

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

25 June 2014

Report by Deputy Chief Executive

REVIEW OF COMMUNITY COUNCIL SCHEME OF ESTABLISHMENT:
STAGE 1 UPDATE, STAGE 2 ENGAGEMENT PROCESS
& STAGE 3 IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this paper is to: report on the findings emerging from a wide range of engagement undertaken during Stage 1 of the current Review of Community Council Scheme of Establishment; and approve the next steps in the review process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Council:
- (i) Note the findings of the Stage 1 research and consultation as outlined in this paper and reports in Annex 1.
 - (ii) Approve the next steps as outlined in paragraph 21.
 - (iii) In principle approval of the Stage 2 & 3 timeline as outlined in Annex 2.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

3. The Council agreed to review the current Scheme on 23 October 2013. By reviewing the Scheme, we want to ensure that East Renfrewshire has a Scheme that:

- Is fit for purpose;
- Encourages a wide range of local people to join and participate in their Community Council;
- Fits with the current and upcoming legislation e.g. Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill;
- Ensures Community Councils operate in line with the principles of good governance whilst being proportionate;
- Encourages Community Councils to be genuinely diverse and representative;
- Has a Code of Conduct which is flexible and enforceable where necessary and;
- Promotes constructive dialogue and good conduct whilst protecting Community Councils' independence and their right to disagree with the Council and partners on local issues.

4. This is a three stage process set out in legislation. Stage 1 ran from 17 February to 30 April 2014. This involved an open consultation and two independent pieces of work: Social Research and a Review of the Operation & Support for Community Councils (CCs).

CONSULTATION

5. The range of engagement activities undertaken during Stage 1 are very broad based and inclusive, taking account of a wide range of views and experience, and included:

- Social research with the wider community in relation to how CCs are configured, operate and represent residents. This was undertaken between February and April 2014 involving a door-to-door survey of 918 individuals and 11 focus groups with 54 individuals. The sample achieved was representative of the population - quotas were set by CC area, tenure, ethnicity, age and gender.
- The independent review of the operation and support for CCs was undertaken between March and April 2014. This involved current and former CC members, elected members, Council and partners. This was based on interviews, survey, letters and a workshop focussing on operation and support mechanisms.
- Feedback from the engagement event with CC members (attended by 27 CC members, with representation from 9 out of the 10 CCs).
- Responses submitted through survey on Citizen Space, the Council's online engagement tool.

SUMMARY OF KEY MESSAGES FROM FINDINGS

6. This section of the report summarises the key messages emerging from the four engagement methods employed. The full reports are in Annex 1.

Local Awareness and Perceptions of CCs

7. The social research shows a moderate level of awareness of CCs at 60% (551), focus groups highlighted negative perceptions of CCs, their conduct, performance and the research details a number of barriers to involvement. Those who had heard of or had experience of their CC often had concerns including: meetings were seen as very formal and not welcoming; concerns around intimidation and bullying; a perception that CCs could be driven by personal agendas or being cliquey; and that CCs do not appear to have a clear role, remit and agenda.

8. Survey and focus group participants felt that CCs need to have a stronger focus and visibility in their communities. Suggestions included undertaking community surveys (similar to Busby CC), hold surgeries and target specific groups. This view was reiterated through the Independent Review to increase membership.

Membership and Community Representation

9. Approximately 35% (306) of survey respondents and most focus group participants involved in the social research, believe CCs are there to represent their community although had little awareness of what this currently involves. Generally survey respondents felt that CCs should be gathering local views, keeping the community informed, send representatives to decision making meetings and campaigning to influence local decisions. Suggestions showed that any revised scheme should support the need for CCs and the Council to increase awareness of CCs and in particular the positive activities that they undertake, promote involvement and reduce barriers to participation.

10. CC members highlighted during the Independent Review, at the CC event and via Citizen Space (online engagement tool) that their CCs need to be more representative and inclusive as they struggled to reflect their communities adequately. The majority felt this to be a weakness, which was amplified by the perception of younger residents that CCs were a bit of 'a talking shop' and had 'no real clout'. CCs still use notice boards and libraries to notify people of meetings and agendas so attendance at meetings is often low rather than using modern methods such as social media. The exceptions occur when there is a burning issue such as a school closure, major planning application or vandalism, however, meetings generally lack focus. The revised scheme should aid and encourage CCs to better represent the communities they serve.

11. The Independent Review noted that creation of multi member wards in 2007 had diluted the relationship with elected members, who in most cases now had two or three CCs in their ward. Although some CCs have claimed that there should be better attendance by councillors, an examination of the most recent minutes of each CC on the Council website showed that 68% (25 out of a possible 37) attendances from elected members took place, more or less the same as CC member attendance which was 69% for the same meetings. Representation from Police Scotland is good, however, it has been difficult to obtain regular attendance from other agencies such as NHS and Transport.

CC Areas and Boundaries

12. Most research participants and the majority of CC members were happy with the boundaries in smaller areas, however, there are differing views in the three largest areas. Some survey respondents and focus groups felt Newton Mearns and Giffnock were too big with suggestions being made around splitting areas into natural communities, although, people found this difficult to do. Barrhead participants felt the boundary was about right.

Support Mechanisms

13. There were consistent findings from the Independent Review, Social Research and at the CC event that CC members felt that they were not listened to, that support from the Council was inadequate at times and there was a lack of responsiveness from some Council services. The Convener's event in December was highlighted as an exception as this provided a positive opportunity for CC members to network and share information.

14. CC members also noted that other services such as Education or CHCP were more likely to consult through other groups such as Parent Councils or Public Partnership Forum. Planning and licensing are required by statute to consult with the CCs before the Council takes decisions, which often contradict the views of the CC. Consequently planning bore the brunt of adverse comments although some planners were praised for their willingness to engage with communities.

15. CC members highlighted that the administrative allowance provided by the Council is insufficient to allow them to fund newsletters and other activities that would enable them to engage with their community. The annual administrative allowance in East Renfrewshire is at a minimal level compared to the rest of Scotland and this has caused considerable resentment. The point made by many CC members is that they are volunteers and that the Council should trust them to run a statutory community organisation on a small administrative allowance and give them some flexibility to carry forward funds.

16. One of the priorities shared across most CCs suggest that there is a need for the Council to examine how the culture of community engagement operates across the Council. It points towards the need for a more transparent and community focused approach and for this to be clearly defined and then embedded across all Council Services.

Conduct and Dispute Resolution

17. In hypothetical discussions, focus group participants felt that robust procedures would need to be in place to prevent bullying and harassment, mismanagement of funds and conflict of interest among CC members. CCs also highlighted this as a top priority as part of the Independent Review. The majority of survey respondents indicate that CCs should remain independent in dealing with disputes, however 50% (459) state that the Council should get involved if CCs can't resolve matters on their own.

18. Implementing the Code of Conduct through clear reporting and enforcement was an issue of great concern. The majority of respondents highlighted the urgent need to have an enforceable Code of Conduct in place as part of the revised Scheme of Establishment.

19. Most survey and focus group participants including CC members suggested ways that the Council could provide support to prevent or address issues. Suggestions included: training and capacity building to prevent issues; complaints, grievance or other relevant procedures consistent across all CCs; a clear route for support if needed; very serious issues to be investigated by the Council or the police; penalty for poor conduct ranging from warnings to permanent suspension.

Elections and Co-option

20. The Independent Review found that there was a lack of contested elections and only 76% of seats are currently occupied and makes a number of suggestions to improve the election and co-option process.

NEXT STEPS

21. The next steps for the Review of Community Council Scheme of Establishment are as follows:

- (i) Communicate feedback from Stage 1 - this will be posted on Citizen Space and the Council's website, local press releases as well as distributed directly to Community Councils;
- (ii) Develop a draft Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils for consultation based on key findings from Stage 1 that includes an enforceable code of conduct, addresses key boundary issues and sets out governance and support mechanisms for Community Councils going forward;
- (iii) A further Special Council meeting in September to approve a draft Scheme for consultation during Stage 2 and Stage 3 implementation phase if required. An indicative process and timeline for Stage 2 and Stage 3 is attached in Annex 2.

CONCLUSIONS

22. Findings from Stage 1 indicate scope for real improvements to the operation and performance of CCs and encourage wider representation as well as strengthen the relationship between the Council and CCs. The objective findings from a wide range of engagement activities suggest the main focus for CCs would be around increasing representation, strengthening support mechanisms, review election and co-option processes, and develop a revised Scheme and associated documentation that is fit for purpose.

23. Stage 2 of the review process will involve further consultation around the draft Scheme with Elected Members, Council Officers, Community Planning Partners, CCs and other community representatives as appropriate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

24. It is recommended that the Council:

- (i) Note the findings of the Stage 1 research and consultation as outlined in this paper and reports in Annex 1.
- (ii) Approve the next steps as outlined in paragraph 21.
- (iii) In principle approval of the Stage 2 & 3 timeline as outlined in Annex 2.

REPORT AUTHORS

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Review of Community Council Scheme of Establishment, Special Council, 23 October 2013

KEY WORDS A report setting out recommendations from a range of engagement undertaken during Stage 1 of the current Scheme Review.

- Community Councils
 - Community Engagement
 - Representation
 - Boundaries
 - Code of Conduct
 - Support Mechanisms
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ANNEX 1:

- Social Research report;
- Review of the Operation & Support for Community Councils;
- Community Council Event & Citizen Space responses.

Social Research: Encouraging Involvement in Shaping Community Councils

East Renfrewshire Council

Final Report

May 2014

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Executive Summary

About this report

This report sets out findings from social research undertaken by ODS Consulting and Research Resource between February and April 2014. The research explored the views of communities in East Renfrewshire on how Community Councils are set up and how they should operate in the future. This research is to inform East Renfrewshire Council's wider 'Review of the Scheme of Establishment of Community Councils'.

This social research involved two main pieces of work – a door-to-door survey of 918 individuals and eleven focus groups involving 54 individuals. The survey and discussion group guide were designed to ensure that the research was independent, exploring the issues that East Renfrewshire wished to find out in a robust manner.

The survey covered a sample of all residents in East Renfrewshire, whether they were involved in their Community Council or not. To ensure the sample achieved was representative of the population, quotas were set by Community Council area, tenure, ethnicity, age and gender. The final sample achieved was very close to the targets set.

The eleven focus groups covered all Community Council areas in East Renfrewshire, and younger and older people; people who were active in their community through other groups, and those who were not; and people who knew a little about Community Councils, and those who did not. Participants were recruited in three ways – through active community groups and organisations; through the East Renfrewshire Citizens Panel; and through the door-to-door survey.

About Community Councils

There are ten Community Councils in East Renfrewshire. They are the most local level of statutory representation in Scotland, and are intended to provide a link between communities and local authorities, and to help make local authorities and other public bodies aware of the opinions, needs and preferences of local communities.

Community Council	Population (2012)
Barrhead	17,662
Busby	3,767
Clarkston and Williamwood	9,042
Eaglesham and Waterfoot	4,664
Giffnock	12,075
Neilston	5,491
Netherlee and Stamperland	8,156
Newton Mearns	25,061
Thornliebank	4,258
Uplawmoor	854

Awareness of Community Councils

Awareness of Community Councils was high among survey respondents (60%). Awareness was lowest in Eaglesham (34%) and highest in Uplawmoor (98%), where levels of awareness were significantly higher than in any other area. Uplawmoor is by far the smallest Community Council area by population. Both Eaglesham and Uplawmoor are relatively small, semi-rural communities – but residents have very different levels of awareness of their local Community Council.

Role of Community Councils

Almost a third of survey respondents were unsure of the main purpose of a Community Council. Those who did provide a view felt that the main purpose was to ‘act for or represent the community’ or ‘to better the community or improve the area’. Most focus group participants were also unsure of the main role of a Community Council, but suggested a range of roles including representing communities, improving the area or resolving problems or issues.

Generally, survey respondents felt that Community Councils should be:

- gathering local views;
- keeping the community informed;
- sending representatives to decision making meetings; and
- campaigning to influence local decisions.

But views varied considerably between different Community Council areas. For example, while 85 per cent of survey respondents in Neilston felt their Community Council should provide services directly; this fell to just 24 per cent in Busby.

Communities and Boundaries

Survey respondents were asked to consider a map of their Community Council area, and comment on how they felt about its size. Most (over eight in ten) felt that the current Community Council boundaries were a good size to address local issues. Giffnock had the highest proportion stating that it was too big (18%), followed by

Clarkston and Williamwood (11%), Newton Mearns (11%) and Barrhead (8%). These are the four largest Community Council areas by population.

Similar trends emerged when exploring views on natural communities, asking people what they would call the area they lived in. In the Community Council areas with the largest populations, the response was the most diverse – particularly in Barrhead, Giffnock and Newton Mearns, where many identified with sub-areas of the Community Council area. This suggests that in the smaller Community Council areas (by population), communities feel an affinity with the geographical boundary of the Community Council. However in the larger areas, particularly Barrhead, Giffnock and Newton Mearns, there is also some affinity with smaller neighbourhoods.

Focus group discussions in these larger areas found that in Barrhead participants felt the boundary was about right. In Giffnock and Newton Mearns there was a feeling that the areas were growing and becoming too large. Focus group participants identified some smaller communities within the Community Council area and possible options for creating smaller Community Council boundaries. However, focus group participants found it very hard to think of a meaningful way to split the area, and there was no common agreement on how this could be done.

While over half of the survey respondents felt that rural areas should have their own Community Councils, focus group participants largely felt that very rural areas should be connected to larger towns and villages.

Views on Performance of Community Councils

Focus group participants discussed their views on the current performance of Community Councils. Many had not heard of their local Community Council, and felt that they could not be doing a good job as they had never heard what they do or how to get involved. Those who had heard of or been involved in Community Council meetings often had concerns about them, including:

- meetings were seen as very formal and not welcoming – with some concerns about intimidation and bullying;
- a perception that Community Councils could be driven by personal agendas or single issues; and
- a perception that Community Councils do not appear to have a clear role, remit and agenda.

Becoming Involved in Community Councils

A lack of information about what Community Councils do, how to get involved, and what difference they can make was identified as the biggest barrier to participation – by both survey respondents and focus group participants. Young people reported particular concerns that Community Councils needed to be more “young person friendly”. And a number of focus group participants felt that the people involved in the Community Council acted as a barrier to participation – either through a perception that the Community Council was “cliquey” or closed to the community, or through concerns about overt intimidation or bullying. Some mentioned practical

barriers like access to venues for disabled people, and poor public transport links – particularly in the larger Community Council areas.

Hearing about Good Practice in Community Councils

Focus group and survey participants were asked how they would like to hear about the achievements of their Community Council. Newsletters were by far the most popular source of information, followed by online information. Some focus group participants stressed the need for Community Councils to be proactively making contact with and gathering the views of local communities – through activity like door-to-door surveys and surgeries.

Dealing with Poor Practice in Community Councils

The survey and focus groups explored what should happen if there were concerns about how Community Councils were run. Survey respondents most commonly felt that a Community Council should initially try to resolve issues on their own, with East Renfrewshire Council only getting involved where issues were unable to be resolved. Those who were aware of or involved in their Community Council were significantly more likely to say the Community Council should resolve the issue on its own.

Focus group participants discussed a number of hypothetical situations where problems may arise in Community Councils – around managing money; bullying and harassment; and Community Councillors using their position to their own advantage. It was emphasised that these were rare situations, and the participants' discussion was entirely theoretical.

Overall, participants felt that these were serious issues. A range of solutions were suggested, including:

- **prevention** – having clear steps in place to regulate Community Councils, provide support, training and capacity building to Community Councillors, elect Community Councillors openly or undertake regular 'health checks' on Community Councils;
- **procedures** – having complaints, grievance or other relevant procedures in place, consistent across all Community Councils, so that people know how these issues are dealt with within the Community Council;
- **clear next stage of support** – if issues can't be resolved by Community Councils, people felt there should be a clear route for further support – either from East Renfrewshire Council or from another organisation;
- **formal investigations where required** – if situations are very serious participants felt that these should be investigated formally by East Renfrewshire Council (or another organisation) and referred to the police where appropriate; and
- **punishment** – participants felt that there should be a system ranging from warnings, to never again being allowed to serve your community.

Overall, participants felt that while Community Councils should be given the opportunity to run their own organisation, it was likely that they would need support in some situations. Most felt that East Renfrewshire Council had a clear role in supporting Community Councils to do well.

1. Introduction

About this report

- 1.1 This report sets out findings from social research undertaken by ODS Consulting and Research Resource between February and April 2014. The research explored the views and preferences of communities in East Renfrewshire on how Community Councils are set up and how they should operate in the future. This social research is to inform East Renfrewshire Council's wider 'Review of the Scheme of Establishment of Community Councils'.

Research context and aims

- 1.2 Community Councils form the most local level of statutory representation in Scotland. They were originally created by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. They were intended to provide a link between communities and local authorities, and to help make local authorities and other public bodies aware of the opinions, needs and preference of local communities. As at October 2012, there were just over 1,100 active Community Councils across Scotland.
- 1.3 Local authorities have statutory oversight of Community Councils. The 1973 Act required local authorities to introduce schemes setting out arrangements including boundaries, finance, elections and meetings. The Scottish Government has produced a [Model Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils](#); a [Model Constitution for Community Councils](#); a [Code of Conduct for Community Councillors](#); and [Good Practice Guidance for Local Authorities and Community Councils](#). Local authorities across Scotland are able, but not required, to use these model documents.
- 1.4 East Renfrewshire Council's current Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils was established in 2009. It is currently undertaking a review of the Scheme, over a long and considered time frame – during 2014 and 2015. The review involves three main stages:
- **Stage One** – This stage of the review runs to April 2014. It involves an open consultation run by East Renfrewshire Council; an independent review of the operation and support of Community Councils involving direct contact with Community Councillors; and this social research exploring wider views on Community Councils.
 - **Stage Two** – This stage is expected to run during summer 2014, lasting for 12 weeks. It will involve the production of a draft scheme, boundaries and associated documents around Community Councils, for comment.
 - **Stage Three** – This stage is expected to take place in late 2014 or early 2015, lasting for four weeks. It will involve East Renfrewshire Council presenting a final revised scheme, boundaries and associated documents for comment.

- 1.5 This social research informs Stage One of the review. The main aims of the research are to:
- identify the views and preferences among the wider community around the operation and representativeness of Community Councils;
 - explore views on different Community Council models – including conceptual neighbourhoods and methods of engagement;
 - identify barriers to participation and explore what would reduce these; and
 - explore how wider community ownership of Community Council activities and priorities can be developed and enhanced.

Research method

- 1.6 This social research involved two main pieces of work – a door-to-door survey and focus group discussions.

The door-to-door survey

- 1.7 The door-to-door survey was undertaken on a face-to-face basis, and involved a total of 918 interviews. The fieldwork was undertaken between 10th March and 2nd April 2014.
- 1.8 The survey content was designed working closely with East Renfrewshire Council, which articulated the issues that it wished the survey to explore. We then designed the phrasing and structure of the questions to ensure that they were robust and independent. The survey explored views on:
- awareness of Community Councils;
 - barriers and enablers to participation – and how barriers could be addressed;
 - Community Council roles and responsibilities;
 - Community Council boundaries; and
 - preferred methods for future engagement.
- 1.9 A draft survey was piloted with 20 individuals in two different communities in East Renfrewshire, using two interviewers. This was to test the length of the survey, ensure that the survey structure flowed easily, and ensure that the questions were understood and within the frame of reference of potential respondents. The survey was adapted following discussion of the pilot findings with East Renfrewshire Council – at which we made recommendations on how to strengthen the survey. The final survey was agreed and signed off by East Renfrewshire Council. A copy of the final survey is included as Appendix Two.
- 1.10 The survey covered a sample of all residents in East Renfrewshire, whether they were involved in their Community Council or not. To ensure the sample achieved was representative of the population, quotas were set by Community Council area, tenure, ethnicity, age and gender. The response profile to the survey is shown in Appendix One. The final sample achieved was very close to the targets set.

The focus groups

- 1.11 A total of eleven focus group discussions were held across East Renfrewshire. These groups focused on the issues discussed in the survey in more detail, particularly exploring views on current geographic boundaries; views on barriers to participation and how to address these; and views on how to deal with problems and issues within Community Councils, when they arise. A draft discussion guide was developed, based on East Renfrewshire Council's priorities for the research. The questions were designed to be robust and independent, and the format of discussion was designed to ensure that all participants could fully, openly and honestly participate. The discussion guide was signed off by East Renfrewshire Council, and a copy of the final discussion guide is included as Appendix Three. This discussion guide was adapted for each group, depending on their core interests.
- 1.12 Focus group participants were identified in three different ways. First, we received a database of active community groups and organisations from East Renfrewshire Council, and approached a sample of 25 to 30 organisations to explore whether members wished to participate in the research. It is worth noting that many groups were very busy and we encountered a high degree of disinterest (with groups keen to spend their time on other issues which were higher priority for them). We also found that many groups were concerned about giving honest views on Community Council operation – particularly within smaller communities where there was some concern that Community Councillors would discover where these views came from. This phase of work involved a significant amount of reassurance about anonymity in participation and reporting.
- 1.13 Secondly, the door-to-door survey asked whether respondents would be interested in participating in further discussions around Community Councils. We approached a sample of those who were interested to invite them to attend focus group discussions.
- 1.14 Thirdly, East Renfrewshire Council approached members of its Citizens Panel who had previously expressed an interest in taking part in focus group discussions. The Citizens Panel is a group of around 1,200 East Renfrewshire residents who regularly provide their views on major issues that affect the area.
- 1.15 The focus group discussions aimed to cover all geographical areas, while also including a small number of dedicated equalities focused groups. A total of nine geographically focused groups and two equalities themed groups took place. Overall, 54 participants took part in the focus group discussions. Participants received £10 to thank them for their time, and groups lasted for one hour. A wide range of participants took part in the focus group discussions – including younger and older people; people who were active in their community through other groups, and those who were not; and people who knew a little about Community Councils, and those who did not.

Table 1.1: Focus Groups
Barrhead
Clarkston and Busby
Eaglesham and Waterfoot
Giffnock, Stamperland and Netherlee
Neilston
Newton Mearns
Thornliebank
Uplawmoor (2 groups)
Group with young people
Group with parents of disabled children

- 1.16 It is worth noting that it was reasonably difficult to attract members of existing community groups to take part in the research. There was a significant level of concern that in small communities, voicing opinions about Community Councils may result in difficult relationships locally in the future.
- 1.17 Some focus group participants had seen recent press coverage about Community Councils in East Renfrewshire. Where this was the case, we ensured that all participants in focus groups who had not seen this press were able to give their views on Community Council operation first, before this press coverage was discussed.

2. Views on Community Councils

Introduction

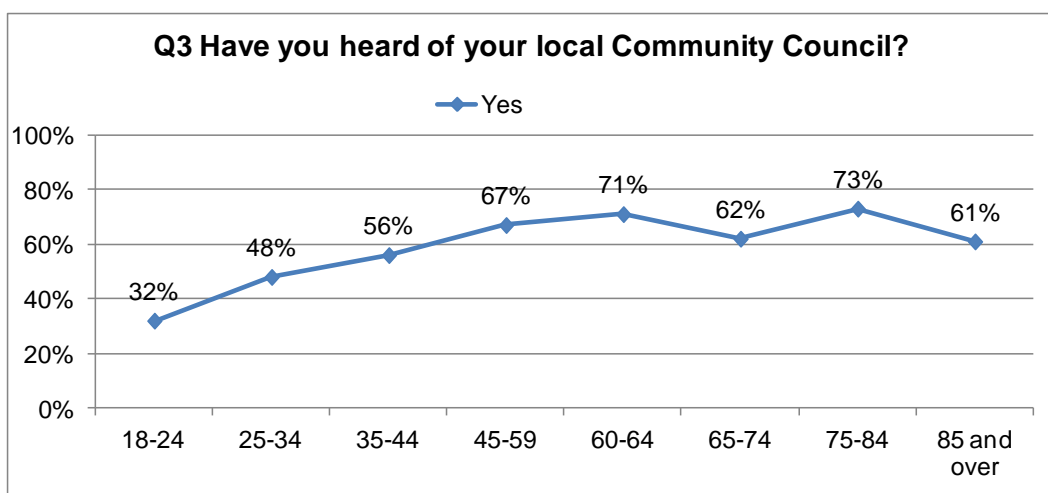
2.1 This chapter explores current awareness of and involvement in Community Councils; views on the purpose of Community Councils; and views on Community Council priorities and future activities. The findings in this section are largely based on the door-to-door survey – but are supplemented with findings from the focus group discussions where appropriate. Analysis has been broken down to Community Council level.

Awareness of Community Councils

2.2 Most survey respondents (60%) had heard of their Community Council. Awareness was lowest in Eaglesham (34%) and highest in Uplawmoor (98%), where levels of awareness were significantly higher than in any other area. Uplawmoor is by far the smallest Community Council area by population (with just 894 residents) and is the only Community Council area, which currently has maximum membership in terms of the number of Community Councillors it is able to have in place. Both Eaglesham and Uplawmoor are relatively small, semi-rural communities – but residents have very different levels of awareness of their local Community Council.

	Base	Yes	No
Barrhead	153	58.8%	41.2%
Busby	54	51.9%	48.1%
Clarkston and Williamwood	85	60.0%	40.0%
Eaglesham and Waterfoot	50	34.0%	66.0%
Giffnock	114	48.2%	51.8%
Neilston	53	83.0%	17.0%
Netherlee and Stamperland	80	65.0%	35.0%
Newton Mearns	228	55.3%	44.7%
Thornliebank	51	72.5%	27.5%
Uplawmoor	50	98.0%	2.0%

2.3 Awareness of Community Councils increased strongly with age. While 32 per cent of respondents aged 18 to 24 were aware of their Community Council, this increased to 73 per cent among those aged 75 to 84. Those who lived in private rented accommodation were less likely to be aware of their Community Council (43%) than those who owned their home (61%) or rented from a social landlord (61%).



2.4 Participants in the focus group discussions were also asked about whether they had either heard of or had any involvement with their Community Council. All of the participants in Uplawmoor had heard of their Community Council – echoing the survey findings. However, only a small minority of participants in other areas had heard of their Community Council, and many had very little idea of what it did or how to get involved.

Involvement in Community Councils

2.5 Those who were aware of Community Councils were asked if they had ever been involved in their local Community Council. Just under 1 in 10 (9%) of those who were aware of their Community Council said they had been involved in a Community Council within their specific area and a further two per cent said they had been involved in a Community Council in another area. Involvement was highest in Thornliebank and Uplawmoor, and lowest in Barrhead.

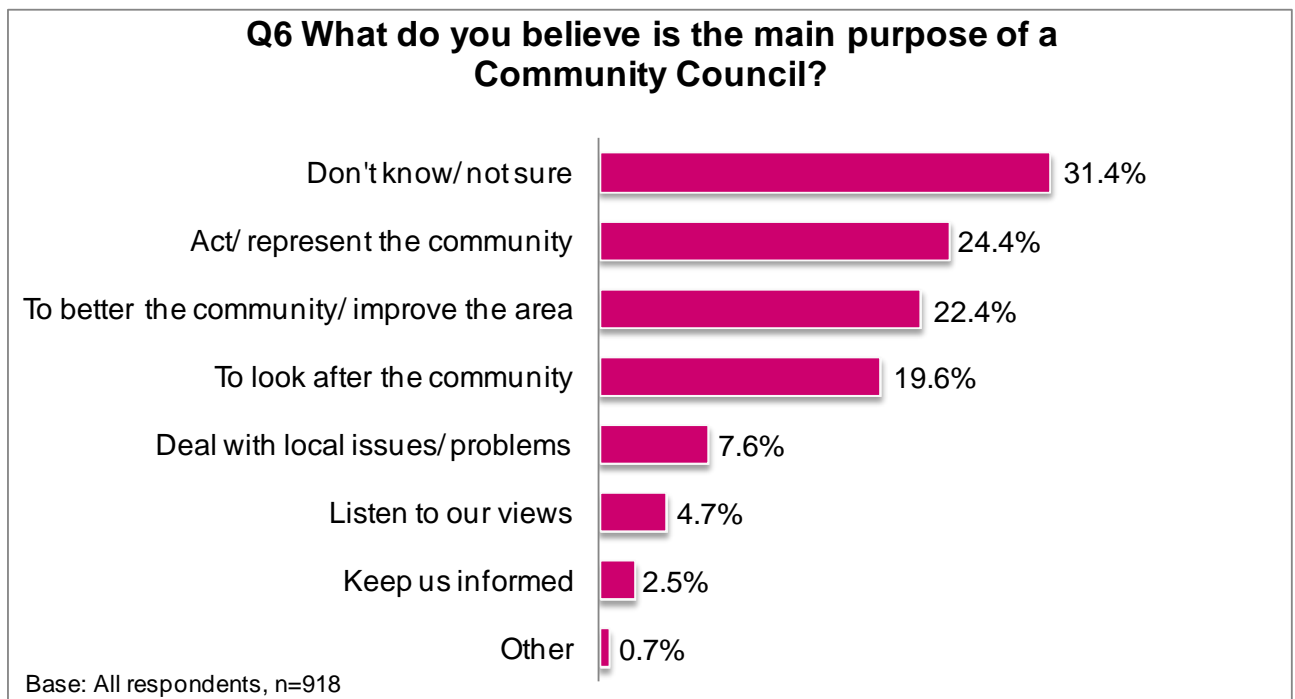
Table 2.2: Survey Q4 Have you ever been involved in your local Community Council?

	Base	Yes, in this area	Yes, in another area	No
Barrhead	90	1.1%	-	98.9%
Busby	28	14.3%	-	85.7%
Clarkston and Williamwood	51	5.9%	2.0%	92.2%
Eaglesham and Waterfoot	17	11.8%	5.9%	82.4%
Giffnock	55	7.3%	5.5%	87.3%
Neilston	44	11.4%	-	88.6%
Netherlee and Stamperland	52	3.8%	3.8%	92.3%
Newton Mearns	126	11.1%	2.4%	86.5%
Thornliebank	37	13.5%	-	86.5%
Uplawmoor	49	14.3%	-	85.7%

2.6 A total of 25 individuals said that they were currently involved in their Community Council – with seven being a Community Councillor; ten attending meetings; and eight receiving information about the Community Council. A breakdown of the way in which respondents were involved within each Community Council area is included as Appendix Four.

Purpose of a Community Council

2.7 When survey respondents were asked about the main purpose of a Community Council, over 3 in 10 said they were unsure (31%). However, where respondents were able to comment the most popular responses were to ‘act or represent the community’, followed by ‘to better the community or improve the area’. It is important to note that this was an open ended question and the responses provided have been coded into common categories for analysis purposes.



2.8 Analysis by area reveals that people in Clarkston and Williamwood were most likely to have answered ‘don’t know’ to this question. Residents in Neilston, Barrhead and Thornliebank were most likely to have said the main purpose of a Community Council was to ‘better the community’, while Giffnock, Busby and Eaglesham and Waterfoot respondents were most likely to say that its main purpose was ‘to act on behalf of or represent the community’. A full breakdown of responses by area is included as Appendix Five.

2.9 Discussion at the focus groups also explored what participants felt was the main purpose of a Community Council. Many found it difficult to discuss this, as they had not heard of their Community Council previously. However, most participants felt that Community Councils should:

- represent communities on relevant issues – with a particular focus on linking communities with East Renfrewshire Council;
- try to resolve problems or issues in local communities – like neighbourhood maintenance, roads and pavements, dog fouling, parking, developments and planning applications;
- make improvements in the area – like children’s play, new benches or flowers;
- run activities in the area – like galas, fun days and other community events; and
- work with others to influence change and develop plans to tackle community issues and promote community interests.

“Make people aware of the opinions and needs of the community they represent, by electing volunteers from the community.”

(Focus group participant)

“Try to solve the problems of the place you live... Like if a wall has fallen down or the area needs maintained.”

(Focus group participant)

“They should facilitate community events at least once a month – to increase their credibility”

(Focus group participant)

Community Council activities

2.10 The main activities which residents felt Community Councils should be responsible for were:

- gathering local views (87%);
- keeping the community informed (85%);
- sending representatives to meetings at which decisions are taken about the local area (85%); and
- campaigning to influence local decisions (83%).

2.11 However, a reasonably high proportion of respondents also felt that Community Councils should respond to enquiries and problems experienced by members of the public; respond to draft policies and consultation documents; and provide services in the local area. Almost half felt that Community Councils should be responsible for owning and managing local facilities.

Table 2.3: Survey Q7 What activities do you feel the community council should be responsible for?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Campaigning to influence local decisions	83.1%	2.8%	14.1%
Sending representatives to meetings at which decisions are taken about the local area	85.0%	1.6%	13.4%
Gathering local views	86.5%	1.7%	11.8%
Keeping the community informed	85.3%	2.7%	12.0%
Responding to draft policies and consultation documents	60.8%	9.2%	30.1%
Responding to enquiries and problems experienced by members of the public	74.0%	6.0%	20.0%
Providing services in the local area	60.5%	17.4%	22.1%
Owning and managing local facilities	49.7%	24.3%	26.0%

2.12 There were very substantial differences between Community Council areas. The biggest differences in opinion were:

- **Providing services in the local area** – 85 per cent of Neilston respondents said their Community Council should be responsible for this, compared to 22 per cent of Busby respondents.
- **Responding to enquiries and problems experienced by members of the public** – Almost all (98%) Uplawmoor respondents said their Community Council should be responsible for this, compared to 33 per cent of Busby respondents.
- **Owning and managing local facilities** – While almost three quarters of of Barrhead respondents (71%) said their Community Council should be responsible for this, this fell to just one third (33%) in Giffnock and Busby.
- **Responding to draft policies and consultation documents** – 82 per cent of Uplawmoor respondents said the Community Council should be responsible for this compared to 48 per cent of Busby respondents.

Table 2.4: Survey Q7 What activities do you feel your Community Council should be responsible for, by area? (% saying yes)

	Base	Campaigning to influence local decisions	Sending representatives to meetings where local area decisions are taken	Gathering local views	Keeping the community informed	Responding to draft policies and consultations	Responding to enquiries and problems of public	Providing services in local area	Owning and managing local facilities
Barrhead	153	81.7%	83.0%	85.6%	83.7%	58.8%	83.7%	71.9%	71.2%
Busby	54	90.7%	85.2%	88.9%	75.9%	48.1%	33.3%	22.2%	33.3%
Clarkston & Williamwood	85	71.8%	76.5%	76.5%	75.3%	61.2%	72.9%	63.5%	47.1%
Eaglesham & Waterfoot	50	92.0%	92.0%	92.0%	92.0%	52.0%	54.0%	54.0%	36.0%
Giffnock	114	86.8%	86.8%	88.6%	86.0%	62.3%	58.8%	39.5%	33.3%
Neilston	53	81.1%	90.6%	88.7%	88.7%	64.2%	90.6%	84.9%	64.2%
Netherlee & Stamperland	80	88.8%	88.8%	88.8%	87.5%	66.3%	71.3%	60.0%	47.5%
Newton Mearns	228	79.4%	80.7%	84.2%	85.5%	57.5%	78.1%	58.8%	46.1%
Thornliebank	51	82.4%	88.2%	88.2%	88.2%	66.7%	88.2%	84.3%	62.7%
Uplawmoor	50	92.0%	98.0%	96.0%	98.0%	82.0%	98.0%	74.0%	48.0%

- 2.13 An open ended question was included in the questionnaire which asked respondents if there was anything else that they felt their Community Council should be responsible for. A total of 61 survey respondents felt that they should be responsible for other activities. Their comments have been coded into common categories and are listed in the table below. The most common response was for the provision of a community centre or activities for youths, with 8 of the 14 respondents who made this comment living in Newton Mearns.

Table 2.5: Survey Q7b Do you think that your Community Council should be responsible for any other activities?		
Base: Provided other comments, n=61	Number	%
Community centre/ activities for youths	14	23%
Care in the community	10	16%
Keeping the area clean/ tidy	9	15%
Dealing with road maintenance	7	11%
Recycling/ bin issues	6	10%
Landscape in the community	3	5%
General community issues/ problems	3	5%
Planning decisions	2	3%
Taking local issues to the Council	2	3%
Other	8	13%

- 2.14 The 'other' comments related to eight different issues including car parking wardens, transport timetabling, monitoring Council performance, listening to communities, community spirit and supporting local businesses.

Priorities for Community Councils

- 2.15 Survey respondents were asked about the priorities they felt their Community Council should focus on in their area, and were asked to select from a list of issues which three they felt were the top priorities. The top priority for respondents overall was for safety and crime (55%), followed by neighbourhood maintenance (44%) and housing (35%).

Table 2.6: Survey Q8 What top 3 priorities do you think your Community Council should focus on in your area?

Base: All respondents, n=918	Number	%
Safety and crime	502	54.7%
Neighbourhood maintenance	405	44.1%
Housing	318	34.6%
Anti-social behaviour	301	32.8%
Education, schools and colleges	247	26.9%
Health and care	208	22.7%
Planning	203	22.1%
Employment and economy	151	16.4%
Transport	95	10.3%
Leisure and sport	71	7.7%
Childcare and nurseries	63	6.9%
Homelessness	48	5.2%
Road maintenance	10	1.1%
Parking issues	3	0.3%
Other	4	0.4%
None	6	0.7%
Don't know/ not sure	20	2.2%

2.16 The table below shows the most cited priority for each Community Council area. Neighbourhood maintenance was the biggest priority for those who lived in Busby, Clarkston and Williamwood and Netherlee and Stamperland. Housing was the main priority for Barrhead, Neilston, Thornliebank and Uplawmoor respondents. Safety and crime was the main priority for Giffnock, Eaglesham and Waterfoot, and Newton Mearns respondents – some of the most affluent parts of East Renfrewshire.

Table 2.7: Survey Q8 Most cited priority analysed by Community Council Area

	Base	Top Priority	%
Barrhead	153	Housing	70%
Busby	54	Neighbourhood maintenance	50%
Clarkston & Williamwood	85	Neighbourhood maintenance	73%
Eaglesham & Waterfoot	50	Safety and crime	86%
Giffnock	114	Safety and crime	70%
Neilston	53	Housing	91%
Netherlee & Stamperland	80	Neighbourhood maintenance	63%
Newton Mearns	228	Safety and crime	56%
Thornliebank	51	Housing	94%
Uplawmoor	50	Housing	58%

- 2.17 Analysis by age reveals that housing was significantly more of a priority for younger respondents aged 18 to 34 (41%) than those aged 65 and over (30%). Neighbourhood maintenance was significantly more important for respondents aged 35 to 64 (48%) than those aged 18 to 34 (37%). Anti social behaviour was more of a priority for older respondents aged 65 and over (39%) than younger residents aged 18 to 34 (29%).
- 2.18 Analysis by tenure reveals that housing was the top priority for those who lived in social rented accommodation (68%). The top priority for owners (56%) and private rented tenants (43%) was safety and crime.
- 2.19 A full breakdown of the responses to this question analysed by Community Council area, age and tenure can be found in Appendix Six.

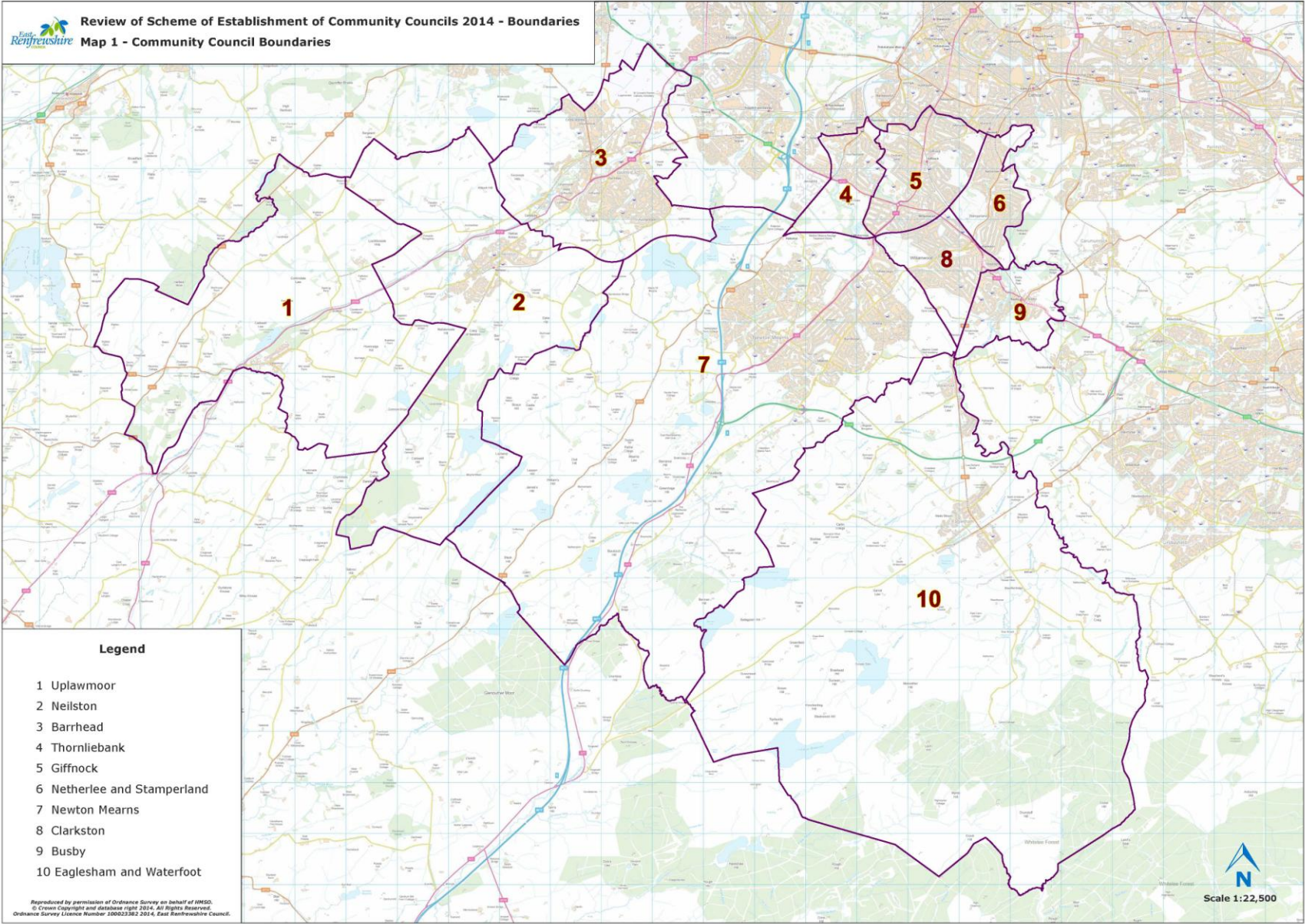
3. Views on Communities and Boundaries

Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter explores views from the survey and focus group discussions around ideas of natural communities in East Renfrewshire, and what factors should influence future Community Council boundaries.
- 3.2 There are currently ten Community Councils in East Renfrewshire. The current areas are:

Community Council	Population (2012)
Barrhead	17,662
Busby	3,767
Clarkston and Williamwood	9,042
Eaglesham and Waterfoot	4,664
Giffnock	12,075
Neilston	5,491
Netherlee and Stamperland	8,156
Newton Mearns	25,061
Thornliebank	4,258
Uplawmoor	854

- 3.3 The areas vary significantly in size, both in terms of physical geography and population. A map showing the existing Community Council boundaries is included below.



Size of Community Councils

- 3.4 Survey respondents were asked whether they felt the current size of their Community Council was a good size to address local issues; too big; or too small. Overall more than eight in ten respondents (83%) felt that the current boundaries were a good size to address local issues. Just three per cent said the boundaries were too small; eight percent said they were too big; and six per cent were unsure. It is, however, worth noting that in Busby, there appears to have been an issue with how respondents interpreted the map showing their Community Council area due to the fact that a thick black line was shown running through the centre of Busby which some respondents interpreted as the Community Council border dividing the Busby area. A relatively high proportion of Busby respondents said that their area was too small, but then gave reasons that indicated that they had misinterpreted the area covered by their Community Council.
- 3.5 Analysis by area reveals that the majority of respondents within all Community Council areas felt the current boundaries were a good size to address local issues. Busby had the highest proportion of respondents stating the area was too small (17% - likely to have been influenced by misinterpretation of the map used to describe the Community Council area). Giffnock had the highest proportion stating it was too big (18%).

Table 3.2: Survey Q9 Looking at the current boundaries of your Community Council, do you think it is:

	Base	A good size to address local issues	Too small	Too big	Don't know/ not sure
Barrhead	153	83.7%	1.3%	7.8%	7.2%
Busby	54	74.1%	16.7%	3.7%	5.6%
Clarkston and Williamwood	85	82.4%	1.2%	10.6%	5.9%
Eaglesham and Waterfoot	50	86.0%	6.0%	-	8.0%
Giffnock	114	77.2%	0.9%	18.4%	3.5%
Neilston	53	92.5%	-	-	7.5%
Netherlee and Stamperland	80	90.0%	-	5.0%	5.0%
Newton Mearns	228	79.8%	3.1%	10.5%	6.6%
Thornliebank	51	92.2%	-	-	7.8%
Uplawmoor	50	94.0%	-	4.0%	2.0%

- 3.6 The survey also explored people's views on natural communities, through asking people how they would respond if someone from East Renfrewshire asked them which area they were from. This reveals that in general, the name of the area specified by respondents ties up with the name of the Community Council area. In some areas, almost all respondents gave the Community Council geography as their response including:

- **Uplawmoor** – where all respondents would say they were from Uplawmoor;
- **Neilston** – where all respondents would say they were from Neilston;
- **Thornliebank** – where all respondents would say they were from Thornliebank;
- **Eaglesham and Waterfoot** – where all respondents would say they were from either Eaglesham or Waterfoot;
- **Netherlee and Stamperland** – where almost all would say they were from either Netherlee or Stamperland;
- **Busby** – where almost all respondents would say they were from either Busby or East Renfrewshire; and
- **Clarkston and Williamwood** – where almost all respondents would say they were from Clarkston or Williamwood (but some would say they were from Busby, Muirend or Stamperland).

3.7 The areas with the most diversity of response were:

- **Barrhead** – where most (80%) would say they were from Barrhead, but others would say they were from particular parts of Barrhead – like the Paisley Road area, the quiet end of Barrhead, the centre of Barrhead, or Auchenback;
- **Giffnock** – where most (77%) would say they were from Giffnock, but others would say they were from Muirend, Braidbar, Lower Whitecraigs, Merrylee, Newton Mearns, or particular parts of Giffnock.
- **Newton Mearns** – where most (58%) would say Newton Mearns, but others would use different answers depending on who asks, or would use areas like Greenfarm (7%), Crookfur (7%), Mearns or Mearns Village (6%), Whitecraigs (5%) or other local areas to describe the area they live in.

3.8 This response indicates that in these areas, many people are identifying with areas which are smaller than their Community Council area, as their idea of their natural community.

Drawing Community Council boundaries

3.9 The survey provided the opportunity for respondents to state why they felt their Community Council area was either too large or too small. The focus group discussions also explored in detail what participants felt about the boundary of their Community Council area. The following sections take each Community Council area in turn, and discuss survey and focus group responses to each.

Barrhead

3.10 The survey showed that most (84%) felt that Barrhead Community Council was a good size to address local issues. Only one per cent felt it was too small, and eight per cent felt it was too big. Survey respondents who felt it

was too small suggested that more rural areas – like Neilston and Uplawmoor – should also be included. Those who felt it was too big felt that:

- smaller areas could deal with problems more quickly;
- smaller areas would allow for dealing with localised problems;
- people don't know the issues across the whole community, because it is large;
- smaller areas would lead to shorter meetings – encouraging more involvement;
- farming communities should have their own Community Council – as the issues affecting them don't affect the majority.

- 3.11 Participants at the Barrhead focus group discussion felt that the Community Council boundary was about right. The group did not spend long considering the boundaries, feeling that they were appropriate. However, the group emphasised that they certainly did not feel that the boundary should be made any larger – stating that it was important to have at least ten separate Community Councils, as they are required to be representative of specific local areas.

“I wouldn't change the boundaries.”

(Focus group participant)

- 3.12 Participants at the discussion group with parents of children with additional support needs also discussed the Barrhead Community Council boundaries. They suggested that there was potential for Barrhead to be linked with Neilston and Uplawmoor, as there was crossover in terms of school catchment areas between these communities. However, some felt that Neilston and particularly Uplawmoor would see themselves as very distinct communities, with a need for a separate Community Council.

- 3.13 At the same group, participants also discussed whether Barrhead should be split into smaller areas – particularly with large neighbourhoods such as Auchenback potentially having their own issues. However, the group agreed that the Barrhead boundaries appeared to be a good size to address local issues, and probably should not be changed.

Busby

- 3.14 The survey showed that Busby respondents were the least sure of those across all areas that their current Community Council area was a good size to address local issues. Again, this is likely to be related to issues with survey respondents misinterpreting the map. Overall 74 per cent felt their Community Council area was a good size, but almost a fifth (17%) felt it was too small, and a small proportion (4%) felt it was too big.
- 3.15 Many of the survey respondents who felt it was too small appear to have misunderstood the map boundaries. Of the nine respondents who stated that they believed the area to be small, their comments suggest that eight of these misinterpreted the map – assuming that the Community Council area covered

half of Busby. Most suggested that it should include the whole of Busby village, including streets on both sides of the river and should include neighbourhoods such as The Paddock and Kippen Drive (which it currently does).

“Should include streets on the other side of the river to represent more varied views and give a larger representative number to encourage East Renfrewshire Council to act quickly on areas which concern the community.”
(Survey respondent, Busby)

“Should include more representative views of a wider community throughout Busby.”
(Survey respondent, Busby)

- 3.16 A small number of survey respondents felt that it was too large, generally because there was a feeling that a “small and manageable” Community Council area would be able to “represent a community with the time to care”. One person felt the area should be a quarter of the size, while two felt that it should be split in two.

“Map should be a quarter of the size. Area too large to represent a community with the time to care.”
(Survey respondent, Busby)

- 3.17 Our focus group discussion with participants from Busby and Clarkston highlighted that generally, participants felt that there should be fewer Community Councils. It should be noted that participants at this group did not feel that Community Councils were currently performing well. They suggested that Busby could be included within a much broader Community Council area for Busby, Clarkston, Stamperland and Netherlee – and felt that other Community Council areas across East Renfrewshire should also be amalgamated.

- 3.18 In addition, a group of parents of children with additional support needs also discussed boundaries in Busby. They highlighted that in Busby, Clarkston and Thornliebank, most communities are seen as “very distinct and separate”. The parents felt that there were some issues of “snobbery” in people wanting to clearly define which area they were from, and seeing these communities as very different. These parents felt that there was one small neighbourhood between Busby and Clarkston where the boundary is “a bit muddy” – the Sheddens area. They felt this could be because children from this area may go to school in Busby, but that they would still feel that they lived in the Clarkston area.

“There can be very clear boundaries between areas like Giffnock, Clarkston, Busby and Stamperland.”
(Focus group participant, group with parents of children with additional support needs)

- 3.19 At a discussion group with young people, participants suggested that Busby should be linked with other neighbouring areas like Clarkston and Netherlee.

“(Community Council areas) 8 and 9 should be together (Clarkston and Busby) – they are similar areas.”

(Focus group participant, young people’s group)

“You can’t really tell the difference between 6 , 8 and 9 (Netherlee, Clarkston, Busby).”

(Focus group participant, young people’s group)

Clarkston and Williamwood

- 3.20 Most survey respondents (82%) felt that the Clarkston and Williamwood Community Council area was a good size to address local issues. Just one per cent felt it was too small – but 11 per cent felt it was too big. This is a reasonably high proportion, compared to that in other Community Council areas.

- 3.21 A minority of survey respondents felt that the area should be increased, by adding Busby. But most felt that concentrating on a smaller area would allow for greater concentration on local issues.

“You would see something getting done if it was more local.”

(Survey respondent, Clarkston)

“If it’s for local issues I think it has to be smaller.”

(Survey respondent, Clarkston)

“Think it needs to be smaller as different problems affect different areas.”

(Survey respondent, Clarkston)

- 3.22 A focus group discussion with participants from Clarkston and Busby explored views on boundaries in more detail. The participants at this group all felt that their local Community Council was not performing well, and all felt that Community Council areas in general, including in Clarkston, should be larger. The group generally felt that reducing the number of Community Councils would strengthen the pool of people available to stand as Community Councillors; and strengthen the financial viability and efficiency of Community Councils.

“Give more money to less Community Councils.”

(Focus group participant, Clarkston and Busby)

“There appears to be too many.”

(Focus group participant, Clarkston and Busby)

- 3.23 Given the strong feelings on Community Council performance in this group, the discussion then focused strongly on how to improve Community Council operation, and did not explore boundaries in more detail.



Eaglesham and Waterfoot

- 3.24 Most survey participants (86%) in Eaglesham and Waterfoot felt that the current Community Council area was a good size to address local issues. However, six per cent felt that it was too small (and none felt that it was too large). Respondents who felt that it was too small suggested that it should be linked with other local areas.

“Not enough happening in area.”

(Survey respondent, Eaglesham and Waterfoot)

“Don't think it's big enough to speak up for community.”

(Survey respondent, Eaglesham and Waterfoot)

- 3.25 Views were explored in more detail at a focus group discussion with Eaglesham and Waterfoot residents. This highlighted that broadly, participants felt that the current boundary was reasonable. The group felt that it was appropriate that Eaglesham and Waterfoot, and the surrounding rural areas, should be included within the same Community Council area. When prompted about whether rural areas should have their own Community Council, participants highlighted that rural residents would still access the villages and have links with them through using services, and that it was appropriate that they were included in the Eaglesham and Waterfoot area. Some pointed out that land was being developed at a fast rate, and that areas that were currently rural could quickly become more urban in the future.

“Eaglesham and Waterfoot should definitely be joined together.”

(Focus group participant, Eaglesham and Waterfoot)

- 3.26 Participants at this discussion group also explored whether Community Councils should be linked to electoral boundaries. Some participants felt that

this may make sense, as it could make it easier for elected members to liaise with Community Councils. However, others didn't feel it would "have much of an impact." Participants didn't feel that there was any need to consider links to school catchment areas, as "schools are much bigger now" and people travel large distances to attend schools, particularly secondary schools.

Giffnock

- 3.27 Giffnock was the area where the largest proportion of survey respondents across all Community Council areas felt that their area was too large to address local issues (18%). Very few (less than 1%) felt it was too small.
- 3.28 Generally, respondents who felt the area was too big felt that it was too big to deal with localised issues, and had a number of distinct communities within the area – such as Giffnock, Orchard Park, Merrylee and Whitecraigs. Some felt that it should simply be divided into "at least two" areas, to reduce the area.

"Quarter the maps into sections to hear all views and deal with problems in detail."

(Survey respondent, Giffnock)

"Should be split into more areas to give more people the opportunity to speak at meetings and have their interest/ problems dealt with quickly."

(Survey respondent, Giffnock)

- 3.29 However others gave specific ideas about how to divide the area. Some felt that there was a natural cut off with the areas south of Eastwood Toll (at the boundary of Rouken Glen Road and Eastwood Mains Road) seen as part of another Community Council area. Others felt that it could be divided in two using Fenwick Road as the dividing line.

"Cut off at Whitecraigs, keep Orchard Park area separate. Too large an area to deal efficiently with the interests of all concerned."

(Survey respondent, Giffnock)

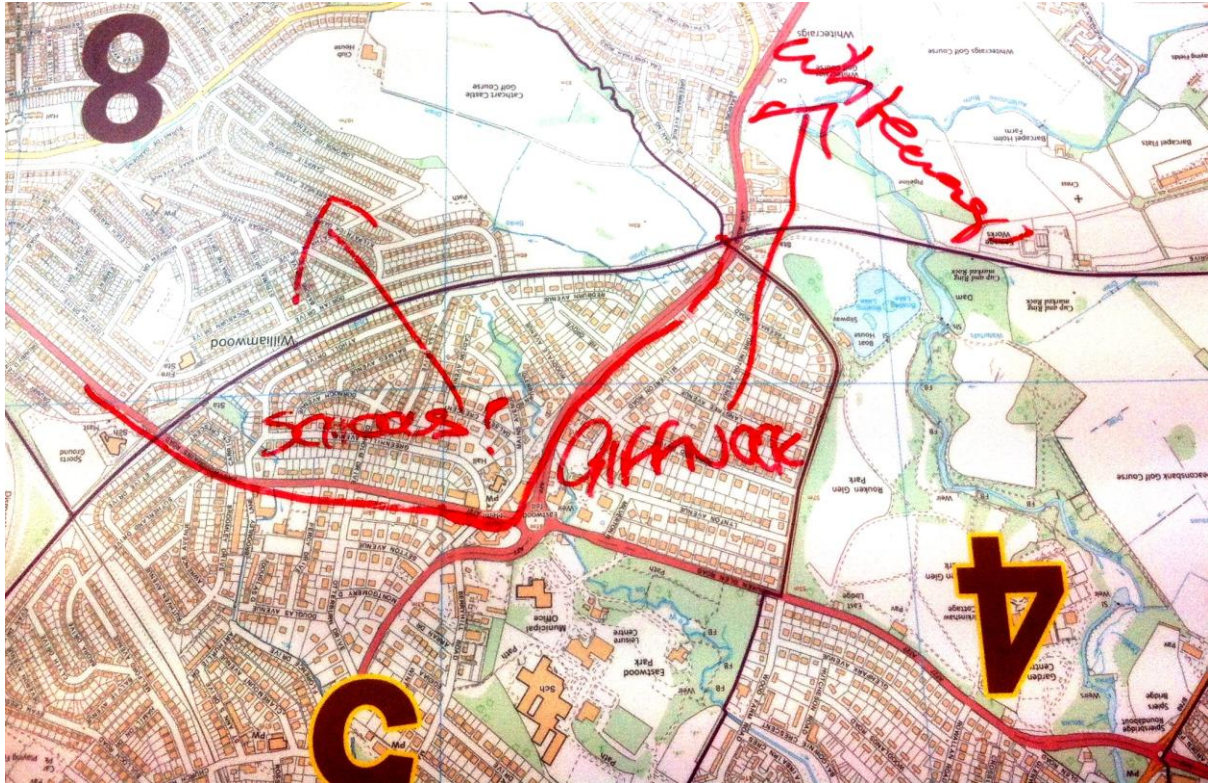
"Divide south of Eastwood Toll; they have different issues to deal with there."

(Survey respondent, Giffnock)

- 3.30 Participants at a discussion group covering Giffnock, Netherlee and Stamperland were very interested in the boundaries for Community Councils across the whole of East Renfrewshire. Participants felt that across the local authority area, some areas were "just mushrooming" – such as the area around the new Waitrose development at Greenlaw.
- 3.31 The group all agreed that it was right to keep Giffnock and Thornliebank separate, as they felt the areas had quite different issues. This was echoed by participants at the young people's discussion group, involving people from across East Renfrewshire.

“Not 4 and 5 together (Thornliebank and Giffnock) – Giffnock gets abuse from Thornliebank – they are close in geography but they’re very different. They call you posh.”

(Focus group participant, young people’s group)



3.32 Generally they felt that the Giffnock boundary was about right, although there was some discussion about:

- The Orchard Park area has a blurred boundary with Thornliebank – but participants felt it should be kept in Giffnock as it shares more issues with this area.
- The area between Rouken Glen Road and Ayr Road can sometimes be called ‘Lower Whitecraigs’ but people felt that this was ‘estate agent speak’ and the area actually belonged in Giffnock.
- The area between Ayr Road and Eastwoodmains Road is within the Williamwood catchment area for the school – but again probably belongs in Giffnock.
- One participant felt that the area could be split in half along the Fenwick Road – but others were not so keen on the idea.

“We don’t want to fragment the area – we would have less influence if it was a smaller area.”

(Focus group participant, Giffnock, Netherlee and Stamperland)



Neilston

- 3.33 All survey respondents in Neilston who had a view on boundaries felt that the current Community Council boundaries were a good size to address local issues.
- 3.34 At our focus group in Neilston, discussion focused largely on other issues around Community Councils – with boundaries not perceived as a key priority.

“The boundary is an entirely marginal issue.”
(Focus group participant, Neilston)

- 3.35 However, one participant suggested that there was some crossover between the more southern, less populated parts of Neilston Community Council area – which it was felt “could just as well belong to Uplawmoor”. Participants felt that the electoral wards for Neilston were “a bit bizarre” – with two electoral wards covering the Neilston area (one linked to Uplawmoor and one linked to Barrhead). They did not feel that Community Council areas should reflect electoral wards. All suggested that there was no need to re-draw boundaries currently.

Netherlee and Stamperland

- 3.36 The majority of survey respondents (90%) felt that Netherlee and Stamperland Community Council area was a good size to address local issues. However, five per cent felt that it was too big and that it should be more local. None felt that it was too small.

“Local issues here don't necessarily affect other areas. Local to me means six or seven streets.”
(Survey respondent, Netherlee and Stamperland)

- 3.37 At our focus group discussion with people from Giffnock, Netherlee and Stamperland, participants agreed that the current boundaries were appropriate – and had no major issues about the existing boundaries.

Newton Mearns

- 3.38 Most survey respondents (80%) felt that the Newton Mearns Community Council area was a good size to address local issues. Just three per cent felt it was too small, and 11 per cent felt it was too big. However, when participants were asked to describe the area they lived in, many identified with a community which was smaller than the Community Council area.

- 3.39 Survey respondents who felt it was too big had a range of concerns. Firstly some felt that there were simply “too many people” for one Community Council to cover. Others felt that there were too many different areas with different needs – like Mearns, Broom and Kirkhill. And others highlighted that the area was “growing all the time”.

“Too many areas covered to be useful. It should be split into two areas.”
(Survey respondent, Newton Mearns)

“Area has grown too big and is losing its identity.”
(Survey respondent, Newton Mearns)

“Area is expanding with more and more houses.”
(Survey respondent, Newton Mearns)

- 3.40 Our focus group discussions with residents in Newton Mearns felt that the area was “vast” and was expanding quickly in terms of population and new development. The group discussed whether there should be more Community Councils for the Newton Mearns area, and some felt that there could be benefits of more local representation.

“More Community Councils would be more representative.”
(Focus group participant, Newton Mearns)

- 3.41 However, few participants could identify any meaningful way of splitting the area into smaller communities. One individual suggested that the area could be split by the main road, into two Community Council areas. Participants at this focus group felt that the Community Council could not meaningfully align with the electoral ward area, and would not align well with school catchment areas either.



- 3.42 The boundaries for Newton Mearns Community Council area were also discussed by parents of children with additional support needs, at a separate discussion group. Many of these parents lived in Newton Mearns. Participants at this group felt that the Community Council “may be more reflective of communities if it is split into smaller areas”. These might be distinct communities like Mearns Village, Broom, Crookfur and Greenlaw.

Thornliebank

- 3.43 All survey respondents who provided a view felt that Thornliebank Community Council was a good size to address local issues. Focus group participants also felt that the boundary was reasonable, and that limited time should be spent on re-drawing boundaries – as what went on within the boundaries was much more important to them.

“It is pointless to re-draw boundaries again and again, as this can be a waste of time; time that should be spent on more important issues.”

(Focus group participant, Thornliebank)

“The boundary looks about right, it is not a massive issue.”

(Focus group participant, Thornliebank)

Uplawmoor

- 3.44 In Uplawmoor, the majority of survey participants (94%) felt that the current Community Council area was about right to address local issues, and four per cent felt that it was too big. The main reason for it being considered too big was due to the inclusion of too many outlying rural areas.
- 3.45 Our focus group discussions in Uplawmoor highlighted that participants felt that Uplawmoor was a “unique” place, and that the Community Council boundaries “should be very local”. They felt that the boundary was “probably about right” and that “it would be strange to change it”.
- 3.46 We discussed the involvement of more rural areas. Participants felt that:
- “It tends to be mostly people within the village who are on the Community Council.”
- 3.47 Participants felt that it was sensible to link school catchment areas with Community Council areas, and thought that the boundaries probably were the same for Uplawmoor. However, participants did not feel that electoral wards would reflect their idea of their community.
- “I’m personally quite happy, even though it could be smaller.”
(Focus group participant, Uplawmoor)
- “There is no reason to change, we are so rural.”
(Focus group participant, Uplawmoor)
- 3.48 Young people from across East Renfrewshire agreed, feeling that the communities of Uplawmoor and Neilston were quite distinct and should each have their own Community Councils.

General comments

- 3.49 One discussion group with young people focused on all ten Community Council areas, given the group involved participants from across East Renfrewshire. At this group, there was a general discussion about the size of Community Council areas. Some felt a small geographic area would be better– as it could be more representative of the community, and there would be more chance to get to know the area and the people in it. However others said that a bigger area would allow for a larger membership and therefore more impact on local issues.
- “Smaller is more representative and it’s easier to collect community views.”
(Focus group participant, young people’s group)
- “But because we don’t know much about the community councils, this signifies that the current boundaries are not working – but bringing them together would have more impact with more local councillors on board.”
(Focus group participant, young people’s group)

- 3.50 Some young participants felt that it was vital that local elected members from East Renfrewshire Council attend Community Council meetings, which led to the suggestion that Community Councils should mirror electoral ward areas.

“I don’t understand how a councillor could represent the community and not go to the Community Council meeting?”

(Focus group participant, young people’s group)

“It would cut the duplication – councillors only sitting on one community council is a better use of their time; if its their only commitment then they’re more likely to go.”

(Focus group participant, young people’s group)

Community Councils in more rural areas

- 3.51 Survey respondents were asked how they felt Community Councils for people living in more rural areas should be arranged. Just under 6 in 10 respondents felt that rural areas should have their own Community Council (57%), a third (34%) felt rural areas should be linked to larger towns or villages to form a Community Council and a minority (8%) were unsure. Some stated that it would depend on the size of the rural area – with smaller areas being linked to other Community Councils; and others suggested a combination of rural Community Councils who work with others when appropriate.
- 3.52 Analysis by Community Council area indicates that respondents who live in Clarkston and Williamwood (mainly urban areas) were most likely to have said that rural areas should have their own Community Councils. On the other hand, the majority of Busby (65%) and Eaglesham and Waterfoot (62%) respondents (mainly small towns or villages) said that rural areas should be linked to larger towns or villages to form a Community Council.

Table 3.3: Q11 How do you think Community Councils for people living in more rural areas should be arranged? Do you think they should have their own Community Council, be linked to larger towns or villages or is there some other way this should be done?

	Base	Rural areas should have their own Community Council	Rural areas should be linked to larger towns or villages to form a Community Council	Other	Don't know
Barrhead	153	54.2%	39.2%	0.7%	5.9%
Busby	54	29.6%	64.8%	1.9%	3.7%
Clarkston and Williamwood	85	87.1%	8.2%	1.2%	3.5%
Eaglesham and Waterfoot	50	34.0%	62.0%	-	4.0%
Giffnock	114	46.5%	49.1%	-	4.4%
Neilston	53	64.2%	22.6%	-	13.2%
Netherlee and Stamperland	80	70.0%	26.3%	-	3.8%
Newton Mearns	228	54.8%	30.7%	3.1%	11.4%
Thornliebank	51	64.7%	17.6%	-	17.6%
Uplawmoor	50	68.0%	18.0%	2.0%	12.0%

3.53 Analysis of this question by the type of area the respondent lived in (based on their response to Question 2 of the survey) reveals that the majority of people in rural, small town and urban locations felt that rural areas should have their own Community Council. However, those who lived in semi-rural areas were most likely to have said that rural areas should be linked to larger towns or villages to form a Community Council.

Table 3.4: Q11 How do you think Community Councils for people living in more rural areas should be arranged? Do you think they should have their own Community Council, be linked to larger towns or villages or is there some other way this should be done? (Analysis by type of area (Q2))

	Base	Rural areas should have their own Community Council	Rural areas should be linked to larger towns or villages to form a Community Council	Other	Don't know
Mainly rural	88	52.3%	39.8%	-	8.0%
A small town or village	460	52.4%	36.7%	0.7%	10.2%
Mainly urban	357	65.5%	27.2%	2.2%	5.0%
Semi-rural	4	25.0%	75.0%	-	-
Don't know	9	33.3%	66.7%	-	-

3.54 Focus group participants in areas covering rural settings also discussed their views on whether rural communities should have their own Community Councils. It was largely felt that rural areas should be connected to larger towns or villages – particularly in areas like Uplawmoor, Neilston and Eaglesham.

3.55 Some participants felt that it was mostly people from the villages, rather than rural areas, who participated in the Community Councils.

“It tends to be mostly people within the village who are on the Community Council.”

(Focus group participant)

3.56 A minority suggested that it may be useful to have rural focused Community Councils.

“The big rural bits should have their own.”

(Focus group participant)

3.57 However, focus group participants generally felt that it was right that rural areas should be connected to settlements for Community Councils. Some highlighted that people would come into the village to access services, and so might want to influence what happens in the area. Others felt that people in very rural areas may be less likely to get involved, as they didn't have some of the issues like dog fouling; lighting; parking; pavements etc that they do in the village. Others felt that “it just needs good communication with rural areas” as it was likely that some people would not know about the Community Council. Some of the participants in the groups were from rural areas, and were aware of their Community Council.

4. Future Involvement in Community Councils

Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter explores views on what would encourage people to become more involved in Community Councils in the future, and what barriers need to be addressed. It also explores views on the current performance of Community Councils.

Views on current performance of Community Councils

- 4.2 Focus group participants were asked if they had any views on the current performance of Community Councils. The focus groups were deliberately targeted at people not currently involved in Community Councils, but this question prompted wide ranging discussions in many groups.
- 4.3 In a small minority of areas, some participants felt that the Community Council was “currently well run”.

“Some Community Councils are better than others.”

(Focus group participant)

- 4.4 However most felt that their Community Council could not be doing its job properly, as they didn’t know where or when it met, or what it was doing. Some recognised that Community Councils had small amounts of funding, and were led by volunteers, which could limit their activities.

“Maybe they do things but we don’t hear about them.”

(Focus group participant)

“They are very low on capacity – they are relying on unpaid volunteers.”

(Focus group participant)

- 4.5 Focus group participants felt that one of the main issues with Community Councils was that the community didn’t hear what they were doing, and what difference they made. Some were very unsure of the remit and purpose of Community Councils, and whether these had been made clear at a local level.

“I can’t see one thing that’s been done by this Community Council. It used to do a lot.”

(Focus group participant)

- 4.6 Others felt that there could be a danger of the Community Council becoming over focused on one single issue, rather than taking account of the range of issues in the area. They felt that this was particularly important as Community Councillors could sometimes just reflect their own views – rather than represent the views of the wider community. Participants didn’t feel that Community Councils did much work to try to understand local issues, on a proactive basis. Some suggested that to help with this, particularly in large areas, there should be representation from different geographical

communities within the area on the Community Council, to ensure all can be involved.

“Community Councils are a good thing as long as they are there for the whole of [the community], and people are prepared to take on issues for the whole area.”

(Focus group participant)

“From what I know they don’t ask around a lot... What mechanism is there to ascertain within a Community Council, to find out the issues and represent the community?”

(Focus group participant)

- 4.7 Those who had attended Community Council meetings generally felt that these were very formal, not welcoming and didn’t allow for equality of participation. Many of those who had been involved had felt intimidated or bullied – either for not following procedures or for talking about issues which others did not want to discuss (or had a different view on).

“The Community Council is an aggrandisement and illusion of power. It collects power. It also has a tendency to collect negative views that stop things happening.”

(Focus group participant)

“You are almost just there as an audience. You feel like an outsider. There were always councillors there, and this could inhibit goings on. Some are quite abrasive and could stifle debate – making it hard for people to voice their concerns.”

(Focus group participant)

- 4.8 Some participants in a community group in East Renfrewshire were pleased that one Community Council had come to their group to ask for their views. However, this group did not receive any feedback having given their views, and so did not know whether they had been taken into account.

- 4.9 A minority of participants across all groups had seen negative press about Community Councils in East Renfrewshire recently. Some who had seen this had gone on to investigate further – looking at minutes or Community Council websites. Others had not. There were different views. Some felt that they would not want to get involved with Community Councils at all having seen this press, due to the type of people involved in the Community Councils. Others felt that it was important to also recognise the role of East Renfrewshire Council, in listening to and supporting Community Councils, so that they are able to have some ‘clout’ and influence.

“There should be a requirement [on ERC] to listen. Community Councils should have clout so that they can do more than one person can do on their own.”

(Focus group participant)

Encouraging people to get involved

4.10 Survey respondents were asked what would encourage them to get involved (or continue to be involved) in their Community Council.

Table 4.1: Q12 What do you think would encourage you to get more involved (or continue to be involved) in your Community Council in the future?		
Base: All respondents, n=918	Number	%
Provide more information about Community Council e.g. what they do/ what's on	99	10.8%
Awareness of how to be involved/ if knew more about it	59	6.4%
No time/ too busy	55	6.0%
If it made a difference/ dealt with issues	47	5.1%
If it affects me personally/ personal interest	35	3.8%
If had time	33	3.6%
Too old/ ill health	31	3.4%
Listened to our views	25	2.7%
Information about meetings	21	2.3%
I already participate/ involved already	12	1.3%
Don't know	89	9.7%
Other	18	2.0%
Not interested	99	10.8%
Nothing	343	37.4%

4.11 Just over one in ten respondents suggested providing more information about Community Councils, about their role in the community and about local events. Six per cent suggested more information on how to become involved in Community Councils. Just under four in 10 respondents (37%) had no suggestions, 10 per cent were unsure and 11 per cent said they were not interested.

4.12 Our focus group discussions also explored what would encourage involvement in Community Councils. Young people had strong views on what would encourage them to participate. There was a clear feeling that Community Councils were currently oriented towards older people.

“They need to be young person friendly. Like I have problems in the community I’d like to change, but I don’t have the confidence to approach the Community Council.”

(Focus group participant)

“Maybe if there were young people’s branches of the Community Council – specific groups of young people?”

(Focus group participant)

4.13 A wide range of focus group participants felt that they would be more encouraged to get involved through:

- accessible information about the purpose and remit of the Community Council - and who is currently a Community Councillor;
- a clear agenda in advance of meetings – with “interesting, relevant topics”;
- purposeful and meaningful engagement by Community Councils with communities;
- evidence of impact – making a difference due to your contribution within the Community Council;
- working to make Community Councils “less cliquey” and more representative – with better leadership;
- a clear community – not individual – focus; and
- joint working with local groups, to raise awareness and impact.

“I would have to know what the Community Council does first.”
(Focus group participant)

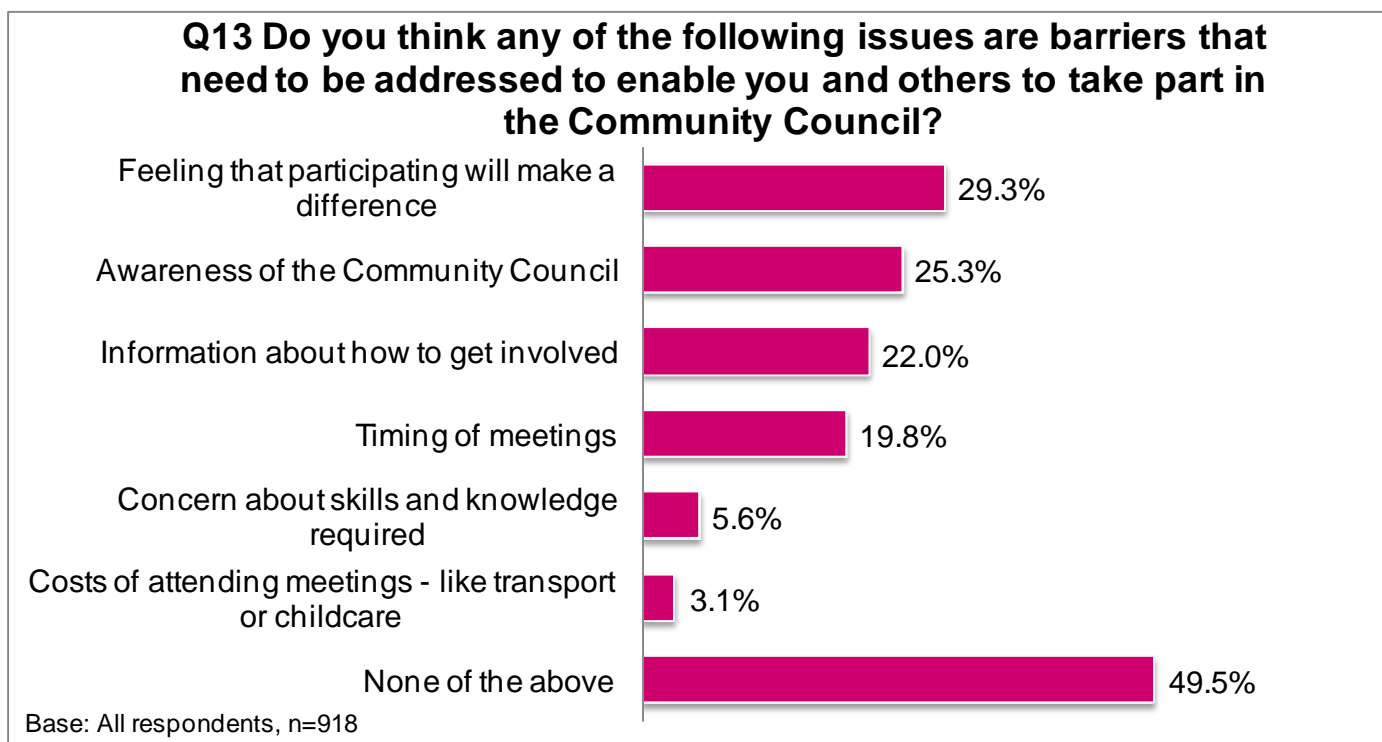
“You have got to see that what you are doing is making a difference.”
(Focus group participant)

4.14 Participants in three of the groups spontaneously suggested that Community Councils should hold ‘surgeries’ so that people could drop in and get involved in a more informal way – without having to participate in a formal meeting. This idea was suggested at the group with young people, who felt that this would be a more informal way of engaging with Community Councils, and others at two of the geographically focused groups.

“We could get to know what the Community Council does, and who they are.”
(Focus group participant)

Barriers to involvement

4.15 When asked about the barriers that need to be addressed to enable residents to take part in their Community Council, 29% said they would need to feel that participating would make a difference, 25% said they would need to increase awareness of Community Councils and 22% said they would need more information about how to get involved. Half of respondents (50%) said there were no barriers that would need to be addressed.



4.16 All respondents were asked if there were any other barriers, other than those mentioned above, which prevented them or others from taking part. The vast majority said there were no other barriers (67%). The most commonly mentioned barriers were age or health reasons (6%), a lack of free time (6%) and work commitments (5%).

Table 4.2: Survey Q14 Do you think there are any other barriers that stop you and others taking part in the Community Council?

Base: All respondents, n=918		
	Number	%
Age/ ill health	52	5.7%
Time	51	5.6%
Work commitments	50	5.4%
Other commitments	22	2.4%
Too busy	14	1.5%
Arranging childcare	9	1.0%
Other	22	2.4%
Don't know	51	5.6%
Nothing	614	66.9%
Not interested/ lack of interest	54	5.9%

4.17 In general, focus group participants found that one of the biggest barriers was accessing information about their Community Council. For example, people gave examples of having to click through a number of different website pages to find online information about Community Councils. Many suggested that information should be available at local shops, libraries and community facilities so that it was easily accessible.

“There was too much information and it was too complicated.”
(Focus group participant)

- 4.18 A number of focus group participants felt that the people currently involved in the Community Council acted as barriers for others becoming involved. This barrier came up spontaneously in six of the eleven discussion groups. In some cases, participants gave overt examples of being discouraged from participating, as their views or issues differed from others in the Community Council. However, most mentioned that it was their perception of the people involved in Community Councils which made them feel that they would not want to participate. In some cases, participants felt that the Community Council had involved the same people for a very long time, and that they would not feel comfortable getting involved. A minority mentioned the recent negative press about Community Councils as their main reason for now not wanting to get involved in the future.

“There would need to be significant turnover of the people involved for me to consider it.”
(Focus group participant)

- 4.19 A number of participants highlighted that they would not know how to get involved, and that “it seems to be a secret”. Some, particularly women, felt that the process of having to put yourself forward for nomination and election would put them off – particularly as they felt it tended to be largely retired men who became involved in Community Councils. Others mentioned that even attending meetings could be frightening for many people, and would put people off becoming involved. And one participant felt that even if they did get involved, they felt decisions would still be taken by more powerful Community Councillors – “it feels like decisions are already taken.”
- 4.20 The formality of Community Council meetings was again mentioned as a key barrier. Some who had attended meetings in the past felt that there was no opportunity for them to become involved and shape discussion and debate.
- 4.21 Some focus group participants highlighted that they felt Community Councils were largely for people who had a specific interest, rather than a general desire to influence change in their communities.

“I wouldn’t get involved until I had a specific problem or issue. It seems to involve people with an agenda.”
(Focus group participant)

- 4.22 In larger areas, some participants felt that the venues for meetings made it difficult for people from across the Community Council area to attend – for example due to poor public transport links. Some felt that this was a particular issue for disabled people, as the venues themselves could also be “quite inaccessible”. They suggested that meetings should be held in central locations, accessible to all parts of the Community Council area.

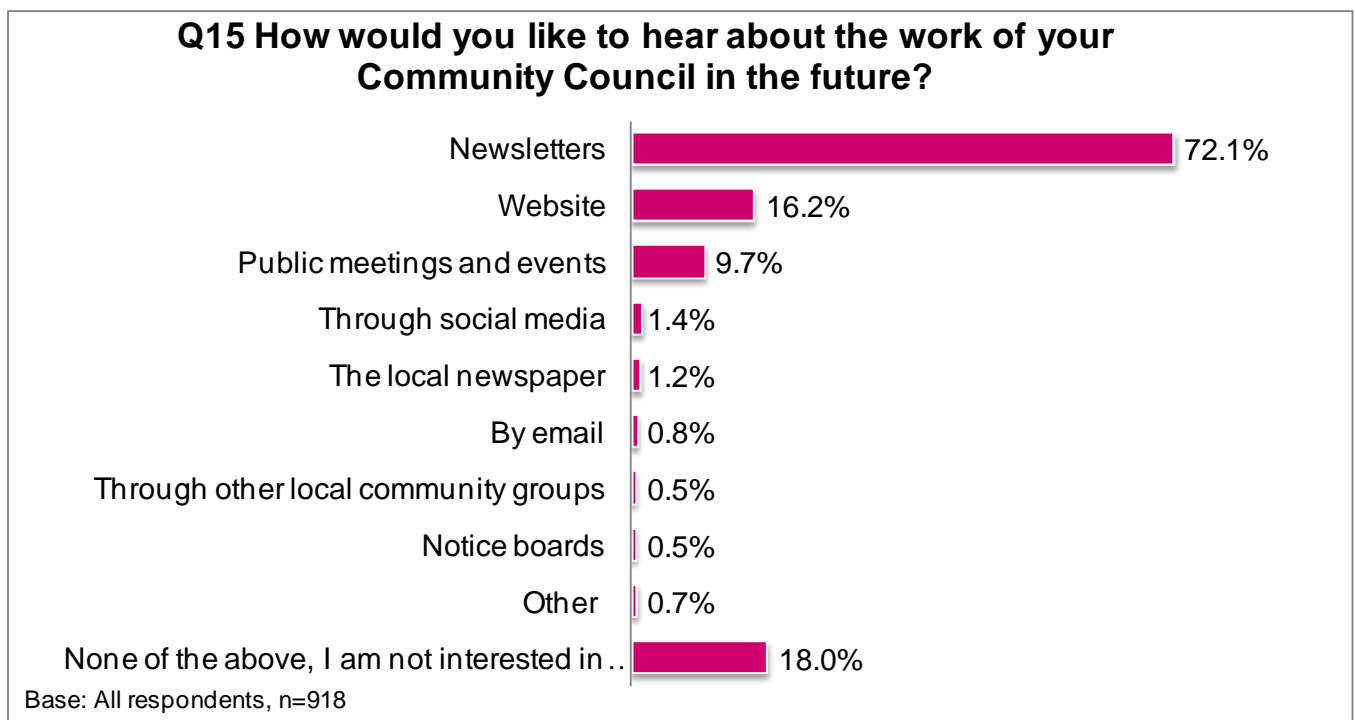
- 4.23 Focus group participants reiterated that a major barrier to getting involved was that they perceived nothing would change as a result. Others felt that it was a lot of commitment, for minimal impact. Mothers involved in the discussion groups felt that time pressures were a key barrier which prevented them from becoming involved in a wide range of community focused activity. Some suggested that more flexible options for being involved – for example completing online surveys to inform Community Council activity – would be helpful. Others suggested online forums, so they could take part from home.

“Face-to-face is not always suitable, as you can’t bring babies to a Community Council meeting.”

(Focus group participant)

Preferred ways of being kept informed

- 4.24 The survey explored how residents would like to hear about the work of their Community Council in the future. Newsletters (72%) were by far the most popular source of information, followed by websites (16%) and public meetings and events (10%).



- 4.25 Further analysis reveals that newsletters were the most preferred communication type for respondents across all Community Council areas. However, more respondents who lived in Clarkston and Williamwood (26%), Giffnock (25%) and Netherlee (29%) said they would like to obtain this information via websites. Younger respondents aged 18 to 34 (24%) were most likely to have said they would prefer to obtain information via websites than those aged 65 and over (5%). Busby respondents were most likely to have said they would prefer to obtain information through public meetings and events. The full responses to this question analysed by Community Council area can be found in Appendix 7.

5. Good and Poor Practice in Community Councils

Introduction

- 5.1 This chapter explores public views on how good practice in Community Councils should be recognised and shared, and how problems and poor practice should be tackled and dealt with. It is based on the findings from the door-to-door survey, and the focus group discussions.

Promoting achievements and good practice

- 5.2 We asked participants at the focus groups to discuss how they would like to hear about the achievements of their Community Council, and how these should be recognised and shared. Most groups focused strongly on how they would like to hear about how their Community Council is doing – reiterating that they currently heard very little about their Community Council.
- 5.3 In line with the door-to-door survey findings, most focus group participants wanted to hear about their Community Council's achievements through newsletters and the press. Some suggested using The Extra (which everyone recognised did not go to everyone in all Community Council areas), other local papers like the Barrhead News, and the East Renfrewshire Council newsletter.

“Community Councils should shout about their work to the media – they need to be a bit more proactive.”

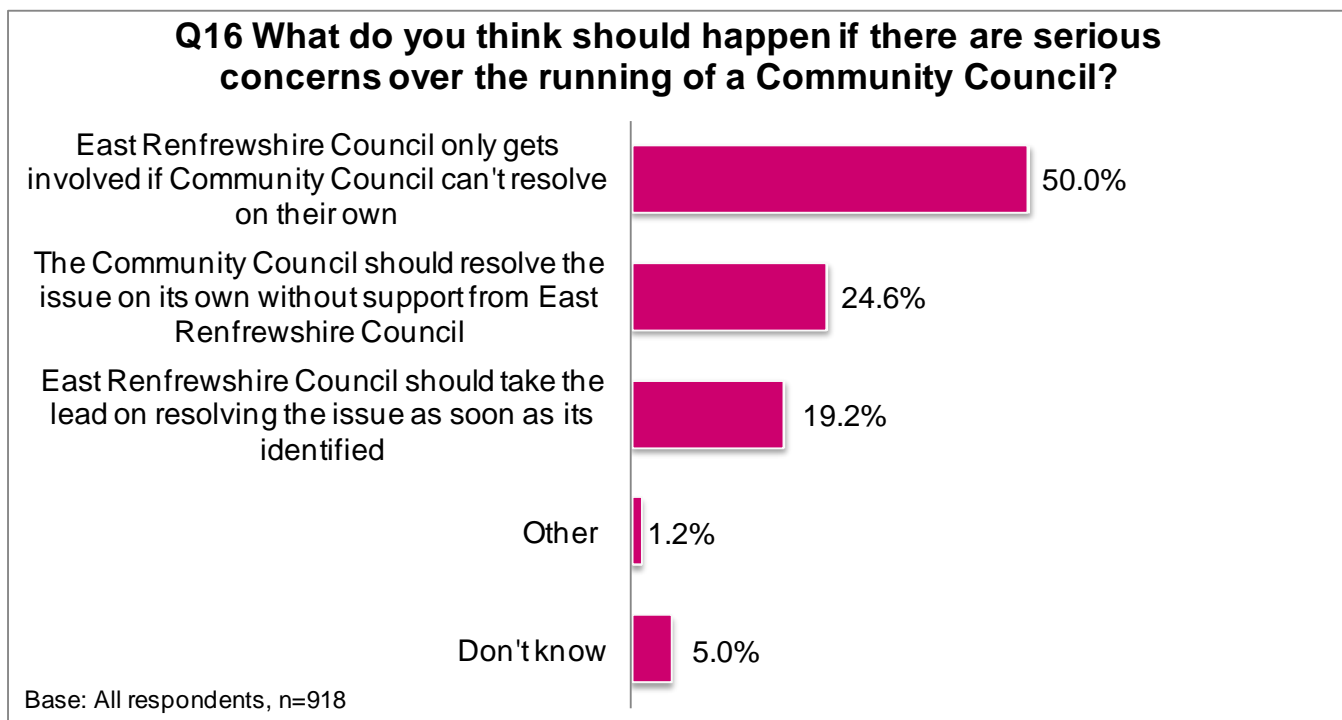
(Focus group participant)

- 5.4 Many also wanted good information to be easily available online, or emailed to them. They highlighted that this information needed to be easy to find and use, and could be connected to social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.
- 5.5 Most felt that in addition, information about Community Councils should be available in local places like libraries, shops, Council offices and other appropriate venues. A number of participants highlighted that notice boards, if used, needed to be well positioned.
- 5.6 Some participants reiterated the need for Community Councils to be proactively making contact with, and gathering the views of local communities – through activity such as door-to-door surveys and holding surgeries. And a small minority suggested that Community Councils should come together regularly to share practice – perhaps working closely with East Renfrewshire Council elected members.

Tackling problems and poor practice

- 5.7 Both the survey and focus group discussions explored what should happen if there were concerns about how Community Councils were run. Half of the survey respondents said that if there were serious concerns over the running

of a Community Council they felt that East Renfrewshire Council (ERC) should only get involved if the Community Council couldn't resolve the issue on its own. A quarter (25%) felt the Community Council should resolve the issue on its own without the support of East Renfrewshire Council and a fifth (19%) felt East Renfrewshire Council should take the lead on resolving the issue as soon as it is identified.



- 5.8 Survey respondents who were aware of their Community Council were twice as likely to say the Community Council should resolve the issue on its own without support from East Renfrewshire Council (31%) than respondents who were not aware of their local Community Council (15%).
- 5.9 Those who were currently involved in their local Community Council were significantly more likely to say the Community Council should resolve the issues on its own without support from the Council (52%) than respondents not currently involved in their local Community Council (24%).
- 5.10 The focus group discussions involved in depth exploration of what should happen in three different instances of concern – around finances; around bullying and harassment; and around Community Councillors using their position to their own advantage. It was highlighted that these issues arise in rare cases. Participants were asked to engage in an entirely theoretical discussion about what should happen if these issues should arise.

Concerns about how a Community Council uses its money

- 5.11 Participants were asked to consider, hypothetically, what should happen if there were concerns about how a Community Council uses its money. Participants felt that if there were concerns about this, it would be a serious

issue. However, a small minority highlighted that the volumes of money Community Councils are responsible for can be very small, therefore reducing the severity of these concerns. There was some discussion at some groups about current procedures, in terms of auditing accounts and having rules in place about how money can and can't be used. However, a wide range of potential options were suggested by participants:

- **Prevention** – Many suggested that there should be steps to prevent this happening, such as having two or more people involved in all activity around money – so that it would be easier for Community Councillors to pick up any concerns at an early stage. Others suggested a role for East Renfrewshire Council in routinely monitoring how funds are used.
- **Warnings** – Some suggested the first stage should be a warning. Others felt that it would be appropriate to issue a warning, coupled with support. There were different suggestions about how this support would work. Some felt that “someone outside the Community Council” could “watch over” them for a while, while others suggested requiring that new Community Councillors be elected to work with the existing members to strengthen their financial approach.
- **Investigations** – Some felt that there should be a “formal investigation” with most feeling that East Renfrewshire Council should have a lead role in this. Some cautioned that it was important the response was proportionate – and that this should happen only if it was clear there was a potential problem and significant amounts of money were involved.
- **Criminality and fraud** – Most felt that if it was clear that a crime may have been committed, it was important to involve the police or other appropriate organisations.
- **Membership of the Community Council** – All participants felt that there should be sanctions for Community Councillors found guilty of misuse of finances – dependent on the severity of the case. This could range from suspension through to being struck off and not allowed to serve on a Community Council again.

“Wrongdoers should be suspended and not allowed to serve again.”
(Focus group participant)

5.12 Generally, participants felt that East Renfrewshire Council had a key role in setting up clear arrangements to prevent this situation occurring, including routinely reviewing use of finances. However, there were mixed views about whether East Renfrewshire Council or another body should be involved in investigating these cases – as another body may be perceived as more independent.

Bullying and harassment

5.13 Participants were again asked to consider, hypothetically, what should happen if there were concerns about bullying and harassment within Community Councils. A small number of focus group participants had directly experienced or heard of issues of bullying and harassment within Community Councils, and felt that this was a particularly important issue to address. Some felt that the

Chair had a key role in ensuring that meetings were professional and not aggressive or unpleasant. However, others felt that there were real issues of harassment and bullying by and within Community Council members which could not be solved only by good meeting management.

- **Grievance procedure** – Community Councils should have clear routes through which people who have experienced bullying or harassment can use to express their problems and have these addresses. Participants felt strongly that these should be consistent across all Community Councils. Participants also felt that it was important to ensure that there was a way for complaints against the Chair to be dealt with in this regard. Some also felt that there should be clear participation, inclusion and equality policies which Community Councils abide by, so that participants understand their rights.
- **Clear next stage of support** – Participants felt that currently it was not clear who they should approach, if the Community Council wasn't able to resolve issues of bullying and harassment. Some felt that East Renfrewshire Council had very little ability to help in these instances, currently, and that it was important to be clear about who to go to if you experience ongoing problems with bullying and harassment. Most felt that this should be either a dedicated East Renfrewshire Council officer or an elected member.
- **Sensitive approach** – Participants felt that bullying and harassment was an important and prevalent issue, but that it needed to be dealt with sensitively. Most felt that the first stage should be about trying to resolve the issue – for example through mediation – rather than punishment or formal investigations.
- **Group to deal with serious cases** – If situations couldn't be resolved, participants felt that it may be appropriate to have an independent body, or a group of East Renfrewshire Council officers or elected members, who explored issues of bullying and harassment. This would provide a clear route for escalating ongoing problems, and ensuring these were dealt with.
- **Punishment if guilty** – Some participants felt that if situations could not be resolved amicably and went through formal procedures, Community Councillors found guilty of serious harassment and bullying should never be able to again represent members of the public through either the Community Council or other routes. However others felt that it depended on the severity of the case, and that there should be a “scale of punishments” appropriate to the issue.
- **Turnover of members** – Some participants felt that the only way to deal with bullying and harassment was to ensure that there was turnover of participants every few years, so that the same person could not continue to hold the same position in the Community Council for more than a certain length of time.

“Someone in East Renfrewshire Council should be totally responsible for Community Councils.”

(Focus group participant)

“Depending on the seriousness of the bullying or harassment – given a warning or get removed from the Community Council.”

(Focus group participant)

- 5.14 Focus group participants in some very rural and small areas highlighted that bullying and harassment could be a particularly difficult issue to resolve in very small Community Council areas, as the community is close knit – and raised the potential of general external ‘health checks’ of Community Councils which could identify these issues, or anonymous tip offs that bullying and harassment is taking place within certain Community Councils – with a clear contact point for these.

Community Councillors using their position to their own advantage

- 5.15 Finally, participants were asked to consider what should happen if a Community Councillor used their position to their own advantage. Focus group participants generally had slightly less to say about this issue, although they did feel that if it occurred it was a serious problem. Many felt that often Community Councillors were involved to influence issues that were of particular importance to them individually, rather than the whole community. Some felt that the Chair of the Community Council was a powerful role, which many people felt unable to influence – meaning that Chairs had the potential to drive the Community Council in a certain direction, if they wished.
- 5.16 Many were unsure how abuse of power should be dealt with, but some felt that East Renfrewshire Council should have a key role in preventing and dealing with these situations. All agreed that in this case, Community Councillors found guilty of using their position to their own advantage should be struck off and not allowed to hold that position again. Some suggested that there should be a clear process for identifying and recording Community Councillor key interests when they are appointed, to help to avoid this situation in the future.

“It ruins the integrity of the Community Council if they are using their position for their own benefit.”

(Focus group participant)

General approach to dealing with any concerns about Community Councils

- 5.17 Many of the focus group participants felt that the three scenarios they considered were all “on a spectrum” of serious concern, and there were a number of common issues which should be addressed to prevent and deal with these. Again, this was a theoretical discussion, and most participants were not aware of the current arrangements in place for dealing with concerns.
- **Clear accountability for Community Councils** – Many felt that it needed to be clear who to go to if there was a concern about a Community Council. This could be East Renfrewshire Council or another organisation. This organisation should have the power to check out the behaviour of the Community Council, and intervene if necessary.

“There needs to be a better monitoring role.”

(Focus group participant)

- **Turnover of Community Councillors** – A number of participants felt that if Community Councillors held their roles for a shorter period, and weren't allowed to be re-elected on an ongoing basis, this would reduce the opportunity for abuse of power.
- **Strong procedures and policies** – In some cases, participants felt that problems in Community Councils were caused more by “sloppy governance” rather than corruption. There was a strong call for consistent procedures and policies across all Community Councils, so that it was clear what they could and could not do. Some participants felt that it was particularly important to have a clear complaints policy, to help when things go wrong.
- **Health checks or audits** – A number of participants suggested that Community Councils should be regularly checked, to review their performance and put in place support for strengthening key areas. Some suggested that agreeing key activities for each Community Council in advance, and then reviewing performance against these would be helpful.
- **Support and capacity building** – A small minority suggested that Community Councils should receive more support and training, with East Renfrewshire Council being seen to have a lead role here.

5.18 Overall, participants felt that while Community Councils should be given the opportunity to create strong, successful organisations, it was likely that they would need support. Participants were largely keen that Community Councils across East Renfrewshire had the same policies and procedures in place, and felt that East Renfrewshire Council had a key role in supporting Community Councils to do well, and addressing problems where they occur.

“I wouldn't want to see the Community Council dealing with issues like this on its own.”

(Focus group participant)

“It has been demonstrated that they can't self monitor.”

(Focus group participant)

6. Key Findings

Introduction

- 6.1 This chapter sets out key findings from the social research, bringing together findings from the door-to-door survey and the focus group discussions.

Role of Community Councils

- 6.2 Awareness of Community Councils was high among survey respondents. Most (60%) had heard of their Community Council. Awareness was lowest in Eaglesham (34%) and highest in Uplawmoor (98%). Awareness increased strongly with age.
- 6.3 Just under a third of survey respondents were unsure of the main purpose of a Community Council. Most who did comment felt that the main purpose was to 'act for or represent the community' or 'to better the community or improve the area'. Most focus group participants were also unsure of the main role of a Community Council – but suggested a range of roles including representing communities, improving the area or resolving problems or issues.
- 6.4 Survey respondents largely felt that Community Councils should be gathering local views; keeping the community informed; sending representatives to decision making meetings; and campaigning to influence local decisions. However, there were substantial differences between Community Council areas. While 85 per cent of respondents in Neilston said their Community Council should provide services directly; this fell to 22 per cent in Busby. And while almost three quarters of Barrhead respondents said their Community Council should own and manage facilities, this fell to one third in Giffnock.
- 6.5 Survey respondents identified safety and crime, neighbourhood maintenance and housing as top priorities for Community Councils to focus on locally. Priorities varied by Community Council area, and by respondent age and tenure.

Communities and boundaries

- 6.6 There was a strong message that most Community Council boundaries are a good size to address local issues. Over eight in ten survey respondents felt that the current boundaries were a good size. Giffnock had the highest proportion stating that it was too big (18%), followed by Clarkston and Williamwood (11%) and Newton Mearns (11%).
- 6.7 However, the survey also explored views on natural communities, asking people what they would call the area they lived in. This found that people strongly identified with the neighbourhoods or communities of Uplawmoor, Neilston, Thornliebank, Eaglesham and Waterfoot, Netherlee and Stamperland, Busby, and Clarkston and Williamwood. The areas with the most diversity of response were those with the largest populations –

Barrhead, Giffnock and Newton Mearns – where many identified with sub-areas within the Community Council area.

- 6.8 Focus group discussions in these larger areas found that in Barrhead participants felt the boundary was about right. In Giffnock and Newton Mearns there was a feeling that the areas were growing and becoming too large. Focus group participants identified some smaller communities within the Community Council area and possible options for creating smaller Community Council boundaries. However, focus group participants found it very hard to think of a meaningful way to split the area, and there was no common agreement on how this could be done.
- 6.9 Over half of survey respondents felt that rural areas should have their own Community Councils. Focus group participants largely felt that very rural areas should be connected to larger towns and villages – like Eaglesham, Uplawmoor and Neilston.

Future involvement in Community Councils

Performance of Community Councils

- 6.10 There was a clear feeling from focus group participants that Community Councils generally were not performing well, with exceptions in a small minority of cases. There were concerns that:
- communities did not hear what Community Councils were doing;
 - Community Councils did not appear to have a clear role, remit and agenda;
 - Community Councils could be driven by personal agendas or single issues; and
 - meetings were seen as very formal and not welcoming – with concerns about intimidation and bullying.
- 6.11 A minority of participants in focus groups had seen negative press about Community Councils in East Renfrewshire recently. For most, this put them off getting involved. However, others felt that East Renfrewshire Council had a duty to listen to and support Community Councils so that they have some degree of influence.

Becoming involved in Community Councils

- 6.12 Survey respondents said that they would be encouraged to get involved in Community Councils in the future if they had more information about Community Councils (11%) or had information on how to get involved (6%). Focus group participants agreed that more accessible information about the purpose and remit of Community Councils would encourage them to get involved. Some wanted to see:
- clear agendas in advance of meetings;
 - meaningful engagement by Community Councils;

- clear evidence of impact; “less cliquy” and more representative membership; and
- a clear community – not individual – focus.

6.13 Young people felt strongly that Community Councils were currently oriented towards older people and that they needed to be “young person friendly”. A number of participants across three focus groups spontaneously suggested that Community Councils should hold ‘surgeries’ to allow participation in a more informal way.

Barriers to participation

6.14 Survey respondents felt that the biggest barriers to participation were:

- feeling that participation would not make a difference;
- awareness of the Community Council;
- lack of information about how to get involved; and
- timing of meetings.

6.15 Focus group participants largely felt that the biggest barrier was accessing information about their Community Council – and wanted to see information more widely and readily available. A significant number of focus group participants felt that the people currently involved in the Community Council acted as a barrier to wider participation – due to overt intimidation or bullying, or perceptions that the Community Council was “cliquy” or closed to the wider community. The formality of meetings and elections was off-putting to some, particularly women and young people. Some mentioned practical barriers like access to venues for disabled people, and poor public transport links.

6.16 Focus group participants reiterated that a major barrier to getting involved was that they perceived nothing would change as a result.

Good and poor practice in Community Councils

6.17 Participants at the focus groups specifically discussed how they would like to hear about the achievements of their Community Council. Most focus group participants wanted to hear through newsletters and the press – and many also wanted good information to be easily available online, or emailed to them. Some reiterated the need for Community Councils to be proactively making contact with and gathering the views of local communities – through activity like door-to-door surveys and surgeries.

6.18 The survey also explored how residents would like to hear about the work of their Community Council in the future. Newsletters were by far the most popular source of information (72%), followed by websites (16%) and public meetings and events (10%). Just one per cent wanted to hear through social media – but some focus group participants felt that it would be helpful to use platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

- 6.19 The survey and focus groups also explored what should happen if there were concerns about how Community Councils were run. Survey respondents most commonly felt that a Community Council should initially try to resolve issues on their own, with East Renfrewshire Council getting involved if they were unable to resolve an issue. However, a quarter felt that the Community Council should resolve the issue on its own entirely, and a fifth felt that East Renfrewshire Council should take the lead on resolving the issue as soon as it is identified.
- 6.20 Those who were aware of their Community Council, or involved in it, were significantly more likely to say the Community Council should resolve the issue on its own without support from East Renfrewshire Council.
- 6.21 The focus group discussions involved in depth exploration of how (rare) concerns around three key issues should be dealt with – finances; bullying and harassment; and Community Councillors using their position to their own advantage. Participants engaged in theoretical discussions about how these situations should be dealt with. All felt these were serious issues, if they occurred, and a range of solutions were suggested including:
- **prevention** – having clear steps in place to regulate Community Councils, provide support, training and capacity building to Community Councillors, elect Community Councillors openly or undertake regular ‘health checks’ on Community Councils;
 - **procedures** – having complaints, grievance or other relevant procedures in place, consistent across all Community Councils, so that people know how these issues are dealt with within the Community Council;
 - **clear next stage of support** – if issues can’t be resolved by Community Councils, people felt there should be a clear route for further support – either from East Renfrewshire Council or from another organisation;
 - **formal investigations where required** – if situations are very serious participants felt that these should be investigated formally by East Renfrewshire Council (or another organisation) and referred to the police where appropriate;
 - **punishment** – participants felt that there should be a system ranging from warnings, to never again being allowed to serve your community.
- 6.22 Overall, participants felt that while Community Councils should be given the opportunity to run their own organisation, it was likely that they would need support in some situations. Most felt that East Renfrewshire Council had a clear role in supporting Community Councils to do well.

Appendix One: Door to Door Survey Targets and Achieved Surveys

1A: Tenure profile

	Target				Achieved			
	Owner occupied	Social rented	Private rented	TOTAL	Owner/shared owner	Social rented	Private rented	No of interviews
Barrhead	11.7%	4.5%	1.2%	17.4%	10.9%	4.5%	1.3%	16.7%
Busby	4.5%	0.8%	0.3%	5.7%	4.0%	1.0%	0.9%	5.9%
Clarkston & Williamwood	8.8%	0.1%	0.2%	9.2%	9.0%	0.1%	0.2%	9.3%
Eaglesham and Waterfoot	5.0%	0.3%	0.3%	5.7%	4.6%	0.4%	0.3%	5.3%
Giffnock	10.7%	0.3%	0.5%	11.5%	11.9%	0.3%	0.2%	12.4%
Neilston	4.6%	1.0%	0.3%	6.0%	4.5%	0.9%	0.4%	5.8%
Netherlee and Stamperland	8.0%	0.1%	0.2%	8.4%	8.5%	0.0%	0.1%	8.6%
Newton Mearns	23.0%	0.7%	1.2%	24.9%	22.3%	0.9%	1.7%	24.9%
Thornliebank	4.5%	0.7%	0.5%	5.7%	4.4%	0.7%	0.5%	5.6%
Uplawmoor	5.2%	0.2%	0.2%	5.7%	5.0%	0.4%	0.0%	5.5%
Grand Total	86.1%	8.8%	5.1%	100%	85.0%	9.2%	5.8%	100%

1B: Age and gender profile

	Target						Achieved					
	Female			Male			Female			Male		
	18-34	35-64	65+	18-34	35-64	65+	18-34	35-64	65+	18-34	35-64	65+
Barrhead	2.6%	4.6%	2.0%	2.4%	4.2%	1.5%	3.3%	4.7%	1.5%	1.9%	4.9%	0.4%
Busby	0.7%	1.6%	0.9%	0.7%	1.4%	0.5%	0.5%	1.5%	1.2%	0.7%	0.8%	1.2%
Clarkston & Williamwood	1.0%	2.6%	1.1%	1.1%	2.5%	0.9%	1.0%	2.2%	1.4%	1.3%	2.5%	0.9%
Eaglesham and Waterfoot	0.7%	1.6%	0.8%	0.6%	1.5%	0.7%	0.7%	1.4%	0.7%	0.5%	1.5%	0.7%
Giffnock	1.2%	3.1%	1.9%	1.2%	2.7%	1.4%	0.8%	2.9%	2.9%	1.0%	3.1%	1.7%
Neilston	0.8%	1.7%	0.7%	0.8%	1.6%	0.5%	1.0%	1.6%	0.4%	0.7%	1.4%	0.7%
Netherlee and Stamperland	0.9%	2.4%	1.2%	1.0%	2.1%	0.8%	0.9%	2.1%	1.1%	1.0%	2.4%	1.3%
Newton Mearns	2.8%	7.1%	3.4%	2.9%	6.2%	2.5%	3.4%	7.3%	2.7%	2.7%	6.2%	2.5%
Thornliebank	0.8%	1.6%	0.7%	0.8%	1.4%	0.5%	0.8%	1.7%	0.7%	0.8%	1.3%	0.3%
Uplawmoor	0.5%	1.5%	0.9%	0.5%	1.5%	0.8%	0.5%	1.4%	0.9%	0.3%	1.5%	0.8%
Grand Total	12.1%	27.7%	13.3%	12.2%	24.9%	9.7%	12.7%	26.9%	13.5%	10.8%	25.6%	10.5%

1c: Ethnicity profile

	Target			Achieved		
	White British	Non White British	TOTAL	White British	Non White British	Total
Barrhead	16.7%	0.6%	17.3%	16.3%	0.3%	16.7%
Busby	5.3%	0.3%	5.7%	5.4%	0.4%	5.9%
Clarkston & Williamwood	8.7%	0.5%	9.2%	8.9%	0.3%	9.3%
Eaglesham and Waterfoot	5.5%	0.1%	5.7%	5.3%	0.1%	5.4%
Giffnock	10.3%	1.2%	11.5%	11.1%	1.3%	12.4%
Neilston	5.9%	0.1%	6.0%	5.7%	0.1%	5.8%
Netherlee and Stamperland	8.0%	0.3%	8.4%	8.5%	0.2%	8.7%
Newton Mearns	21.9%	3.1%	25.0%	22.7%	2.2%	24.8%
Thornliebank	5.0%	0.7%	5.7%	5.0%	0.5%	5.6%
Uplawmoor	5.4%	0.2%	5.7%	5.2%	0.2%	5.4%
Grand Total	92.6%	7.4%	100.0%	94.2%	5.8%	100.0%

Appendix Two: Door-to-Door Survey

Introduction [INTERVIEWER READ OUT]

East Renfrewshire Council has asked us, Research Resource, to explore community views on Community Councils in East Renfrewshire.

We would like to ask you to take part in a short, 15 minute survey which explores your views on your community and Community Councils. We are interested in your views whether you are very involved in your Community Council, or don't know much at all about the Community Council in your area.

ADD IF NECESSARY [Interviewer prompts]

- The research is being conducted under the Code of Practice of the Market Research Society, which means that all of the answers you give are strictly confidential and anonymous. Participation in this survey is voluntary. You can say if there are any questions you do not wish to respond to and we will move on to the next one.
- The responses of all people taking part will be combined into a statistical report.
- If you wish to check that Research Resource is a bona fide research organisation you can contact Lorna Shaw at Research Resource on 0141 641 6410 or Kieran Retour at East Renfrewshire Council on 0141 577 3405.

Your Community

We are interested in hearing your views on how you would define your community geographically.

1. If someone from East Renfrewshire asked you what area you live, what would you say?

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2. Would you say that the area you live in is: **[INTERVIEWER: READ OUT LIST AND CODE ONE ONLY]**

Mainly rural	1	Go to Q3
A small town or village	2	
Mainly urban	3	
Other (please specify)	4	

Community Councils

3. Have you heard of your local Community Council? **[INTERVIEWER: CODE ONE ONLY]**

Yes	1	Go to Q4
No	2	Go to Q6

4. Have you ever been involved in your local Community Council? **[INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL THAT APPLY]**

Yes, in this area	1	Go to Q5
Yes, in another area	2	Go to Q6
No	3	

5. Are you currently involved in your local Community Council? **[INTERVIEWER: CODE ONE ONLY]**

Yes, I am a community councillor	1	Go to Q6
Yes, I attend community council meetings	2	
Yes, I receive information about the community council	3	
No, I am not currently involved in my community council	4	
Other (please specify)	5	

6. What do you believe is the main purpose of a Community Council? **[INTERVIEWER: PROBE FULLY]**

[INTERVIEWER: READ OUT] *The Scottish Government defines Community Councils as “the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland”. They bridge the gap between local authorities and communities, and help to make public bodies aware of the opinions and needs of the communities they represent. Their primary purpose is to ascertain and express the views of the community to East Renfrewshire Council and other public bodies like the NHS and police, fire and transport authorities. Many Community Councils also involve themselves in a wide range of other activities including fundraising, organising community events, undertaking environmental and educational projects and much more.*

- 7a. I am going to read out a list of activities that Community Councils may be involved in. What activities do you feel your Community Council should be responsible for? Please state yes or no for each activity I read out. **[INTERVIEWER: CODE YES OR NO FOR EACH STATEMENT]**

	Yes	No	Don't know	
Campaigning to influence local decisions	1	2	3	Go to Q7b
Sending representatives to meetings at which decisions are taken about the local area (like Council committees or partnership meetings)	1	2	3	
Gathering local views (through holding public meetings, community events or carrying out surveys)	1	2	3	
Keeping the community informed (through a community newsletter or community website)	1	2	3	
Responding to draft policies and consultation documents	1	2	3	
Responding to enquiries and problems experienced by members of the public	1	2	3	
Providing services in the local area	1	2	3	
Owning and managing local facilities	1	2	3	

- 7b. Do you think that your Community Council should be responsible for any other activities?

Yes (please describe)	1	Go to Q8
No	2	

8. **SHOWCARD** What top 3 priorities do you think your Community Council should focus on in your area? **[INTERVIEWER: RESPONDENT SHOULD SELECT UP TO 3 RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTION]**

Housing	1	Go to Q9
Homelessness	2	
Antisocial behaviour	3	
Safety and crime	4	
Education, schools and colleges	5	
Health and care	6	
Neighbourhood maintenance	7	
Planning	8	
Employment and economy	9	
Childcare and nurseries	10	
Leisure and sport	11	
Transport	12	
Other (please specify)	13	

The geographical scope of Community Councils

[INTERVIEWER: SHOW RESPONDENT MAP OF COMMUNITY COUNCIL AREA AND EXPLAIN THAT THIS IS THE AREA THAT THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL COVERS JUST NOW]

9. Looking at the current boundaries of your Community Council, do you think it is:

A good size to address local issues	1	Go to Q11
Too small	2	Go to Q10
Too big	3	
Other (please specify)	4	Go to Q11

10. **[IF TOO SMALL OR TOO BIG AT Q9]** Can you please explain why you feel that a Community Council of this size too big/ too small to reflect the needs and issues of all of the different communities within the Community Council area? **[INTERVIEWER: PROBE FULLY]**

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11. How do you think Community Councils for people living in more rural areas should be arranged? Do you think they should have their own Community Council, be linked to larger towns or villages or is there some other way this should be done?

[INTERVIEWER: READ OUT OPTIONS AND CODE ONE ONLY]

Rural areas should have their own Community Council	1	Go to Q12
Rural areas should be linked to larger towns or villages to form a Community Council	2	
Other (please specify)	3	

Future Involvement in Community Councils

12. What do you think would encourage you to get more involved (or continue to be involved) in your Community Council in the future? **[INTERVIEWER: PROBE FULLY]**

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13. Do you think any of the following issues are barriers that need to be addressed to enable you and others to take part in the Community Council? **[INTERVIEWER: READ OUT LIST AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY]**

Awareness of the Community Council	1	Go to Q14
Information about how to get involved	2	
Costs of attending meetings – like transport or childcare	3	
Concern about skills and knowledge required	4	
Timing of meetings	5	
Feeling that participating will make a difference	6	
None of the above	7	

14. Do you think that there are any other barriers that stop you and others taking part in the Community Council? **[INTERVIEWER: PROBE FULLY]**

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15. How would you like to hear about the work of your Community Council in the future?

Newsletters	1	Go to Q16
Website	2	
Public meetings and events	3	
Through other local community groups	4	
Other (please specify)	5	
None of the above, I am not interested in hearing about the work of the Community Council in the future	6	

16. **SHOWCARD** What do you think should happen if there are serious concerns over the running of a Community Council? Please select the response which is closest to your view from this showcard. **[INTERVIEWER: ONLY IF QUESTIONED WHAT SORT OF CONCERNS? – By concerns I mean issues about conduct such as persistent bullying and harassment or serious issues of fraud]**

The Community Council should resolve the issue on its own without support from East Renfrewshire Council	1	Go to Q17a
East Renfrewshire Council only gets involved if Community Council can't resolve on their own	2	
East Renfrewshire Council should take the lead on resolving the issue as soon as its identified	3	
Other (please specify)	4	

Voluntary Future Involvement

We are holding ten discussion groups to talk about these issues in more detail. These will last one hour. The dates and times have not yet been agreed – but they will happen during March and early April. Participants will receive a £10 incentive for taking part and to thank you for your time. Even if you say yes now, you can say no later.

- 17a. Would you be interested in being contacted with more information about this?

Yes	1	Go to Q17b
No	2	Go to 18

- 17b. Can you provide your contact details so that we can contact you?

Phone	
Email	

[INTERVIEWER: READ OUT] East Renfrewshire Council wants to make sure that the people involved in this research hear about what we have found.

18. Can we take a note of your email address to give to East Renfrewshire Council? They will only use this to tell you about the findings of this research, and any changes to Community Councils in the future.

Yes – only the results of the review	1	Complete email address below
Yes – the results of the review and future changes to Community Councils	2	
No	3	Go to Q19

Email	
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About You

[INTERVIEWER: READ OUT] This final section of the survey asks some factual questions about you and your household circumstances. These will be used only for analysis purposes to understand the characteristics of East Renfrewshire residents. I would like to remind you that these questions will be completely anonymous and if you do not want to answer any question, please just say and I will move on to the next one.

19. Gender?

Male	1	Go to Q20
Female	2	

20. **SHOWCARD** Which of these age categories do you fall into?

18-24	1	Go to Q21
25-34	2	
35-44	3	
45-59	4	
60-64	5	
65-74	6	
75-84	7	
85 and over	8	

21. **SHOWCARD** Do you own or rent your home or is there some other arrangement?
[INTERVIEWER: CODE ONE ONLY]

Rent from:		Go to Q22
East Renfrewshire Council	1	
Housing association or charitable trust	2	
Tied accommodation (rent/ rent free from employer)	3	
Private landlord	4	
Owner-Occupier:		
Own outright or buying with a loan/ mortgage	5	
Shared owner (part own, part rent)	6	
Other (Please specify)	7	
Don't know	8	

22. **SHOWCARD** Do you have any of the following conditions which have lasted, or are expected to last, at least 12 months? **[INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL THAT APPLY]**

Deafness or partial hearing loss	1	Go to Q23
Blindness or partial sight loss	2	
Learning disability (for example Down's Syndrome)	3	
Learning difficulty (for example dyslexia)	4	
Developmental disorder (for example, Autistic Spectrum Disorder or Asperger's Syndrome)	5	
Physical disability	6	
Mental health condition	7	
Long term illness, disease or condition	8	
Other condition (please specify)	9	
No condition	10	

23. **SHOW CARD** How would you describe your ethnic origin? **[INTERVIEWER: CODE ONE ONLY]**

WHITE	
White Scottish	1
White English	2
White Welsh	3
White Northern Irish	4
White British	5
White Irish	6
Gypsy/ Traveller	7
Polish	8
Any other white ethnic group (please specify)	9
MIXED OR MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS	
Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups (please specify)	10
ASIAN, ASIAN SCOTTISH OR ASIAN BRITISH	
Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British	11
Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British	12
Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British	13
Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British	14
Other (please specify)	15
AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN OR BLACK	
African, African Scottish or African British	16
Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British	17
Black, Black Scottish or Black British	18
Other (please specify)	19
OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	
Arab	20
Other (please specify)	21

THANK AND CLOSE

Appendix Three: Discussion Guide for Focus Groups

Introductions and Views on Role

1. Can you tell me:
 - your name
 - if you have heard of or had any involvement with your Community Council?
2. In your opinion, what do you think the main role of a Community Council should be?

Explain: The government defines the main purpose of Community Councils being to express the views of communities to East Renfrewshire Council and other public bodies like the NHS and police, fire and transport authorities. Many Community Councils also involve themselves in lots of other activities – like fundraising, events, projects, etc.

3. Do you have any views on whether Community Councils currently perform this role well?

Community Council Geography

We are interested in your views on the size and geographical areas covered by Community Councils in East Renfrewshire.

4. This is your current Community Council area (show map and describe area). What do you think about the current boundary?
 - *Do you think it is currently the right size to fulfil the role we discussed? Is it too big, too small, about right?*
 - *Does it fit with your idea of 'your community'? If not, what area do you see as 'your community'?*
5. If we were asked to jointly set new meaningful boundaries for Community Councils in your local area, what would you suggest?
6. Do you think that Community Council boundaries should be linked to other boundaries – like school catchment areas, electoral wards, GP practice areas, other meaningful boundaries?

Enablers and Barriers to Getting Involved

We are interested in knowing a bit more about what would encourage you to be involved in your Community Council, or what might put you off or make it difficult for you.

7. Would you be interested in getting involved in your Community Council in the future?
 - *What would encourage you to get involved?*
 - *What would you need to help you to get involved?*
 - *What would put you off getting involved?*
8. Do you think that certain groups or individuals face specific barriers to being involved in Community Councils?
 - *What could help to address this?*
9. What could Community Councils do to make sure that you can influence what they are doing – even if you are not directly involved in the Community Council?

Role of East Renfrewshire Council

East Renfrewshire Council provides funding to Community Councils, and is responsible for agreeing a 'Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils' which sets out how Community Councils are set up, and how they should behave.

10. Community Councils can do work that has a real positive impact on local communities. How do you think this positive work should be recognised and promoted?

In rare cases, Community Councils don't work as they should, and someone needs to be responsible for checking they are working properly, and taking action where they aren't.

11. What do you think should happen if there are concerns over the running of a Community Council? What level of involvement should East Renfrewshire Council have in these situations?
 - If there are serious concerns about how the community Council uses its money?
 - If a Community Councillor is accused of persistent or serious bullying or harassment?
 - If there are serious concerns that a Community Councillor is using his or her position as a Community Councillor to their own advantage?

Close and thanks

Appendix Four: Breakdown of Survey Respondent Involvement in Community Councils

Survey Q5 Are you currently involved in your local Community Council? (Asked only of those who were aware of their Community Council)						
	Base	Yes, I am a community councillor	Yes, I attend community council meetings	Yes, I receive information about the community council	No, I am not currently involved in my community council	Other ("involved dealing with litter picking")
Overall	47	7	10	8	21	1
Barrhead	1	-	1	-	-	-
Busby	4	1	-	1	2	-
Clarkston & Williamwood	3	2	-	-	1	-
Eaglesham and Waterfoot	2	1	-	-	1	-
Giffnock	4	-	1	1	2	-
Neilston	5	-	3	1	1	-
Netherlee and Stamperland	2	-	-	-	2	-
Newton Mearns	14	2	1	4	6	1
Thornliebank	5	1	1	-	3	-
Uplawmoor	7	-	3	1	3	-

Appendix Five: Purpose of a Community Council, by Area

Q6 What do you believe is the main purpose of a Community Council?										
	B'head	Busby	C'ston & W'wood	E'sham & Waterfoot	Giffnock	Neilston	Netherlee & S'land	Newton Mearns	T'bank	Up'moor
Base	153	54	85	50	114	53	80	228	51	50
To better the community/ improve the area	34.0%	16.7%	8.2%	4.0%	17.5%	43.4%	13.8%	21.9%	37.3%	26.0%
Act/ represent the community	20.3%	31.5%	21.2%	52.0%	32.5%	3.8%	26.3%	28.5%	5.9%	8.0%
To look after the community	17.0%	13.0%	-	34.0%	18.4%	41.5%	12.5%	15.4%	21.6%	62.0%
Deal with local issues/ problems	2.6%	9.3%	11.8%	4.0%	13.2%	7.5%	8.8%	4.8%	5.9%	18.0%
Keep us informed	1.3%	1.9%	5.9%	-	2.6%	-	7.5%	2.6%	-	-
Listen to our views	3.3%	9.3%	3.5%	-	10.5%	-	2.5%	5.7%	-	6.0%
Don't know/ not sure	33.3%	42.6%	56.5%	26.0%	21.1%	17.0%	45.0%	28.9%	31.4%	4.0%
Other	-	-	1.2%	-	-	-	-	2.2%	-	-

Appendix Six: Analysis of Priorities for Community Councils, by Area, Tenure and Age

Q8 What top three priorities do you think your Community Council should focus on in your area? (Analysed by Community Council area)

Break % Respondents	Total	QUOTAAREA									
		Barrhead	Busby	Clarkston & Williamwood	Eglesham and Waterfoot	Giffnock	Neilston	Netherlee and Stamperland	Newton Mearns	Thorniebank	Uplawmoor
Base	918	153	54	85	50	114	53	80	228	51	50
Q8 What top 3 priorities do you think your Community Council should focus on in your area?											
Housing	34.6%	69.9%	14.8%	4.7%	2.0%	21.9%	90.6%	8.8%	18.0%	94.1%	58.0%
Homelessness	5.2%	6.5%	3.7%	5.9%	-	7.0%	1.9%	6.3%	7.0%	-	2.0%
Anti social behaviour	32.8%	28.1%	27.8%	57.6%	20.0%	25.4%	37.7%	51.3%	22.8%	33.3%	50.0%
Safety and crime	54.7%	47.7%	33.3%	69.4%	86.0%	70.2%	32.1%	50.0%	55.7%	37.3%	52.0%
Education, schools and colleges	26.9%	32.0%	37.0%	16.5%	16.0%	30.7%	9.4%	30.0%	35.1%	7.8%	16.0%
Health and care	22.7%	38.6%	27.8%	3.5%	14.0%	34.2%	28.3%	5.0%	15.8%	33.3%	26.0%
Neighbourhood maintenance	44.1%	19.6%	50.0%	72.9%	64.0%	44.7%	34.0%	62.5%	47.8%	17.6%	34.0%
Planning	22.1%	7.8%	9.3%	16.5%	70.0%	16.7%	24.5%	15.0%	25.9%	23.5%	44.0%
Employment and economy	16.4%	31.4%	16.7%	14.1%	4.0%	9.6%	18.9%	17.5%	15.8%	17.6%	-
Childcare and nurseries	6.9%	3.9%	20.4%	5.9%	2.0%	9.6%	3.8%	7.5%	9.2%	-	-
Leisure and sport	7.7%	2.6%	24.1%	14.1%	-	8.8%	-	11.3%	10.1%	-	-
Transport	10.3%	11.1%	24.1%	2.4%	-	14.9%	5.7%	5.0%	7.9%	23.5%	18.0%
Other	0.4%	-	1.9%	-	-	0.9%	-	-	0.9%	-	-
Road maintenance	1.1%	-	-	-	-	1.8%	-	5.0%	1.8%	-	-
Parking issues	0.3%	-	1.9%	2.4%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/ not sure	2.2%	-	-	3.5%	6.0%	-	3.8%	5.0%	2.6%	3.9%	-
None	0.7%	-	-	1.2%	-	-	-	-	2.2%	-	-

Q8 What top three priorities do you think your Community Council should focus on in your area? (Analysed by tenure)

Break % Respondents	Total	Q21 Do you own or rent your home or is there some other arrangement?			
		Owner/ shared owner	Social rented	Private rented	Don't know
Base	918	779	84	53	2
Q8 What top 3 priorities do you think your Community Council should focus on in your area?					
Housing	35%	31%	68%	42%	-
Homelessness	5%	5%	1%	13%	-
Anti social behaviour	33%	33%	35%	25%	-
Safety and crime	55%	56%	48%	43%	50%
Education, schools and colleges	27%	26%	23%	40%	100%
Health and care	23%	22%	33%	23%	-
Neighbourhood maintenance	44%	46%	31%	34%	100%
Planning	22%	24%	6%	17%	-
Employment and economy	16%	15%	24%	25%	50%
Childcare and nurseries	7%	7%	7%	8%	-
Leisure and sport	8%	8%	4%	13%	-
Transport	10%	11%	11%	6%	-
Other	0%	0%	4%	-	-
Road maintenance	1%	1%	-	-	-
Parking issues	0%	0%	-	-	-
Don't know/ not sure	2%	2%	-	2%	-
None	1%	1%	-	2%	-

Q8 What top three priorities do you think your Community Council should focus on in your area? (Analysed by age)

Break % Respondents	Total	Q20 Which of these age categories do you fall into?		
		18-34	35-64	65+
Base	918	216	482	220
Q8 What top 3 priorities do you think your Community Council should focus on in your area?				
Housing	35%	41%	34%	30%
Homelessness	5%	7%	5%	4%
Anti social behaviour	33%	29%	32%	39%
Safety and crime	55%	52%	58%	50%
Education, schools and colleges	27%	32%	26%	23%
Health and care	23%	18%	23%	27%
Neighbourhood maintenance	44%	37%	48%	44%
Planning	22%	17%	22%	26%
Employment and economy	16%	20%	15%	16%
Childcare and nurseries	7%	12%	5%	5%
Leisure and sport	8%	10%	9%	4%
Transport	10%	6%	11%	14%
Other	0%	0%	-	1%
Road maintenance	1%	2%	1%	1%
Parking issues	0%	-	0%	0%
Don't know/ not sure	2%	3%	2%	2%
None	1%	0%	0%	1%

Appendix Seven: Analysis of how people would like to hear about the work of Community Councils in the future?

Q15 How would you like to hear about the work of your Community Council in the future? (Analysed by Community Council area)

Break % Respondents	Total	QUOTAAREA									
		Barrhead	Busby	Clarkston & Williamwood	Eaglesham and Waterfoot	Giffnock	Neilston	Netherlee and Stamperland	Newton Mearns	Thornliebank	Uplawmoor
Base	918	153	54	85	50	114	53	80	228	51	50
Q15 How would you like to hear about the work of your Community Council in the future?											
Newsletters	72.1%	88.2%	90.7%	48.2%	40.0%	86.8%	83.0%	51.3%	64.9%	76.5%	92.0%
Website	16.2%	11.8%	9.3%	25.9%	6.0%	24.6%	-	28.8%	21.9%	-	-
Public meetings and events	9.7%	9.8%	50.0%	2.4%	2.0%	19.3%	1.9%	1.3%	7.9%	3.9%	-
Through other local community groups	0.5%	-	1.9%	-	-	0.9%	-	-	0.9%	2.0%	-
Other	0.7%	0.7%	1.9%	1.2%	-	0.9%	-	-	0.4%	-	2.0%
None of the above, I am not interested in hearing about the work of the Community Council in the future	18.0%	5.2%	1.9%	35.3%	60.0%	2.6%	15.1%	26.3%	21.9%	21.6%	6.0%
Through social media	1.4%	-	-	-	-	7.0%	-	-	2.2%	-	-
By email	0.8%	0.7%	-	-	-	0.9%	-	-	2.2%	-	-
The local newspaper	1.2%	-	1.9%	1.2%	-	0.9%	-	-	3.5%	-	-
Notice boards	0.5%	-	1.9%	-	-	0.9%	-	-	1.3%	-	-

Trust in the Community

An Independent Review of the Operation and Support Community Councils in East Renfrewshire Council

Local democracy will be enhanced if Community Councils are able to speak as the authentic voice of their communities. This requires them to be truly representative and inclusive of their communities. They must be given support to canvass opinion and to encourage the active participation of their citizens. It requires the maintenance of two-way trust with the Council if the benefits are to be reaped for its communities.

**Keith Yates, SOLACE Enterprises
May 2014**

Trust in the Community

Engaging the Democratic Voice of Communities

An Independent Review of the Operation and Support Community Councils in East Renfrewshire Council

Remit

1. I was commissioned in March 2014 by East Renfrewshire Council (ERC) to carry out an independent review of the operation and support to Community Councils. The remit was:
'to inform the Review of the Scheme of Establishment of Community Councils and to make recommendations on how the operation, inclusiveness, representativeness of Community Councils and the support they receive from the Council can be improved through a revised scheme and future support arrangements.'
2. The review was expected to take 6-8 weeks and to address the following key questions:
 - Are Community Councils operating well i.e. well organized, sustainable, transparent, with active participation by Community Councillors?
 - To what extent are CCs diverse, open and inclusive?
 - Is the Council meeting its requirement in terms of support to Community Councils?
 - What is the quality of support provided by the Council?
 - How independent of the Council are Community Councils?
 - Do Community Councils recognise and accept a legitimate role of the Council around oversight and support?
 - Is the relationship between Community Councils and East Renfrewshire Council and other agencies constructive – if not why/how might this be improved?
 - In relation to the above questions - to what extent is the picture uniform or diverse across East Renfrewshire?
3. It was expected that the review should, at minimum, include interviews with:
 - Current & former Community Councillors
 - Elected Members
 - Key council and partner officers who engage with or support CCs.
4. I was briefed by the Council on 7 March, 2014. Thereafter began a series of interviews with councillors and officers of the Council and invited all community councillors who had served within the past twelve months to an interview. I also carried out a survey of all community councillors and I was asked to chair a consultation workshop for Community Councils on the Review of the Scheme of Establishment.

2 Forward

- 2.1 Community Councils were established in 1974 as the means of giving voice to local communities in shaping their futures. The Model Scheme for Community Councils was set out in Section 51(2) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as follows: *“the general purpose of a community council shall be to ascertain, co-ordinate and express to local authorities for its area, and to other public authorities, the views of the community which it represents....and to take such action in the interests of that community as appears to it to be expedient and practicable”*
- 2.2 Community Councils in Scotland have had a chequered history since their inception. They are the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland and local authorities have statutory oversight of Community Councils. They bridge the gap between local authorities and communities, and help to make public bodies aware of the opinions and needs of the communities they represent. There have been significant changes in the management of public services as well as a significant but less well documented transition from paternalistic to personalised public services.
- 2.3 In addition to the two local government re-organisations in 1975 and 1996, the number and size of quangos and inspection agencies has grown inexorably. Many services such as colleges, water, police and fire have been removed from local democratic control and are accountable at the Scottish wide level. The emergence of the Scottish Parliament has altered the balance of democratic decision making with more decisions and functions directed from Holyrood, despite the promise of subsidiarity and the rising rhetoric for more localisation. What has remained intact throughout these changes is an enduring recognition that there is a need for a representative sounding board at the community level.
- 2.3 Councils, as the most localised level of democracy and provider of the majority of public services, are charged with maintaining a Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils and providing support for them. Other public services such as the NHS, transport agencies, police and fire have an obligation to inform and respond to Community Councils and have done so to varying degrees.
- 2.4 In recent years there has been an attempt by the Scottish Government to re examine the role of Community Councils as part of its review of ‘Community Empowerment and Renewal’ but the review has languished behind the competing priorities of public sector reform. Community Councils have lost some of their influence as a broker for local problems as contact centres and digital communications have enabled more direct and personalized relationships between public services and their customers. They have been further distanced from Councils and public bodies that are increasingly regulated and directed from the national level.
- 2.5 In this context it is understandable that Community Councils have lost some influence and trust in them by local citizens has waned. In East Renfrewshire this has been mirrored to some extent by a diminishing trust in the Council and other public agencies by the Community Councils. Only part of this can be explained by the loss

of facilities and services resulting from the years of austerity. There has been only limited support from public services and an implicit exclusion of Community Councils as partners in shaping the future of services with the emergence of several single-issue statutory consultation bodies. The outcome has been a deficit in mutually assured trust between Community Councils and public service organisations.

- 2.6 The primacy of Community Councils as the pivotal local organisations for community engagement has been challenged by the emergence of many other local consultative bodies such as parent councils and public partnerships in health. The erosion in the effectiveness of Community Councils is partly because they have not always captured the mood or been inclusive of their communities. Legislation has hampered them with an overly bureaucratic constitution that makes them essentially responsive and consultative organisations. They are generally reactive rather than proactive and, despite the diligence of many community councillors, they are to some extent restrained by old-fashioned governance procedures. This was commented on by many newly nominated community councillors and has diminished the esteem of Community Councils in the minds of local citizens as well as Councils and other public bodies.
- 2.7 The quest in East Renfrewshire is to resolve this conundrum and, if possible, to restore the energy, voice and respect of Community Councils as the authentic voice of their communities. East Renfrewshire Council could wait for future guidance from the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill but it has a wide remit and it is questionable whether any significant changes will be made to the powers of Community Councils. They have been to some extent lost in the deliberations to define the nature of community engagement. It should be evident in a climate of diminishing resources that future public services will require the active involvement of the community and voluntary sectors in both the design and delivery of services. Co-production of services between the Council and community organisations will increasingly become a sustainable model for delivering local services. In these circumstances it is hard to see why Community Councils should not be a key partner for creating a more vibrant local democracy and in contributing towards the redesign of services.
- 2.8 If Community Councils are deemed to be the legitimate custodians of community opinion they need be instrumental in setting a vision for future change in localities. This in essence is what Community Planning is about and the emergence of a common vision would be strengthened and embedded by the active participation of local communities as well as the involvement of the panoply of public agencies. There are examples across Scotland of Community Councils playing significant roles in developing new initiatives. These Community Councils are typically representative, self-confident and have a strong vision and attainable priorities for their communities. They have earned trust from their residents and command attention from the Council and other agencies. East Renfrewshire has an example of this with the adoption of the Neilston Town Charter. Community futures that are successful require the mobilisation of local citizens and businesses and an all-embracing forum where this

can take place. The Community Council is the most obvious vehicle for this but it requires them to be smarter in understanding and engaging with all interest within their communities. Councils must nurture this proactive and integrative role for Community Councils.

- 2.9 Local democracy will be enhanced if Community Councils are able to speak as the authentic voice of their communities. This requires them to be truly representative and inclusive of their communities. They must be given support to canvass opinion and to encourage the active participation of their citizens. It requires the maintenance of two-way trust with the Council if the benefits are to be reaped for its communities.

3. Method of Review

- 3.1 I was briefed by the two commissioning officers from East Renfrewshire Council and obtained the background papers relating to the Review of the Scheme of Establishment of Community Council, maps and demographic information about the ten existing Community Councils. I was also given a verbal summary of the perceived issues that had led to the Council carrying out a review of the scheme. It was made clear that the Council and some of its Community Councils were at loggerheads and that the voice of the community was sometimes lost in the jousting between Council and Community Councils.
- 3.2 Before starting the interviews I examined the existing Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils in East Renfrewshire, together with the Guidance Manual for Community Councils and the Induction Pack that had been revised in 2009. Although based on the Model Scheme for Scotland it is set out in a different format, which has caused some confusion amongst the Community Councils. It is also silent on the issue of enforcing the Code of Conduct. I looked at the Scottish Government/COSLA Community Council Short-Life Working Group Report and examined the Scottish Government Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill consultation paper and the published responses, which has been progressing slowly over the past four years.
- 3.3 I also studied the existing boundaries of the Community Councils and compared them to the multi-member ward boundaries. East Renfrewshire Council is responsible for determining the number and boundaries of community council areas and the membership of each Community Council. I obtained a wider view of local issues by browsing the ERC website and scanning a complete set of the most recently approved Community Council minutes.

Interviews and Survey of Community Councils

- 3.4 All 123 existing and 30 recently retired community councillors were invited to an interview with the intention of achieving about 20 interviews. The responses resulted in 24 interviews and these were augmented by a survey of all existing and recently retired members of Community Councils. This drew a response of 47 replies, which together with the interviews and five letters from community councillors enabled me to obtain the views of about half of the cohort of community councillors. I also chaired a consultation workshop meeting of Community Councils on the evening of 14 April 2014. This event was arranged in response to requests from several Community Councils to have an open consultation as part of stage 1 of the Community Council Review. The workshop was well attended by 25 representatives from the all 10 of East Renfrewshire's Community Councils.
- 3.5 The interviews with the community councillors were arranged to address half a dozen key questions covering their reason for joining, how the Council operates, how representative and diverse is the CC, what support does it receive from the Council, what more needs to be done, and what changes are needed to the scheme of

establishment? These questions were asked in an informal way so that the discussion could flow naturally and other concerns and leads pursued. Following the initial set of questions I subsequently obtained their views on how inclusive they felt the CC to be, how effective in raising and tackling local issues, the involvement level of East Renfrewshire councillors and finally, what are the three things that would make the biggest difference to the operation of the Community Councils? The typical interview lasted about 45 minutes and was conducted mainly through one to one discussions. On four occasions I met with groups of two or three community councillors.

- 3.6 Representatives from all Community Councils apart from Netherlee and Stamperland and Eaglesham and Waterfoot responded to the request to be interviewed. I managed brief conversations with representatives from these Councils at the consultation workshop and subsequently attended a focus group in Eaglesham and Waterfoot. The outcome from the interviews plus the survey and the letters was that I had a good spread of responses from all other community councils. Newton Mearns had the highest response with 14, followed by Neilston - 10, Clarkston and Uplawmoor - 9, Barrhead and Giffnock - 8, Thornliebank - 6 and Busby - 5. There was only 1 response from Netherlee and Stamperland and 2 from Eaglesham and Waterfoot.

Interviews of Council Members and Officers

- 3.7 All 20 serving East Renfrewshire Councillors were also given the opportunity to be interviewed and 11 Councillors accepted the invitation. Initially interviews with officers were restricted to a number of chief officers together with the community council liaison officer. However as interviews progressed additional interviews took place with Council officers who had been referenced by community councillors. In most cases they were officers who had regular contact with Community Councils. In the interviews with Council members and officers I sought to establish the nature of contact with community councils and how this had changed over recent years.
- 3.8 The questions focused on their perception of how representative the Community Councils were of their communities, how the meetings were conducted, the key issues emerging and the reasons for the deteriorating relationships with a few Community Councils. I also tried to establish what they thought would make Community Councils more effective and how relationships with the Council could be improved.
- 3.9 Finally I liaised with ODS Consulting who were conducting surveys and focus groups for local residents in all Community Council areas to establish views on boundaries and how more people from a range of backgrounds could be encouraged to become community councillors. We clarified our respective remits and I attended one of the ten focus groups that had been set up in each community and with disabled and youth groups.

3.10 The responses from the various interviews, the survey, letters and the consultative workshop are contained in the next two sections, which focus on the operation of community councils and the support from the Council as specified in the remit.

4. Operation of Community Councils

- 4.1 During the interviews there was an appreciation by both the Council and the Community Councils that they are complementary organisations and that they would both benefit from more effective collaboration. The Council is perceived as one of the better performing Councils in Scotland with excellent school performance and education facilities and a well-established Community Health and Care Partnership (CHCP) responsible for delivering all local health and social care services to East Renfrewshire people in an integrated way. What was not in dispute was a firm belief that East Renfrewshire Council had provided better services than would occur if it had been absorbed into either Glasgow or Renfrewshire.

East Renfrewshire Community Councils

- 4.2 East Renfrewshire has relatively few Community Councils and their average size of 9,000 persons is twice the Scottish average size of 4,300 persons. The size of the Community Councils varies from the village of Uplawmoor with a population of 857 to Newton Mearns with 24,495.

Table 1 Community Councils in East Renfrewshire

Community Council	Population	Councillors		Quorum
		Max	Current	
1 Uplawmoor	857	10	9	4
2 Neilston	5583	15	14	15
3 Barrhead	17268	20	18	7
4 Thornliebank	4193	14	9	5
5 Giffnock	12200	20	17	7
6 Netherlee and Stamperland	8079	18	10	6
7 Newton Mearns	24495	20	14	7
8 Clarkston	8839	18	13	6
9 Busby	3717	13	7	5
10 Eaglesham and Waterfoot	4620	14	12	5
East Renfrewshire	89851	162	123	

Source: Small Area Population Estimates, 2011 and ERC Scheme of Establishment for CCs

- 4.3 The maximum number of community councillors is prescribed in the scheme of establishment and is quite high with a base allocation of 10 councillors plus 1 extra councillor for every 2,000 population. At present only 76% of the prescribed places are taken up. There is difficulty in attracting nominations for Community Councils and this sometimes makes it difficult to achieve the quorum, which is set at a third of the membership. Elections were held in September 2013 and a high proportion of the current community councillors have been co-opted since the election.

Feedback from Interviews

- 4.4 All East Renfrewshire Councillors interviewed spoke about the importance of having well functioning Community Councils to act as sounding boards for their communities and to act as a conduit for consultations. They also wanted them to be more representative and, in the case of a few Community Councils, less hostile towards the Council and its officers. On the other hand the Council admit that their support of the Community Councils is 'light touch' and the administrative grants are amongst the lowest in Scotland. Moreover the Council have been rigorous in their financial monitoring of the CCs and have deducted any carry over of funds greater than 10% from the previous year's annual grant. This was widely regarded by the Community Councils as an example of penalising good housekeeping and restricted their flexibility to utilise the very modest resources.
- 4.5 A common observation from community councillors was that, unless there were controversial issues such as school closures or significant planning proposals, Community Councils lack a focus and have difficulty obtaining a visibility in their communities. A frequent refrain echoed by many community councillors and by the focus groups facilitated by ODS consulting was that they are merely talking shops.
- 4.6 A consistent claim by most Community Councils was that East Renfrewshire Council does not always listen to its Community Councils and that there is a lack of responsiveness from some services of the Council. The distribution of facilities across the Council area was also a common concern with a belief that certain communities have benefited to a greater extent in recent years.
- 4.7 The survey of Community Council priorities confirmed what had been found during the many of the interviews with community councillors. Public transport, roads and parking were the most cited issues that they thought needed to be improved by the Council. The majority of Community Councils felt that the Council was failing to maintain roads to an acceptable standard or to advocate improvements in public transport despite the claim on the website that the Council has "a big role to play in improving infrastructure and encouraging residents to use public transport."
- 4.8 Education was seen as remote and more likely to consult with Parent Councils and the Community Health and Care Partnership consulted primarily through its Public Partnership Forum. There were criticisms about community and environmental services, which is not unexpected given that these are universal services and their impact is more visible in the communities. Cleansing seemed to be an exception to this generalization and there was near universal praise for this service as an exemplar of good practice. Planning and licensing are required by statute to consult with the Community Councils before the Council takes decisions, which often go against the views of the community council. Consequently planning bore the brunt of adverse comment although some planners were praised for their willingness to engage with communities.

- 4.9 There was also a sense from several of the Community Councils that there had been a decline in ERC support over recent years. Some of this was ascribed to the loss of previous personnel who were dedicated to assisting Community Councils. Comments were made that the absorption of the community engagement function into the community planning team had diluted the support to the Community Councils. This had been exacerbated by the budget and staffing reductions within the team.
- 4.10 The Community Councils were of the opinion that there was no consistency in the way that Council officials engaged with communities. It varied between the different Council services and even within the various services. The excellence awards to the 'customer first' team did not mean that customer responsiveness had percolated throughout the Council. There were comments from a number of CCs that the Council could be more transparent in its dealings with them. Newton Mearns CC had used Freedom of Information requests to get information. Several interviewees expressed the view that it would be extremely beneficial if there was a clear and unambiguous policy and culture of community engagement and, equally important, that this was enforced by the Council.
- 4.11 The creation of multi member wards in 2007 had diluted the closer relationship with councillors, who in most cases now had two or three Community Councils in their ward. Although some Community Councils have claimed that there should be better attendance by councillors, an examination of the most recent minutes of each Community Council on the Council website (22/4/2014) shows that 68% (25 out of a possible 37) attendances took place, more or less the same as community councillor attendance which was 69% for the same tranche of meetings.
- 4.12 A further concern of some Community Councils was that the presence of several councillors at a Community Council meeting could politicise the climate of the meeting and that this was not always conducive to obtaining action on local issues. It was claimed by a couple of Community Councils that there had been infiltration by political parties at the 2013 Community Council elections. It was clear that several people who were members of political parties had been nominated but this is not restricted by the constitution. There is no evidence that they have politicised the Community Councils and a counter accusation is that longer standing community councillors have been hostile to the arrival of new members and this has led to a number of resignations. There was a very clear consensus from both ERC and community councillors that there should be no overt politicisation of Community Councils.
- 4.13 Conversely there were strong views expressed by both ERC councillors and officers that some Community Councils had adopted a hectoring, aggressive and at times abusive manner when dealing with the Council and there was 'no joy' in attending these particular Community Council meetings. A significant number of community councillors referred to bullying or exclusion of new members. They hoped that ERC would address this in the review so that dysfunctional behaviour could be

challenged and wilful members suspended. There was a widespread belief that the Code of Conduct needed to be enforced if the Community Councils were to become viable organs of local democracy. This needed a staged process with resolution sought initially within the Community Council but if necessary escalated to a Panel involving Council and Community Council members with the option of seeking independent arbitration advice if required.

Number and Boundaries of Community Councils

- 4.14 A key issue for the Council was whether the number and boundaries of Community Councils were still appropriate. If so did they provide the most effective framework for community engagement and was the representation on the community councils balanced in terms of local geography and demography?
- 4.15 Although the study by ODS Consulting had a remit to look at the boundaries, it was a common issue raised in many of the interviews and it is worth capturing the views of the Community Councils and comments from officers. In brief, most of the ten Community Councils are thought to match the natural communities in the area. This applied even in Barrhead (17300) and Newton Mearns (24,500), both of which are amongst the largest community councils in Scotland. In these two areas questions were raised about the benefits of splitting the existing Community Councils into their constituent neighbourhoods to facilitate more local consultations.
- 4.16 Barrhead CC was adamant that it was a self contained small town with community wide facilities, schools, a health centre, town centre and policing and that any division would result in duplication of discussion on these issues. These views were consistently obtained from the interviews, the questionnaire and the consultation workshop. Some Council officers and councillors wondered whether it was too large but recognised that it would be difficult to specify how it could be split. Although it was considered that there was good representation from all parts of the town at present, the creation of wards within the area would guarantee a reasonable geographic spread of members.
- 4.17 Newton Mearns had a majority view from those interviewed and the questionnaire that whilst it was an established community that it was a grouping of four or five linked neighbourhoods. About half of the community councillors favoured splitting the Community Council as it was considered too large, apparently the second largest in Scotland. It must also be recognised that with new house building Newton Mearns could have a population increase of 5000 or so over the next few years taking the population to over 30,000. This is similar to the population of established towns and cities such as Dumbarton, Dumfries and Stirling, all of which have half a dozen or more Community Councils covering their constituent neighbourhoods.
- 4.18 Splitting the existing Community Council would achieve a greater focus on local issues and allow a more diverse representation than hitherto. There would be merit in the Council examining how the area could be broken into more localised

communities taking cognisance of where the growth will be in the future. The alternative would be for nominations for future elections to be organised by ward so that there is a geographic balance of members. This is probably the outstanding issue to be resolved on boundaries and there is a clear tension between the Council and the leadership of the Community Council. It is important that decisions are taken for the long-term benefit of the community and not as response to the independent tendencies of Newton Mearns Community Council. The majority of Newton Mearns community councillors who were interviewed, made contact or answered the survey were concerned about the current governance with its agenda dominated by issues that did not reflect the diverse views of all community councillors, many of whom felt excluded from the inner sanctum.

- 4.19 Thornliebank and Uplawmoor Community Councils, whilst agreeing that they are natural communities, both felt that minor boundary adjustments should be considered. In Uplawmoor, the issue arose because wind turbines that overlook Uplawmoor are contained within the boundary of Neilston Community Council, which has benefited from an income stream. The Council needs to examine this issue for planning consultation purposes as well as for the CC boundaries. The particular problem in Thornliebank is that the CC boundary matched the ward boundary. However ward boundaries were drawn primarily to achieve parity in the size of electorates rather than to reflect natural communities. The logic behind Community Council boundaries should be to reflect the boundaries identified by communities rather than made co-terminus with the electoral boundaries.

Representation and Inclusiveness

- 4.20 The representation on Community Councils has always been a matter of concern across Scotland. There was an acceptance from most Community Councils that they needed to be more representative and inclusive. Community Councils tend to be dominated by older citizens and there is a distinct shortage of young people and parents with young families. The representation by gender and ethnic background of CC members appears to be less of an issue in East Renfrewshire.
- 4.20 None of the ten Community Councils were elected by ballot at the 2013 elections and only one, Eaglesham and Waterfoot, in 2009. Most of the Community Councils are short of their prescribed membership. A constant turnover of members and co-optees has resulted in 123 community councillors at present, compared to the established maximum of 162. Moreover up to a third of the members are co-opted and co-opted members are able to continue for the duration of the Community Council between elections.
- 4.21 Busby, Thornliebank, Netherlee and Stamperland, Clarkston and Newton Mearns Community Councils all operate with at least 25% fewer members than in the scheme of establishment as set out in Table 1 on page 9 above. None have full membership although Neilston and Barrhead come close.

4.22 Membership of the Community Councils is distinctly biased towards older people as can be seen in Table 2. The over 50's have twice as many CC members than their proportion of the population would justify. The absence of young people is quite marked despite the efforts of some Community Councils to attract younger members. This has generally proved difficult although there have been a couple of exceptions. Community councillors did not think that the traditional agenda led format of meetings was compatible with attracting younger members. Perhaps more significant is the paucity of working age adults, particularly those under 40. This is the age group that is most dependent on Council services such as pre school, education, leisure, housing, social care and recycling. Their absence perhaps explains why transport and road issues top the priority of the current community councillors, the significant majority of whom are over 50. These priorities are at variance with the priorities identified by the total population in the resident's survey carried out by ODS Consulting. These focus on Community Safety, Housing, Education, Health, Planning and the Economy. Only 1.4% from a sample of 918 identified Roads and Parking as a priority issue.

Table 2: Age Profile of Community Council Members

Age Group	CC Members	Total Population
16 --30	2%	16%
31 – 40	2%	13%
41 – 50	17%	13%
51 – 60	20%	15%
Over 60	58%	24%

Source: Survey of Current Community Councillors, April 2014 (sample size 47) and NRS Scotland MYE Population 2011.

4.23 Gender balance on the CCs appears to be fairly equal and certainly more so than the Council where only 20% of members are women. During the interviews it was apparent that a high proportion of the men are retired whereas there is a better age spread amongst women. It was notable that women with children brought an altogether different perspective to the discussions and were far more likely to focus on education, health, young people and how to better utilise social media. There was a vast difference in the tone and content of comment between incumbent community councillors and newly nominated members. Instead of a contest between legacy and disruptors, capturing the experience of the old guard and the ideas of the new should provide the impetus for revitalizing the CCs.

4.24 Community councillors were candid about the failure of Community Councils to adequately reflect their communities. The majority felt this to be a weakness, which was amplified by the perception by younger residents that CCs were dominated by older residents and a bit of a talking shop with no real clout. These criticisms have been levelled at Community Councils since their inception in 1974. Their modus operandi is fairly staid with an emphasis upon agendas, minutes, consultations and reports from local councillors, officers and police representatives at the meetings. The notification of meetings and agendas are still the province of notice boards and libraries and it is unsurprising that attendance at meetings is fairly low. The

exceptions occur when there is a burning issue such as a school closure, major planning application or bout of vandalism.

- 4.25 Community Councils were intended as the overarching forum in a community and the main mechanism for councils and all other public bodies to consult and take soundings. But they are no longer the only means for local residents to be consulted or to vent their concerns. Parent councils, tenants associations, public partnership forum for the Community Health and Care Partnership, environmental groups and youth groups are all part of a mixture of channels that vie to engage people locally. Community councillors regretted that it had become increasingly difficult to engage with the wider community and many of them recognised the need to transform the way in which they worked. This will require Community Councils to become more transparent, less formal and more active in using social media to communicate with local residents.
- 4.26 It was argued by a number of community councillors that two other types of area based bodies, Area Forums and Local Development Trusts, have diverted business away from community councils. The Council operates 3 Area Forums covering a combination of the six multi-member wards. There is an overlapping agenda and a strong feeling that there is unnecessary duplication at a time when resources were diminishing. The Area Forums meet quarterly and make recommendations for area grants to Council Cabinet. They appear to have diminishing agendas and attendance and several councillors felt that they were a bit of a chore. They could be wound up and the business transferred to a Council wide forum with bids for area grants being made through Community Councils. This would be a positive move from the perspective of Community Councils and there seems no one in the Council defending the continuation of Area Forums.
- 4.27 Local Development Trusts are community organisations that have also sprung up in several parts of the Council. They are owned and managed in the local community and aim to achieve the sustainable regeneration of a community by generating income through enterprise and the ownership of assets. All trading surpluses are reinvested in the organisation or the community. Local Development Trusts are engaged in running local projects from allotments to community buildings and open space initiatives. They have the ability to draw down funding from a variety of sources and are more proactive and, some would say, more effective than Community Councils.
- 4.28 Community Councils may be statutory bodies but they do not currently have the resources or the powers to drive forward or invest in major projects. They are in danger of becoming moribund or at best prisoners of their constitutions. There is no reason why the Community Councils should not be able to bid for area grants and become more action orientated. They may wish to do this by promoting a local development trust. Both Community Councils and East Renfrewshire Council would

benefit from more proactive Community Councils but this is dependent upon more genuinely representative and vibrant Community Councils.

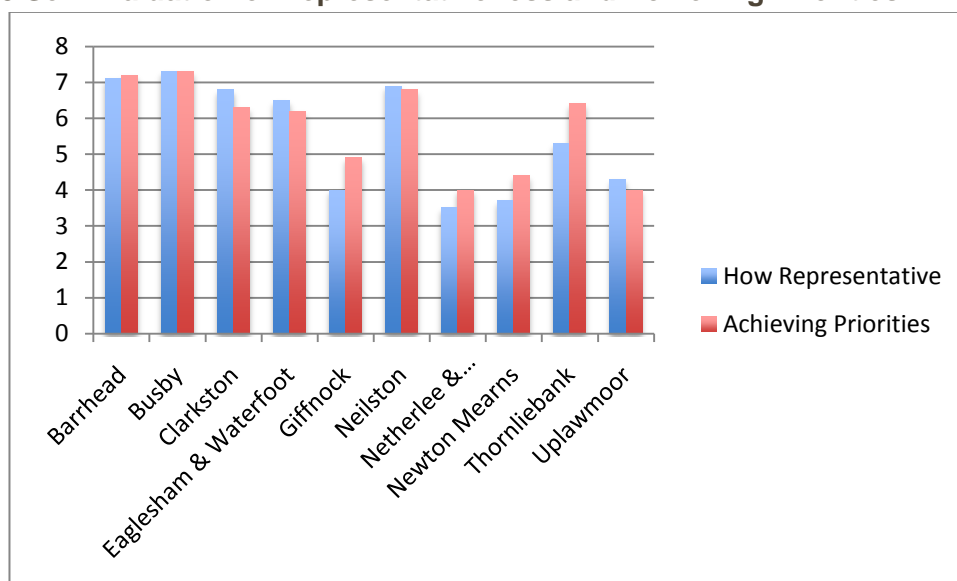
Elections

- 4.29 The lack of contested elections and the failure to attract sufficient community councillors, only 76% of potential seats are currently occupied, suggests that there needs to be a radical overhaul of Community Council elections in ERC. It is not unusual across Scotland for elections to be uncontested and the call for democratic elections is common to most studies of Community Councils. In Councils where contested elections have been more common new community councillors have been elected who are less imbued by the orthodox inertia of Community Council procedures. It can bring more diverse ideas, re vitalise the organisation and give impetus to tackle new projects and events. Just the type of activities that community planning should be stimulating at the local level.
- 4.30 There is reluctance by many people to stand for election and for understandable reasons. They do not want to be politicians nor do they want to fail. This why the nominations seldom exceed the number of places available even in the more active Community Councils. There needs to be some creative thinking about this. First, the number of community councillors could be reduced. Second, there is considerable benefit in asking all nominated candidates, whether there is an election or not, to prepare an election statement setting out their reasons for standing, their experience and priorities for change. These statements should be made widely available to the electorate through the Council website, e-mails and local newspapers. The ground rules should be simple: a statement of no more than 250 words, no comment on other individuals and stressing how they would like to improve their community. Third, results of the election should be announced as a list of those elected without giving the number of votes or those unelected. This would save a potential loss of face to those not elected and remove one of the barriers to people standing.
- 4.31 Given the manifest difficulty attracting citizens to stand for Community Councils there would be some merit in reducing the membership to increase the likelihood of contested elections and allow a more consistent use of co-options. It is suggested that instead of 10 members plus one extra member for every 1000 residents, subject to a maximum of 20, there should be two types of member. Two-thirds of places should be available for election (or nomination) and a further third should be reserved for co-option. This is the same ratio as at present but putting a cap on the number of elected places will reduce the number to be elected and increase the probability of contested elections. The co-opted places on the Community Council should be used primarily to attain a better diversity by age, gender, ethnic minority or geography. These should be determined after the elections and appointment of office bearers.
- 4.32 It is suggested that all the Community Councils should have 10 elected members plus 5 co-optees. This would reduce the total number of elected community

councillors from 162 to 100 but there would also be the potential for 50 co-optees to become members. If Newton Mearns were to be split into, say, three new Community Councils, this would mean 120 elected community councillors and 60 co-optees. Parity in the number of community councillors has advantages, all community councils have the potential to do the same things and experience has shown that it is often the smaller CCs in rural areas that are the most innovative. This may reflect the fact that there is a stronger common purpose and greater chance of a strong caucus emerging.

- 4.33 Whether it is 100 or 120 places available, it would increase the possibility of elections. By dividing the larger community councils, Barrhead and Newton Mearns, if it is decided not to split it into smaller CCs, into wards would also increase the probability of elections. One of the problems identified by many community councillors is their legitimacy in representing wider views. They acknowledged that they were an extremely biased cohort of the population as is apparent from the self-evaluation by members varies across community councils and is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Self Evaluation of Representativeness and Achieving Priorities



Source: Survey of community councillors, April 2014

- 4.34 The survey asked community councillors to score how representative of their community they considered themselves to be and then asked how effective they were in achieving their priorities. Barrhead, Busby, Clarkston and Neilston felt most confident about representing their communities, Giffnock, Netherlee and Stamperland, Newton Mearns and Uplawmoor considered themselves the least representative of their communities, all scoring less than 5 out of 10 in the survey.
- 4.35 Given that there is an acknowledgement by community councillors that they are relatively unknown in their communities, and this is evidenced by the ODS survey, a second issue is how effective do they believe they are at focusing on key priorities? There was again a variation in the responses across the 10 Community Councils.

Barrhead, Busby, Clarkston, Eaglesham, Neilston and Thornliebank were most confident that they were setting and achieving their priorities whilst Giffnock, Netherlee and Newton Mearns had the least faith that their priorities were being achieved, all scoring less than 4 out of 10.

Governance

- 4.36 Whilst Community Councils are the only comprehensive local representative body, the escalation of other groups such as parent councils, youth groups, elderly forums and various environmental action groups has shifted debate about specific issues away from Community Councils and made them less likely to be the lead on many issues. This is a pivotal question for the Council. Do individual services and single-issue organisations become the preferred channels for consultation or do Community Councils also have a say in determining wider community priorities? If the former, and some Council services have a statutory requirement to consult with specific groups, then Community Councils will be estranged from some decision making processes.
- 4.37 There is a synergy between the role of the Council to take a wider perspective through the community plan and the role of community councils to provide an overarching view of local priorities. Despite the supportive words of the Scottish Government and Councils in enshrining this approach, there is an undercurrent of departmentalism underpinned by professionals pursuing their departmental priorities. If politics is the language of priorities, it is challenged by the language of professional domains, all eager to protect their own priorities.
- 4.38 Local development trusts can be the vehicle for Community Councils to address some of their priorities and in many localities across Scotland there is a symbiotic relationship between the two bodies. On other occasions a local development trusts can take on a life of their own and be in conflict with Community Councils. These tensions need to be resolved by the Council as part of their community engagement strategy. Otherwise the role of Community Councils could be jeopardised by unaligned activities of local development trusts. Community Councils are not in a strong position to attract younger members if they are seen as an organisation that responds to statutory consultations and tests public opinion. Younger generations have a proclivity to 'just do it' and in this sense local development trusts might offer a greater opportunity to make a difference.
- 4.39 Given the apparent obscurity of Community Councils in the eyes of the majority of the population, it is worth examining how they communicate with their communities and how this is assisted or otherwise by the Council. They have notice boards, agendas and minutes are in local libraries, one or two have dabbled with the use of social media and their minutes are published on the Council website. Very little is published in local newspapers and there is a tendency to use postage rather than the internet to inform people of agendas etc. Good governance is a function of good communication and an understanding of local concerns. Community Councils will need to modernise their approach on both these counts. The Council would achieve

a good return if it provided guidelines and training for developing websites and the use of social media. This could be further enhanced if the forum of CCs were encouraged to share good practice in the use of digital communications.

4.40 Occasionally Community Councils will hit the jackpot when a local issue seeks a platform for discussion but attendance at the meetings is generally low. The question is whether the formal agenda, which may be necessary when decisions are being taken on planning applications or proposed changes to services, is relevant for an organisation that is in effect a sounding board for local opinion? Would it be possible to develop a less didactic style of meeting where free flowing discussion was allowed to generate ideas and recommend actions? Community Councils need to develop a more proactive rather than reactive focus with the emphasis more on shaping the future directions rather than protecting past practices.

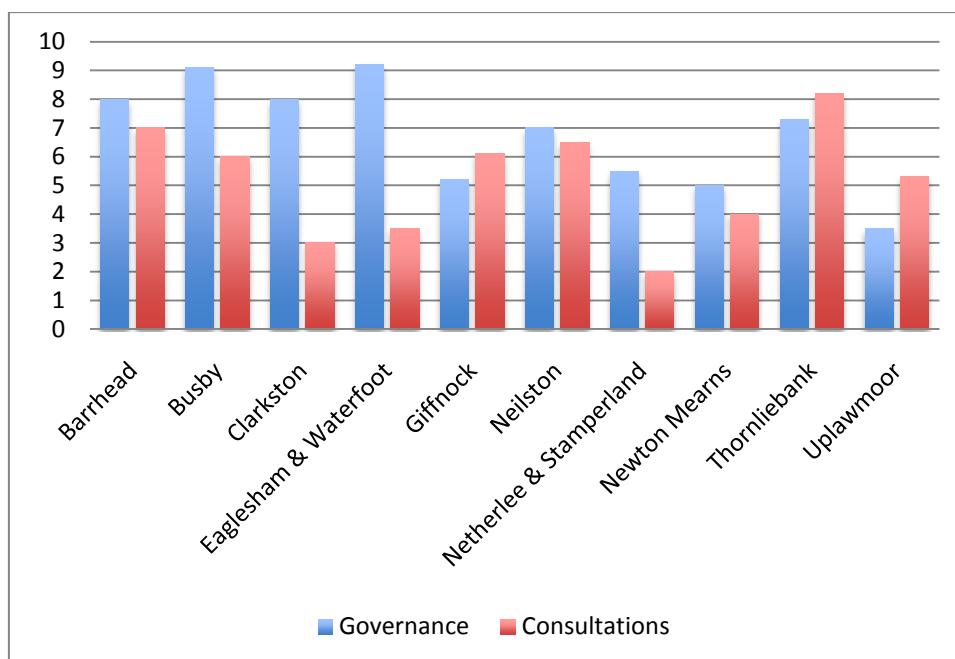
4.41 The survey and interviews with community councillors were very revealing about the governance of Community Council meetings. Despite a general view that the meetings were well administered by the secretary and the limited administrative budgets were under control, there were concerns about many other aspects of governance and much angst in some Community Councils. The most common concerns raised from the survey and interviews were:

- Agendas and discussion were often dominated by the chair and/or office bearers
- An unwillingness of some services and organisations to attend or listen to the views of the CC
- Slow response times from the Council and other organisations
- Interpersonal relationships and cabals within the CC restricted open debate
- A lack of transparency and secretive behaviour within the CC
- A tendency to be hypercritical of the Council and local councillors
- Most items on the agenda were reactive rather than proactive
- Attempts to raise concerns about poor behaviour were dismissed and the Code of Conduct was toothless
- Suggestions for being more proactive in taking soundings from local residents or utilising social media were not welcomed
- Lack of inclusiveness in welcoming the public to meetings or encouraging them to participate
- A bureaucratic and controlling rather than an enabling style of support from the Council.

4.42 The manner of working of the Community Councils varies greatly, determined to a large extent by its leadership. There were some very experienced community councillors who were protective of their domain others, usually younger and mostly women, who wished to address concerns of the family or elderly or to raise the profile of Community Councils by carrying out surveys and communicating through social media. The CCs who were most positive about their governance (Table 4)

were Barrhead, Busby, Clarkston and Eaglesham and Waterfoot. All had been stable with experienced chairs and office bearers. Thornliebank and Neilston were the next most satisfied and again there had been stability although this had been fractured in Thornliebank recently with the departure of the chair. Giffnock, Netherlee and Stamperland, Newton Mearns and Uplawmoor were least satisfied and they had all been subject to difficulties since September 2013 with resignations and internal strife.

Table 4 Self Evaluation of CC Governance and Consultations



Source: Survey of community councillors, April 2014

4.43 These conflicts had spilled over to the Council and there was criticism from some quarters that the Council was too remote and had allowed strident voices to damage relationships. There had been a campaign to change the constitution of the Community Councils independently of the East Renfrewshire Council review. Indeed two CCs, Newton Mearns and Clarkston had decided unilaterally to change their constitutions and Thornliebank had also considered this option before rescinding its decision. The Council had indicated that their status as statutory Community Councils would have to be rescinded if they were to take this decision. Negotiations are still taking place and it is hoped at the time of writing that the two Community Councils will await the review of the scheme of establishment, which will examine the concerns that they are raising.

4.44 The changes to the constitution have been discussed in the East Renfrewshire Community Council Forum, a recent development intended to allow the exchange of ideas and experiences. Although there was some support for the proposals to change the constitution, many of the interviewees highlighted the unacceptable behaviour of the Forum and the cult of personalities. They desired a more constructive relationship with the Council on the constitution and other matters. This

has resulted in five of the Community Councils indicating that they have left the Forum.

- 4.45 Yet there is a need for a network of Community Councils to share good practice and to identify issues of common concern that can be negotiated with the Council, or indeed, other public bodies. Community councillors made positive comments about the workshop for the new Community Councils set up by the Convener for Community Services in December, which they found extremely helpful. They felt that this was a step in the right direction with presentations from various services and the possibility of establishing some partnerships with services that would supplant the more controlling tendency of the Council.
- 4.46 A major responsibility of Community Councils is in dealing with consultations, particularly planning and licensing applications. Table 4 shows the self-evaluation of consultations by the Council on planning and licensing matters. The scores are generally low with only Barrhead and Thornliebank scoring more than 7 out of 10 and Giffnock and Neilston more than 6. The most critical CCs are Clarkston, Eaglesham and Waterfoot, Netherlee and Newton Mearns. The underlying message from these responses is the need for the Council to create a more positive culture of consultations and to ensure that this is practiced across all services. The point made by many community councillors is that they would appreciate a response from the Council when decisions are made and briefly why the CC comments had been overruled. It seemed to be as much an issue of common courtesy as disappointment in the decision.

Constitution for Community Councils.

- 4.46 The objectives of Community Councils were set out in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and continued under the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, which produced the current system of unitary local authorities. They are:
- a. To ascertain, co-ordinate and reflect the views of the community which it represents, to liaise with other community groups within the area, and to fairly express the diversity of opinions and outlooks of the people;
 - b. To express the views of the community to the local authority for the area, to public authorities and other organisations;
 - c. To take such action in the interests of the community as appears to it to be desirable and practicable;
 - d. To promote the well being of the community and to foster community spirit;
 - e. To be a means whereby the people of the area shall be able to voice their opinions on any matter affecting their lives, their welfare, their environment, its development and amenity.

The language may be terse but the intent is clear. Community Councils have a duty under statute to operate within the Council's Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils and the Code of Conduct.

4.47 East Renfrewshire's Scheme of Establishment of Community Councils is based upon the Model Scheme for Scotland, which allows local authorities to determine the number of Community Councils and the composition of each Community Council. The consultation on the review of the scheme is intended to provide a revised scheme in 2015. The format of the present scheme for East Renfrewshire differs from the Model Scheme and this causes some confusion. It would simplify matters if the ERC scheme were reformatted to be consistent with the Model Scheme as part of the review. The Constitution and the Code of Conduct were matters raised most often in the interviews with both community councillors and Council members and officers. The consultative workshop of Community Councils on 14 April had two sessions that allowed all Community Councils to identify changes that they would like to see to the Constitution of Community Councils.

4.48 The main issues raised by community councillors during the interviews and at the consultative workshop were:

- The need for an enforceable Code of Conduct;
- Removal of the requirement that draft minutes are submitted to the Council before approval by the Community Councils;
- Greater speed by the Council in publishing minutes on the website;
- Community councillors required to have some experience on the Community Council before becoming office bearers;
- Community Councils being allowed to meet 'in camera' for part of a meeting;
- Proxy votes to be allowed in the absence of a community councillor;
- How to utilise co-option powers to ensure a more diverse community council;
- How to streamline the format of meetings to allow greater discussion including the involvement of local people attending the meeting; and
- The use of social media to publicise and engage the local community in the affairs of the Community Council.

These suggestions are matters for the Council to consider in its review. There were divergent views about most of these the suggestions that make it imperative that the Council deliberates on these without prejudice. What is not in doubt is the need for the Community Councils to acquire gravitas in their communities. Time and again expressed the sentiment that CCs should not be engaging in vendettas or the pursuit of personal agendas. They should be bodies that are proactive, open to ideas, and responsive to the interests of their localities. Community councillors stressed that they cared for their communities and wanted to make a difference.

4.49 An issue that needs to be addressed relates to the status and image of Community Councils. The general lack of understanding by the local residents about the affairs of Community Councils is evident from the focus groups conducted by ODS Consulting. Notices of meetings and Agendas on Notice Boards and Libraries are not in keeping with modern communication. The use of social media by Community Councils could enable them to reach a far wider (and younger) audience. This must be encouraged if they are to fulfil their remit and the Council has some responsibility

to provide the IT support and training of community councillors to take advantage of social media and to develop websites.

- 4.50 There have been a number of disputes since the formation of the new Community Councils in September 2013. These have been around resignations, new co-optees, criticism of officers of the Council, financial probity, rejection of the existing constitution and a deteriorating relationship between the Council and some Community Councils.
- 4.51 This plays both ways and the Council could do more to support and nurture its Community Councils. This cannot be left entirely to the community council liaison officer who has had to cope with a great deal of unwarranted criticism from some of the new Community Councils since September 2013. Community Councils are anxious for senior management to become more involved and to intervene in some of the acrimonious exchanges that have taken place.
- 4.52 Community Councils should be a key part of community planning and it is part of the community planning team's remit. The Council must provide a wider range of support if there is to be a radical shift in the operation and effectiveness of Community Councils. If the new Community Councils following the review are to fulfil their potential, it will be imperative that the Council provide training for new and returning community councillors. This should cover the constitution, standing orders, code of conduct and an provide support in relation to IT, social media, communications, legal issues, research and surveys, etc.

5. Support from the Council

- 5.1 The responsibility for the development and support of Community Councils rests with the local council, which is charged with maintaining a Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils. The Council is also responsible for the election of Community Councils and their support. The last review of the scheme for the establishment of Community Councils took place in 2009. The next elections then took place in September 2013. None of the ten Councils had contested elections and currently only 76% of the established 162 members are in post.
- 5.2 East Renfrewshire Council has adopted a light touch to its support of Community Councils with annual administrative grants at a minimal level compared to the rest of Scotland. Grants are now capped at the actual level of expenditure of the Community Councils and this has caused considerable resentment. The point made by many community councillors is that they are volunteers and that the Council should trust them to run a statutory community organisation on a few hundred pounds and give them some flexibility to carry forward funds.
- 5.3 There is good representation at Community Council meetings by councillors, who had a 69% attendance at the last tranche of meetings, and by Council officers if requested, although there is a fairly consistent view that officers do not always listen or respond to the Community Councils. Both councillors and officers reported that there was a dismissive attitude towards them from Clarkston and Newton Mearns CCs and this resulted in poorer attendance of councillors at the Newton Mearns Community Council. Representation at meetings from the police is very good with Scotland Police continuing the strong commitment to community engagement. It appears more difficult to obtain attendance from other public agencies that are managed nationally, such as NHS, Water, Scottish Enterprise and Transport agencies.
- 5.4 Most Community Councils concur with the view that the Council has been less supportive and difficult to engage with than they would like. The exception was the session held in December hosted by the convener of the Community Services that received widespread positive comment. It was felt that there was a good opportunity to network with other Community Councils and to share knowledge and information.
- 5.5 As with most councils, the main contact for Community Councils has been through the community council liaison officer. The location of this post currently sits in the Community Planning team. The majority of Community Councils stated that they appreciated the support of the community council liaison officer in respect of elections, conducting meetings, training and surveys. However they feel that the post does not have the seniority to instruct other services to become more participative or respond to locally identified issues. The Community Planning Team, who are ostensibly the support team for Community Councils, were seen as too

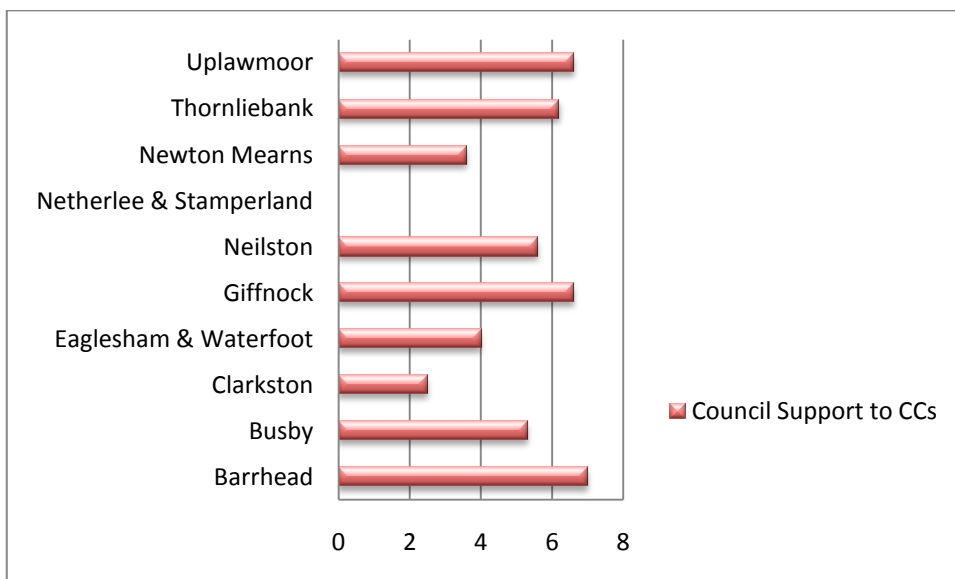
caught up in wider policy and research matters. It was contended that they should be more visible and proactive if the intention is to encourage greater community engagement. There would be merit in spreading the responsibility that is currently vested with the community council liaison officer more widely across the community planning team

- 5.6 Some Community Councils, notably Clarkston and Newton Mearns, felt that the Council was far too controlling and denied the Community Councils their independence. Following recent elections there have been difficult relationships between the Council and some of the Community Councils. This has included a long standing chair having to stand down because the boundaries did not match the natural community. carrying out an extended audit of another CC for breach of financial regulations and most recently with two Community Councils attempting to change their constitutions independently of the Council.
- 5.7 It was evident from the comments made by other Community Councils during the interviews that the behaviour of the Newton Mearns CC supported by Clarkston CC is regarded as damaging to effective collaboration. A view that is shared by some members of these two Community Councils. They have been the leading lights in the creation of the East Renfrewshire Community Council Forum. The Forum is an informal gathering of the Community Councils and has no recorded minutes. It has made a series of comments highly critical of the Council and some of its officials. Half of the Community Councils have chosen to no longer participate in the Forum claiming that it is more of a 'wrecking shop' and is undermining relationships with the Council, which they want to improve but by mutual agreement.
- 5.9 Since the September 2013 elections there have been a number of incidents, which have exacerbated the tension between the Council and the Community Councils. There has been a perception amongst the Community Councils that, after a long period of laissez faire regulation, the Council is now seeking compliance on matters that had been allowed to go under the radar. Councillors and senior managers are in no doubt that to achieve the full participation of Community Councils in community planning that there has to be a closer and mutually supportive set of relationships.
- 5.10 Recent difficulties have had to be escalated to the Head of Democratic and Partnership services or the Depute Chief Executive. It has resulted in a number of peremptory decisions that could have been avoided had there been a better working relationship between Community Councils and the Council. The most notable incident relates to Clarkston and Newton Mearns seeking to unilaterally amend the Scheme of Establishment. This would allow them to meet in camera, restrict office bearers to members who have served for at least a year, and allow Community Councils to approve their minutes before submitting them to the Council, at present draft minutes are submitted prior to their approval for examination by the Council.

5.11 At a meeting of the Council on 26 March 2014, the Council chose to challenge this and gave notice that these Community Councils could no longer operate as statutory Community Councils unless they reverted to the existing agreed constitution. The Council argued that the current review was set up to examine the case for change, including any proposals put forward by Community Councils. If Clarkston and Newton Mearns remain outside the scheme they would be excluded from any support by the council including administrative grants, free use of premises and attendance Council members and officers. Whilst it is hoped that this dispute can be resolved, it reinforces the imperative to create a more emollient relationship with Community Councils. Although only two CCs are directly affected, there is some sympathy from other CCs for some of the proposed changes and the rightful place for this to be considered is in the revised Scheme of Establishment.

5.12 In the context of these recent difficulties it is not surprising that the satisfaction with support from the Council leaves room for improvement. The satisfaction ratings across the Community Councils do vary significantly as illustrated by Table 5. Leaving aside Netherlee and Stamperland, which had a nil response; Clarkston and Newton Mearns were least satisfied, scoring less than 4. Conversely Uplawmoor, Thornliebank, Giffnock and Barrhead were most satisfied despite the fact that the first three of these have had their own local difficulties since September 2013.

Table 5: Satisfaction with Council Support for Community Councils



Source: Survey of community councillors, April 2014

Improvements to Support for Community Councils

5.13 When asked in the questionnaire about what improvements the Council should make to support Community Councils, the most common responses from Community Councillors in rank order were:

- i. The Council should listen more, show respect for and trust in the community councillors who are volunteers
- ii. The Council should ensure that sanctions are applied against bullying behaviour within the CCs and ensure that there is enforcement of the Code of Conduct
- iii. The Council needs to communicate better, provide information and help promote the CCs
- iv. More training should be provided in both the management of meetings and details of the services provided by ERC
- v. Councillors and officers should attend meetings when asked
- vi. The Council should stop interfering and patronising the CCs
- vii. The Council should provide training and support to CCs to develop websites and start newsletters
- viii. Senior Council managers should get out and listen to the views of communities

5.14 The top priority was shared across most Community Councils and suggests that there is a need for the Council to examine how the culture of community engagement operates across the Council. It points towards the need for a more transparent and community focused approach and for this to be clearly defined and then embedded across all Council Services.

5.15 The second priority of implementing the Code of Conduct through clear reporting and enforcement was an issue of great concern to several of the community councillors who were interviewed and there was an acknowledgement by both councillors and officers of the Council that this had not been addressed. The majority of both community councillors and ERC councillors highlighted the urgent need to have a process in place as part of the revised Scheme of Establishment. There was a view that an appeal process involving an independent person would be preferable to the Council acting as judge and jury on Code of Conduct matters.

Model scheme

5.16 The existing Scheme for Community Councils in East Renfrewshire draws heavily on the model scheme for community councils. There have been a number of suggestions to change the constitution by some community councils. During the consultation workshop there was a majority view in one of the two workshops that the Council should make changes to the constitution in relation to the need for office bearers to have previous experience, the option to meet in camera and for CCs to be able to approve minutes before submission to the Council. Any changes such as these can only be carried out as an integrated set of proposals as part of

the next stage of the review. It is worth noting that some of the negative vibes about the role of the Council comes from what is perceived as secretive behaviour, this has resulted in a number of Freedom of Information requests. But just as the Council should operate in an open and transparent way so should Community Councils. The notion of seeking to meet in camera goes against the grain of becoming a more inclusive community organisation.

5.17 If trust is to be maintained or regained with the Community Councils there needs to be a senior manager of the Council charged with managing the relationship. Greater progress towards restoring confidence in the Council could be made if champions were also identified in each of the major services. They could be called upon to resolve potential conflicts and maintain positive relationships with the Community Councils. Some reconciliation will need to be exercised to re establish trust between the Council and some of the Community Councils.

5.18 The current indifferent relationship requires a commitment from both parties if it is to be resolved. The review should be the mechanism to deal with this but it will require some measure of negotiation on both sides. The timetable for the review is for proposals to be considered by the Council in the late summer followed by a consultation with the Community Councils. Thereafter, if approved it is proposed that there should be new elections in 2015. There may be concern about another round of elections less than 2 years from the last round. This is understandable but given that none of the Community Councils had contested elections in 2013 and the subsequent difficulties, there is a compelling case for the outcome of the review to be implemented as a matter of urgency.

5.19 During the interviews it was readily apparent that the ten community councils had very different priorities and perceptions. A key feature of the revamped Community Councils should be to develop shared visions for their future with the Council. Neilston has carried out such a future visioning which can be a powerful tool for engaging a wider cross section of the communities as well as setting a proactive agenda for the future. This approach could be a basis for revising the purpose of Community Councils but it will require good facilitation, improved communication and a more open style of working by the Council than hitherto. Whether this can be achieved across the board will depend on the willingness of Community Councils to be revitalised and the capacity of the Council to support them

Area Forums

5.20 There are three area forums that provide an opportunity to discuss issues at a more local level. The area forums meet quarterly and cover pairings of the six multi-member wards in East Renfrewshire. The area forums were seen as a means of taking community planning nearer to the communities. They are also responsible for advising the Cabinet on the distribution of area grants. The ten Community Councils do not nest easily into the area forums and there is a distinct

lack of enthusiasm about them from the Community Councils. They are seen as an unnecessary duplication that divert resources and respect from the CCs.

5.21 Council members and officers recognise this dilemma and it would be worth considering whether at a time of diminishing resources and capacity and with agendas and attendance in decline for a review of area forums to follow the review of community councils. There does seem to be unnecessary duplication and there is considerable merit in wiping the slate clean of consultation and decision making bodies that are perceived as an impediment to progress. They could be replaced by a single East Renfrewshire wide forum that acts as the liaison body for community organisations including representatives from the Community Councils.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 Forty years after their introduction, Community Councils in Scotland are at a tipping point. They are in theory the most local level of local democracy but much of their potential is not being realised. In East Renfrewshire they operate on minimal administrative grants and they have difficulty achieving the aspirations of their communities unlike many single-issue community organisations. All of these organisations seek to influence the redesign of services but only Community Councils are in a position to help shape a future vision for their community. Their unique role is a function of their statutory responsibility “to express the views of the community to the local authority.”
- 6.2 There are some calls to await the outcome of the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill before taking any action but the consultation is largely silent on the role of Community Councils. East Renfrewshire Council needs to determine whether they allow Community Councils to continue primarily as a consultation body for planning and licensing or whether they are encouraged to take a more proactive role as the focus for citizen participation in community planning at the local level. This may be ambitious but circumstances require a stronger partnership with communities and their involvement in the co production of services. Community engagement should be embraced as a way of augmenting the capacity of a locality and should extend across all services.
- 6.3 This requires a commitment to supporting Community Councils to become the pivotal local organisation. This in turn requires more representative Community Councils with a greater capacity to carry out their intended democratic role. It is the contention of this review that Community Councils are the only viable organisations able to carry out this role and become the authentic voice of their localities. The recommendations listed below stem from the interviews and discussions with Community Councils and Council members and officers. They are intended to provide a checklist for the Council as it moves forward in its review of the Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils.
1. The Council should develop Community Councils as the legitimate voice of the local communities and see them as key local partners in Community Planning. They should be seen as proactive partners in visioning and supporting local service improvements in their localities.
 2. In order to provide the authentic voice of the local community, Community Councils must become more representative of their communities and given the support, training, information and respect that enables them to survey, gather ideas and prioritise local concerns.
 3. The Council should develop and adopt a positive culture of community engagement that seeks to develop partnerships with Community Councils and other community organisations. This needs to be clearly defined and embedded across all Council services.

Boundaries

4. The existing ten Community Council areas match the natural communities and whilst there are some advantages of retaining them there are compelling arguments in favour of splitting the largest Community Councils.
5. The Council should consider splitting Newton Mearns Community Council into a number of smaller Community Councils, more in tune with its constituent neighbourhoods and taking cognisance of future population growth to 30,000. A short term alternative would be to split into three or four wards.
6. Barrhead Community Council with a population of 17,000 should remain at this stage as a single entity but be divided into three or four wards to ensure a balanced representation from different neighbourhoods.
7. Minor boundary issues in Thornliebank and Uplawmoor should be examined and, where appropriate, adjusted. The logic should be weighted towards boundaries identified by communities rather than made co-terminus with the ward, which was primarily defined to achieve parity in electorates.

Elections

8. To encourage contested elections of Community Councils, the number of elected community councillors should be reduced from the current total of 162 across ten Community Councils to 120/130 across twelve or thirteen Community Councils with a further 60/65 seats available for co-optees.
9. Community Councils should be required to utilise the co-opted places to attract a greater diversity in terms of age, gender and ethnic minorities.
10. All nominations for election, whether contested or not, should be accompanied by a 250 word statement setting out the key views and priorities of the candidates. These should be available on the website, made available through e-mail, included in the local papers and, if the timing is right, the Council newspaper.

Governance

11. The revised Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils should examine the various proposed amendments to the constitution made by existing Community Councils. The draft proposals should be subject to detailed consultation with all the Community Councils.
12. The new Scheme should be a document in the format of the Model Scheme for Community Councils in Scotland. (The scheme is divided into three parts: the Scheme, the Constitution, Standing Orders and Code of Conduct)
13. The key principles guiding the revised code should be openness about decisions, inclusiveness of the whole community, integrity and respect for fellow members and active collaboration with other agencies including the Council.

Constitution and Training

14. The Council should provide Induction Training on the constitution of Community Councils, including standing orders and the code of conduct, within three weeks of the elections.
15. There should be two or three repeated sessions to be attended by all elected or nominated community councillors before they sign the Code of Conduct and before they are eligible to take their place on the Community Council.
16. It is important that the chief executive and the leader of the Council introduce these sessions as a signal of the importance they give to the future partnership with Community Councils.
17. Office bearers should be appointed after the induction training and before the appointment of co-optees.
18. Co-optees should be selected to ensure a more representative balance to the Community Council in terms of geography, gender, age and ethnicity.
19. Co-optees should serve for a period of two years and should not be eligible for more than two terms unless they are subsequently elected.
20. Training should be provided on planning, licensing, community planning and communications as soon as possible after the election but preferably after the appointment of co-optees.
21. Further training on specific services should be offered to all Community Councils and this should be provided on an annual basis using the workshop format adopted in December 2013.

Code of Conduct

22. The Code of Conduct should be upheld by an enforcement policy, which should be robustly administered by the Council. Complaints in the first instance should be dealt with by the community planning team and brought to the attention of the Community Planning manager to determine appropriate action.
23. Stage 1 should seek to resolve complaints in negotiation with the Community Council. If necessary the issue should be escalated to a Panel comprised of 3 councillors, 2 community councillors and an independent person from outwith the Council.
24. In the event of more complex issues an independent person should be appointed to hear the allegations and make recommendations to the Panel.

Support from the Council

25. Responsibility for liaising with Community Councils should be vested with the Community Planning team, which encompasses policy, research, youth as well as community engagement functions. The Community Planning manager should act as the responsible officer.
26. Responsibility for elections and the constitution of CCs should remain with the Democratic and Partnership Services.
27. The role of Community Council liaison should be spread across the Community Planning team with dedicated officers acting as the first point of contact on administrative/ election/constitutional issues and identifying appropriate contacts in the Council and partner bodies.

28. They should ensure that responses are provided and that, subject to capacity, there is support and advice provided from services including finance, legal, communications and IT.
29. Champions should be appointed from each service area to work with the Community Councils. This should include managers from the major services Directorates: Education, Environment and the CHCP together with managers from planning, finance, legal and communications.
30. The Community Planning team should assist the Community Councils to carry out surveys and needs assessments.
31. There should be agreed response times for dealing with Community Council issues and these promises should be performance managed.
32. Members may wish to explore appointing a lead elected member for each Community Council. Most elected members serve on two or more Community Councils and it would be advantageous to focus their efforts and for them to be recognised as partners in the democratic leadership of Community Councils.
33. The Council should provide a fixed level of administrative grant of £500 -£600 per annum for all Community Councils. This is in line with the average grants identified by the 2013 Scottish Government survey of Community Council support.
34. Although the CCs differ in size, they all carry the same responsibilities. This grant should not be subject to claw back at the year end.
35. There should be an annual conference/workshop for CCs when the key developments in the Council are presented, and there is an opportunity for sharing best practice and responding to issues raised by the Community Councils.

Other Matters

36. The Council should work with the Community Councils to encourage attendance by other public agencies.
37. Community Councils should be encouraged to initiate and take on local projects as co-producers with the Council. This should explore how CCs can be enabled to commission or manage projects/events aimed at improving the wellbeing of the community
38. The Council should consider introducing an annual award for Community Councils as a means of nurturing innovative initiatives.
39. The Council should be supportive of an independent network of CCs but this must be properly constituted as a vehicle for sharing information and best practice.
40. The Council should review the three Area Forums with the possibility of disbanding them to be replaced by a single ERC area forum that acts as a briefing forum for community groups across the entire area.
41. Guidance should be prepared on the linkages between Community Councils and other community organisations including local development trusts.

References

COSLA Community Council Short-Life Working Group, September 2012 Final Report and Recommendations

East Renfrewshire Council, March 2013 Community Council Guidance Manual

East Renfrewshire Council, March 2013 Introduction to Community Councils, Induction Pack

Scottish Executive, (2004) Community Planning Advice Note 5: Effective Community Engagement Scottish Government, (2012) Community Empowerment and Engagement Bill

Scottish Government, (2013) Survey of Local Authority Community Councils, Annex G

ODS Consulting and Research Resource, (May 2014) Social Research: Encouraging Involvement in Shaping Community Councils

**Review of East Renfrewshire Community Council Scheme of Establishment
Stage 1 Engagement with Community Councils
15 April 2014**

Introduction

This event was organised to allow Community Councillors to come together in one place and discuss their views on the existing East Renfrewshire Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils and the national model Scheme, as well as the current boundaries for Community Councils.

The event was well attended by 27 Community Councillors and all Community Councils were represented. Keith Yates, who was undertaking the Independent Review of the Operation and Support for Community Councils, chaired the event.

Community Councillors were split into two groups, and each group discussed, in turn:

- (i) Current CC Boundaries
- (ii) The current Scheme of Establishment and national model Scheme

Summary Feedback

The detailed discussion notes are provided however at the end of each discussion each group was asked to summarise three main points.

Maps and Boundaries

Group 1:

1. The review of boundaries should take into account other administrative boundaries to enable Community Councils to operate more effectively
2. The issues around boundaries are less about the overall size of the area and more about where precisely the boundary lines are drawn
3. It should be borne in mind that smaller areas foster a stronger of identity

Group 2:

1. Overall within this group, CCs are happy with their current boundary
2. However there is difference of opinion within Thornliebank regarding the boundary line at Robslee Road
3. It is important to recognise that increasing the number of community councils would likely result in difficulties in recruiting enough Councillors

Scheme Content

Group 1:

1. Scottish Government constitution should be adopted in its current format
2. The council should support and endorse independence for community councils
3. Community councils should have the power to hold meetings 'in camera' (in private) if necessary

Group 2:

1. Limiting office roles to anyone who has been on the CC for a year could be damaging to CCs in terms of getting people to take the roles.
2. Amendments have to be made to both the Community Council Scheme of Establishment and their constitution.
3. There should be a review of the finances for CCs and they should be better resourced to meet the individual needs of each group.

Maps & Boundaries Feedback

Q1 Are the current boundaries too small, too big or just right?

Group 1: Discussion summary

In the discussions, the majority of participants were most comfortable to respond based on the experience within their own area, and were reluctant to give a view of other areas. There was a strong view that the key issue is not the size of community council areas but rather where precisely the lines are drawn, and the way that other administrative boundaries cut across CC areas, such as police beats, wards and school catchment areas.

A particular point was made about the way that area forums cut across CC boundaries. This affects Newton Mearns CC to the greatest degree as it sits across two area forums (Uplawmoor, Newton Mearns North and Barrhead Area Forum and Newton Mearns South, Busby, Clarkston and Eaglesham Area Forum). Area forum boundaries are built up from ward areas and there is an expectation that elected members attend that Community Council meetings within their ward. Some participants in the group believe that there is limited engagement with their CC by some elected members.

It was acknowledged that ward boundaries are a national issue.

Participants shared a view that while some of the CC areas are large, smaller areas can foster a stronger sense of identity.

While discussing the potential impact of reducing the size of some larger CC areas, a number of points were raised.

Participants from Barrhead had a clear view that they are content with their boundary area, both in terms of its size and the strong identity of Barrhead, which they wish to maintain.

In terms of Newton Mearns CC, it was suggested that breaking up the area would generate problems in acquiring enough community councillors. Newton Mearns CC currently has 12 Councillors, of a possible 20.

Group 2: Discussion Summary

In this discussion, each participant took the opportunity to comment on their view of the own CC area.

Barrhead CC – similar to the previous group, Barrhead CC want to maintain their identity as a town and would not want to split up the area.

Eaglesham – noted that they are a small community within a larger geographical area and it was recognised that the boundary line reflects as well as possible the natural community

Busby CC – mentioned discussion that they had held with both Clarkston and Eaglesham CCs and are happy with the boundaries

Uplawmoor – happy with their boundary noting that merging CCs together would dilute the priorities of smaller areas

Netherlee and Stamperland – feel that their boundary, marked by a railway, river and the boundary with Glasgow City Council defines the community clearly.

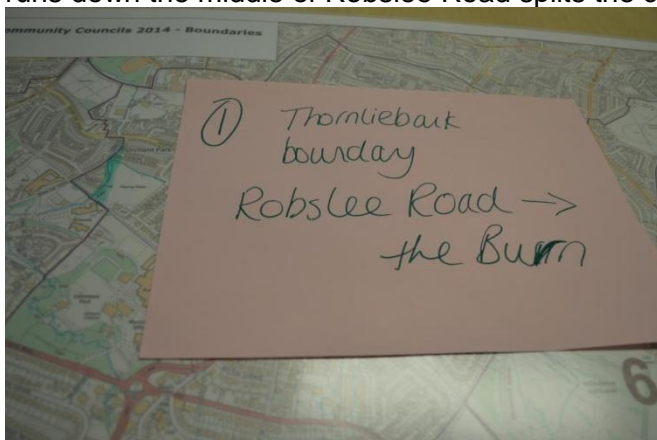
This group also noted that reducing CC boundaries in size and thus increasing the overall number of CCs would make the recruitment of enough Councillors difficult.

A view was put forward that the optimum population size, looking at the East Renfrewshire population, would be 8,000. However it was recognised that recognising natural communities is more important than population.

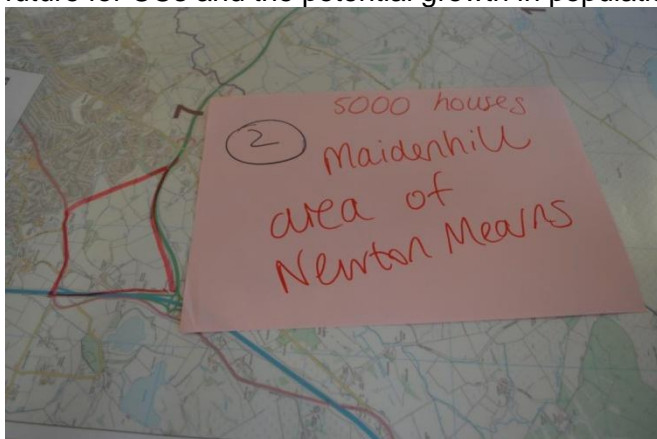
Q2 Describe what boundaries could look like? The second part of the discussions allowed participants to view large scale maps and draw any suggestions onto these maps.

Group 1: Boundary suggestions

- Some members of Thornliebank CC expressed a view to change Thornliebank boundary from Robslee road to the Burn, the key point being that the current boundary line, which runs down the middle of Robslee Road splits the community;

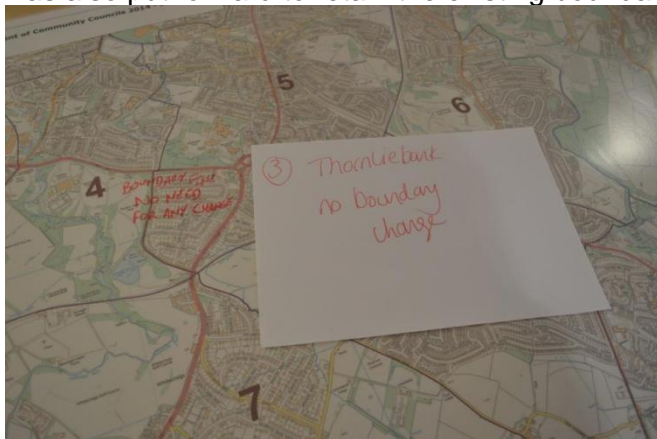


- A point was made about the future of Newton Mearns and a housing development at Maidenhill which could result in an increase in population of up to 5,000. A boundary was drawn around the proposed Maidenhill area but the general point was about looking to the future for CCs and the potential growth in populations.



Group 2: Boundary Suggestions

- Some members of group 2 agreed with suggestion 1 above.
- There is a difference of opinion regarding the Thornliebank boundary and a suggestion was also put forward to retain the existing boundary



Scheme Content Discussion Summary

Q1 What works about the current Scheme?

Group 1 Feedback:

In the discussions, the majority of participants felt that the current scheme does not work for them; they also felt that the current scheme does not comply with the Scottish government scheme and there was feedback that East Renfrewshire's standard community council constitution was 'foisted' upon them. The participants went on to suggest that each community council is different and therefore should be allowed to develop their own bespoke constitution which would be in their view more appropriate to the work they do in their own area.

Group 2 Feedback:

Again participants expressed the opinion that the scheme in its current form did not work for them and that this would have to be addressed in the review, although some of the CCs felt that it was an operational tool, served its purpose, and was workable with the application of common sense and they were happy to work with it.

Almost all of the participants agreed that there was no recourse for action to remove people from the CCs for misconduct. It was felt that this was an important issue which needed to be addressed.

In this group again there was a lot of discussion around minutes and that many of them did not follow the scheme in terms of submitting their minutes, most are done after being approved at the CC meeting and not sent to ERC for approval first. Participants agreed there was a division on the understanding of procedures for submitting minutes and that this needs to be addressed in the revised scheme.

One CC said that they submitted their minutes in order to check any legalities and found this a helpful process before approving their minutes.

Q1 What could be better?

Group 1 Feedback:

There were a few different responses from the participants although there was a level of agreement among the group. The suggestions were;

- Take the Scottish Government scheme and implement it in East Renfrewshire
- Almost all of the participants felt that there was a lack of support for community councils from the community planning team in relation to communication and secretarial support (minute Secretaries). They felt that there should be increased support in these areas although were not definitive about the support they require in relation to guidance and communication. It should be noted at this point that 2 participants felt that they received a good level of support from the CP team which has helped the development of their community council and so disagreed with the points being raised. It was also pointed out by a community councillor that the admin grant received from ERC can be used to pay a minute secretary and there is precedence for this.
- Participants felt that there should be consistency when dealing with ERC officers, this is sometimes not possible
- It was again repeated that Community Councils should have the freedom to personalise their constitution to better suit the needs of their group and the communities which they serve.

- Participants also felt that the minutes from meetings are not being uploaded onto the council website within a reasonable timescale. A long discussion ensued around the most appropriate time to send minutes into the council for - some participants send their minutes in prior to them being approved and others after Community Council approval. It was felt that this needs to be discussed and cleared up for all community council members.

Group 2 Feedback:

The feeling in this group was that the Scottish Governments model constitution should be followed. It was felt that there may be changes that will affect Community Councils and the work they do and they should have the recourse to amend their constitution accordingly. An example of this was given as the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill which could have an impact on community councils and how they work within their communities and with the council.

Participants felt that ERC's responsibility to listen to the community councils should be written into a new scheme as nearly all in the room felt they were not listened to. Any new scheme should enhance the independence of Community Councils.

There was some appetite in the room for a specific provision for a constituted forum i.e. a forum that would be an umbrella group for the community councils, however not all agreed.

Participants felt that there should be some provision whereby the community council can fill a position if someone is unable to fulfil their role, most of the community councillors felt that this was something that was already happening and worked well in their group.

There were mixed views around the administrative allowance provided to CCs by East Renfrewshire Council. Almost all the community councils felt that their grant was not sufficient to meet their needs, such as paying for a minute secretary, but representatives from smaller community councils were more likely to state difficulties in spending their allowance.

While discussing the composition of community councils all participants agreed that they should be made up to show a true reflection of their community by including young people and underrepresented groups. It was felt by some that a composition directive should be included in any new scheme.

The groups then went on to have an open discussion on a range of issues related to the Scheme:

Group 1 Feedback:

The majority of participants felt that community councils on the whole were not given enough publicity or support to publicise and promote their own Community Council. Some suggestions to help improve this were to have regular features about community councils in the ER magazine. It was also highlighted and agreed by all that ERC website is very difficult to navigate for community members and exceptionally difficult to find anything relating to community councils, there was a suggestion made about a specific CC page being developed and added to the website.

Participants also felt that there should be more financial support for community councils to enable them to better engage with their communities as it was felt the current administrative allowance would not allow them to contact their community members regularly in the form of letters and newsletters, with particular issues around postage costs.

A range of feedback regarding the elections process was given. It was felt by almost all participants that the election process was too onerous, particularly given the lack of contested

elections. a number of suggestions were made regarding election night meetings, including: holding election night meetings at the same time as the regular meeting of the CC, it was also felt that the officer representing the Council at the meeting should stand down once the new Chair has been elected, although everyone agreed that officers are welcome to stay for the rest of the meeting after they hand over the chair.

There was a discussion about CC meetings, including the involvement of ERC elected members. All participants agreed that it should be mandatory for the ERC Councillors to be present at all of the meetings in the areas which they represent. Some participants did add that they have good representation from councillors.

Discussion also took place around the role of new community councillors. The main point raised was that new members should not be allowed to hold office until they have been serving for 1 year minimum. The meeting was split on this issue with some participants saying that the reason they were asked to join the CC was to take an office role to support the CC. It was also pointed out that ERC community planning staff are very good at providing training and support for new office bearers.

The scheme guidance does not have any recourse for dispute resolution and this should be made as the code of conduct does not go far enough in this regard.

It was also felt and agreed that community councils should not be forced to co-opt new members because of low numbers.

A long discussion took place around the idea of 'in camera' meetings, essentially meaning that meetings should be allowed to be conducted in private. It was felt that this would be beneficial to protect those who may be vulnerable and have issues which they would not like to discuss in an open full meeting. This was questioned by some participants who felt that this was not necessary as there is scope for a separate meeting which could be fed back to the main community council.

As there was disagreement in the meeting around this issue, a vote took place to try and ascertain people's feelings around this issues this resulted in 13 yes and 2 no.

Group 2 Feedback:

This group also discussed how long community councillors should serve before taking an office bearer role but some participants felt this could be a barrier for people coming into the Community Council.

All of the Community Councillors present felt that ERC should not assume that the Community Council elections will be contested, it was felt that the election preparation should take better consideration of the needs of Community Councils when setting meeting dates.

ANNEX 2:

Stage 2 & 3 Process and Implementation Timeline

ANNEX 2: Review of Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils, Stage 2 & 3 Process and Implementation Timeline

Please note that there will other significant engagements being undertaken at the same time as the Scheme Review including the Budget Engagement (October to December 2014).

Key dates and milestones

25 June 2014	24 September 2014	Early October 2014	Late October 2014	Early January 2015	Mid January to February 2015	12 February 2015	March to May 2015
Special Council Meeting to provide a Stage 1 update and approve outline process for Stage 2.	Special Council Meeting to agree draft Scheme and associated documentation for Stage 2 engagement.	Launch Stage 2 Engagement via public notices in local press, on the Council website and Citizen Space online consultation tool.	Stage 2 Community Council Engagement Event.	Stage 2 Close.	Feedback Collation Period.	Special Council Meeting to approve or make further amendments to revised Scheme, associated documents and to initiate Stage 3. Feedback to Community Councils and the wider community.	Implementation of Stage 3 if required.