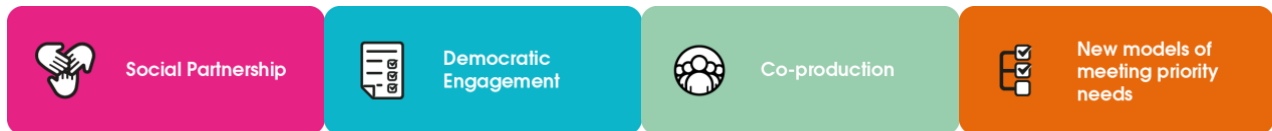


COMMUNITY



Inverclyde Council

Community Councils in Inverclyde

Introduction

Community Councils (CCs) are collaborative groups of people who give time to, and have a shared commitment and interest in, the well-being of their community. Introduced by The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, their main purposes are to:

- consult and represent the local community;
- make known to the Council and other public bodies the views of those in the community; and
- take such action they feel is appropriate in the interests of the community.

CCs are valued partners and are frequently consulted on how local services are delivered and other issues affecting their localities such as planning and licencing. In Inverclyde, they operate under the *Scheme for the Establishment of CCs*, which covers a variety of matters including the CC areas; who can be a Community Councillor; how many and what types of CC there can be; and the roles and responsibilities of Community Councillors. It also covers the operation of CCs, dealing with meetings, accounts, and Elections.

To empower CCs to engage meaningfully and act as inclusive, representative voices, Inverclyde Council provides a range of support in the spirit of co-operation and capacity building; support includes:

- a comprehensive, collaborative training package;
- tailored support to Office Bearers;
- preparing for public meetings and consultations;
- liaising with Council Services;
- support and guidance to access match funding;

- development of skills to work in partnership with a range of agencies and groups; and
- support to develop project proposals (for example, a new play park).

Review process

The Council must from time to time review the Scheme and, if it is considered necessary, may amend or replace it. On 1 December 2022, the Council started such a Review as part of a process leading to CC Elections in 2024, which considered both the current CC areas and the terms of the Scheme itself which, amongst other things, contains provisions on:

- maximum and minimum memberships;
- co-option and limits on co-option;
- minimum meeting requirements;
- Elections; and
- model Standing Orders and Constitution.

From the outset, this process was seen as a co-operative piece of work, to be co-designed alongside existing CCs. As such, Inverclyde Council's Community Learning and Development (CLD) Team arranged a facilitated workshop with current CC members and the Council's Community Council Champion. The workshop provided feedback and helped identify local training needs, support and assistance to help create a pathway for new CC members. A digital consultation was completed which provided a baseline of the format of meetings in the future, recruitment of new members and support to ensure annual accounts are verified to allow the release of grants.

The Consultation process comprised three main parts. Firstly, the Council sought the views and representations of the community in the CC areas and the composition of the CCs under the Scheme in force at that time (the 2011 Scheme). We then sought views and representations on the terms of a Draft Scheme, incorporating proposed new CC areas with 1,200 responses received. During the third part of the Consultation, the views and representations of the community were invited on a proposed Amended Scheme, which included a map of proposed CC areas based on the CC areas under the 2011 Scheme. Each phase aimed to foster open dialogue and joint decision-making, helping to shape a model that works for all involved.

Council Officers also took account of the Scottish Government's Good Practice Guide <https://bit.ly/3Y36z90> which includes details of a Model Scheme on which the previous Inverclyde Scheme, and a number of other Councils' Schemes, are based.

The 2023 Scheme and financial support for CCs

At a special meeting on 7 December 2023, the Council noted the outcome of the Third Consultation and amended the Scheme by adopting the proposals consulted on as the current Scheme (the 2023 Scheme) – a framework shaped through co-operative input.

The Council approves a budget annually for the funding of CCs. The Council meets various initial costs from this budget, such as public liability insurance arranged for the CCs; and Election costs (in years where the regular four-yearly Elections for CCs are held).

The remaining budget is then allocated to the provision of the CC Grant. The CC Grant comprises two parts: the Administrative Grant (a sum of £500 per CC); and the Project Grant (the remaining

grant budget for that year split amongst the CC areas). CCs are expected to use their Administrative Grant for the purpose of meeting reasonable and appropriate operational and administration costs. They are encouraged to work collectively to prioritise the use of these funds in ways that promote inclusive community benefit. Additionally, CCs may be able to apply for other forms of grant funding, both from Inverclyde Council and from other sources.

Delivering strategic priorities

Supporting and collaborating with CCs plays a vital role in achieving the goals of The Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33, aligned with The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The Council's CLD Plan places Community Empowerment as a key strategic priority. As such, CCs are recognised as a key partner and supporting and engaging with them is key to achieving this priority and in delivering change with communities, not just for them.

CC Election and Current CC Position

Following the conclusion of the successful Review process, the Council formally approved in December 2023 the start of CC Elections to be run between January and February 2024. The successful Election process resulted in a 30% increase in the number of Community Councillors, 64% now being women, six existing CCs re-established, one CC returning after a period of inactivity, and two new CCs established in areas which have not had one for several years.

As a result, the Council currently has 9 CCs out of 11 formed. The CLD Team continues to build strong working relationships with each established CC, offering support and training and attendance at CC meetings. Some CCs receive assistance with general operations and functioning, while others may benefit from more specialised support, such as guidance on office bearer roles and responsibilities. By fostering open communication, offering customised support and shared learning, we aim to build the capacity, effectiveness and efficiency of each CC, ensuring they can thrive as a collaborative, trusted voice in their community and therefore ultimately benefiting the communities they serve.

As a result of Review, CCs recognised the need to cooperate more together and have started the process of setting up an Association of CCs in Inverclyde, with the support of Council Officers. The Association will aim to strengthen and provide a collective voice for CCs in Inverclyde, by working co-operatively together, with the Council and other key stakeholders.

For further information contact:

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