

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Public Protection
DATE	17 January 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Community Empowerment Strategy 2023-2026
REPORT NUMBER	CUS/23/014
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CHIEF OFFICER	Martin Murchie
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TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.5

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the Community Empowerment Strategy 2023-26 which complements and sits alongside the Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), refreshed in 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee endorse the Community Empowerment Strategy presented at Appendix 1.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 was introduced with the aim of further empowering communities in Scotland. It sets out the responsibilities of Community Planning Partnerships in supporting communities to be involved and meaningfully participate in community planning. It also gives new rights to community bodies to do more for themselves and have more say in decisions that affect them through participation requests and asset transfer. In 2016 Community Planning Aberdeen (CPA) published an [Engagement, Participation and Empowerment Strategy](#) which used the metaphor of a ladder to represent the interactions between public organisations and people. The strategy set out an ambition for CPA to go beyond informing, consulting and involving people - towards community empowerment.
- 3.2 The [Community Empowerment Group](#) was established to maintain an overview of the Engagement, Participation and Empowerment Strategy and to advise and support CPA on effective approaches to engaging and involving communities. Since 2017 there have been advances in how we do this as a Community Planning Partnership and recent developments include the establishment of Locality Empowerment Groups, which provide a forum for all communities across the City to connect and collaborate on shared priorities. The role of community connector on LOIP improvement project teams was

introduced to link community ideas for change to existing projects and strengthen collaboration between staff and communities. The Community Empowerment Network was established to provide a space for community groups and organisations to connect with each other, stay informed and develop relationships. Finally, online tools such as the Citizens Points Simulator and social media platforms now complement other, longer serving mechanisms like City Voice, Priority Neighbourhood Partnerships and participatory budgeting.

- 3.3 In light of these developments and recognising that more work is required to genuinely empower communities, Community Planning Aberdeen's Community Empowerment Group undertook to revise the existing Engagement, Participation and Empowerment Strategy and define what improvement would look like by 2026.

Development Process and Stakeholder Engagement

- 3.4 In September 2021, a sub group of the Community Empowerment Group was formed to lead on the development of the newly named Community Empowerment Strategy. Other titles have been explored but not agreed. The group began by reviewing and appraising the existing strategy and answering important questions about who the new strategy was for and what it aimed to achieve.

3.5 **Who is the strategy aimed at?**

- Community Planning Aberdeen partners and governance groups. It should set out principles and standards to govern CPA's work and influence individual partners' practice.
- It will also have a public audience and will provide clarity for staff, community groups and the general public about the opportunities for people to get involved in their communities and in the work of Community Planning Aberdeen.

3.6 **How do we anticipate the strategy may be used?**

- It will be used by Community Planning Aberdeen and partner organisations to drive improvement in community engagement and empowerment and set a baseline against which we can evaluate the success of our approach.
- It will provide partner organisations and community groups, who wish to better engage with each other, a framework that promotes good practice.

3.7 **How will it result in improvement for communities?**

- The strategy will set out, in plain English, how communities can get involved and have influence and be launched with a clear communications plan.
- The strategy highlights the limits of the current approach and openness to explore new and innovative models of community engagement and empowerment that will benefit people and communities.

- 3.8 Over the last twelve months sessions have been held with members of the Community Empowerment Group to draft and develop the new strategy. A public engagement exercise was carried out in June and July 2022 using [Padlet](#), an online whiteboard. It was promoted via social media and with community groups & networks and people were invited to tell us what success in Community Empowerment looked like for them. The [Padlet Findings](#) were explored through workshops at the Community Empowerment Network meeting held on 28 July 2022 which was open to all and promoted by CEG members. The feedback from the engagement has helped define the overall aim of the strategy and the themes for improvement. The specific ideas captured as part of the Padlet exercise will be further explored and tested through the improvement projects to be taken forward as part of the strategy.

Community Empowerment Strategy 2023-26

- 3.9 The Community Empowerment Strategy presented in Appendix 1 to this report is the product of work which has taken place since September 2021. It complements and supports the Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan refreshed in July 2021. See summary below of key sections.

Purpose of the Strategy

- 3.10 To achieve the vision set out in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan for Aberdeen to be 'a place where all people can prosper', we need an active and inclusive citizenship where all people have a voice and ability to influence what happens to them and their community. The ambition of the Community Empowerment Strategy is for all communities across Aberdeen to be equal community planning partners in realising this vision. It acknowledges the power inequalities that exist across the City and makes a commitment to understand and address these in taking forward this strategy.

New Guiding Principles & Standards

- 3.11 The guiding principles are based on the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 guidance and regulations for Community Planning Partnerships which requires all CPPs and community planning partners to ensure that all bodies which can and want to contribute to community planning are able to do so. Adoption of the Grampian Engagement Standards provides guideline behaviours and practical measures that underpin effective engagement to support CPA and partners to put these principles into practice. Finally, the Ladder of Empowerment illustrates the different levels of engagement and our collective desire to aim for community empowerment and self-determination.

New Stretch Outcome 16

- 3.12 The strategy defines what improvement in community empowerment will look like by 2026 by introducing a new 16th Stretch Outcome. The approach follows the same quality improvement discipline adopted for the other 15 stretch outcomes within the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, setting out what we will improve, by how much and by when. The Community Empowerment Group will be responsible for leading the achievement of the stretch outcome through the delivery of the improvement project aims set out within the strategy.

100% increase in the proportion of citizens who feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026 (Baseline 2021: [24%](#) Source: [Aberdeen City Voice](#), [Place Standard](#) question. Percentage of respondents scoring 5 and above out of a possible 1-7.)

New Online Tools & Resources

3.13 A new and 'live' part of the strategy which will continue to evolve with support from all partners is the new Community Tools and Resources webpage. This front facing component of the strategy aims to be guiding, supporting and empowering for all: professionals, community groups/associations, and community members keen to get involved.

3.14 See Appendix 2 for Strategy Communication Plan.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The recommendation support compliance with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) <small>*taking into account controls/control actions</small>	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	No significant risks identified	N/A	N/A	N/A
Compliance	Must comply with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015	The Strategy supports compliance	L	Yes
Operational	There is a risk that teams are not aware of the Strategy	Communication plan ensures that staff are aware of the Strategy and when to use it.		Yes

	and do not use the tools when engaging with the public which may have a negative impact on the public's perception of the Council and Partnership working.			
Financial	No significant risks identified	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reputational	There is a risk that teams do not use the Strategy when engaging with the public which may have a negative impact on the public's perception of the Council and Partnership working.	Communication plan ensures that staff are aware of the Strategy and when to use it.		Yes
Environment / Climate	No significant risks identified	N/A	N/A	N/A

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2022-2023</u>	
Impact of Report	
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></p>	<p><i>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement:-</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering Aberdeen's Communities • Recognise that citizens and communities – rather than the City Council - are best placed to say what services they require and how these are provided and seek to give greater control over appropriate services and facilities to local communities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the use of Plain English by the Council. • Consult citizens, community councils and other partners on the work of the City Council, including carrying out a public engagement and consultation as part of the annual budget setting process. • Explore options to establish local Citizens' Assemblies – with the first remit of a Citizens' Assembly being to advise the council on what's needed to tackle gender inequality in Aberdeen • Seek to make Aberdeen a UNICEF Child Friendly City.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The Community Empowerment Strategy complements and supports the Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan refreshed in July 2021. To achieve the vision set out in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan for Aberdeen to be 'a place where all people can prosper', we need an active and inclusive citizenship where all people have a voice and ability to influence what happens to them and their community. The ambition of the Community Empowerment Strategy is for all communities across Aberdeen to be equal community planning partners in realising this vision. It acknowledges the power inequalities that exist across the City and makes a commitment to understand and address these in taking forward this strategy.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	
Regional and City Strategies	N/A

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Full impact assessment not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	None

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 [Draft Community Empowerment Strategy 2023-2026 – Community Planning Aberdeen Board, 30 November 2022 \(Item 2.1 Pages 43 - 68\)](#)

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Community Empowerment Strategy 2023-2026
- 11.2 Communication Plan

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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