



**Glasgow City Council**

**Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement  
City Policy Committee**

**Report: Director of Community Empowerment Services**

**Contact: Steven Dowling Ext: 74111**

**Item 4**

24th September 2020

**REPORT ON A PROPOSAL FOR ESTABLISHING A CITY-WIDE CONTACT AND REPRESENTATIVE GROUP OF 23 COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS; TO EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL FOR SUCH A GROUP BEING PART OF THE RECOVERY JOURNEY FOR COMMUNITY COUNCILS TO REACH APPROPRIATE OPERATIONAL SPHERES IN THE FUTURE.**

**Purpose of Report:**

To inform members of the Committee of a proposal to establish a city-wide contact and representative group of 23 community with its key remit being to aid the operational recovery of Community Councils and the social recovery of the wider community.

**Recommendations:**

The Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the contents of the report and appendices;
- b) Establish a city-wide representative group of 23 community councilors, one from each multi member ward;
- c) Consider a preferred timeline for such a group to be established.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes  No  consulted: Yes  No

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The normal operational spheres for Community Councils (CCs) across Glasgow remain severely restricted due to the ongoing effects of the current COVID19 pandemic; a key feature of this is the required provision for social distancing.
- 1.2 A number of CCs have continued to meet remotely via social media since the beginning of lockdown; this number is relatively low (circa 15) compared to the current number of active CCs which is 78.
- 1.3 This report proposes establishing a city-wide contact and representative group of 23 community councillors (one from each multi member ward); to explore the potential for any traction for such a group to be formed and function, for as long as may be required as part of the recovery journey for CCs reaching appropriate operational spheres in the future.

## **2 CONTEXT**

- 2.1 Since the beginning of lockdown there has been a regular and significant number of electronic communications, information updates and intelligence sharing with CCs via the CC Briefings list; circa 600 personal and/or generic email addresses for CCs and their members across the City are contained on this list.
- 2.2 The regular CC Briefings are very well received and appreciated, however they may be construed as being mainly reactive i.e. the content is almost exclusively generated by officers and/or partners towards CCs.
- 2.3 It is with current circumstances and context in view that this report proposes to (1) increase the representation and voice of as many of the 78 active CC as is possible and safe to do so, and (2) identify additional guidance/good practice to support CC coming out of lockdown (with any guidance/good practice being influenced, shaped, driven and evidenced by CCs).
- 2.4 Appendix 1 to this report, (*email sent to CCs on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2020 'CC Governance and Procedures - ongoing COVID response*) may also support consideration of the proposal to establish a city-wide contact and representative group of community councillors.

## **3 APPROACH**

- 3.1 The approach to populating and establishing this group would mirror previous approaches when identifying representatives to sit on the Glasgow City Council Licensing Forum and the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community & Citizen Engagement City Policy Committee (see Appendix 2 (1)).

- 3.2 The city-wide contact and representative group of community councillors will be required to meet remotely, and engage with their Ward CCs and/or wider community whilst observing social distancing. As such, the candidate nomination form will include considered criteria, and whether candidates would be content to meet this criteria to ensure that prospective members' participation and representation is as meaningful as possible (see Appendix 2 (2)).
- 3.3 An appropriate timeline for the call for nominations and undertaking of any contested elections could be between 4 to 8 weeks; this could mean the group being established as soon as 26<sup>th</sup> October/2<sup>nd</sup> November or later being 23<sup>rd</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> November 2020.
- 3.4 The proposed approach (which will include encouraging participation and representation from as many of Glasgow's communities as possible) and potential contested election process can provide legitimacy to the group and its members' representativeness for each of their respective Wards and associated CCs, and the wider communities of Glasgow.

#### **4 REMIT AND STRUCTURE**

- 4.1 The key remit of the city-wide contact and representative group of community councillors is to aid the operational recovery of CC and social recovery of the wider community.
- 4.2 The group would receive appropriate support from Community Empowerment Services to enable members to work collaboratively towards meeting objectives for influencing, shaping, driving and evidencing what the operational recovery of CCs and social recovery of the wider community may look like.
- 4.3 The first task for the group would be to agree operational ground rules that would be in keeping with existing governance for CCs i.e. the Scheme, and specifically the 'Code of Conduct for Community Councillors'.
- 4.4. A timetable of virtual meetings can be agreed and ongoing tasks would include proactive participation and invoking actions as and when discussed and agreed e.g. topic-based sub groups, researching internet for models of good practice; desktop research; inputting to briefings/reports, supporting virtual local consultations etc.
- 4.5 The group will be made up of 23 community councillors who have embraced the considered criteria. Where there may be any gaps in participation and representation of CCs, then all will still remain as part of the information / consultation loop (e.g. CC Briefings); to ensure all CCs are kept informed and provided opportunities to comment on any agreed actions and/or responses.
- 4.6 It is proposed that the group would include support from Community Empowerment Services (see Report section 5.3) to provide appropriate

administration, technical and strategic support, as well as from partner organisations upon request.

## **5 BENEFITS**

- 5.1 A group of 23 can be more easily communicated with while observing social distancing; it can be formed more effectively into a digital platform; it can inform and shape a meaningful exit and transition towards a 'new' normal for community councils and how they may operate in the future whilst satisfying their governance requirements.
- 5.2 A group of 23 fully legitimised and appointed contact and representative members, with access to circa 800+ community councillors, as well as many other networks (as identified in the '*Strengthening Community Councils & Citizen Representation: A Diversity & Equalities Survey for Glasgow's Community Councils*') can make for a significant and diverse network of equalities based community engagement (see Appendix 3).
- 5.3 The group could establish links into the Social Recovery Task Force, which is co- chaired by the City Convener for Community Empowerment, Equalities, and Human Rights and the City Treasurer. This structure facilitates the mutual sharing of information and intelligence, and promotes joint actions as or when appropriate.

## **6 FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 Consideration could be given to the possibility of providing all CCs the option of moving to online meetings, if they would so wish. At that point, an assessment of what access to ICT software/hardware may be needed along with the capacity of community councillors to enable further assessment of the potential costs/resources required for full digital inclusion.
- 6.2 There are approximately 15 CCs which have successfully moved online and it is anticipated that they would continue to do so. Other CCs may just require additional guidance and support to get started, and those which may require a higher level of support could be encouraged to nominate a representative in the meantime.
- 6.3 In addition to the above, there may be added value for an agreed follow-up date for a CC update report to come back to the (WECCE) Committee, possibly within 3 to 6 months, so that the Committee can determine if this approach is not only working but also if it needs to be modified as national and/or local COVID19 guidelines are adjusted.

## **7 SUMMARY**

- 7.1 The fact that CCs across Glasgow have not been able to operate as effectively as normal has dealt a significant blow to community engagement for the City. The capacity of CCs is at risk of being eroded, and with the

additional postponement of the 2020 Full Elections and AGMs, this erosion of CCs capacity may only be compounded.

- 7.2 If we do not take appropriate action at this time then the road to recovery for CCs in the future may be at risk of becoming longer, with the capacity, resilience and sustainability of a significant number of CCs being eroded even further.
- 7.3 Although a city-wide contact and representative group of 23 community councillors may form a small part of a wider *social recovery plan*; its potential to reach out to circa 800+ community councillors, as well as many other networks can be evidenced; its potential to aid the operational recovery of CCs, and social recovery of the wider community, may also provide evidence of good practice for others to follow.

## 8 POLICY AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

<b>Resource Implications:</b>	None
<i>Financial:</i>	None
<i>Legal:</i>	None
<i>Personnel:</i>	None
<i>Procurement:</i>	None
<b>Council Strategic Plan:</b>	Resilient & Empowered Neighbourhoods – citizens and neighbourhoods can influence how services are developed and budgets spent (74, 86); A Well Governed City that listens and responds – citizens are more involved in local and city wide decision making (95).
<b>Equality Impacts:</b>	Promote and Support Respect for Equality and Diversity
<i>Does the proposal support the Council’s Equality Outcomes 2017-22</i>	The Council Family has visibly promoted and delivered events that promote and celebrate cultural diversity in Glasgow.
<i>What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?</i>	Advancing equality of opportunity
<b>Sustainability Impacts:</b>	None
<i>Environmental:</i>	

*Social:*

*Economic:*

**Privacy and Data Protection impacts:** None

## **9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community & Citizen Engagement City Policy Committee is requested to:

- a) Note the contents of the report and appendices;
- b) Establish a city-wide representative group of 23 community councilors, one from each multi member ward;
- c) Consider a preferred timeline for such a group to be established.

### **Content of CCs Briefing email to all listed personal and generic email addresses held on file for CC and members. Sent Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

Dear Community Councillors

I hope all remains well with you and yours during these ongoing trying times.

Please ensure that this briefing is pro-actively shared amongst your respective memberships. Following consideration of the contents, your community council may wish to submit a coordinated response which could include any concerns and/or queries.

I have been receiving an increasing number of queries from community councillors with regards upcoming AGMs / Full Elections / Filling Vacancies etc. I have sought consideration and guidance from senior management, following recent discussions between Lawrence and I, with regard to a number of governance and procedural matters relating to community councils amid current circumstances. The following list summarises the considered guidance from our discussion, along with recommendations; please be wholly assured that these are based on ensuring that all community councillors' (as well as local communities and the general public) ongoing safety is not compromised and/or put at risk. As such, I would hope the following will meet with your understanding:

#### **Block Insurance**

This is in hand and all 78 active community councils have provided a satisfactory response to ensure that they have the necessary Insurance Policy cover in place. My thanks for your support, assistance and patience during the gathering of these responses;

#### **Filling Vacancies**

All community councils are advised to appoint community residents, who have expressed an interest in joining their community council, as Associate Members until such time that a 'meaningful call for nominations' can be undertaken. Please ensure that any such appointments are formally noted and that either Lawrence or I are informed. The status of Associate Members can be found via Scheme clauses 3.13 – 3.15;

*Associate Members:*

- 3.13 *Associate Membership can be by invitation made to any individuals or to local organisations that are active within the Community Council boundary or alternatively by a request made by individuals or local organisations. The decision of who can become an Associate Member lies exclusively with the elected Community Councillors, as does the duration of their appointment (see Scheme clause 3.15).*
- 3.14 *Associate Members need not reside within the Community Council boundary. They should only be appointed where Community Councillors have agreed by a simple majority that a need has arisen to appoint individuals*

*with particular skills, knowledge or experience; and the reasoning and decision are recorded in the relevant minute.*

- 3.15 *As determined by the Community Council; Associate Members may serve for a maximum period of the same term of office as the office bearers i.e. 12 months, although all Associate Membership should be reviewed at the October AGMs if this occurs sooner than the 12 months. Associate Members' status is similar to that of all other Ex-Officio members i.e. see Scheme clause 3.12, although they may attend meetings of external bodies to observe on the Community Council's behalf, and report back, but only following a minuted agreement for them to do so.*

### **Community Council Development Session (CCDS)**

These sessions remain on hold although there is current discussion with colleagues and partners regards a virtual consultation on Public Transport. This proposal sits perfectly with my previous intention to develop and hold a Transport Panel/Forum session as part of the CCDS, which was in response to the clear appetite shown for this by community councillors at the CCDS held in February 2020 – and (if at all possible) in the coming months (but more likely in 2021) to hold such a Transport Panel/Forum session as a catch all following the virtual consultation, although I emphasise if at all possible and safe to do so;

### **October 2020 Full Elections**

There are 16 Full Elections scheduled to be held in October 2020. However, the process for these should have begun already but can't because, similar to filling vacancies, current circumstances do not support a meaningful advertising of Full Elections, participation as prospective members or any potential for contested elections and subsequent voting residents. It is proposed that Full Elections are postponed at present with the aim of undertaking these by March 2021 at the latest, although they can be brought forward should current circumstances significantly improve;

### **Annual General Meetings (AGM)**

Similar to current circumstances outlined above for October 2020 Full Elections. Although there are a few community councils which have been holding virtual meetings via social media it is recommended that the same proposed timeline as that above is applied to the 78 AGMs;

### **Annual Accounts / Administration Allowance / Discretionary Grant Fund**

A view has been taken that annual accounts could still be collated by respective community council members where and when it is absolutely safe to do so and in keeping with Government guidelines. The independently examined accounts would remain subject to the current financial year i.e. covering the period from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020. All accounts received will be saved to file in 'draft' form until they can be formally approved at the AGM.

There may also not be an immediate requirement for Annual Administration Allowances (AAA) to be provided to each community council following receipt of accounts due to the degree of inactivity, expenditure and/or where there is a reasonable bank balance available - this is logistical in being able to monitor and log all recipients of AAA effectively in the future when circumstances improve. In the

meantime, for those community councils who may be experiencing financial issues and/or concerns I would steer them towards the Discretionary Grant Fund (see attached);

**Annual Monitoring – Red-Amber-Green (RAG) Analysis and Status**

It is not possible to undertake any meaningful RAG Analysis of community councils for 2020. If RAG Analysis were to be rigorously applied then circa 80% to 90% of community councils would be RED! At date of this email there are 14 community councils with RED RAG status, mainly for insufficient minutes. In normal circumstances this status can be easily rectified with support and guidance from the appropriate officers. The view has been taken to suspend the RAG Analysis for 2020 and all community councils which are currently Red will be uplifted to Amber. The next RAG period can be undertaken from October 2021 to September 2022.

I am happy to discuss any of the above further should you wish although I would request that your community council submit a coordinated response which may include any concerns and/or queries.

Best wishes, stay safe.

Regards

Steven

**(1) The approach to populating and establishing a city-wide contact and representative group of community councillors which mirrors the 23 Wards**

1. Send out a CC Briefing calling for nominations from each of the 78 active CCs;
2. Simultaneous and similar hard copy letter with enclosed nomination form sent to the 78 CCs;
3. All candidates will provide a statement in support of their nomination;
4. All candidates' nominations will include whether they would be content to meet considered criteria (see Appendix 2 (2) below);
5. Only 1 representative is sought from each of the 23 Wards;
6. Contested elections will take place in those Wards with more than 1 candidate;
7. All CCs in each Ward will identify their preferred candidate in instances of contested elections;
8. Participation and representation of as many of Glasgow's communities as possible will be encouraged;
9. A timeline will be in place for submission of nominations (see report section 3.3);
10. Appropriate administration, technical and strategic support will be provided by officers from Glasgow City Council and requests to partner organisations.

**(2) Candidates' Considered Criteria**

1. Knowledge, experience, and/or willingness, to actively engage with the regular use of social media and/or alternative electronic means to communicate with group members, Ward based CCs and wider community;
2. Accept membership of 'Contact & Rep Microsoft Teams Group\*';
3. Willingness to commit to attending regular calendared virtual meetings and other virtual meetings as may be discussed, agreed and appropriate;
4. Willingness to share contact details e.g. name, phone, email (with understanding that these details may be likely to be shared in the public domain – Note: technical assistance can be explored further with use of generic/tailored contact details);
5. Willingness to proactively share information and intelligence with Ward CCs and wider community and similarly involve, consult and collaborate with Ward CCs

and wider community to aid the operational recovery of CCs and social recovery of the wider community;

6. General willingness to proactively participate and invoke actions as and when discussed and agreed e.g. topic-based sub groups, searching internet for models of good practice; desktop research; inputting to briefings/reports, supporting virtual consultations etc. to aid the operational recovery of CCs and social recovery of the wider community.

\*It is proposed that this group will include appropriate support officers and senior managers from Community Empowerment Services.

**Extracts from ‘Strengthening Community Councils & Citizen Representation: A Diversity & Equalities Survey for Glasgow’s Community Councils’ revised 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020:**

**1 Introduction**

1.1 The following briefing contains responses collated from a recent diversity and equalities survey (audit) carried out with Glasgow’s community councils. The audit was conducted from November 2019 to January 2020, with a closing date for responses set for Friday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020.

**8 Are you a member of other groups within your local area?**

Yes **57.10%** No **38.58%** Prefer not to say **2.78%** Left blank **1.54%**

If you have answered ‘Yes’ above, please provide some details:

- crime prevention panel (2);
- neighbourhood watch (3);
- church/faith groups (23);
- social/community group (48);
- carers (2);
- Area/Sector Partnerships/Locality Planning/Thriving Places/Community Budgeting (14);
- political (4);
- guides/scouts (2);
- licensing forum (1);
- Trusts (8);
- parent council/PTA (6);
- charity (3);
- rotary (1);
- bowling club (3);
- community action groups (16);
- tenants & residents (23);
- sports (3);
- housing associations (11);
- friends of/heritage/conservation/environmental (31);
- justice of the peace (1).

*(the above groupings have been broadened to accommodate the range of descriptions provided and provide a more succinct list)*