

Bringing 'neighbourhood' centre stage in Scotland

Report on a 24-hour event for Scottish local authorities
and their partners active in community planning partnerships

Hosted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation
and Communities Scotland, Edinburgh

14–15 June, 2006

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**JOSEPH ROWNTREE
FOUNDATION**

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Introduction

The purpose of this event was to explore the emerging role for neighbourhoods in local governance and the links between neighbourhood regeneration and service delivery. Ten local authorities were variously represented by: the chair (or other members) of the Community Partnership Board, the chief executive or other senior officers. Many active partners also participated, representing for example, the police, the National Health Service (NHS) and community organisations. The Scottish Executive and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) also participated. Lord Best, Director of JRF, chaired the event.

To enable full and frank consideration of the practicalities of empowering neighbourhoods, and the benefits and pitfalls that this entails, the discussion was under 'Chatham House rules'. The programme and the attendance list are attached.

Opportune time to bring neighbourhoods centre stage

An introductory presentation by a representative of Communities Scotland noted that it was now three years from the introduction of Scotland's 2003 Local Government Act. Given this, it was an opportune time to reflect on progress in community planning. A review of community planning had just been published by Audit Scotland.¹ This endorsed the important role of community planning partnerships but also set out the challenges involved in addressing some key issues: the need to prioritise policy and action and taking real steps to put communities and local councillors at the heart of the community planning process.

A recent Parliamentary Committee report for the Scottish Parliament also noted the link of community planning to addressing issues of poverty and disparity of opportunity. The Committee recommended more attention to regeneration outcomes and simplified funding regimes.

In concluding, the speaker from Communities Scotland noted there was much research evidence and personal experience of partnership and community planning. It was now time to undertake some radical thinking about how to improve outcomes and the quality of participation rather than just focus on structures. Scotland ought to be able to take advantage of its relatively small size in population to foster such learning.

Part I: Learning lessons

A message from Liverpool

To reinforce a theme of learning between countries, a first keynote presentation was given by an elected member from Liverpool City Council who also chairs the Advisory Group of JRF's Neighbourhood Programme. The Neighbourhood Programme links 20 neighbourhoods in Scotland, England and Wales in community development and policy review activities.

The presentation highlighted the importance of the neighbourhood governance theme. It noted how this was shortly to be addressed by the first combined meeting in four years of local government organisations such as COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities), from the four countries of the UK. The speaker also noted the upcoming White Paper for England on neighbourhood governance, expected in the autumn. He discussed the importance of finding practical expression for the concept of 'double devolution' of power – to deliver control over core public services from central government to local authorities and thence to communities and partner organisations.

The speaker noted that, while central government may empower community planning, it could only happen as a result of local initiative in:

- establishing genuine community planning partnerships
- empowering communities.

Practical achievements of Liverpool City Council in working at the neighbourhood level across the local authority were cited. The quality of public services is particularly critical to deprived households who are dependent on public services for quality of life.

Consult less and listen more

A key step in Liverpool has been for the council to start listening to the opinions and aspirations for service quality of its residents, who telephone the council in large number every day with concerns and complaints. Taking advantage of readily available input from residents was far preferable to initiating expensive 'mock participation exercises' – which were sometimes seen to serve to justify poor service delivery or defend policy decisions already made.

Neighbourhoods fit for purpose

In concluding remarks the Liverpool councillor stressed the importance of neighbourhoods to quality of life, noting that every city was a collection of neighbourhoods that should be 'fit for the purpose of living'. He pointed out that all require joined-up services, not uncoordinated silos, and a lead agency to oversee service delivery. A key innovation in Liverpool is to recognise that agencies other than the city council could be the lead agency for the neighbourhood. For example, in the Liverpool 8 ward a local housing association takes the role of coordinating local governance and service delivery. In another, a development trust could play that role. He outlined how Liverpool City Council is always looking for good partners to help it fulfil its strategic functions.

Lessons from JRF's Neighbourhood Programme

A representative of the Neighbourhood Programme, the facilitator for Scotland, highlighted key points of learning from the 20 neighbourhoods. These included four in Scotland: Pilton in Edinburgh, Faifley in West Dunbartonshire, East Pollokshields in Glasgow and Barrhead in East Renfrewshire. Key points included:

- the possibility that neighbourhood governance would not only improve services through feedback, but could be a basis for renewing democratic processes;
- the importance of communities having a say not only in service delivery but in strategic planning issues, such as approval of superstores, which could have real impact in the neighbourhood;
- the importance of complementary roles for elected members and community representatives with examples of positive relationships in neighbourhoods;
- the importance of public sector organisations listening to residents and acting accordingly;
- the importance of early involvement of residents in policy decisions;
- recognising that residents and communities have both rights and responsibilities;
- recognising the need for 'local' community planning based around identifiable neighbourhoods and villages (150–8,000 people) as well as 'area'-level community planning (20,000–60,000 people), which was ideal for service coordination.

Lessons from 'the Renton' in West Dunbartonshire

An experienced community activist from the former industrial village of the Renton in West Dunbartonshire is also a member of the steering group of the Neighbourhood Programme. He documented his village's achievements of 'bottom-up' development, making use of their community-based housing association as a focal organisation in neighbourhood empowerment. He suggested that among the lessons learnt is that communities must find their own solutions to their problems, not have them dictated from 'on-high' in the power structure. He argued that this not only tailors solutions to genuine local needs, but allows local residents to take ownership of, and responsibility for, new development options.

Cordale Housing Association in the Renton has taken over most housing management and development functions, in the village. It has built a vibrant new community centre, a multi-functional health centre/chemists and a new grocery store that is leased to commercial operators. The Housing Association employs 17 local residents who work in delivering services for the community. A development trust has been established to take forward ambitious plans for new market sale and affordable housing, recreation and tourism development.

The speaker said that a key lesson from the experience of the Renton is that physical change and regeneration investment must achieve positive social change – the community ‘taking ownership’ was the key to social development. He stressed that his community was ‘going it alone’ – without assistance from what they saw as an obstructive and unhelpful local authority. Lively discussion was initiated on this point.

Key points arising in discussion

Working ‘with’ or ‘against’ the local authority?

A number of important issues were addressed from the outset of discussion:

- How can communities and local authorities with different points of view develop a common agenda for local action?
- How can top-down structures, attitudes and behaviours support local initiative rather than be seen as a hindrance to it?
- Should communities expect support for their aspirations from local authorities, or is this just over-optimistic, wishful thinking?

In discussion it was pointed out that communities could work with local authorities. A representative from the Aberdeen Civic Forum gave an example of a good working relationship between community organisations in that city and the lead local authority. Key points in Aberdeen’s community planning programme include:

- empowerment of 37 ‘natural’ (that is, logical to residents) neighbourhoods for neighbourhood action planning;
- decentralisation of the council that sees most officers working in area offices, to bring service delivery closer to neighbourhoods;
- reorganisation of the council departments along thematic, rather than functional lines;
- reorganisation of ward and community council boundaries to conform as best as possible to that of neighbourhoods; and
- establishment of a ‘citizens parliament’ (The Civic Forum) of 120 representatives of neighbourhoods and communities of interest that works for community benefit on key partnerships and strategy groups.

‘Natural’ neighbourhoods concept

One of the most important aspects of Aberdeen’s initiative was to empower residents to work with service providers (particularly the police) to define natural neighbourhoods that make sense to local people. Most of these now had community councils to represent them, which although

encouraged, are not a statutory requirement. However, an issue yet to be addressed was the extent to which council and partners' budgets responded to neighbourhood action plans.

Neighbourhood and ward boundaries and councillors' roles

There was lively discussion over the most beneficial relationship between neighbourhoods and wards and between community activists and councillors. There was widespread agreement that both 'representative' (councillors) and 'participatory' (activists) democracy were important and ought to be balanced. The days were certainly gone when councillors could say that they alone represented the community. But there was also recognition of the vital role of councillors and a need to bring them more fully into community planning processes.

A role identified for local councillors was in championing neighbourhood action plans within the broader governance structure. Another suggestion was for councillors to have a natural overview across neighbourhoods, particularly in new multi-member wards, to find areas of common cause. A representative from Fife noted they had area committees that provided an important governance role for councillors in addressing 'real, tangible' issues.

Community planning in rural areas

A number of contributors suggested the discussion should not be dominated by discussion of urban neighbourhoods and urban regeneration when much of Scotland was rural. In Argyll and Bute for example, what would be considered a neighbourhood of 8,000 people in the city would stretch over 50 or 60 miles. In rural areas, long travel distances made local meetings challenging, although residents appreciated being able to have face-to-face discussion with service providers. It was suggested that in terms of direct local action, rural villages are often a good unit.

One lesson identified was that community planning could not be too prescriptive as Scotland's local authority areas differed so much. However, it was recognised that some issues and approaches could cut across urban and rural. In Fife for example, 23 'localities' (some rural, some urban) had authority over local initiative budgets that gave a real measure of devolved local control.

Area versus neighbourhood?

Discussion of neighbourhoods raised a matter of concern from the largest local authorities. For example, if Glasgow were to introduce governance at a neighbourhood level, it could require as many as 75 local community planning partnerships, which seems an unwieldy amount. Instead Glasgow was currently proposing 10 local community planning partnerships, each encompassing a partnership of around 60,000 people.

Areas of this size had been chosen to give a cross-cutting perspective on strategic issues such as health, public safety and housing. A key challenge identified for Glasgow is 'to make sense' of the variety of initiatives operating at the area level, which often reflected diverse central and local government policy and departmental silos, and which might be coordinated to generate better service delivery. A further challenge will be that of including, within community planning partnerships, the problems and needs noted at the neighbourhood level.

This reinforced the point made in an earlier keynote presentation that neighbourhood or village-level action is a good point of departure for community participation – but that service coordination is often more efficiently carried out at a larger spatial level. It was agreed that both are important to neighbourhood empowerment.

The worst-off neighbourhoods

During discussion a warning was made that the benefits of community planning and better local governance should not just go to well-organised communities. It was pointed out that sometimes the least organised needed the most assistance and that many of Scotland's deprived neighbourhoods were characterised by intergenerational unemployment and benefit dependence. Given this, it was suggested that there was an important role for representatives of Jobcentre Plus in taking forward this agenda.

The point was also made that most communities need at least modest resources to organise themselves but local authorities often found it difficult to access funding to support this. The point was made that there was little benefit of transferring small amounts of funding out of one neighbourhood to another 'more deprived' neighbourhood. Rather, it was suggested public policy should set its sights on bringing the poor neighbourhoods up to a good norm for all. It was agreed that good governance is for all neighbourhoods, not just an aspiration for neighbourhoods badged as 'deprived'.

The locus of community leadership

In terms of what type of organisations could lead neighbourhood development, the seminar was reminded of the value of community-based housing associations. The role of JRF's Neighbourhood Programme's partner Southside Housing Association in East Pollokshields was cited as a good example in initiating, from scratch, a lively local partnership in Scotland's most ethnically diverse neighbourhood. Other examples included Cordale Housing Association in the Renton and Knowes Housing Association in JRF-partner neighbourhood Faifley. In other areas, such as Aberdeen and Edinburgh, there are growing numbers of active community councils, encouraged to form and supported by community development expertise from the local authority. A key question is how these neighbourhood organisations find a role in local and city-wide community planning.

Stock transfer and community empowerment

In terms of the potential of community-based housing associations, the discussion examined the role of stock transfer in Scotland and its potential to empower communities. A key point was made that big transfers were not necessarily empowering neighbourhoods whereas this had happened with a series of smaller stock transfers. The representative from Liverpool noted that while Birmingham was singularly failing to transfer its all of its 92,000 houses at one go, Liverpool had quietly accomplished 13 stock transfers ranging in size from 200 to 4,500 houses in a way that reinforced neighbourhood governance initiatives.

Achieving broad-based participation

A related point was the need to empower many different people so participation at the neighbourhood level was genuinely broad based. In East Pollokshields for example, around half

the population are of Asian origin and care was needed to develop participation mechanisms useful and acceptable to that community. Similarly it was felt that there needed to be real effort to involve young people who could help take forward innovative action. JRF's partner, the Faifley Neighbourhood Forum, was mentioned as an organisation with an active young person's involvement programme.

It was suggested that 'meeting culture' was not for everybody and real effort was needed to initiate events that attracted many residents to community planning. An example from a Neighbourhood Programme partner, the Boothtown (Halifax) Partnership was cited. They hold an annual dance and music festival that attracts Halifax residents far and wide, and has drawn together different ethnic groups in the neighbourhood. The role of the arts, and neighbourhood arts centres, such as in nearby Pilton, was also cited.

The influence of sensationalist media on local politics

There was concern expressed over the difference between broad-based participation and the ease with which a 'vociferous few' can manipulate a sensationalist media to unhinge public debate, almost always in opposition to policy decisions. Many people felt that local politics in Scotland is too often affected by such sensationalism. One reply to this from a local councillor was that both local authority and partnership policy decisions needed to be fully transparent – so that the rationale for decision making was clear and could be articulated forcibly in the face of strident opposition.

Leadership and participation

It was pointed out that strong leadership, particularly by the council's leader and chief executive, is needed to back up decisions taken. Such decisions should be based on reliable information and in participation with all relevant stakeholders. The point was also made that officers needed to be supported to interact with neighbourhood organisations in lively debate. Too often officers were reluctant to engage in this way, taking frustration by residents over poor services as a personal attack rather than an opportunity to work to improve services. New skills for officers in *working with*, rather in *opposition to*, communities were urgently required.

However, the point was made that that there is no 'one community'. Communities themselves could well disagree on key issues. This made it difficult to attach weight to 'community views'. One way forward was to ensure that planning processes had been genuinely inclusive of different views, achieved by a variety of mechanisms of participation appropriate to different groups, and to build those views as much as possible into a coherent and consensual policy approach. Most community activists are reasonable and want to feel that they have been part of decision making, even if not all their views can be incorporated in policy

The role of attitudes and organisational culture

A local government leader reminded the seminar that community planning structures were 'not an end, but a means to an end', which aimed to provide a clean, safe, well-managed environment. It was argued that successfully using the structure to achieve the real goal – better neighbourhoods – often depended on the attitudes and behaviours of 'power holders'.

Another contributor felt that the public sector is too often 'risk adverse' – a feature of the 'organisational culture' of some local authorities. 'Risk aversion' was the opposite of the positive leadership that needed to complement public participation. One councillor described the need to melt 'the permafrost' of senior officers resistant to attitudinal change and community empowerment. It was suggested that if officers are not willing to positively embrace new ways of working they should be dismissed. The City of Aberdeen Council recently had senior officers re-apply for their jobs with the consequence that 50% left. It was suggested that this brought in 'new blood' committed to a practice described as 'continuous innovation'.

A common theme identified was the need to change 'top-down' organisational culture in local authorities to value, rather than fear, citizen engagement and neighbourhood action. Strong leadership in the local authority was identified as the key to changing organisational culture and as a pre-requisite to better citizen participation and to partnership working.

But a challenge was also mentioned. Although local authorities and the NHS between them were big employers in Scotland, staff and trades unions were often resistant to organisational change and new working practices. Unless this issue was addressed, Scotland could have difficulty modernising working practices in its public sector – despite the fact this was very much desired by residents.

Learning-by-doing

A number of speakers stressed that genuine learning came from failure as well as success. However, they felt that admitting failure was very difficult in a risk-adverse public sector faced with a sensationalist media. One trick identified was to anticipate issues in advance and discuss them. This would allow for honest debate on the complexity of public policy tasks and then support people involved to learn-by-doing and incorporate the lessons of service delivery into steady improvement.

A new role for local authorities?

A reminder that poor service delivery is only one part of the problem concluded the discussion of day one. A question was posed as to whether there was a larger issue: what is the optimum role for local authorities in the 21st century? For example, should they give up direct service delivery altogether and become genuine strategic organisations? This was described as 'a reasonable question' that needed further consideration.

Part II: Putting it into practice

Learning from regeneration outcome agreements and community planning partnerships

A presentation from Communities Scotland initiated discussion of day two. This focused first on learning the lessons from regeneration outcome agreements and current operation of community planning partnerships. Evaluation had unlocked considerable learning, including the key points that regeneration outcome agreements needed to:

- be more strategic in integrating regeneration into main themes of strategic development and improved governance;
- have more rational funding streams;
- focus more clearly on needs-based outcomes;
- include better community participation processes.

Lessons for community planning partnerships were that they should:

- work hard to get a good chairperson;
- have clear roles and responsibilities;
- include a written participation agreement, or protocol;
- have dedicated staff working to partnership objectives not those of individual partners;
- be organised around streamlined, efficient and effective structures.

Learning from Edinburgh

The challenges of community planning in Edinburgh were then presented. In particular the issue of the boundaries of local community planning areas had presented considerable difficulties. This had been especially challenging given the complexity of existing organisational boundaries overlaying the entire city and the work of the Boundary Commission in revising ward boundaries. The council have recognised that boundaries for areas larger than a logical neighbourhood will be relatively arbitrary and, so they were open to experimenting with current proposed boundaries. The main task was to get on with community planning and then benefit from learning about what was working and what was not. At the neighbourhood level, Edinburgh had an increasing number of community councils (like parish councils in England) and these were to provide the foundation of participation in many neighbourhoods with local community planning partnership areas.

To 'cut across silos' between city departments, Edinburgh had reorganised local services into a single service grouping called 'Services for Communities'. For example, housing, health, anti-social behaviour, cleansing, etc were all being consolidated under new neighbourhood managers. The neighbourhood managers initiative clearly had real potential to improve service delivery.

Extended democracy or just better managerial processes? Learning from the community view

The presentation from a senior manager in a community-run partnership made some points that inspired heated discussion. He asked if community planning is seen as a process of genuinely extending democracy that gives people real control over governance processes, or if it is merely a better top-down managerial process of delivering services.

The speaker reviewed the commitment and role of various 'top-down' agencies in community planning. He said that the Scottish Executive has always said that community engagement is at the heart of community planning. However, he felt that in far too many cases this has yet to happen, causing people to become increasingly cynical about the whole exercise. He argued that central government policy silos also are still a problem. Why, he asked, is the Scottish Executive funding parallel strategic partnership initiatives like community planning partnerships and community health partnerships when community planning was supposed to avoid partnership proliferation? The speaker argued that too often where the funding is available, it reflects misguided central priorities. He cited as an example the emphasis on drug addiction when local communities were finding alcohol addiction the real issue.

The speaker suggested that it would be more helpful if Communities Scotland could communicate more clearly and avoid bureaucratic language. He also said that Communities Scotland was over focused on its own relatively small Community Regeneration Fund, when the key issue should be bending the much larger of mainstream funds that affect life in deprived neighbourhoods. This point was later challenged by Communities Scotland who argued that their intent and guidance promoted mainstreaming.

Edinburgh Council was also criticised by the speaker for inviting community views on boundaries for local community planning and then apparently ignoring those views. The speaker concluded by noting that his neighbourhood, as a Social Inclusion Partnership, had organised itself to be ready for community planning two years ago – and was still waiting for community planning to happen.

Key points arising in seminar discussion

Extended democracy or better managerial processes – are both the answer?

Although many of the points from the community view were seen as accurate, the question was raised as to how we achieve a complementary balance between empowered residents/ neighbourhoods and better service organisation. It was agreed that that Scotland's neighbourhoods need to be empowered but also that many people would be content with better services without participation. It was also suggested that some services, such as integrated transport planning, child protection or surgery, are better centralised than dispersed. The discussion therefore focused in on a key challenge of governance: how can we organise governance and partnership structures so that services are managed at appropriate levels and democracy is enhanced by genuine participation at all levels?

It was put forward that often the institutional response to poor services was yet more unproductive participation. This avoids dealing with central issues like poor management or the inability to change working practices. It was felt that unproductive and token participation could generate more cynicism about democratic processes. A rule of thumb from Liverpool when faced with service failure could be paraphrased as 'don't talk about it, just fix it'. This suggested that service improvements needed to go hand-in-hand with consideration of enhanced local democracy. While residents may want more influence on a range of decisions, the first thing they want is clean, safe streets and efficient housing repairs.

Other issues that would benefit from resident involvement were identified. These included issues around 'youth disorder', which, like fear of crime, has real and imagined dimensions. It was suggested that the approach to this should not be about more police but about allowing residents to take control of their own neighbourhoods in association with service providers like the police and the council.

More boundary issues

Glasgow outlined how its local community planning partnership boundaries would coincide with (groups of) multi-member ward boundaries. This, it was felt, could help link community needs directly to council decision processes. A counter-argument was made by suggesting that larger boundaries are 'well-and-good for service coordination', but residents would still want to participate at the neighbourhood level. This reinforced a point made the previous day on the need to ensure that governance at the area and the neighbourhood level need to be made complementary to achieve both democratic participation and better managed services. This was seen as particularly important in larger local authorities and community planning partnerships.

An organisational culture among officers

The discussion came back to the attitudes of power holders in relation to community empowerment. It was agreed that however boundaries are defined, the attitudes of officers in the local authority and the cultures set by institutional partners remain a key factor. Officers' roles, it as argued, should not be confined to narrower professional responsibilities but should also encompass a broader duty to work with communities and to respond to their needs.

It was suggested that officers, instead of defending existing practices (described as 'the DAD model' – decide and defend), ought to be the very people in the council and the power structure who challenged existing ways of working and sought innovation and improvement. These officers ought to be 'strategists', who worked with local councillors to link community needs to the larger policy framework. And where the council was not doing a good job, it was suggested that they should be happy to hand over responsibilities and funds to community organisations like development trusts and housing associations who could take over some services, such as street cleansing. In all of this, it was felt that strong leadership in the council was the key to the challenges addressed by the opening speaker on day one: achieving better partnership and genuine community engagement.

Taking it forward: Rapporteur's summary

To conclude the seminar, the rapporteur was asked to identify some key issues from discussion that could receive priority for further consideration. Four themes were identified.

Better service provision in 'areas' and enhanced democracy in neighbourhoods

The rapporteur outlined how he felt that a key point in local community planning is the need to rectify what ought to happen at various spatial levels. He suggested that there is no easy or right answer for a policy agenda that covers better services, social inclusion and enhanced democratic processes. Service providers want to organise at the area level where efficiencies are apparent while many residents find such areas with artificial boundaries not appropriate for nurturing genuine local

participation. He thought that the two levels could be linked through locality plans (for example, neighbourhood action plans) that could involve an enhanced role for community councils.

The rapporteur said that in some local authorities, area and neighbourhood engagement may well imply council decentralisation and/or a role for area committees. In these cases, he suggested, community planning should work in tandem with these structures, taking care to avoid unnecessary duplication. In rural areas, the challenges of transport sharpen the need for meetings to make efficient use of participants' time but it was noted there is real value in community activists being face-to-face with service providers for discussion.

It was argued that across Scotland, there is a wealth of knowledge being generated on community planning that should be assessed within a clear framework of understanding the relevant political, managerial and participation issues. Understanding of the linkage between democratic participation and better services should also inform increasingly sophisticated regeneration outcome agreements.

Fostering innovation in local authorities

The rapporteur pointed out how discussion had returned again and again to the fact that elegant organisational structures and nice words about community planning are not worth much if the lead local authority is not committed to changing its organisational culture to value community empowerment and partnership working. He suggested that the local authority has a delicate *leadership* role in community planning while working itself out of the job of leading the partnership and becoming just one member among equals, including community representatives. He pointed out how in Aberdeen and Stirling, for example, stakeholders other than the council are now playing key leadership roles in community planning, with the full support of the council.

This, he suggested, is 'wise' leadership, in which councils recognise that strong roles for other partners, including community representatives, is complementary to their role, rather than in conflict with it. He thought that where the local authority recognises this, other partners feel positive about community planning. Otherwise, as heard in the seminar, some communities feel 'community' planning just reinforces the dominance of local authorities to the exclusion of neighbourhood empowerment.

The rapporteur said that he thought that the jury is out on whether community planning will succeed. If we were to encourage local government modernisation, there should both be more rewards, as well as effective sanctions, as in the Beacon Councils initiative in England. He thought that 'catalyst' funding initiatives, like the Community Regeneration Fund, could foster long-lasting innovations in community governance that genuinely empower deprived neighbourhoods and generate lessons for all neighbourhoods on good governance.

The rapporteur suggested that Audit Scotland would play a vital role in constructive critique of modernisation and empowerment. Scotland also needs to consider how it achieves training in better governance. He wondered if COSLA was willing and able to take the lead, or if it needed an organisation like the Improvement and Development Agency?

Rethinking roles and relationships of key players in community planning

The rapporteur outlined how he felt that one aspect of learning-by-doing is developing a clear idea of how the many players in community planning contribute in a complementary fashion so that partnerships are true 'learning organisations'. He felt that there was a strong feeling in discussion that elected members needed a clearer role, particularly backbenchers, possibly provided by area committees. But he also felt that we needed to think more clearly about the roles of all the players in community planning: officers, councillors, other stakeholders, community activists and members of the national policy community. In addition, he thought that we needed participation mechanisms, such as community events, for 'non-activist' residents who might get involved just occasionally. He suggested that it might also be useful to seek their views on a systematic basis, such as through citizens' panels, to counter sensationalist media.

The rapporteur suggested that this 'role review' also needed to think about the important linkage between national policy from the Scottish Executive and what happens in the neighbourhood, with all the points in between: the new 'city-regions' proposed by the Executive, the local authority, the area, the village and so on. Integrating governance and partnership initiatives spatially in this manner is, he said, a key challenge of governance.

A cross-party approach, locally and in the Scottish Parliament

Finally, the rapporteur suggested that whatever the problems of community planning, interest in this seminar and many other similar events demonstrates that many people across Scotland want community planning to succeed. He felt that this could happen as a result of a steady, long-term process of learning and improvement. There is recognition that none of the challenges of local governance, socioeconomic development and resolving social exclusion are easy. Neighbourhoods will play a key role but the power structure will also do so.

The rapporteur concluded by saying that community planning attempts to resolve long-term challenges and should therefore be a long-term, even intergenerational, initiative – which would put young people at the heart of the process. However, he felt that there is a real fear that, without cross-party support, community planning could become just another 'policy gimmick', which was here today and gone tomorrow. Given this he suggested that cross-party commitment and positive support would be essential to realise the objectives that set the stage for the seminar: community empowerment and better partnership across Scotland.

Note

- 1 Audit Scotland (2006), *Community planning: An initial review*, prepared for the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General of Scotland, June.

Annex 1: Programme and delegates for 24-hour event

Programme: Wednesday 14 June 2006

2.00 pm **Discussion session 1: Learning lessons**

Chair, Lord (Richard) Best, Director, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Opening remarks

Ian Mitchell, Director of Community Regeneration,
Communities Scotland

Speakers

Councillor Richard Kemp, Liverpool City Council

Professor Michael Carley, Heriot Watt University

Archie Thomson, Cordale Housing Association

Richard Kemp will talk about the links between community regeneration, governance, and service delivery; Michael Carley will talk about good practice in bringing 'neighbourhood' centre stage; Archie Thomson will talk as a neighbourhood practitioner about his experiences of re-shaping and delivering community services and facilities.

3.45 pm **Continuation of discussion session 1**

After tea, the issues raised during the first session will be pursued in an open session.

5.45 pm **Close of session**

7.00 pm **Depart for dinner at National Museum of Scotland**

Programme: Thursday 15 June 2006

9.00 am **Discussion session 2: Putting it into practice**

Chair, Lord (Richard) Best

Speakers

Craig McLaren, Director, Scottish Centre for Regeneration, Communities Scotland

Alan Howie, Community Planning Development Manager &

Susan Bruce, Neighbourhood Manager of Edinburgh City Council

Ian Cooke, a community-based practitioner from Pilton Partnership in Edinburgh

Craig McLaren will talk about strategic approaches to regeneration, partnership and mainstreaming; Alan Howie and Susan Bruce will talk about pulling services together in the neighbourhood; Ian Cooke will talk about a neighbourhood's experiences of community planning.

10.30 am **Discussion session 3: Taking it forward**

Chair, Lord (Richard) Best

In this session the Chair will facilitate a discussion around:

- the lessons that have been learned from the event;
- the problems and constraints that hinder progress;
- further research or assistance that would be helpful;
- the next steps

1.00 pm **Close of event**

Delegates

Cllr Donald Anderson	Edinburgh Partnership
Brian Barker	Argyll and Bute Council
Supt Andrew Barker	Central Scotland Police/Stirling CPP Steering Group
Andrew Barnett	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Doreen Bell	Kirkcaldy & Levenmouth Community Health Partnership
Robin Benn	Scottish Executive
Lord (Richard) Best	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Susan Bruce	Edinburgh City Council
Raymond Burns	Glasgow City Council
Andrew Campbell	Argyll & Bute Council
Professor Michael Carley	Heriot Watt University
Mary Castle	North Lanarkshire Council
Ian Cooke	Pilton Partnership
Norma Cuthbertson	City of Edinburgh Council
Tom Divers	Greater Glasgow NHS Board
Lesley Gallagher	Stirling Community Planning Partnership
Thomas Glen	Communities Scotland
Jim Gray	Glasgow Community Planning Ltd
Ronnie Hinds	Fife Council
Alan Howie	Edinburgh City Council
Cllr Richard Kemp	Liverpool City Council
John Low	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Fiona MacLeod	Stirling Council/Stirling CPP Steering Group
Lavina Massie	Aberdeen Civic Forum
Cllr James McCabe	North Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership
Cllr Anne R McGovern	Fife Partnership
Alisdair McIntosh	Scottish Executive
Craig McLaren	Communities Scotland
Ian Mitchell	Communities Scotland
Cllr David O'Neill	North Ayrshire Council
Douglas Paterson	Aberdeen City Council
Douglas Rae	NHS Ayrshire and Arran
Ian Snodgrass	North Ayrshire Council
Cllr John Stewart	Aberdeen City Council
Archie Thomson	Cordale Housing Association
Catherine Toy	South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership
Dr Sue Warner	Communities Scotland
Derek Williams	Joseph Rowntree Foundation Scotland Manager
Louise Woodruff	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Elaine Zwirlein	Dundee City Council

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