

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Communities Committee

Does this report require to be approved?

Yes No

Ref AA/LJ

Date 28/10/24

Democracy Matters 2

From Archie Aitken, Chief Officer (Legal and Democratic)

E-mail AitkenA@northlan.gov.uk

Telephone 07939 280102

Executive Summary

In 2017, the Scottish Government and COSLA launched the Local Governance Review to ensure Scotland's diverse communities and different places have greater control and influence over decisions that affect them most.

To aid the review process, during 2018 Scottish Government launched the Democracy Matters engagement process. A second phase launched in August 2023 with the intention that it would last for a period of six months. The outcome report was published in late September 2024.

This report provides an overview of the outcomes of the Democracy Matters 2 engagement which sought to gain a deeper understanding and facilitate conversations around future governance arrangements for the public sector and decision-making bodies.

A summary of the emerging themes from the one hundred and sixty-six responses is contained herein as well as a number of next steps. Overall, the key message was that whilst there is support for greater community-decision making in Scotland, it is highlighted that multiple considerations need to be addressed to ensure a new layer of decision-making could work effectively.

Further developments from Democracy Matters 2 will be incorporated within the Programme of Work to 2028 with future reports to the Communities Committee encompassing such areas from the One Service Programme Board which are linked to the Council's Ambition 19: Improve engagement with communities and develop their capacity to help themselves.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Communities Committee:

- (1) Acknowledge the contents of this report;
 - (2) Acknowledge the themes emerging from the Democracy Matters 2 consultation
 - (3) Endorse the next steps outlined herein, including the submission of this report to the Strategic Leadership Board and Community Boards thereafter.
-

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Priority | All priorities |
| Ambition statement | (19) Improve engagement with communities and develop their capacity to help themselves |
| Programme of Work | One Service |

1. Background

- 1.1. In 2018, Scottish Government advised of the intent to consult with communities, as part of their ongoing Local Governance Review. The aim of this wider Review was to look across all of Scotland's public services to consider how power, responsibility and resources should be shared across national and local government and with different communities.
- 1.2. That initial conversation, Democracy Matters, encouraged over 4,000 individual responses with feedback being gathered on a number of broad questions relating to communities:
 - Would they like to be involved in making decisions about their community?
 - If they would like their community to have more control over some decisions and what these might cover?
 - The different types and sizes of communities that would make the most sense when taking decisions about their future?
 - What needs to change for communities to have more power?
- 1.3. Approximately forty public sector partners also submitted feedback to various aspects of the consultation.
- 1.4. The second phase deliberation on the future of community decision-making, Democracy Matters 2, was launched by the Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance, the Minister for Local Government, Empowerment and Planning and the COSLA Presidential Team in August 2023 and ran for a period of six months through multiple engagement channels.
- 1.5. Financial support, circa £300, was made available for community organisations to help support venue hire, catering, creche facilities and transport with the aim of helping communities of all backgrounds to join the conversation.
- 1.6. Democracy Matters engagement is recognised as an important part of the Local Governance Review with the aim of helping to deliver community, fiscal and functional empowerment for Scotland's different places and diverse communities of interest and place

2. Report

- 2.1 Democracy Matters 2 sought to generate deeper learning by engaging with communities using a specific set of questions (Appendix 1) to consider what different government arrangements could be like in different places.
- 2.2 The questions looked across all public services and the roles that communities might play in their design and delivery to improve local people's lives. Engagement was open to everyone across Scotland and communities were encouraged to discuss and respond

to the questions with their families, friends and neighbours to understand different perspectives.

2.3 In total Democracy Matters 2 received 166 unique responses with the vast majority, 159, submitted directly to the consultation hub or Scottish Government. Of these:

- 83 responses arose from conversations within communities
- 46 organisations submitted their views
- 30 were sent by individuals who responded directly to the consultation

2.4 The final 7 responses were from facilitated conversations.

2.5 A response on behalf of the North Lanarkshire Partnership was prepared and submitted by the due date, this was signed off by the Strategic Leadership Board at their meeting in February 2024 Appendix Two. However, further analysis of the information contained within the Democracy Matters 2 report suggests that there was no further representation from North Lanarkshire in either the community conversations nor facilitated events.

Analysis and Key Findings

2.6 Analysis to understand the full range of views expressed was carried out by a 3rd party organisation, The Lines Between. This was to ensure that a robust, independent analysis of the responses to the public consultation was provided.

2.7 The report itself [Democracy Matters 2 Analysis Responses](#) provides a thematic analysis and these have been identified as follows:

2.7.1 Powers

There was a clear desire amongst participants to have a greater say in community decision-making and to have resources which can be directed independently without ringfencing.

A range of services for the involvement of communities included – transport and environmental services including running transport services, repairing roads and maintaining green spaces. Levels of desire for community involvement varied.

2.7.2 Representation

Strong support among participants for community decision-making to be representative of the whole community and that there should be a concerted effort to include people with protected characteristics. Involving young people was also a frequent suggestion.

2.7.3 Participation

Seeing the impact of community governance leading to positive change was a key message and a way of encouraging participation in community decision-making. Further suggestions focussed on support for attendees through cash payments, paid childcare, vouchers or paid time off to volunteer.

2.7.4 Boundaries

There was little consensus about boundaries for any new decision-making arrangements. There was, however, recognition that the definition of “local” can vary considerably.

2.7.5 Accountability and Standards

Many respondents suggested that community decision-making bodies could be held accountable by ensuring that communications are clear and that future community action

plans feature SMART (Specific, Measurable, Relevant and Timebound) objectives. Support for frameworks covering clarity of purpose, accountability as well as regulatory and legal issues to ensure trust were suggested.

Developing a community charter was supported which would be agreed by the public, community decision-making bodies and other community groups.

2.7.6 Funding Community decision-making

Whilst there is support for community decision-making bodies to have direct funding from national and local government some participants expressed scepticism as to whether or not this was a realistic ask. A funding model was suggested to allow communities to take a long-term view and plan effectively, however, others advocated that funding should remain with local authorities to prevent disagreement within communities on how the money is spent.

2.7.7 Support to develop skills and knowledge

A need for support and training to enable community decision-making bodies to make important decisions, take on more responsibilities and deliver effective services was highlighted.

Participants also suggested that such bodies should be able to employ staff to take on responsibilities such as administration, financial management and HR and legal functions. This was in addition to such roles as youth work. It was felt essential that as communities take on more responsibility roles carried out by paid staff should not be transferred to volunteers.

There was a call for more community development professionals to act as critical bridges between institutions and communities.

2.7.8 Implications for public bodies

There was recognition that the role of public bodies would change and perhaps allow them to take a more strategic approach to their future responsibilities. It was noted that there needed to be a clearly thought-out role for Community Councils in any future governance arrangements.

Key Findings

2.8 In summary, the main findings from the discussions and consultations responses were:

- Arrangements for community decision-making should be flexible and responsive to the needs of the community and place.
- Decision-making bodies should be a platform to influence decisions and shape services in a structured and meaningful way, and be representative of their community, including groups with protected characteristics.
- Ensuring accountability and trust was seen as critical.
- Clear participative mechanisms should be in place to make decisions with various approaches used to maximise accessibility and encourage participation.
- A decision-making body should have a sustainable budget that can be directed independently.
- Community capacity building and skills development will be important to enabling communities to deliver more.

Next Steps

2.9 A number of next steps will be developed including:

- Oversight of the direction of travel and the emerging approach from Scottish Government will be maintained through the Programme of Work to 2028 One Service Programme Board.
- Any course of action deemed appropriate by Scottish Government will be developed in line with Community Wealth Building requirements and is the subject of a separate report to the Enterprise and Fair Work Committee.
- This report, if approved, will be submitted to the Strategic Leadership Board on 6 December and thereafter to Community Boards.

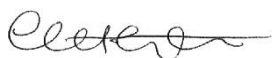
3. Measures of success

3.1 Success will be measured through the implementation of the direction of travel outlined in due course by Scottish Government as part of the Local Governance Review.

4. Supporting documentation

4.1 Appendix 1 Democracy Matters 2 – Consultation Questions

4.2 Appendix 2 Democracy Matters 2 – Consultation Response – North Lanarkshire Partnership



Archie Aitken

Chief Officer (Legal and Democratic)

5. Impacts

5.1 Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty

Does the report contain information that has an impact as a result of the Public Sector Equality Duty and/or Fairer Scotland Duty?

Yes No

If Yes, has an assessment been carried out and published on the council's website? <https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/equalities/equality-and-fairer-scotland-duty-impact-assessments>

<https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/equalities/equality-and-fairer-scotland-duty-impact-assessments>

Yes No

5.2 Financial impact

Does the report contain any financial impacts?

Yes No

If Yes, have all relevant financial impacts been discussed and agreed with Finance?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

5.3 HR policy impact

Does the report contain any HR policy or procedure impacts?

Yes No

If Yes, have all relevant HR impacts been discussed and agreed with People Resources?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

5.4 Legal impact

Does the report contain any legal impacts (such as general legal matters, statutory considerations (including employment law considerations), or new legislation)?

Yes No

If Yes, have all relevant legal impacts been discussed and agreed with Legal and Democratic?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

5.5 Data protection impact

Does the report / project / practice contain or involve the processing of personal data?

Yes No

If Yes, is the processing of this personal data likely to result in a high risk to the data subject?

Yes No

If Yes, has a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) been carried out and e-mailed to dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk

Yes No

5.6 Technology / Digital impact

Does the report contain information that has an impact on either technology, digital transformation, service redesign / business change processes, data management, or connectivity / broadband / Wi-Fi?

Yes No

Yes No

5.7 Environmental / Carbon impact

Does the report / project / practice contain information that has an impact on any environmental or carbon matters?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

5.8 Communications impact

Does the report contain any information that has an impact on the council's communications activities?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

5.9 Risk impact

Is there a risk impact?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the key risks and potential impacts, highlighting where the risk(s) are assessed and recorded (e.g. Corporate or Service or Project Risk Registers), and how they are managed?

5.10 Armed Forces Covenant Duty

Does the report require to take due regard of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty (i.e. does it relate to healthcare, housing, or education services for in-Service or ex-Service personnel, or their families, or widow(er)s)?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the provision which has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the particular needs of the Armed Forces community to make sure that they do not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.

5.11 Children's rights and wellbeing impact

Does the report contain any information regarding any council activity, service delivery, policy, or plan that has an impact on children and young people up to the age of 18, or on a specific group of these?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact and the provision that has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the

relevant Articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

If Yes, has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) been carried out?

Yes

No

The following 16 open questions were included in the Democracy Matters Phase 2 consultation paper.

- Q1. How could your community use these types of powers to achieve its ambitions, now and into the future?
- Q2. What other powers should be added, and are there some which should be retained by existing decision-makers?
- Q3. When thinking about who might be part of new decision-making bodies, what are the best ways to ensure they truly reflect their communities and enhance equality?
- Q4. Thinking about your own community, what groups would you like to see represented through other selection methods, and what should these methods be?
- Q5. What would the role of local elected representatives be, and what would incentivise other people to take on/be part of decision-making?
- Q6. What do you think are the best ways to ensure new decision-making bodies are accountable to their community?
- Q7. Are community events a good way to involve local people in scrutinising progress and setting future direction?
- Q8. What other mechanisms would help achieve high levels of community participation in local decision-making processes?
- Q9. What else should this process include to provide new community decision-making bodies with a strong locally agreed mandate?
- Q10. Are there ways to ensure new bodies are still wanted – for example by making them time-bound and subject to renewal ballots?
- Q11. How do you think community decision-making bodies should be resourced?
- Q.12. Are these the right set of standards to provide reassurance that new community decision-making bodies will be effective and treat everyone with dignity and respect?
- Q13. How could a charter be designed to best ensure a positive relationship between community decision-makers and their partners in national and local government and the wider public sector?
- Q14. What types of support might communities need to build capacity, and how could this change the role of councils and public sector organisations?

- Q15. Are there specific additional powers and resources which would help public sector organisations to work effectively in partnership with new community decision-making bodies?
- Q16. Thank you for considering these questions. When sending us your views, please also tell us about anything else you think is important for us to know at this stage.

Questions used in facilitated conversations

The seven facilitated conversations and several of the community conversations held by participants used a shorter version of the questionnaire. This focused on six wider themes encompassing the consultation questions.

- Q1: What powers do communities need to take democratic action?
- Q2: How would people be selected, and how can people best reflect their communities?
- Q3: How can we make sure any new structures are accountable to the community?
- Q4: How can the wider community participate in decision-making?
- Q5: What resources and standards are required for democratic involvement?
- Q6: How can we share and grow skills and knowledge for local democracy?

NLP Strategic Leadership Board

Civic Centre,
Windmillhill Street
Motherwell ML1 1AB

Our Ref: SD/LJ/JL
Your Ref:
Contact: Linda Johnston
Tel: 07939 280883
E-mail: johnstonl@northlan.gov.uk
Date: 26 February 2024

Community Empowerment, Reform and Governance Division
Scottish Government
Area 3F North
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Dear Sir/Madam

Local Governance Review – Democracy Matters 2 Consultation

I refer to the '*Democracy Matters 2*' consultation currently underway by the Scottish Government and CoSLA.

North Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership's Strategic Leadership Board has kept abreast of the progress of Democracy Matters 2 and encouraged community and voluntary organisations and local people to participate. While the consultation materials and 'community conversations' are rightly targeted at local communities, we would like to provide some feedback, observations and suggestions for further engagement.

Place Based

North Lanarkshire Partnership has previously identified community empowerment and the development of Community Hubs as strategic priorities. Through North Lanarkshire Council's Community Hubs, partner agencies, including the community and voluntary sector, are working jointly with local communities and individual families in designing and developing services and whole system approaches that address what matters most to local people at each stage in their lives. We have developed a Memorandum of Understanding amongst partners to facilitate and support their access to the partnership zones, bookable spaces and amenities available in the Community Hubs and this helps to foster a culture and commitment to collaboration. Local Outcome Improvement Plans for each of our 9 communities of place provide a partnership focus for place-based action with communities around jointly agreed priorities. The supporting partnership delivery mechanisms provide a structure for co design and delivery of the council and partnership ambitions.

Participatory Democracy

Community Boards are our key delivery vehicle for community empowerment and participatory democracy. The network of nine Community Boards encourages local involvement in identifying and agreeing local priorities and service design with decision making through the Local Development Programme and Participatory Budgeting, plus consultation and engagement events. At a strategic level, Community Boards are responsible for ensuring that the shared ambitions in *The Plan for North Lanarkshire* are implemented locally, while at a community level, each Board has developed its own Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) that sets out the locally determined priorities and actions. Local Partnership Teams, whose membership comprises officers with a geographical or thematic responsibility, support the Community Boards and drive and embed delivery of the LOIPs across the Community Planning Partnership and ensure effective monitoring and management of progress.

Community Solutions provides a further example of place-based decision making. Established in 2013, Community Solutions is a partnership between: University Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire; Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire; and the community and voluntary sector. Six Locality Consortia, with membership from community and voluntary sector organisations and representatives from the council and NHS are responsible for the co-production of an “Improving Lives Locality Development Plan”, informed by residents’ and service users’ views and priorities. Delivery of this plan is supported by:

- collective management of an “Improving Lives Local Activity Fund”, providing small grants to community and voluntary sector organisations to support delivery of the agreed plan; and,
- collaboration on community and voluntary sector capacity building to strengthen their ability to support local people.

The Locality Fund is supplemented by further thematic funds awarded to community and voluntary organisations to provide support on issues such as mental health and wellbeing; carers’ support; and provision of community support following discharge from hospital. University Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire provides recurrent, annual funding for the programme at around £1.2 million, supplemented by additional fixed-term funding from Health and Social Care and other sources.

Representation

The Community Boards have formal Terms of Reference and membership includes organisations that are representative of the local community. It is important that the membership clause within the Terms of Reference for any community decision-making body makes provision for a wide range of representation and reflects the demographic profile, diversity and needs of the local community. As such representation should include communities of interest as well as geographically based organisations and representation by groups that support and promote equalities and inclusion – for example: disabled people; people living with long term conditions and challenges relating to their health; people from the LGBTQIA+ community; people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities; and other people who may be traditionally under-represented within the local area. Potential barriers to engagement, such as transport to attend in-person meetings; carers’ needs and responsibilities; language and accessibility needs; and digital skills, connectivity and access to devices should be identified and addressed, with support provided as required to ensure maximum participation.

Through North Lanarkshire Council’s Equalities Board work is underway to examine barriers to participation for equalities groups and to establish a baseline of information to identify improvement actions aimed at increasing participation. Thereafter awareness raising and development work will be delivered through Community Boards to identify and agree

improvement actions. A North Lanarkshire Partnership Lead Officers' Group, established in response to research jointly undertaken by the council with Heriot Watt University and the University of West of Scotland, is examining the lived experiences of people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities to address barriers and unmet needs as well as supporting the actions above to increase participation.

Accountability and Transparency

Accountability and transparency are key to the success of any community decision-making model. As such, the Terms of Reference must clearly articulate the objectives of the community decision-making body and provide clarity and a universally shared understanding of the powers that rest with the decision-making body. The expectations and responsibilities placed on representatives should be widely understood to avoid misunderstanding and minimise the potential risk of conflict and dissatisfaction or disillusionment in the process.

Training

It is essential that local representatives serving on community decision-making bodies are confident in their roles and equipped with the knowledge and skills to undertake their responsibilities, including reporting and being accountable to the communities or organisations that they represent. Similarly, local representatives should have the skills and capacity to enable them to consider and take decisions that will benefit their area and improve outcomes.

North Lanarkshire has developed an online training and development portal aimed at Community Board and Local Partnership Team members. Informed by training needs' analysis, with content developed by North Lanarkshire Council's People Resources and Libraries Teams, the portal hosts a wide range of modules including: Participatory Budgeting; Community Planning Structures and partners; being an effective chairperson; Your role on the Community Board; Community Asset Transfer and Participation Requests.

Culture Change

Training, empowering staff and creating a culture amongst and within individual partner organisations that values and actively supports community empowerment and decision making is also critical. NHS Lanarkshire has established a Lived Experience Advisory Panel to strengthen community informed research and participation in its health inequalities programme. Engagement between health practitioners, policy advisers and the Lived Experience Advisory Panel aims to develop models of working that encourage successful interfacing between community assets and better integrated health and social care systems.

North Lanarkshire Partnership is in the process of finalising the Implementation Plan to support delivery of our 'CommUnity Agreement'. Developed over the past two years, through an Appreciative Inquiry approach that involved 500+ participants including the community and voluntary sector, elected members and partnership staff, the CommUnity Agreement sets out shared values and approaches to empowering and investing in local communities to support improved wellbeing, equality and sustainability. It is designed to enhance trust and joint working between local communities, voluntary organisations and partners with a combined focus on improving the wellbeing of North Lanarkshire's communities and people. Partners have already adopted the CommUnity Agreement and the implementation stages require individual agencies to cascade the principles and approaches within their own organisations to ensure collective ownership, awareness and delivery.

Communications

All communications between statutory bodies, partners and the community decision-making body must be straightforward, accessible and inclusive. This should also be in place for communications between the community decision-making body and the communities it represents. Communications should be published digitally and/or in formats that best meet the needs of targeted audiences. Honest conversations on resources, priorities and any matters where there is limited scope, or very specific parameters on how services are developed and delivered, are also essential.

Evaluation and Review

Structured and transparent review arrangements, with the purpose of the review, process and reporting arrangements shared and agreed locally, can help to instil trust and ensure that the participatory democracy arrangements are effective and achieving their intended benefits in terms of increased engagement, participation and local decision making. Evaluation and review of effectiveness should examine representation, wider engagement, decision-making, outcomes and the types and levels of support provided.

Strategic Direction and Subsidiarity

Achieving the effective balance between strategic direction, that is determined corporately or at an authority wide level, and local community planning can be extremely powerful. At an authority wide level, public sector bodies set the strategic priorities to address inequality, poverty or disadvantage and ensure fairness and equity across the wider population. They can use their scale and influence to excellent effect to promote prosperity and inclusive growth for all. Local elected members, as the only locally democratically elected body in each authority area, are key to ensuring the principles of subsidiarity and local self-determination and are able to balance representing the views and needs of their constituents with developing wider strategic priorities and resources to benefit the local authority area and the people and communities served.

Conclusion

Other community planning partnerships will have similar place-based decision-making arrangements to those described above. There is an opportunity to learn from these in terms of representation, encouraging people to participate and communicating the work of the community decision-making body. To this end, targeted engagement with community planning partnerships on existing community decision-making and participative processes that enable local people to be involved in the design, delivery, review and implementation of services should be considered.

I trust this information is useful and if you have any questions or would like to explore further any of the examples or points made by North Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership please contact North Lanarkshire Council's Business Strategy Manager at the address above.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Dolan'.

Stephen Dolan
Chair on behalf of North Lanarkshire Partnership Strategic Leadership Board