

**Audit Scotland National Review of Community Planning
Report by Alasdair Mathers, Community Planning & Performance Manager****1 Purpose of Report**

This report provides a summary of the results of the national review of Community Planning undertaken by Audit Scotland in 2014, providing a commentary on the Midlothian position relative to each recommendation with recommendations for further action.

2 Background

- 2.1** Since the publication of the Statement of Ambition by Scottish Government in 2013, Audit Scotland considers that there has been a strong sense of renewed energy nationally and locally to improving Community Planning. In their view Community Planning continues to become more of a shared enterprise, with more active participation by partners and evidence of more shared ownership of the priorities in Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs). However, in their view although many aspects of Community Planning are improving, leadership, scrutiny, and challenge are still inconsistent.
- 2.2** Audit Scotland comments firstly on the role of the Scottish Government and the National Community Planning Group (NCPG). The report indicated that the NCPG has taken steps to promote the importance of Community Planning across government and in partner organisations. Audit Scotland considered that the NCPG needed to set out what the refocused approach to Community Planning means for the Statement of Ambition, its expectation of CPPs, and how success in implementing these principles will be assessed. Alongside that, it comments that the Scottish Government needs to demonstrate a more systematic approach to implementing its outcomes approach by clarifying the links between longer-term outcomes, its priorities, and performance measures across all policy areas.
- 2.3** Turning to CPPs, Audit Scotland concludes that many CPPs were still not clear about what they are expected to achieve, and the added value that can be brought through working in partnership. Although SOAs have improved since their introduction by Scottish Government, Audit Scotland considered that many still do not set out the specific improvements CPPs are aiming to achieve. They also consider that many CPPs lack a focus on how Community Planning will improve outcomes for specific communities, and reduce the gap in outcomes between the most and least deprived groups in Scotland. This reflects a wider ambiguity both nationally and locally about the extent to which the focus of Community Planning should be on local needs or about delivering national priorities. Audit Scotland considers that CPPs need to improve their use of local data to help set relevant, targeted priorities for improvement that will address inequalities within specific communities.
- 2.4** Audit Scotland goes on to note that CPPs are starting to better understand what resources they have available to deliver their SOA. They have begun to identify how partners use their resources, such as money and staff, in particular priority areas or specific communities. But Audit Scotland considered that discussions about targeting these resources at their priorities and shifting them towards preventative activity were still in the early stages. CPPs did not know what a strategic approach to prevention would look like, and in many areas the evidence base for this was underdeveloped. The current pace and scale of activity was contributing to an improved focus on prevention but was, in Audit Scotland's view, unlikely to deliver the radical change in the design and delivery of public services called for by the Christie Commission.
- 2.5** Audit Scotland considered that there was no coherent national framework for assessing the performance and pace of improvement of CPPs. In their view this meant that there was no overall picture of how individual CPPs are performing, and what progress was being made towards the effective implementation of the Scottish Government's Statement of Ambition. The Scottish Government was starting to use existing performance management and accountability arrangements to monitor the contribution of public bodies to Community Planning. But was not yet consistently holding central government bodies or the NHS to account for their performance within CPPs.

2.6 The Statement of Ambition placed Community Planning at the core of public service reform, but many CPPs were, in Audit Scotland's view, not clear about what their specific role in these reform programmes should be. While some CPPs had a good overview of public service reform in their area, CPP oversight of and engagement with some important aspects of reform, such as the integration of health and social care services, and national reform programmes such as the Early Years Collaborative, remained underdeveloped. Scottish Government guidance was not clear enough about the specific role that CPPs should play in the implementation of public service reforms.

2.7 Audit Scotland made specific recommendations for CPPs:

- strengthen the effectiveness of the leadership, challenge, and scrutiny role at CPP Board level
- streamline local partnership working arrangements and ensure they are aligned with local improvement priorities
- ensure that local Community Planning arrangements are clear about who is responsible for:
- agreeing the priorities of the CPP and SOA
- allocating resources and coordinating activity
- implementing activity
- scrutinising performance and holding partners and others to account for their performance
- work with the new health and social care integration joint boards to develop services that meet the needs of local people and support SOA priorities
- set clearer improvement priorities focused on how they will add most value as a partnership, when updating their SOA
- use local data on the differing needs of their communities to set relevant, targeted priorities for improvement
- start to align and shift partners' resources toward agreed prevention and improvement priorities.

2.8 Progress by Midlothian CPP

The CPP has established a good reputation, as evidenced by feedback from a variety of external partners for effective data gathering and evidence based planning, and for engagement with stakeholders and the communities of Midlothian. The Strategic Assessment process has been used as an example of good practice by Scottish Government, and the local area profiling as a basis for Neighbourhood Planning has been adopted and developed by our neighbouring council East Lothian. Partnership working in Midlothian is also well regarded and the relationships this has developed has supported the introduction of the Integrated Joint Board with few of the public difficulties reported in some other parts of Scotland. Partnership working with the Third Sector is well established, and the level of third sector participation in CPP decision-making structures is also commented on by Scottish Government as good practice.

- **Strengthen the effectiveness of the leadership, challenge and scrutiny role at CPP board level.**
The Board has revised its reporting arrangements to ensure that the half yearly reports it receives now focus on progress the the top three priorities, and the areas where progress is off target. Each thematic partnership identified as owning a top priority has to report on its progress directly to the Board. Every Board meeting now also considers progress reports on the three "approaches" agreed between the partners. Board members lead the annual planning day where the results of the annual Strategic Assessment and public engagement are debated with partners and community representatives. Operational progress reporting is now addressed at the Community Planning Working group, which includes representation from each thematic group and partner agencies. This group regularly reports to the Board through the Chair who is a Board member. Annual public performance reporting is in place.
- **Streamline local partnership working arrangements and ensure they are aligned with local improvement priorities**
The Board has reduced the number of thematic partnerships, merging economy, housing and environment activities together under the title Sustainable Growth Midlothian (SGM). This provides a link between Community Planning and the Local Development planning system, a complex area operating under specific national legislation where nationally links between community and development planning require further consideration. It is also recognised that the environment strand of the CPP's work has been under-resourced to undertake engagement with communities of interest in environmental issues. This will be partly addressed by proposals for revisions to the staffing structure

in the current Council planning service review. The key priority of economic growth is led by the SGM partnership, supported by work in the Improving Opportunities Midlothian (IOM) partnership on employment, lifelong learning, and reducing inequality

IOM leads on positive post school destinations for young people, supported by the Getting it Right for Every Midlothian Child (GIRFEMC) partnership, where raising attainment and supporting children to get the best start in life are key outcomes.

GIRFEMC leads on the final priority of early years, and child poverty reduction, where the IOM group has taken a specific role in the reducing child poverty aspect, given its remit for reducing poverty. This non 'silo working' approach is supported and encouraged by the Community Planning Working Group (CPWG), whose role includes scrutiny of performance and promotion of joint working.

- **ensure that local community planning arrangements are clear about who is responsible for:**
- **agreeing the priorities of the CPP and SOA**
In Midlothian this is the Single Midlothian Plan, agreed at the Board through the planning cycle of profiling/ Strategic Assessment/public engagement/decision making, and subsequently adopted by the Council as its corporate strategy.
- **allocating resources and coordinating activity**
In Midlothian coordination is undertaken by the Working Group and the five thematic partnerships reporting to the Board, resource sharing is a normal part of partnership working. The Board considers allocation of additional resources for key priorities, for example the targeting of resources towards the areas of multiple deprivation.
- **implementing activity**
Implementation is undertaken by the five thematic partnerships, by working groups reporting to them on specific action plans and by individual agencies and staff/community activists and volunteers depending on the activity.
- **scrutinising performance and holding partners and others to account for their performance**
Accountability and scrutiny is undertaken at a variety of levels, from action planning groups and Neighbourhood Planning groups through thematic groups to the Working Group and up to the Board. The Covalent Performance Management system is used to record and track progress and performance, reporting as indicated above.
- **work with the new health and social care integration joint boards(IJB) to develop services that meet the needs of local people and support SOA priorities**
The IJB arrangements in Midlothian have been successfully integrated into the CPP structure, with the IJB assuming oversight of the Community Planning work on adult health and care, and in turn reporting to and attending the CPP Board. A full engagement process to develop the required joint health and care plan has been completed. The new plan will be launched on time.
- **set clearer improvement priorities focused on how they will add most value as a partnership, when updating their SOA**
The CPP will be reviewing the three year outcomes it set itself in 2013 at this year's annual planning event on 22 October. The focus of this event is the outcomes achieved through partnership working in the period 2013-15 as a precursor to agreeing new medium term outcomes (improvement priorities) for the period 2016-19.
- **Use local data on the differing needs of their communities to set relevant, targeted priorities for improvement**
The completion of 16 Neighbourhood Planning processes over the past five years, based on local data sharing between agencies and with communities, has identified the need for more comprehensive local profiling. Profiles of Mayfield, Gorebridge, Dalkeith/Woodburn, and Penicuik have been completed and further work is underway. The CPP has established an area targeting approach to the three areas including the top 20% geographies in the Scottish Indicators of Multiple Deprivation.

- Start to align and shift partners' resources toward agreed prevention and improvement priorities. The CPP has set preventive intervention as one of its three priority approaches, and reports are provided regularly to the Board on activities under this approach. There is room for improvement in tracking the resources being delivered by partners, and further work is required to establish effective systems to do this.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

There are no direct resource implications arising from this report; however the Community Empowerment Act now requires joint resourcing not just of delivery of Community Planning priorities, but of the facilitation of the Board and its sub groups. The Council can now open discussions with key partners to request co-financing of support of the Board, working, and thematic partnership groups.

3.2 Risk

Risk management of Community Planning is embedded in the Covalent risk register, where a number of risks have been identified and risk management arrangements put in place. The national audit report identifies significant common risks across Scotland and the CPP board is embarking on self evaluation work with the Improvement Service which will consider these.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- Community safety
- Adult health, care and housing
- Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- Sustainable growth
- Business transformation and Best Value
- None of the above

3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The Audit report covers all Community Planning themes, and makes recommendations for improvement that will impact on the Single Midlothian Plan. The new Community Empowerment legislation will require all CPPs to publish a local outcomes improvement plan. Scottish Government has indicated in advance of the statutory guidance due next year that the existing Single Midlothian Plan broadly meets the requirements of the new Act.

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

One aim of the Audit Scotland review was to increase focus on outcomes in the operation of Community Planning. The Community Empowerment Act further strengthens expectations to demonstrate impact in joint delivery with communities and across partners.

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The Single Midlothian plan prioritises preventive interventions as one of its three "approaches", regular reports are made to the CPP Board on progress.

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The Single Midlothian plan prioritises capacity building and co- production as one of its three "approaches", regular reports are made to the CPP Board on progress.

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

The Single Midlothian plan is subject to and equality impact assessment process each year.

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

The Single Midlothian plan includes Sustainable Growth as one of the five thematic partnerships. The resourcing of sustainability work is part of the current service review of planning within the Council.

3.10 IT Issues

There are no IT issues

4 Summary

The Audit Scotland report made a set of observations and recommendations, which have been outlined in the body of this report, alongside the current position within Midlothian on each of these. Actions are underway to address improvements recommended and to prepare for the implementation of the Community Empowerment Act 2015, due to come into force next year.

5 Recommendations

It is recommended that Audit Committee

1. Note the contents of the Audit Scotland national report and the current assessment of the Midlothian position within this report.

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Background Papers: