Community Empowerment Group

Thursday 25 May 2023, 2-4 pm

Member	Present
Michelle Crombie, Aberdeen City Council (Chair)	Yes
Maggie Hepburn, ACVO (Vice Chair)	Yes
Claire Smith, Police Scotland	Apologies
Dave Black, GREC	Yes
Susan Thoms, ACC	Yes
Colin Wright, ACC	Yes
Martin Wyllie, ACC	Yes
Elaine McConnachie, NHSG	Yes
Iain Robertson, ACHSCP	Yes
Margaret Stewart, ACC	Apologies
Anne McAteer, ACC	Yes
Jade Leyden, ACC	Yes
Murray Dawson, SHMU	Yes
Allison Swanson, ACC	Yes
Baldeep McGarry	Yes
Carol Hannaford	Yes

Item	Title	Lead	Notes/ Actions	Responsibility
1.	**Welcome & Apologies**	All	Apologies received from Margaret Stewart and Claire Smith. Welcome to Carol Hannaford and Baldeep McGarry joining the meeting today to find out more about the Community Empowerment Group and to consider membership. For Item 3 on Community Asset Transfer, welcome to guests Cate Armstrong - ACC, Sandy Mathers - ACVO and Felix Spittal -	
2.	**Actions from meeting on 27 April 23**	MD	Actions from the last meeting were marked as complete or will be considered on todays agenda with the exception of the following: Colin Wright to coordinate input of Dave and Maggie as well and others into the document started by Allison to create a list of community groups currently engaged in the work of Community Planning Aberdeen. Colin sought clarity on expectations for this task. It was agreed that Colin would compile a	

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			simple list of all known community groups that Community Planning Aberdeen has touch points with through CLD, LOIP projects (as advised by Allison) and the Locality Plans. The list should include the name of the group and a contact email and/ or website. This will be developed into a directory as part of project 16.3 which other members will be asked to contribute to. The format of the directory will be co-designed with LEGs and PNPs. This builds on the work started by Dave with the Directory of Equality-Related Groups and organisations.	CW
3.	**Community Asset Transfer**	All	Michelle explained the background to Community Asset Transfer being on the agenda today. It is recognised that the Asset Transfer Request process legislated for by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 is a key enabler of community empowerment. Community ownership of assets has been identified as having a role to play in inspiring people, creating opportunities and potentially transforming communities. The Community Empowerment Strategy published by Community Planning Aberdeen at the end of 2022 identifies a number of improvement project aims to help achieve the ambition of the strategy for all communities to be equal community planning partners. Although no specific improvement project on asset transfer has been identified within the Strategy, the number of asset transfers is a KPI which the group will monitor with interest. The group therefore agreed to invite colleagues from the Council's Corporate Landlord function and ACVO to find out more about local arrangements for supporting and promoting asset transfer in Aberdeen and any challenges and barriers which need to be overcome. Cate Armstrong began her presentation by showing the Council's landing page for Council Asset Transfer on the Council website. The landing page includes documents for making an asset transfer application and advertises its surplus assets available for transfer for 8 weeks. At the moment Council libraries are being advertised. Cate explained that the assets will not be advertised after 8 weeks but may still be available. Cate told the group about the Council's asset register and showed the map view of the assets, explaining the colour coding which indicates where there is interest from community groups (red), community centres (purple), asset transfers completed (blue) and new assets available for transfer (green). Cate advised that there are more expressions of interest than there are asset transfers. Some groups showing an interest have been unable to provide constitutions which is a requirement of the process or they need more support with their application. Where this is the case, Cate will typically contact ACVO or COSS to provide this support. Sandy Mathers from ACVO warned that the focus of asset transfer can often be on transfer of title deeds but we need to think about more broadly and consider supporting lease as well as ownership. Intense financial pressures on public services means we need to maximise use of public land. Asset transfer is about inspiring people to turn what can be a redundant space into a thriving community space and	

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			supporting communities to take control of assets that might otherwise be closed. Technicalities with the process can create unnecessary hurdles and barriers. E.g. the need to have a constitution. Felix Spittal explained that COSS promote the need to support communities through their application rather than just turn them away. We can be blinded by the notion that you need to be a limited company to be able to submit transfer request. COSS and ACVO explore whether there are easier ways to transfer assets through lease etc. Sandy and Felix were asked how they promote asset transfer to communities and how proactive they are in sharing this information with communities or do they rely on community groups approaching them or a referral from Cate. Colin was also asked about the role of CLD in supporting asset transfer. Colin advised that CLD are already doing a lot of support but this is community driven rather than from Cates team. CLD team will defer to ACVO for more technical support. There was a discussion about how aware communities are of the Asset Transfer process and the different ways they might achieve a successful outcome without a constitution. The group also questioned how aware communities were of the Council's asset register and the 8 week advertising window. It was shared that at Moray Council there are two routes for asset transfer, one is for a short term lease, the other a full blown asset transfer. At ACC we only have one formal process for a full asset transfer. Other discussion points were around the Glasgow Caledonian Evaluation of Community Asset Transfer 2019 which refers to the need to support marginalised groups. What happens to a building if a community group responsible for the transfer ceases to exist. And what monitoring takes place to ensure that the planned community benefit has been delivered as a result of the transfer. The discussion concluded that it is in everyone's interest to promote feasible and sustainable public use of public assets and to inspire communities to take action. The following areas were identified for improvement: Council website signposting communities to support from ACVO etc; greater promotion of available assets to communities and reporting on the benefits gained as a result of community asset transfer. The group thanked Cate, Sandy and Felix for making time to come along this afternoon and for their presentations, information and insights. The Community Empowerment Group will consider their role in the topic and agree next steps.	All
4.	**CLD Progress Report 2021/22**		Colin had circulated the CLD Progress Report to members in advance of the meeting and was now seeking the group's approval of the report. Michelle advised that she had expected to receive a report for 2022/23 at this point in the year and that the lag in timing of nearly a year was not helpful. Colin explained that the	

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			the lag in timing seemed worse due to the CLD Plan being approved in December and annual reporting falling yearly thereafter. Michelle also advised that although the ragging helped provide an indication of where the CLD team felt progress was being made it was very difficult to understand what impact was being achieved. Although there are stats within the report, the lack of targets and trend information made it difficult to understand their relevance. Colin explained that the report only captures the data made available by the Council's CLD team and where CLD partners that have provided this. As there is currently no forum that brings all CLD partners together then it can be challenging to gather wider CLD partner information. Michelle suggested that Colin should explore setting up a sub group of the Community Empowerment Group for CLD to address the gap in CLD partner representation on the Community Empowerment Group. There were no other queries. The group agreed to approve the report and requested that Colin take on board feedback for 2022/23 report.	CW
5.	**SO16 Improvement Project Updates**	All	Michelle confirmed Jade Leyden will be taking on the role of Lead Contact for the Group and will be checking in with project managers to ensure their projects are keeping on track. **Risks/ Issues** Allison explained the Project Reporting Template which is being tested with the Community Empowerment Group as a means to capture community engagement activity. Project managers were asked to provide any feedback to Allison. At the moment there are some gaps in the Community Empowerment project updates on this new section. **Successes/ Improvement Highlights** 16.1. City Voice Community Empowerment Edition has now been drafted 16.2. Some funding has come through for child engagement 16.3. Testing reporting template 16.4. Locality Empowerment Groups being relaunched 16.5. Upcoming event on measuring social return for investment 16.6. Community Gathering helped to promote over 24 community groups 16.7. Elaine has drafted feedback form	
6.	**Debrief on Community Gathering 13 May**	All	The group had a quick debrief on the event in May which was very successful. The event team are currently producing a report which can be shared with partners and communities.	MC

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7.	**Thematic Sessions 2023/24**	All	The Group welcomed Dave's proposals for thematic sessions 2023/24. Further suggestions included building in a session on community engagement on the LOIP and Locality Plans and a session dedicated at looking at other examples of online community empowerment tools and resources. Maggie also advised that the NESCAN/ TSI approach to PB for Just Transition would be helpful pre-reading for the planned PB session and links to this should be included.	MH
8.	**AOB**		N/A	
9.	**Date of next meeting**	All	29 June 2023	