. Such arrangements should be put in place well in advance of when they are required. The sharing of carers should also be considered, where convenient.

2.11 To meet the resource needs of office bearers of groups in administering the activities of MCPP groups

Such resource needs would include postage, photocopying and stationery items. The majority of these resource needs should be met through utilising existing administrative facilities within the offices of partner organisations.

Other expenses incurred in administering the activities of relevant groups, including telephone charges, Internet connections and charges and the cost of print cartridges, should be met through submission of expenses sheets, together with evidence of such expense.

2.12 To provide a pleasant experience and environment for those taking part in meetings and events

The venues selected for meetings and events should be warm and welcoming and fully accessible, within the context of the Disability Discrimination Act. Groups should be aware of any barriers preventing anyone being fully engaged. A range of basic refreshments should be provided, including healthy options, as appropriate.

2.13 To put in place appropriate support mechanisms, which individuals can access to address issues and concerns about their involvement in Community Planning activities

The Workers, supporting Community Planning processes, should be available on a daily basis to be approached regarding such issues and concerns. These could

relate to issues arising from meetings, which individuals have attended or local concerns, which it is considered are not being adequately addressed.

Lead Officers, who are senior representatives of the MCPP partner organisations, are soon to be appointed to each of the 8 Area Forums. Their primary responsibility will be to ensure the smooth running of Local Community Planning structures in their area and bring any concerns back to the MCPP to be addressed.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 This Guidance Note sets out the key principles underpinning the support of individuals involved in groups convened by the MCPP to carry out its business and in the wider activities of the MCPP, including consultation events.
- 3.2 It is recognised that every organisation is unique and operates within its own agreed budget limits. However, each organisation should be endeavouring to support volunteers according to the principles set out in this document.
- 3.3 In seeking to be a model of good practice, the MCPP has put together an indicative policy statement outlining the financial implications of adopting such principles and how these will be met. This is set out in **Appendix 2**. It is hoped other organisations will adopt a similar approach and produce similar policy statements of their own.

Appendix 1

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

1. Research Methodology

- 1.1 The initial task identified was to gather information about the current involvement of volunteers in Community Planning groups and activities and investigate the barriers preventing people from getting involved or perceived by existing Community Planning volunteers as problematic.
- 1.2 A short questionnaire was devised and facilitated in January 2007 by Volunteer Centre Moray, on behalf of MCPP.
- 1.3 Over 1500 questionnaires were sent out to groups and organisations on the Community Planning database, Area Forum members and clients of Volunteer Centre Moray. Young people were targeted through Dialogue Youth and Elgin Youth Café. Copies of the questionnaire were also placed in various public places, including libraries and community centres, as well as on the Community Planning website - www.yourmoray.org.uk.
- 1.4 Around 9% of the questionnaires were completed and returned. The responses were then analysed by Volunteer Centre Moray and a detailed report produced on the findings. This can be accessed on the Community Planning website at www.yourmoray.org.uk/CPEXtranet/SupportingVol/Supporting%20Involvement%20Report.pdf.
- 1.5 As a result of the initial questionnaire, a wide variety of factors, which influence voluntary involvement, were identified. Further research was then carried out involving the Area Forums, partly to validate the outcomes previously identified and partly to gain greater insight into some of the issues raised.
- 1.6 Some of the Area Forums organised small Focus Groups to look in more depth at the initial research findings. Others discussed the matter as an agenda item at one of their regular meetings.
- 1.7 The Area Forum Support Workers, who facilitate and support the Area Forums, then came together to compile a report on discussions held and draw up proposals to address some of the barriers and shortcomings, which had been identified.

2. Research Findings

- 2.1 In respect of barriers to greater involvement in the Community Planning process, it was recognised that there are two levels to be considered.
- 2.2 Firstly, in relation to individuals, who have never been involved, the following constraints were highlighted:
 - lack of confidence and self-esteem
 - lack of knowledge and awareness of Community Planning

- lack of time
 - unwillingness to participate as an acknowledged or 'official' member of a group
- 2.3 Secondly, in relation to individuals already involved in Community Planning activity, the following potential barriers were identified:
- lack of time
 - travel to meetings
 - childcare/dependant care responsibilities
 - lack of suitable training opportunities
 - lack of clear understanding of Community Planning and roles and responsibilities within that
 - heavy consultative documents and limited time to respond to these
 - perception that involvement is 'tokenistic' and not influencing the decision-making process, which may result in apathy
 - lack of interface with MCPP partner representatives
- 2.4 A number of more specific constraints were also recognised, particularly in relation to attendance at meetings. These included:
- travelling to meetings in the dark (particularly relevant to more elderly members of communities)
 - too many meetings held in Elgin, rather than more locally
 - commitment to attend frequent meetings
 - formality and bureaucracy of meetings
- 3. Existing Practice**
- 3.1 A number of services and organisations were approached and asked to provide information about their existing practices in relation to supporting the involvement of individuals in their activities.
- 3.2 The remit of the Council's Community Learning and Development (CLD) Service is to engage with and support the involvement of individuals and groups in communities. Groups actively involved in adult, youth, sports and arts volunteering are supported in a variety of ways depending on the activity. This includes meeting travel costs to and from the volunteering activity, organising training relating to the activity and supporting access to the Community Capacity Training Calendar, produced by CLD on behalf of the MCPP. Some of the training is accredited such as PD: ITALL for adults volunteering to work with people with numeracy and literacy issues, PP1 & 2 for those wishing to develop skills in working with young people and certain sports related activities. Due to lack of resources, childcare is not currently offered or supported, unless these costs are part of an external funding package related to a particular activity.
- 3.3 The network of Tenants' Forums throughout Moray receives support from the Council's Housing Policy Officer. Each Forum receives an annual allowance from the Council of £250, from which to meet all administrative expenses. Forum

members are entitled to claim a travel allowance at the rate of 35p per mile. They are also entitled to claim support for childcare, but this has very rarely been taken up. Occasional training courses have also been organised for Forum members to help build their capacity, but these have been limited by the available resources to fund them.

- 3.4 The Joint Community Councils of Moray (JCC), as well as individual Community Councils, receive support from the Council's Community Council Liaison Officer. The JCC receives an annual allowance of £500 from the Council to meet administrative expenses. Community Councils also receive an annual allowance from the Council, commensurate with the population of their area. Members can claim travel expenses at the rate of 40p per mile. Regular opportunities are provided for members to develop their skills on topics, surrounding governance issues. Occasional capacity building sessions are also organised to cover issues, such as new planning regulations.

Appendix 2

MCPP Policy Statement on Financial Implications

- 2.1 This policy statement sets out the financial implications of the MCPP's support for the involvement of volunteers as laid down in the Guidance Note.
- 2.2 The MCPP undertakes to meet the out-of-pocket expenses of those involved in carrying out its activities and business as follows:
 - 2.2.1 pay for the cost of travel by car to and from meetings and events at a rate of 40p per mile on submission of relevant form with details of travel
 - 2.2.2 pay for car parking charges on submission of relevant form detailing such charges and attaching appropriate parking tickets
 - 2.2.3 pay for the cost of travel to and from meetings by public transport on submission of the relevant form with details of travel and attaching tickets (or proof of purchase)
 - 2.2.4 meet the cost of childcare at the prescribed rate for a suitably qualified individual to undertake such duties, ie £4 per hour, on submission of relevant form detailing the number of hours for which childcare was provided
 - 2.2.5 meet the cost of dependant care at the prescribed rate for a suitably qualified carer to undertake such duties, ie £10 per hour, on submission of the relevant form detailing the number of hours for which dependant care was provided
 - 2.2.6 pay for the cost of postage and other stationery items, where it has not been possible to make use of the facilities and resources available within partner offices on submission of the relevant form detailing costs incurred and attaching relevant receipts as proof of purchase
 - 2.2.7 pay for telephone charges incurred on submission of relevant form detailing costs incurred, together with appropriate evidence of these charges
 - 2.2.8 pay an agreed proportion of computing costs, including Internet connections and charges and print cartridges, on submission of relevant form detailing costs incurred, together with receipts and other evidence of charges
 - 2.2.9 pay for the cost of refreshments (tea, coffee etc) provided for meetings and events on submission of the relevant form detailing costs incurred and attaching receipts as proof of purchase
- 2.3 Each Area Forum is responsible for overseeing and monitoring the processes involved in meeting out-of-pocket expenses, as outlined above. It is anticipated

that all such expenses will be met from the annual allocation of £1,500 granted to each Forum by the MCPP.

Appendix 3

**Community Engagement Framework
The National and Local Context**

