

Strengthening Community Councils

Exploring how community councils can contribute to democratic renewal in Scotland.

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¹ SCDC is the lead body for community development in Scotland and is a charity and Company Limited by Guarantee based in Glasgow. For more information: www.scdc.org.uk.

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1. Introduction

Imagine a local body that...

Acts as a **bridge** between citizens and public authorities



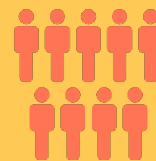
Works at a **local** level, open to all citizens to attend meetings and take part in public deliberation

Consists of people who **volunteer**, unpaid, to help address issues on behalf of their local community



As with other democratic institutions, works more **democratically** when interest, awareness and voting turnout are higher

Enables people to engage in political decision making and current issues, **without** having party politics as a basis for contribution.



Has been found internationally to be sometimes more **diverse** than 'higher-tier' democratic institutions.

Is a way for people with little experience of politics to get **involved**.



Has, in some places, been leading the way using new '**empowering**' legislation such as participation requests and democratic innovations such as participatory budgeting.

The above is true for many, if not most, community councils in Scotland.

The statements remind us that no democratic institution is perfect, and that community councils (CCs) have a range of features that aren't always shared by other democratic institutions and local organisations.

Furthermore, the role community councils have as a local, democratic bridge between communities and public authorities makes them very relevant to ideas of 'community empowerment' and 'democratic renewal'. In sum, community councils have a lot of value yet remain undervalued, and this report makes an informed call for much needed reform.

Our research

Jointly funded and carried out by Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) and What Works Scotland (WWS), this research explores how community councils can be even more relevant in Scotland's evolving policy context. The key objective of the research is to provide evidence to inform ongoing public service reform and the current Local Governance Review.³

Community councils (CCs) are seen to have an important role within this policy environment, as part of the empowerment agenda boosted by the 2011 Christie Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services and the 2014 COSLA Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy. In its 2016 Manifesto, the Scottish National Party reaffirmed its continued commitment to Scotland's community councils undertaking to "allow community councils, that can demonstrate a strong democratic mandate, to deliver some services."⁴

In the Community Empowerment Act (2015)⁵ community councils are referred to as a 'community participation body' that can make a participation request. The Act also sets out circumstances where community councils should be notified on matters regarding the use of local common good property. Guidance on 'localities' within the new integrated health and social care structures identifies community councils as having a representative role in this context.

Opportunities therefore exist for community councils in this emerging policy landscape. Our research explores how community councils can take forward these opportunities. But there are challenges as well. Community councils have told us about these challenges during the research. They include issues around power, legitimacy, diversity and support.

Power Legitimacy Diversity Support

Without these ingredients in place, community councils will find it harder to play their role in community empowerment and democratic renewal. This is a central issue that our research tries to explore and address.

³ Local Governance Review webpage: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/improving-public-services/local-governance-review/> Accessed 9th January 2019

⁴ Scottish National Party (2016) *Manifesto 2016*, Edinburgh: Saltire Print
[https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/thesnp/pages/5540/attachments/original/1485880018/SNP_Manifesto2016-web_\(1\).pdf?1485880018](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/thesnp/pages/5540/attachments/original/1485880018/SNP_Manifesto2016-web_(1).pdf?1485880018) Accessed 21st September 2017

⁵ Scottish Government (2015) *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015*
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/6/contents/enacted> Accessed 21st September 2017

Key recommendations

- 1 CCs have the potential to be a vehicle for community empowerment and democratic renewal in Scotland and strengthening them should be considered amongst different options for improving local democracy within the Local Governance Review currently co-led by the Scottish Government and the Convention of Local Scottish Authorities.
- 2 Our findings make a strong call for reforming CCs through giving them enhanced power and increased resources while supporting them to involve and engage with their wider communities and to become more representative of local diversity.
- 3 There is not necessarily a conflict or contradiction between the need for CCs to have more influence and the need for them to be more democratic and representative of diversity. If these dimensions are tackled simultaneously, they will reinforce one another.
- 4 Support is needed for CCs to be more democratic and empowering. This includes training, capacity building, resources, networking and promotion. Local authorities should review their current support for CCs and, in collaboration with the Scottish Government, put in place resources to improve CCs' capacity to meet local needs and aspirations.
- 5 Where an appetite exists, development and support should be provided for local CC associations as a source of information and support for CCs and a regular point of contact for local authorities and other agencies.
- 6 Compensation schemes should be put in place to support community councillors with accessibility, travel, caring responsibilities, and even loss of earnings. Otherwise, the system is not genuinely open to young people, single parents, disabled people, carers, low paid workers and the self-employed, etc.
- 7 In order to make CCs more representative of diverse groups and perspectives, consideration should be given to new measures regarding CC membership, including increasing the size of CCs, widening the criteria for who can join, and making use of alternative forms of democratic selection to complement elections.
- 8 The Scottish Government should conduct a publicity campaign aimed at raising awareness of CCs, demonstrating impact and increasing CC membership.
- 9 Reforms should be carefully designed to allow variance so that local needs can be met. CCs work in contrasting parts of Scotland, are at different stages and will require a flexible range of powers and support. This should vary between and within local authority areas.

2. Methods

The research started with a review of existing literature on community councils and similar models around the world highlighting possible options for reform.

The literature review informed the first meeting of the project's Research Reference Group (see appendix B) in Edinburgh (October 2017), this group consists of community councillors, members of other community organisations, university researchers, and stakeholders within Scottish Government and the Improvement Service.

The Research Reference Group (RRG) meeting was followed by regional workshops for community councillors and local stakeholders Edinburgh, Glasgow, Elgin, Kilmarnock and Aberdeen. These were held between Nov 2017 and Jan 2018 and involved over 100 people.

Following on from the workshops an online survey was produced to explore the comments/opportunities expressed by participants in the workshops. The survey was available from May 2018 to July 2018 and was promoted through the Improvement Service, Research Reference Group and Community Council Liaison Officers.

608 people responded to the survey and of that total 591 (97%) described themselves as community councillors.⁶ 17 (3%) said that they have strong links their CC e.g. as a co-opted member or community member who has worked with the community councils directly. Responses to the survey came from councillors located across all 32 local authorities, although the distribution is uneven. The volume of responses by local authority ranges from 54 in a highly-populated urban local authority to 1 in a less-populated rural local authority.

The survey contained 30 questions (see appendix C) and was divided into a number of key themes, including:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| ■ Community councils and their activities | ■ Skills, training and support |
| ■ Powers | ■ Democracy and diversity |
| ■ Relationships | |

Survey results were analysed along with data from the other stages of the research from August to October 2018. This research report brings together our findings, starting with a presentation of key themes followed by a discussion of how they relate to each other in order to inform meaningful reform. The report will feed into the current Local Governance Review conducted by COSLA and the Scottish Government.

⁶ This was a population survey rather than a sample survey and a few caveats must be noted. We sought to reach the full population of community councillors through existing channels used by local and national government. However, we have no way of ascertaining the response rate (in the absence of a census of CCs) and to what extent the responses are representative. We are confident, however, that the volume of responses increases the chances of the survey being reflective of a range of perspectives within CCs.

3. What the research shows us

Participation

Activity and interest

Community councils were created by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973⁷ to act as a bridge between communities and local authorities. Local authorities consult CCs on planning applications, certain licence applications and changes to the use of common good property and assets. Many also involve CCs in community planning.⁸

CCs are expected to ascertain and express the views of the community to local authorities and other public bodies, and to take action which reflects the interests of its community. In addition, they frequently engage in a range of other activities, from fundraising to environmental projects,⁹ building relationships with a range of local people and organisations from different sectors.

Our survey indicates that CCs are involved in a myriad of aspects of community life, including education, health and social care, transport, community planning, spatial planning, licensing, community safety, the environment and leisure and recreation. Despite the wide range of activity, it is well established that many CCs in Scotland struggle with low election turnouts and to recruit new members. Recent research has estimated that approximately 2000 places may be unfilled within the 1100 currently active CCs in Scotland.¹⁰

People in our workshops and who responded to our survey were concerned that interest and participation in CCs is low. When asked about the strongest concerns of their CCs, participants frequently gave replies such as “new members” and “recruitment and retention”.

Competitive elections

The 2012 Scottish Government study of CCs found there had been no contested CC elections in a quarter of Scottish local authorities.¹¹ This situation was reflected in our research, and a lack of interest in CCs was seen as a key factor.

⁷ UK Government (1973) *Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973*

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1973/65/contents> accessed 21st September 2017

⁸ Weakley, S. and Escobar, O. (2018) *Community Planning after the Community Empowerment Act: The Second Survey of Community Planning Officials in Scotland*, Edinburgh: What Works Scotland

<http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/community-planning-after-the-community-empowerment-act-second-survey-of-community-planning-officials/> [Accessed 9th January 2019]

⁹ Scottish Government (2012) *Survey of Local Authority Community Councils*, The Scottish Government p1

¹⁰ Hall, H., Cruickshank, P. and Ryan, B. (2017) *Community Councils in Scotland: Information Literacy for Democratic Engagement*. Edinburgh Napier University, p4

<https://communityknectdotnet.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/lildem-stakeholder-report-october-2017.pdf>

¹¹ Scottish Government (2012) *Survey of Local Authority Community Councils*, The Scottish Government p9



Many CC members are not actually elected by the community unless there are more candidates than places. (Survey response)

The level of indifference to CCs is demonstrated by the fact that there have been 23 uncontested elections in Glasgow this year [2017]. (Regional workshop participant)

Many councillors do not have to do very much to get a seat at the table, due to un-contested elections.

(Regional workshop participant)



Promotion

Promotion at a national level was viewed as the best way to improve CC elections (see chart 1). Other popular options were having a special election day or holding CC elections at the same time as other local and general elections.

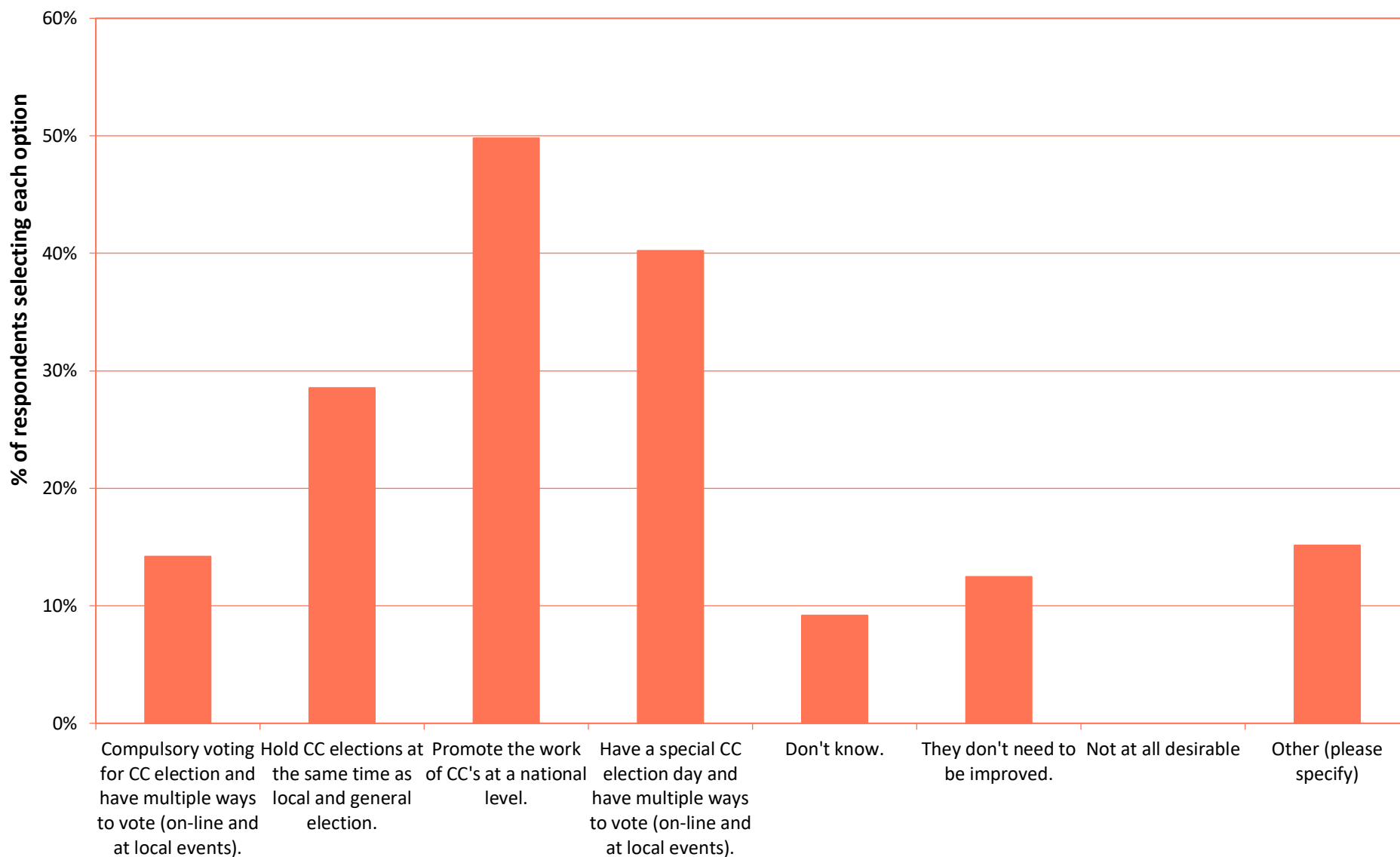
A national campaign to communicate the role and relevance of CCs; PR to raise the profile and modernise the image

CC elections should be on the same day as other elections to boost participation

Regional workshop
participant

Regional workshop
participant

Chart 1: How can CC elections be improved?

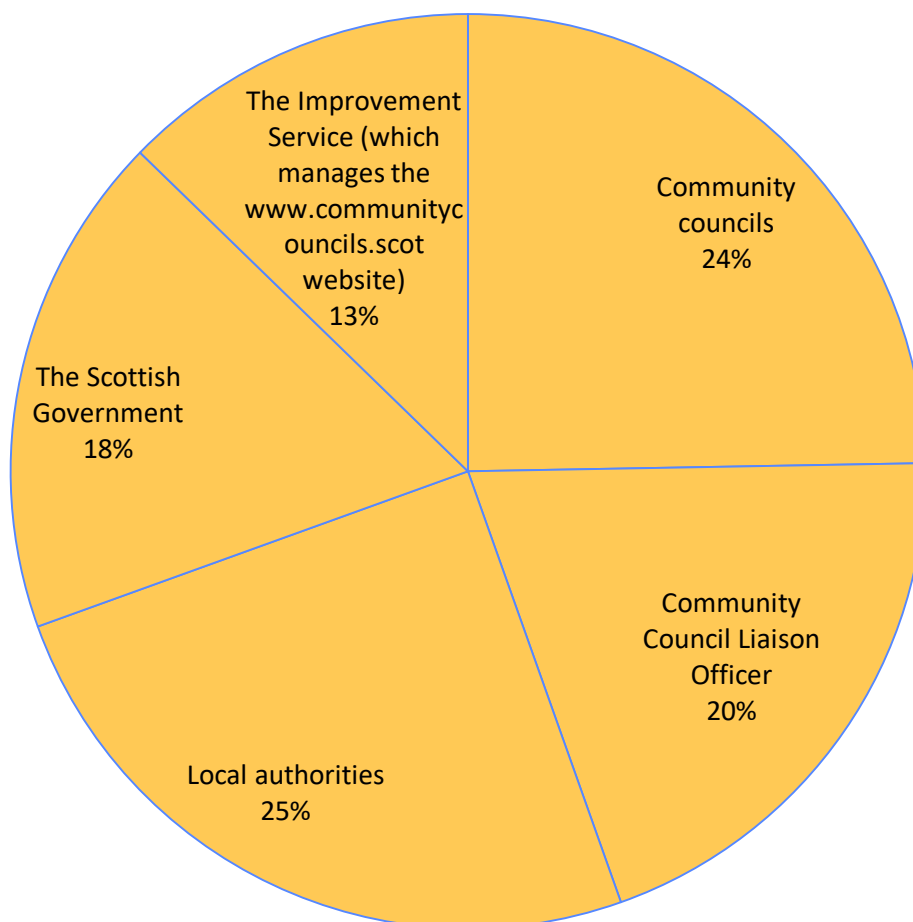


92%

of respondents in our survey agreed that “more should be done to promote the work of CCs and raise their profile.” (See question 10 in appendix C)

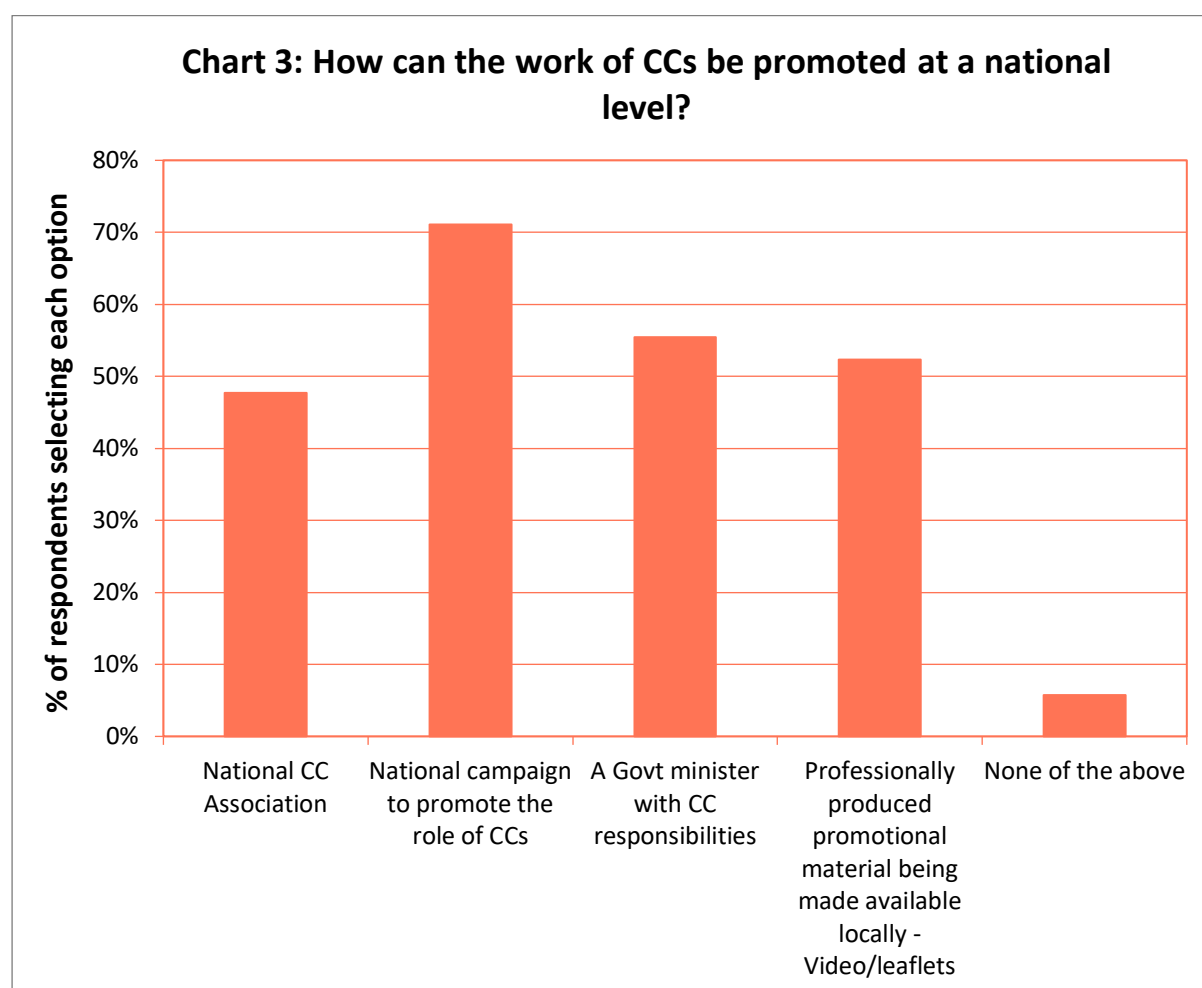
Chart 2 shows that responsibility for promotion of CCs was seen to lie across a range of organisations. 25% of respondents selected local authorities as having the greatest responsibility for promotion, and it should also be kept in mind that community council liaison officers (who were seen as having most responsibility by 20% of respondents) are based in local authorities.

Chart 2: Who should take the most responsibility for promoting CCs?



We also asked how the work of CCs can be promoted at a national level. Chart 3 shows there was broad support for all the options we put forward for how to do this, although the option with the most support was a national campaign, with 432 out of 608 respondents supporting this option.

71% wanted a national campaign to promote CCs.



Relationships with other groups

A premise of this research was that there are a range of organisations that make up the fabric of community participation in local democracy, including CCs, development trusts, housing associations and other community organisations. A finding of the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy in Scotland was that efforts to enhance local participatory democracy shouldn't be standardised; that is, they should enable and accommodate a

variety of approaches and processes.¹² Accordingly, the research set out to explore the role of CCs within the wider community sector and the relationships it has with other groups.

This research interest was reinforced by discussions in the RRG and in the regional workshops around Scotland. Participants expressed a desire for better partnership working and links with other community organisations.



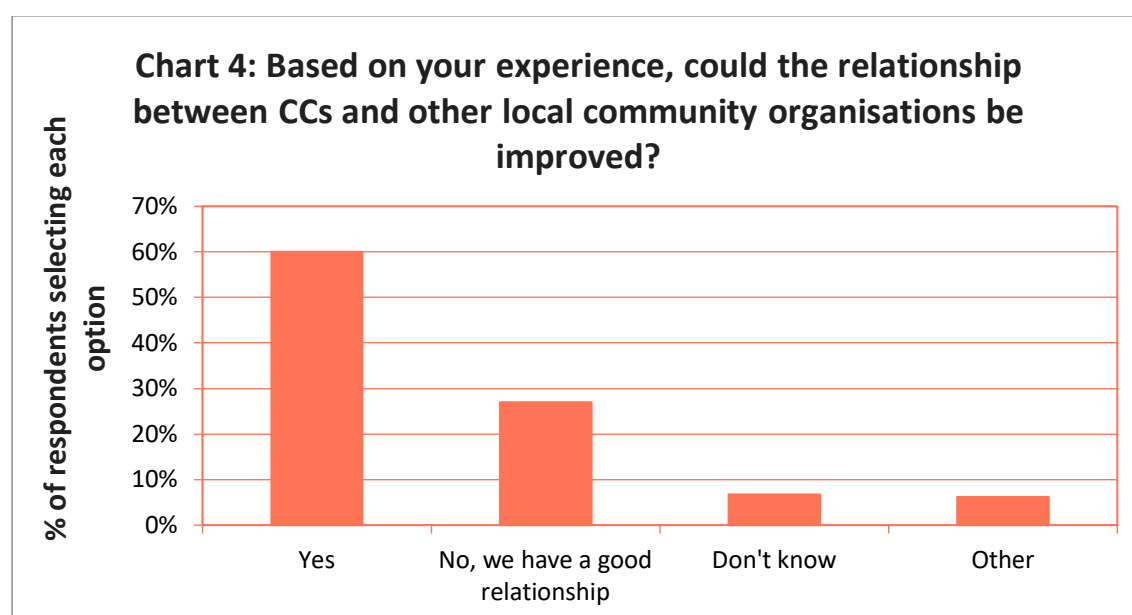
We should work well with other community groups in a collaborative way. (Regional workshop participant)



A few respondents described their CCs as having well-established engagement with other local community organisations. For example, members of Dennistoun Community Council in Glasgow attend the meetings of other local groups and associations as part of their wider community engagement (see appendix A).

We included a question in our survey about CCs' relationships with other local organisations. Many CCs reported limited engagement with other community organisations.

Chart 4 illustrates that 60% (320 out of 533) of respondents thought the relationship between CCs and other local community organisations could be improved whereas 27% thought good relationships already existed.



¹² The Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy (2014) *Effective Democracy: Reconnecting with Communities* <http://www.localdemocracy.info/news/final-report/> p15

A common concern within the workshops and the survey was where CCs fit in with the ‘community empowerment agenda’. There was a perception that legislation and funding streams put in place to support community empowerment are aimed more at other organisations within the community sector than they are aimed at CCs. This was seen to further undermine the function of CCs locally. Clarity of roles and responsibilities was seen as important.



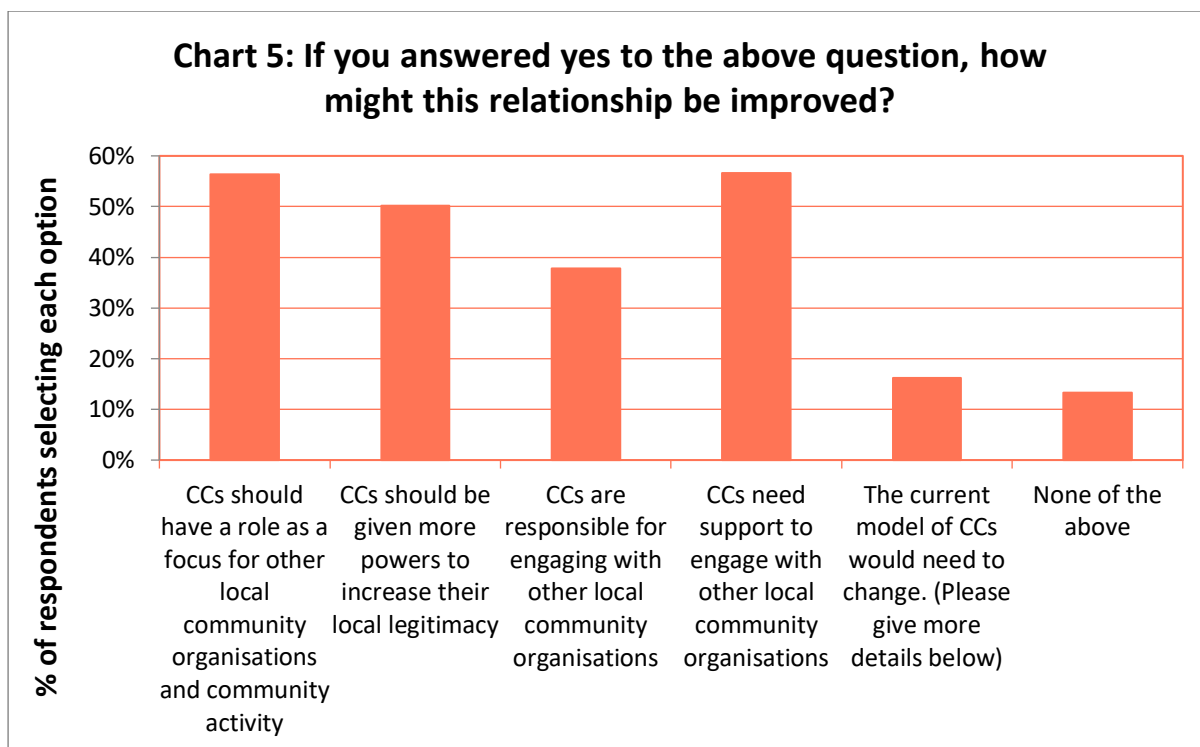
More formal partnership/collaboration structure and clarity of distinct roles with the Community Development Trust would help these organisations work together as community anchor organisations.

(Survey response)



We also asked how the relationship between CCs and other community organisations could be improved (see chart 5). 458 people responded to this question. 56% (258) thought that CCs should have a role as a focus for other local community organisations and activity, although 38% (173) saw CCs as being responsible for engaging with other local community organisations. 57% agreed that CCs need support in order to do this. Only 16% (73) felt that it was necessary to change the ‘current model’¹³ of CCs in order to do this.

¹³ We recognise that respondents could interpret ‘current model’ differently. However, the question was designed as a prompt to enable participants to put forward more radical proposals. That relatively few suggestions were forthcoming does not necessarily mean that community councillors would be against more radical proposals if they were suggested.



Representation and diversity

Community councils in Scotland, and internationally,¹⁴ have been described as being only notionally democratic and dominated by white, more-affluent, retired men.¹⁵ A 2004 survey by the now defunct Association of Scottish Community Councils showed that the average age of community councillors was 55 and that there was particularly low representation of people aged 25 and under.¹⁶ Further research in Scotland has shown that community councillors are often concerned about lack of diversity in community councils.¹⁷

This limited diversity may reflect which groups have the time and inclination to carry out the role. The traditional ways in which CCs usually work can be a factor in attracting certain profiles of participant. Overly formal procedures and meetings can be a barrier to accessibility by lacking appeal to people who may prefer more participative and dynamic forms of community dialogue and action. Recent research has suggested that community

¹⁴ Houston, D., Ong, P.M. (2012) 'Determinants of Voter Participation in Neighborhood Council Elections', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 41(4) p687.

¹⁵ Naysmith, S. (2012) 'Calls for radical change to community councils' *The Glasgow Herald*, 21st August 2012, Society section, p21

¹⁶ Scottish Executive (2005) *What Can We Do To Help Community Councils Fulfil Their Roles* A discussion paper by the Scottish Executive, October 2005, p7

¹⁷ Escobar, O. (2014) *Strengthening local democracy in Scotland: The Community Council's perspective*.

Edinburgh: COSLA Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy, p10. Open access:

<https://www.localdemocracy.info/start-the-debate/listening-sessions/26-february-community-councillors/>

councillors need high information literacy, which tends to be more prevalent among higher social classes and is also developed in the workplace.¹⁸

Questions around the membership of CCs do not stop at geographical boundaries. People who work in the area, who run businesses, who send children to local schools and so on also have a stake in community life. Arguably, these groups should have as much right to CC membership as someone who is a local resident and may or may not be engaged in everyday life locally.

Support for diversity

Community councillors were generally in agreement that CCs should have a diverse membership.



We should be open to more diversity, cultures, backgrounds. (Regional workshop participant)



In response to a question in our survey (see chart 6), 79% (411 out of 522) of people strongly agreed or agreed that disenfranchised groups (young people, minority ethnic, disabled people etc) should have representatives on CCs where willing candidates put themselves forward.

Others emphasised the importance of commitment to work on behalf of the community. Only 34% (180) agreed that CC membership should be open to people who work in the area but who are not residents. 47% (249) of people disagreed with this proposal, showing strong attachment to a narrow definition of community of place that prioritises residency over other aspects of everyday life.

There was also very little enthusiasm for selecting membership by lottery, a proposal¹⁹ put forward to overcome problems of inclusion and diversity and to which we return later in the discussion.

¹⁸ Hall, H., Cruickshank, P. and Ryan, B. (2017) *Community Councils in Scotland: Information Literacy for Democratic Engagement*. Edinburgh Napier University, pp10-11
<https://communityknectdotnet.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/lildem-stakeholder-report-october-2017.pdf>

¹⁹ Escobar, O. (2014) *Strengthening local democracy in Scotland: The Community Council's perspective*. Edinburgh: COSLA Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy, pp. 19-20. Open access:
<https://www.localdemocracy.info/start-the-debate/listening-sessions/26-february-community-councillors/>



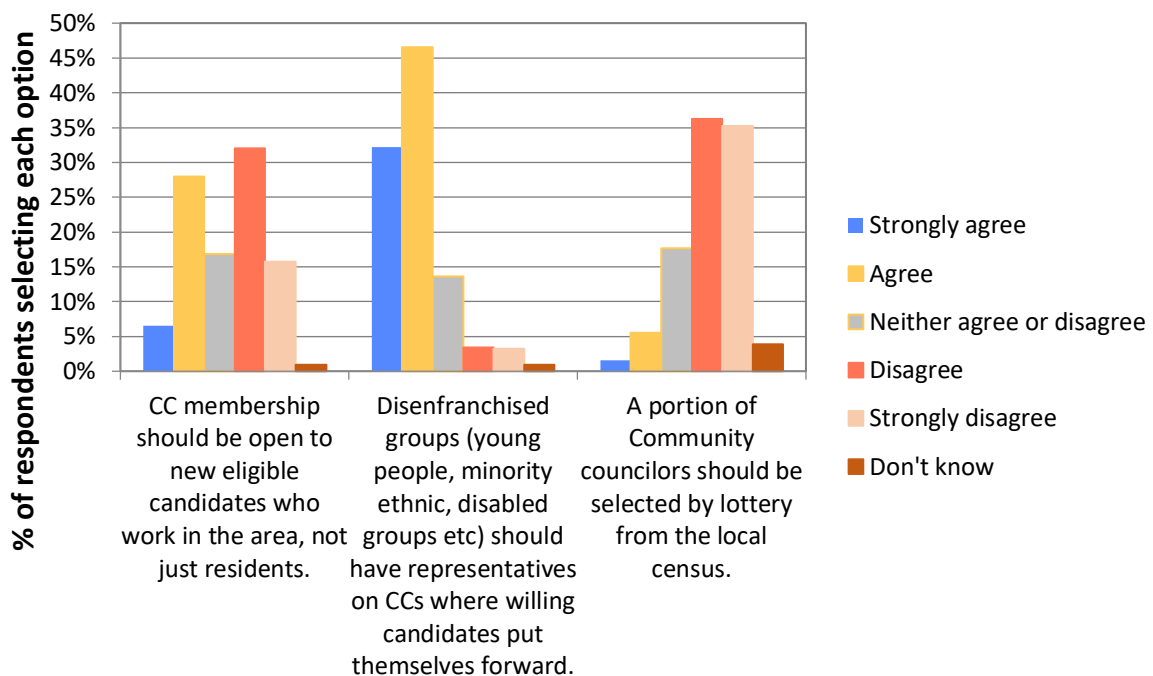
CC should be available for anyone resident within the area only and need not represent every minority but should consist of only those that care about their community and want to get involved with local issues.

(Survey response)

Better to have a few people who care about what happens in the community rather than press gang someone who may or may not turn up and who may be disruptive for the sake of it. (Survey response)



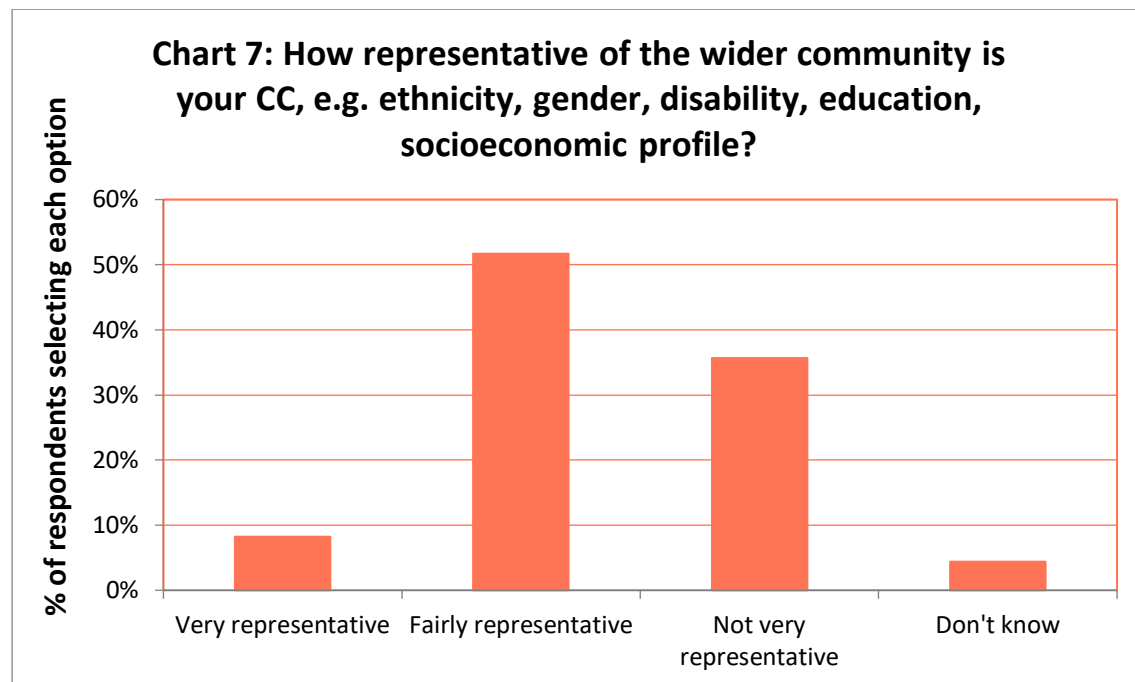
Chart 6: Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.



Current membership

We asked community councillors for their views on how representative²⁰ of the wider community their CC was (see chart 7).

52% (270 out of 522) of respondents stated that their CC is “fairly representative” of the demographics of their community and a further 8% (43) answered “very representative”. 35% (186) said their CC was “not very representative”.



Comments reflected this divergence in experience and views.

“*There seems to be a fair mix of sex and education/experience. I have little knowledge of the socioeconomic profile, but everyone is given a chance to voice their opinions at meetings and by e-mail traffic.* (Survey response)”

²⁰ We focussed on demographic representation (i.e. ethnicity, gender, disability, education, socioeconomic background) rather than discursive representation (i.e. diversity of worldviews and opinions). Future research should consider also the latter, because demographic diversity does not guarantee diversity of perspectives, especially in small groups.



Our C.C. is made up of mixed sex members including an immigrant from outside the EU and has close ties to the local primary school and a nominated member from the local parish church. (Survey response)

There needs to be more diversity and accessibility. It should not be full of middle class, over educated white men when the town is made up of so much more than that. (Survey response)

We need to get more people involved from all aspects of society, sometimes CC's are run by semi-retired and retired people. We need to get a better cross-section of society coming to meetings. (Survey response)



Other comments in the survey, and some in the regional workshops, indicated that those who described their CC as “fairly representative” were not necessarily claiming this for all groups of people. In particular, there was an acknowledgement that younger people were underrepresented. This included young people who are still at school and students at college and University but also residents who may be in their late 20s or 30s and who have young families.

We have a range of ages but still need to try and get some under 24s in the mix. We have disabled members and encourage their involvement. A range of educational standards and backgrounds are also involved

At 24 I am the youngest by at least 10 years and as a youth worker I am in the lowest paid position, I am well educated but really struggle to feel welcome and like I have a place there. As a middle-class white education woman if I am struggling I can only imagine what it must be like for people who are from minority groups

Power and influence



What's the point of having us if we've got no influence?

(Regional workshop participant)

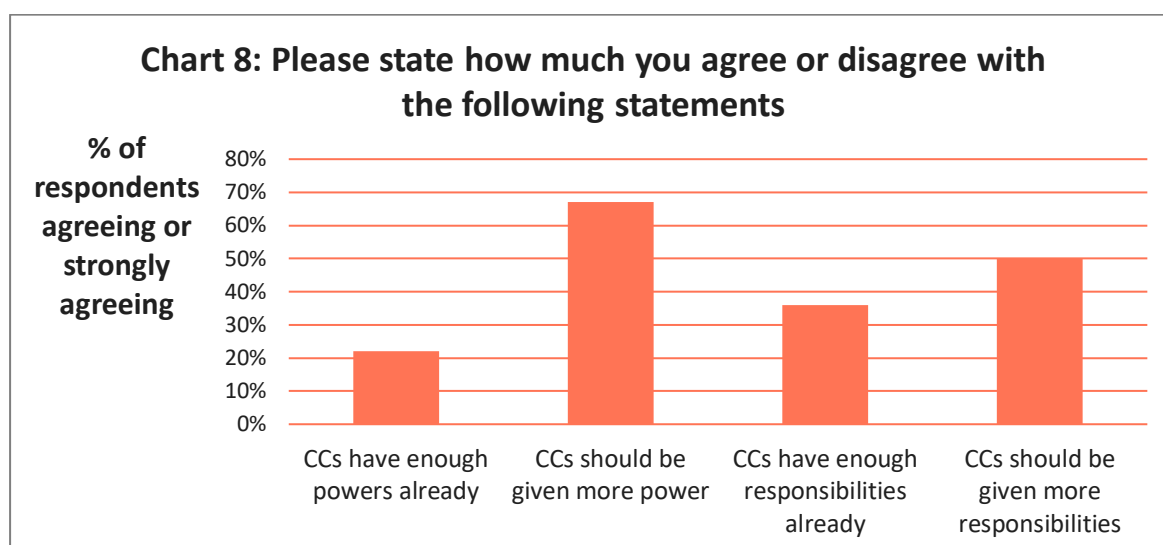


More power

The idea of giving more power to community councils has been floated at a policy level. For instance, the 2012 Community Council Short-Life Working Group recommended that:

“local authorities work with their Community Councils to explore areas of local authority work that they mutually agree Community Councils could manage; deliver; and influence, and work together to agree parameters to allow this to happen.”²¹

In its 2016 Manifesto, the Scottish National Party undertook to “allowing community councils, that can demonstrate a strong democratic mandate, to deliver some services.”²² More broadly, given the highly centralised system of local governance in Scotland, CCs can also be seen as part of a wider agenda of devolution of power and decentralisation.²³ We asked community councillors about power and responsibilities (see chart 8).



²¹ Scottish Government. (2012). *Community Council Short-Life Working Group Report and Recommendations*. Scottish Government: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0040/00403921.pdf>

²² Scottish National Party (2016) *Manifesto 2016*, Edinburgh: Saltire Print
[https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/thesnp/pages/5540/attachments/original/1485880018/SNP_Manifesto2016-web_\(1\).pdf?1485880018](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/thesnp/pages/5540/attachments/original/1485880018/SNP_Manifesto2016-web_(1).pdf?1485880018) Accessed 21st September 2017

²³ Escobar, O., F. Garven, C. Harkins, K. Glazik, S. Cameron, & A. Stoddart (2018), 'Participatory budgeting in Scotland: The interplay of public service reform, community empowerment and social justice', in N. Dias (Ed.), *Hope for democracy: 30 years of participatory budgeting worldwide*, Faro, Portugal: Oficina, pp. 312-313, 333-334.

67% agreed or strongly agreed that CCs should be given more powers.

50% (292 out of 579) agreed or strongly agreed that they should be given more responsibilities. There is therefore strong support for getting more powers, but more limited support to get more responsibilities. This may indicate that CCs feel they need more powers in order to fulfil their current responsibilities and before acquiring new ones.

Chart 8 also shows that community councillors in the research preferred increased power to increased responsibility. This highlights an important distinction as, although power and responsibility are clearly related, the two are not one and the same thing. Some respondents commented on this.



It seems that CCs have lots of responsibility (according to local residents) but we have no authority. Therefore we get blamed for all the wrong reasons. (Survey response)

CCs have huge potential but there are a lot of barriers to making real change. They have too little power but a lot of responsibilities. The Council seems to see them as a microphone into communities for their information and views, rather than the other way around - seeing CCs as the forum for sharing community views with the Council. (Survey response)

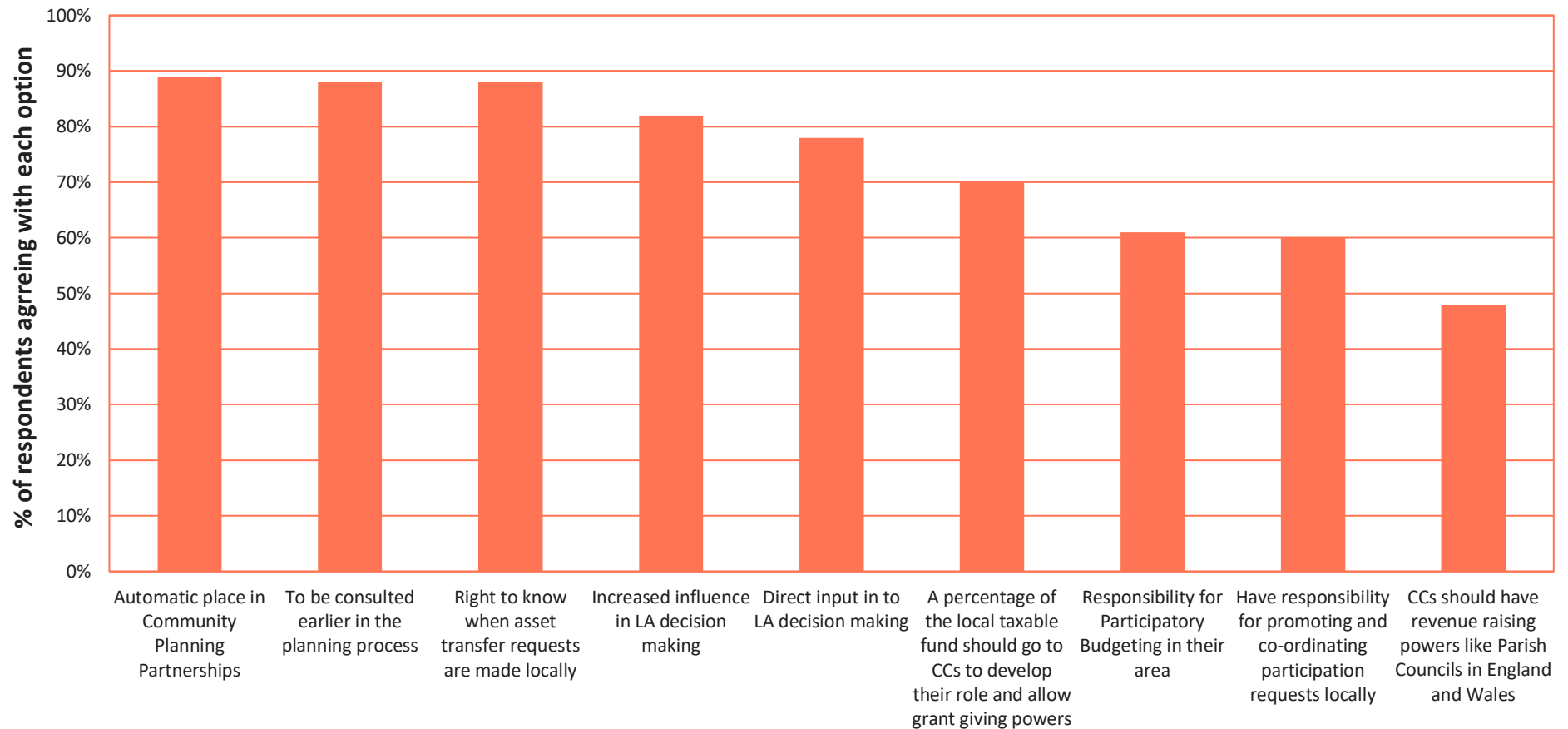
What community councils need is more authority to match the existing responsibilities before you heap more responsibilities onto us. (Survey response)



Which powers?

We also asked respondents which, out of a range of additional powers, they would like community councils to have (see chart 9). Those who responded (579) wanted most of the listed powers.

Chart 9: Do you agree CCs should have the following additional powers?



Planning

As stated previously, local authorities must consult with CCs on planning applications and it is no surprise that a lot of discussion and feedback in our research concerned issues related to spatial planning.



It is getting harder to get involved in development plans. We used to be provided with a list and now we must go online to find it. We don't get communication as community councillors about what is happening. When we have asked for a plan to be called in we have been told that it is an abuse of our power to call it in.

(Regional workshop participant)

Regarding planning – it is the gift of the attitude of officers and councillors within the local authority. They have the power to involve CCs and the legislation is vague enough so that they sometimes don't consult. Currently powers and responsibilities are not taken seriously.

(Regional workshop participant)



One of the most contentious issues in planning is that of the third party (or equal) right of appeal. Currently, planning applicants and property developers, but not affected communities, can appeal a planning decision. Introducing a third party right of appeal would give communities the same right to appeal a decision. Prior research into CCs in Scotland has identified the lack of a third party right of appeal in planning decisions as a barrier to participation with local authorities.²⁴ This message was reinforced in our own research.

²⁴ Escobar, O. (2014) *Strengthening local democracy in Scotland: The Community Council's perspective*. Edinburgh: COSLA Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy, p12. Open access: <https://www.localdemocracy.info/start-the-debate/listening-sessions/26-february-community-councillors/>



Third party right of appeal needs to be restricted to big developments but is necessary to curb the aspirations of big developers. (Survey response)

I believe a form of restricted third party appeal with strict guidelines could be helpful but it would need to be carefully designed, otherwise it would simply be abused.

(Survey response)



There was particularly strong agreement with the need to be consulted earlier in the planning process and this was seen by some as a better approach to improving community involvement in planning than the third party right of appeal.²⁵



Third party appeals will slow a planning process to dead stop. What is required is a plan-led planning system. currently too much planning by appeal with DPEA single reporter deciding in a vacuum largely ignoring statutory plan status and policies. (Survey response)

Planning applications are time consuming and complicated. CCs don't need veto power but need a better-defined consultation process. There is a lot of lip service towards many CCs. The whole process is too flexible and lacks consistency between CCs.

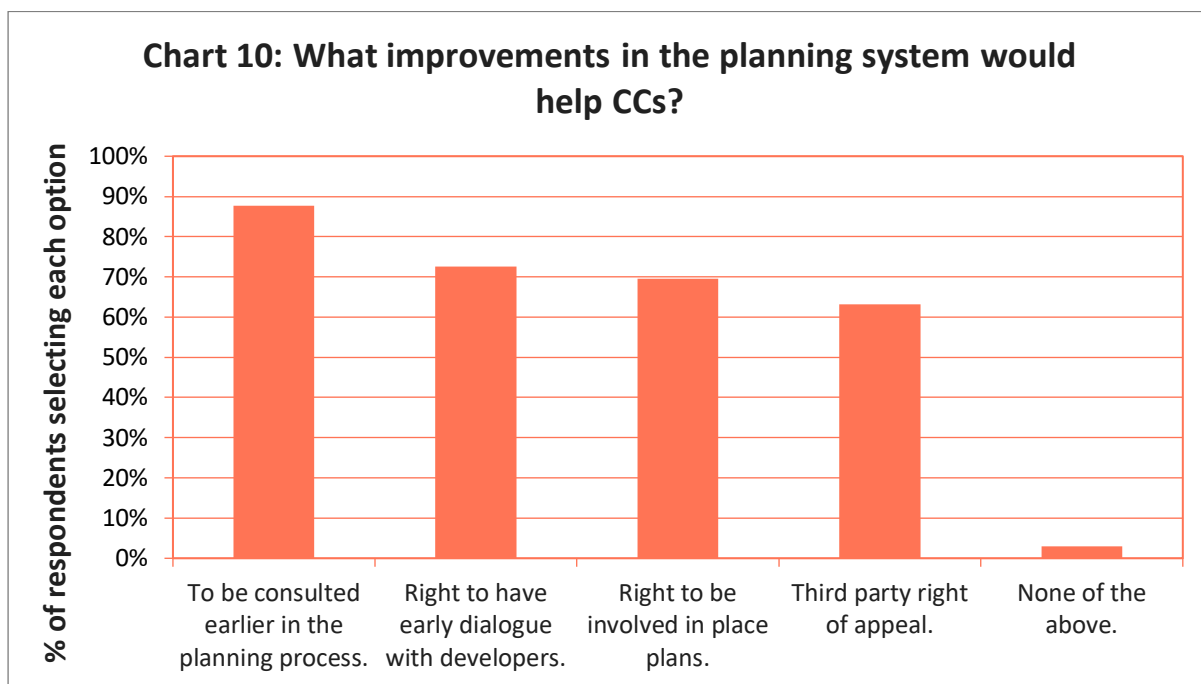
(Regional workshop participant)



²⁵ The Planning (Scotland) Bill is currently being scrutinised by the Scottish Parliament and is considering potential models for early community involvement in planning processes
<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/106768.aspx>

88%

wanted early involvement in the planning process (see chart 9). Furthermore, this was prioritised by more respondents than the third party right of appeal (see chart 10).



Spending power

Many respondents also agreed that CCs should have more spending power. For instance, 70% (403) agreed or strongly agreed that a percentage of the local taxable fund should go to CCs to develop their role and allow grant-giving powers (see chart 9).

In a similar vein, community councillors were interested in having more of a role in participatory budgeting (PB) in their areas. Participants in one regional workshop were aware that the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) have agreed a framework that at least 1% of local authority budgets will be subject to PB by 2020/21.²⁶ They suggested that CCs could have a responsibility for a small amount of this.

This finding was reinforced in our survey, with 61% (352) of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that CCs should have responsibility for participatory budgeting in their area (see chart 9). Some community councils have already been involved in helping to develop local PB processes. For instance, community councils have had a lead role in the Money For Moray PB initiative (see appendix A). Community councils in Aberdeenshire have

²⁶ <https://news.gov.scot/news/more-choice-for-communities>

also made a joint participation request to Aberdeenshire Council to improve their participation in the planning of local PB processes.²⁷



Involvement in the LA budget setting process would also help form a better understanding between both about issues that are decided less than transparently, and which later cause tensions [...] I've been involved in five PB exercises and believe it's a great way to make a difference in an area. (Survey response)



Other areas where survey respondents wanted more powers included having an automatic place in Community Planning Partnerships²⁸, a right to know when asset transfer requests are made locally and increased influence in, and/or direct input into, LA decision making.

Formal representation

As chart 11 illustrates, there was general agreement from 579 respondents that CCs should be formally represented within some of the main statutory bodies.²⁹

Community planning partnerships were the body respondents wanted formal representation in most, with 82% (476) saying “yes” to this. Comments included:



To be part of Community Planning and to create Neighbourhood Plans. (Survey response)



²⁷ <http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/participation-request-decision-notice/resource/13af882b-69e1-4e5a-8861-7eac7f65aeec>

²⁸ This already happens in some local authority areas, such as in North Ayrshire – see example in appendix B.

²⁹ Question 16 in our survey listed local authorities, community planning partnerships and health and social care partnerships (see appendix C)



Improved representation in CP so that CCs are looked upon as having influence in other areas besides LA activities. (Survey response)



Some research participants were concerned that neighbourhood planning, or locality planning, is happening in a way that excludes, and even undermines, community councils.



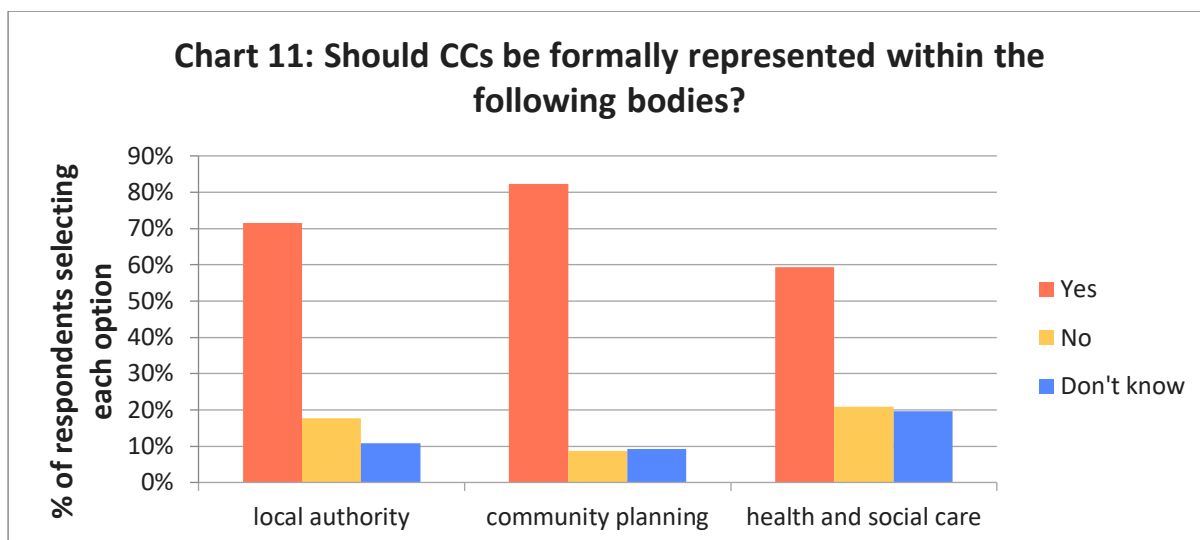
The CC is now very much in the shadow of the local community planning partnership, though even fewer members of the public understand the partnership's role. Perhaps the two should be merged. It is certainly an unintended consequence that the community planning partnerships have undermined CCs.

(Survey response)

Although here we have a reasonably good relationship with other groups the CP Area Forums are given a higher regard by many elected members and LA officers than CCs. (Survey response)

Recognise CCs at same level as locality forums or merge and avoid duplication. (Survey response)





72% said “yes” to formal representation in local authorities.

There was less support for formal representation in health and social care partnerships, with 59% (344) supporting this. However, there may have been less knowledge and awareness about health and social care structures, as 20% stated they didn’t know. Some community councillors wanted voting rights within these structures and bodies.



There should be voting positions created on the boards of these groups for nominated representatives of the Joint Association created from the CCs within an LA. (Survey response)



CCs can be involved in decision-making structures at different levels. For instance, having an automatic ‘seat around the table’ enables CCs to have their views taken into account in order to influence decisions. It is therefore possible to be formally represented in such structures without having decision-making power. This is an important distinction, since it allows for community councils to have a more effective democratic role without having to be as directly accountable as statutory bodies are.³⁰

³⁰ Parlow, M. (2008) ‘Civic republicanism, public choice theory, and neighbourhood councils: A new model for civic engagement’ *University of Colorado Law Review*, vol.79;2008 p176

Proposals for how formal representation could work included having one person attend meetings on behalf of their CC, or even a group of CCs.³¹ This could be done on a rotational basis.



Rotation of membership from an association of CCs within the LA area. (Survey response)

Community representation should be ensured at both the strategic and local level in each instance. This could be achieved by inviting representatives of community council forums/associations to attend decision-making bodies at the board/strategic group level, while also inviting local individual CCs in each identified and relevant areas to attend more locally and community focused decision-making bodies. An example of this exists in Aberdeen's Community Planning Partnership where there are community representatives at the Board, Management Group and Outcome Improvement Groups, as well as at the Locality Partnership levels. There should not be the enforcement of choice between these levels, but instead should be expanded upon and strengthened.

(Survey response)



³¹ Formal representation of CCs in decision-making and/or planning structures exists. In Glasgow, for instance, CCs currently sit on Area & Sector Partnerships and the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community & Citizen Engagement WECCE) City Policy Committee (CPC)



A designated person from each CC could attend meetings on rotation and subsequently distribute information either electronically or by meeting up with other CC reps. e.g. month 1, representative of CC1, months 2, representative of CC2, and so on.

(Survey response)



Aberdeen Civic Forum and North Ayrshire Locality Partnerships offer alternative models for how CCs and other community organisations can feed into community planning.

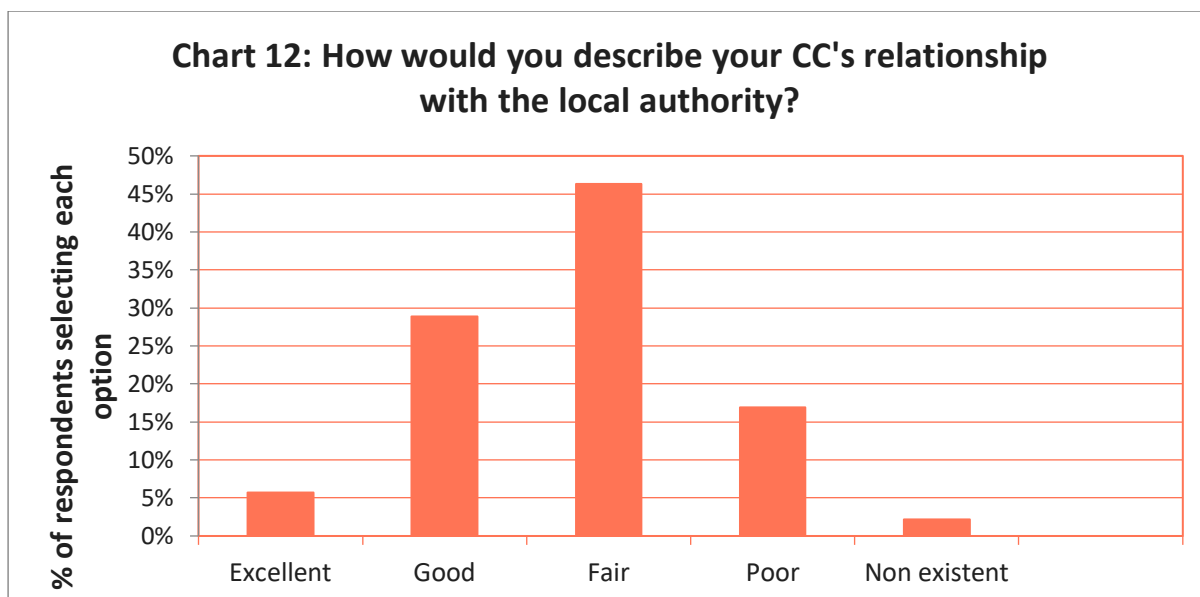
In North Ayrshire, the Chair of each CC has an automatic place on one of six Locality Partnerships representing different geographic communities across the authority. Aberdeen Civic Forum provides a collective voice for civic organisations within decision making structures including community planning. See appendix A for more on both these examples.

Relationship with local authorities

An important dimension of the power and influence of community councils is their relationship with public bodies. The body CCs are currently set up to interact with the most is local authorities. Other research with community councillors has highlighted the risk that CCs over-rely on information from local authorities at the expense of engaging with their communities around local priorities.³²

It is no surprise, then, that a consistent theme in this research was the relationship between CCs and local authorities. As a result, we included a related question in our research (see Chart 12). Out of 419 people who responded to this question, 35% (145) said they had a good or excellent relationship, 46% (194) said they had a fair relationship and 19% (80) a bad or “non-existent” relationship with their local authority.

³² Hall, H., Cruickshank, P. and Ryan, B. (2017) *Community Councils in Scotland: Information Literacy for Democratic Engagement*. Edinburgh Napier University, p3
<https://communityknectdotnet.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/lildem-stakeholder-report-october-2017.pdf>



It is fair to say from chart 12 that experiences of this relationship were mixed, and the experience tended to vary from department to department. Respondents' comments on the relationships their CC had with local authority staff reflected this.



Living in the area for many years and establishing a good relationship and understanding with long standing local authority employees. (Survey response)

They pay lip service to CCs and have cut support staff, they have not embraced the Christie report unlike other authorities and still use a top down approach instead of bottom up. (Survey response)

Our relationship with the LA is poor due to CCs being looked at as a statutory inconvenience. The biggest failing is due to lack of GENUINE consultation. It just doesn't exist. (Survey response)





No formal meetings for over last 15 months. Previous structure was flawed but local authority is avoiding setting up any alternative. (Survey response)

There is a clear willingness from some departments to recognise community councils. Other departments, particularly Planning appear to be reluctant to embrace the ethos of community engagement.

(Survey response)



Some community councillors described previous positive relationships with council staff, but that relationships with the local authority had subsequently been put under strain by personnel changes.



When productive relationships are developed with council staff it can be very rewarding but there is sometimes a quick turnover of staff because of funding they move to a different job or lose the job, and relationships are lost. We then have to start again if possible. (Regional workshop participant)

It has been difficult to access support because officers within the council have moved on and the structures have changed...as soon as we get someone that knows something it changes. (Regional workshop participant)



The most frequently valued role was that of elected councillors.



Good working relationship with local councillor but this of course depends on who may or may not be elected as a local authority councillor and their belief in the role of the community council. (Survey response)

Attendance of multiple LA councillors at CC meetings has ensured issues are heard and acted upon. CC voice is heard by the right people.... very important.

(Survey response)



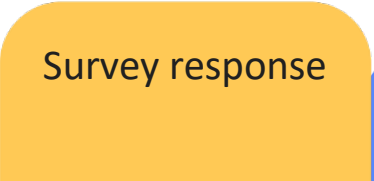
In terms of positive relationships, community council liaison officers were regularly cited as helpful. Respondents described constructive relationships with specific council officers. In some instances, they may have been referring to liaison officers.



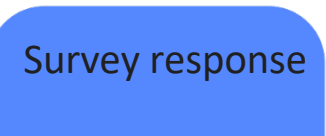
A council officer assists with funding applications



Ease of communication with relevant departments and good level of helpful / positive responses



Survey response



Survey response

“

We have a very good working relationship with our local councillors. They are a very good two-way street for any local issues. (Survey response)

Ward councillors have been useful at getting us in the room – we have a good working relationship.

(Regional workshop participant)

What's really crucial is the relationship with city councillors, even though there's no real obligation for them to come along, it's just not in the nature of the role of councillors that you can oblige them to do these things, but, nevertheless, I think we could twist their arm because they definitely ought to be coming along. And that's where you get much of your influence from – by the city councillors, who can go round the council officers for you. And they should be doing that for you.

(Regional workshop participant)

”

Building on this, a number of respondents recommended that local councillors have more of a role in attending community council meetings and taking forward priorities to local authority level.

“

Set up a system of consultation perhaps elected councillors raising issues for discussion at CC meetings. Include CC members in LA officer working groups.

(Survey response)

”



They [elected reps] should be obliged to come along. They're representing the community.

(Regional workshop participant)

Could councillors have some sort of role to play in representing voice of CCs at Council level? As democratically elected representative it would make sense to join this up with CCs?

(Survey response)



Scheme of Establishment

Some community councils felt that their local schemes of establishment³³ should enable them to have more power, as demonstrated by the following comments.



The CC has no powers, it only has an advisory role which in my experience is typically ignored by [the] Council.

(Survey response)

[The scheme of establishment] could give community councils wider powers and have greater influence by broadening statute obligations on local authorities to consult with community councils. The planning system is an example and CCs should be consulted about development planning gain funding from large developments (ie over 50 homes).

(Survey response)



³³ The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 required local authorities to establish "schemes for the establishment of community councils for their area."

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1973/65/section/51>

However, most respondents were either happy with, or unaware of, their local schemes of establishment. In response to question 7 in our survey (see appendix C) asking people about their local scheme of establishment, 59% stated that their scheme of establishment was “fit for purpose” and 30% replied that they hadn’t seen it. Only 11% said theirs wasn’t fit for purpose.

Oversight and accountability

A number of participants suggested that public bodies needed to have more accountability when it comes to making decisions and involving CCs in these decisions. In a question in our survey (see question 21 in appendix C), the two highest ranked preferences for what would improve the relationship between CCs and local authorities were increased transparency and accountability. One regional workshop discussion concluded that LAs should be accountable to CCs and not the other way around. This desire for more accountability also applied to other public service bodies.



Public service providers should be accountable to CCs.

(Regional workshop participant)

A national body of COSLA type for CCs could be established with a means of holding individual LAs to account. *(Survey response)*

CCs in Aberdeen, in liaison with the CC Forum are currently developing an updated Scheme of Establishment with the CC Liaison Officer. This will include an 'Information Pack' containing an overview of rules and information for news and existing members of CCs. It will also include a 'Code of Conduct' and 'Complaints Procedure' to ensure that there is a robust mechanism in place to deal with any and all cases of untoward or upsetting behaviour in an accountable and supportive manner. *(Survey response)*



Support

A key issue for community councillors in our research was support. Participants in our research talked about a wide range of different types of support, including financial support, better provision of information, training, support from community council liaison officers and more positive promotion.

Some regional workshop participants identified areas of work they would prefer others to carry out on behalf of their community councils.



I mean if you wanted to do something like a public consultation with the people in your area: me personally, I wouldn't feel qualified to say 'right, I'm having a public meeting,' and I would stand up and speak. So I'd be looking for somebody else to come in.

(Regional workshop participant)

Would be useful to have someone to come in and do the agenda, take the minutes. That basic information and communication work that will free up CC's time.

(Regional workshop participant)



Others wanted external support in order to carry out areas of their work more effectively. This included practical help (e.g. running meetings, financial management, communication, IT support and engaging with the community) as well as training in a range of areas (see 'Training needs' subsection below).



Developers have money and resources to wear down LAs and councillors. CCs don't have the support or resources to effectively challenge the developer. Could orgs like Planning Aid Scotland support CCs in a more formal way?

Regional workshop
participant



Dedicated planner to support community councils on planning issues. (Regional workshop participant)



Training needs

Current research into the training needs of community councillors being conducted by Napier University highlights the need for “training around basic community council duties.” This includes training in planning, communication with social media, presenting information, using surveys and schemes of establishment.³⁴



³⁴ Hall, H., Cruickshank, P. and Ryan, B. (2017) *Community Councils in Scotland: Information Literacy for Democratic Engagement*. Edinburgh Napier University
<https://communityknectdotnet.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/lildem-stakeholder-report-october-2017.pdf>

In our survey, 72% (381 out of 527) of respondents said that they wanted more training in public participation/engagement (see chart 13). 63% (333) wanted more training in relevant legislation. 52.4% (276) wanted support in communication (PR/marketing) and 51.8% (273) funding. Induction and/or refresher training for councillors was another popular option.

This suggests that community councillors want to do more to reach out to the wider community and agency stakeholders to engage them in the work of the community council. It also demonstrates an interest in learning about, understanding and taking part in matters of local, regional and, where appropriate, national strategies, decisions and future direction of travel. Community councillors are clearly keen to access funding for community activities.

It is notable that equalities awareness came very low down in training needs for councillors even though this is an area which is an acknowledged weakness for many community councillors themselves. Likewise, facilitation, mediation and running meetings also appear low in the list of training priorities. This seems surprising given the importance that respondents placed on public participation and engagement. Conflict and mediation came up less as a topic, although some participants gave examples of why support was needed.



We had one person resign, and that was really difficult. It took months and months, and it took mediation and a lot of meetings and eventually one person resigned. It was one of those situations where you've got two people in one council who were both elected and neither of them would give an inch. [...] you're limited in what you can do [as chairperson], and I had to rely on the area council to help me. (Regional workshop participant)



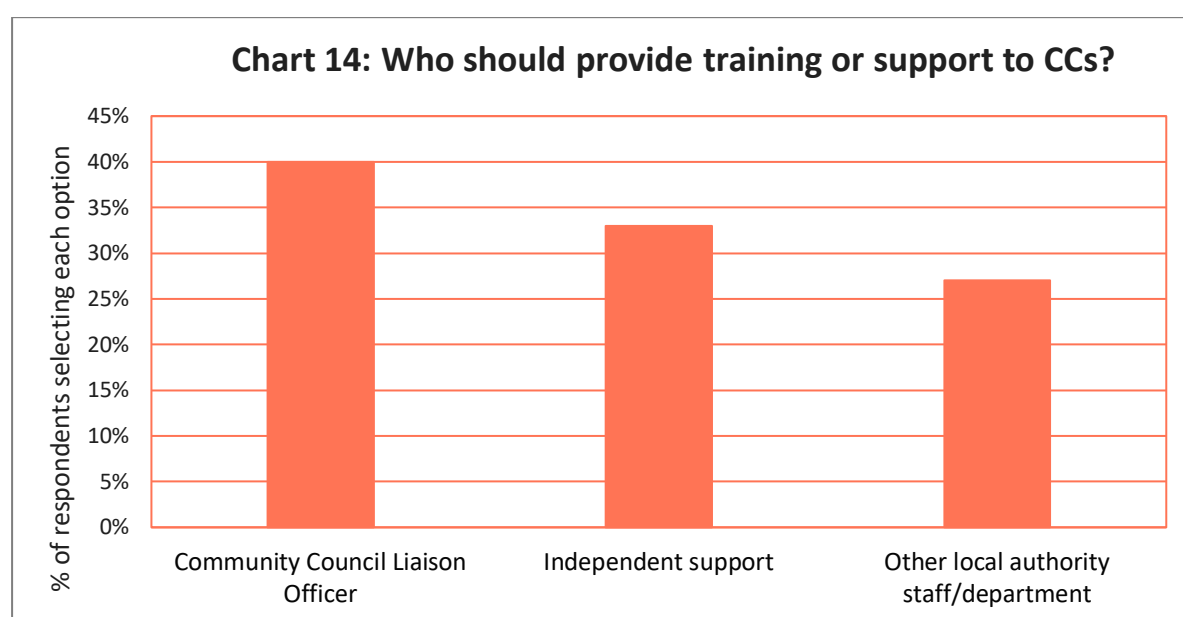
There is perhaps a lack of appreciation for the skilled nature of community engagement work, for example: facilitation skills to enable effective dialogue and deliberation that are inclusive and lead to action; mediation skills to enable difficult conversations and collaboration in the context of competing agendas and controversial issues; and the ability to run meetings that are dynamic and co-productive, tapping into a range of participative formats and techniques.³⁵

³⁵ See <https://www.scdc.org.uk/> for support and resources in these areas, and also Escobar, O. (2011). Public dialogue and deliberation: A communication perspective for public engagement practitioners. Edinburgh: UK

Who should provide training and support?

There was no clear consensus in the research on the matter of who should provide support and training. Independent support was preferred by some community councillors, whereas others were happy with local authority provision, including community council liaison officers. Participants in one regional workshop suggested that their local authority should fund a team of independent planning, licensing and legal experts. Another idea put forward was that of having a separate support budget for community councils.

In our survey, 40% (209 out of 527) selected Community Council Liaison Officers as their top choice with independent support (33% or 175) and other local authority staff/departments (27.1% or 143) not far behind (see chart 14).



Resources

It has been recognised in other research that a lack of finances for community councils limits the role they can have in and for their wider communities.³⁶

Throughout our research, participants emphasised the need for more financial resource to be able to carry out their work effectively.

Beacons for Public Engagement. Open access: [https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/public-dialogue-and-deliberation\(068a922c-0f20-4cf5-b967-8c0ceaeacd11\).html](https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/public-dialogue-and-deliberation(068a922c-0f20-4cf5-b967-8c0ceaeacd11).html)

³⁶ Pound, D., Reed, M., Armitage, L. and Pound, J. (2016) *Engaging and empowering communities and stakeholders in rural land use and land management in Scotland*, a report for the Scottish Government, p39



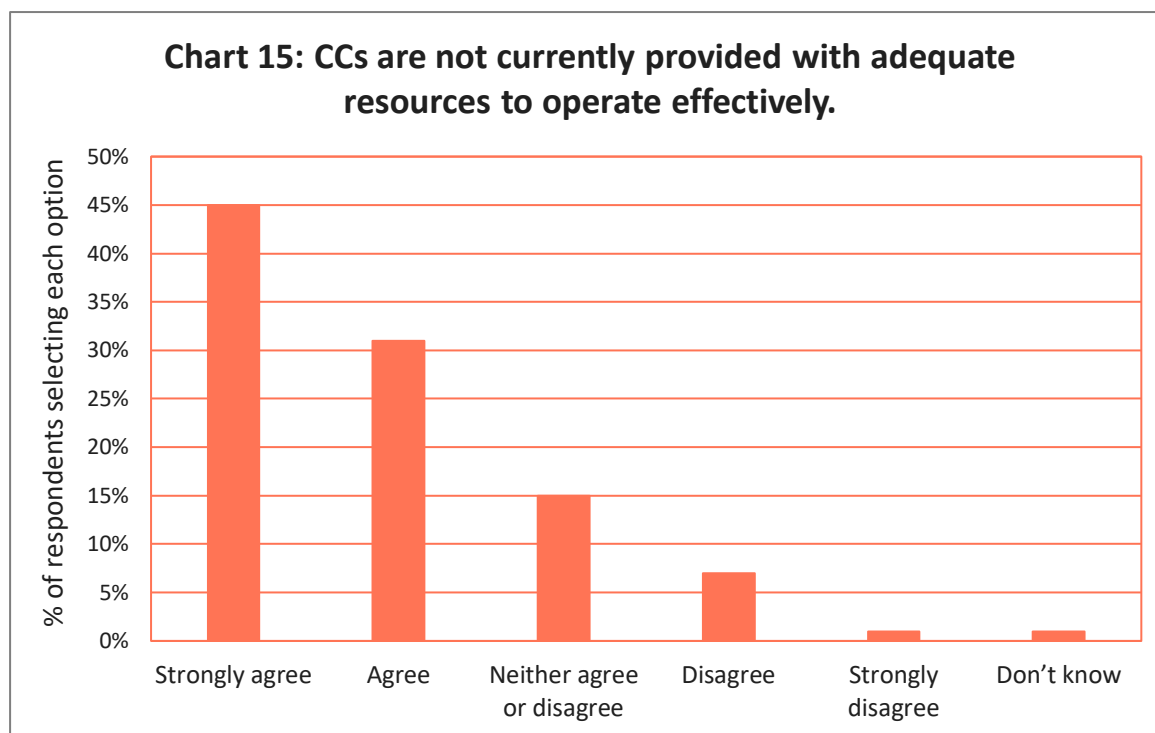
Community councils need to be properly funded to effectively carry out all the asks that are being made of them as local authorities continue to cut the services they provide due to the continued cuts from Scottish Government funding. (Survey response)

As things stand, our CC is not able to fulfil its basic function as a regional workshop, representing the views of the local community, as it does not have anything like the resources required to do so. In order to do so, it would require both increased financial support and much greater access to support services from the local authority - the latter, in my view, is particularly important. (Survey response)

At times there seems to be a belief in the community that we are the ones responsible for what are actually government or local council responsibilities. It is difficult for a small group of volunteers to cope - being Chair easily turns into a full-time job. Perhaps we need to be more like an English Parish Council and have a budget which would enable us to employ someone to do some of the admin. (Survey response)



76% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that CCs were not provided with enough resources to operate effectively (see chart 15).



Some local authorities do provide community councils with a budget to support their work. For instance, in 2018/19 East Lothian Council committed to giving community councils and local community associations a proportion of its Local Priority Scheme based on size of population. This should work provide an average of £7500 to each community council to enhance their local environment for the benefit of their community (see appendix A).

Association

Another potential source of support is a community council association. The role of both national and local associations in supporting community councils has been highlighted in previous research on community councils.³⁷ The development of associations at these levels could be a mechanism to drive change, share practice, research, information, advice and to facilitate networking.

³⁷ Escobar, O. (2014) *Strengthening local democracy in Scotland: The Community Council's perspective*. Edinburgh: COSLA Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy, p 15. Open access: <https://www.localdemocracy.info/start-the-debate/listening-sessions/26-february-community-councillors/>



There are 16 CCs represented on Midlothian Federation of CCs, and it is clear that everyone has the same issues. The federation will have speakers from planning, service managers etc. We find that we have more power because we represent more people. We have sub committees for planning and roads within the Federation. We have members of the Federation within the various boards and planning groups. There was a planning development that wasn't in the development plan so the Federation are taking legal advice to take them to court. The Fed is resourced by the LA, they have the community liaison officer minute the meetings. (Regional workshop participant)



Some local associations exist in Scotland, such as Midlothian Federation of CCs described in the above quote and in appendix A, but national representation for community councils no longer exists in Scotland. The Association of Scottish Community Councils wound down in April 2012, stating that it did not have enough Scottish Government funding to operate effectively.³⁸



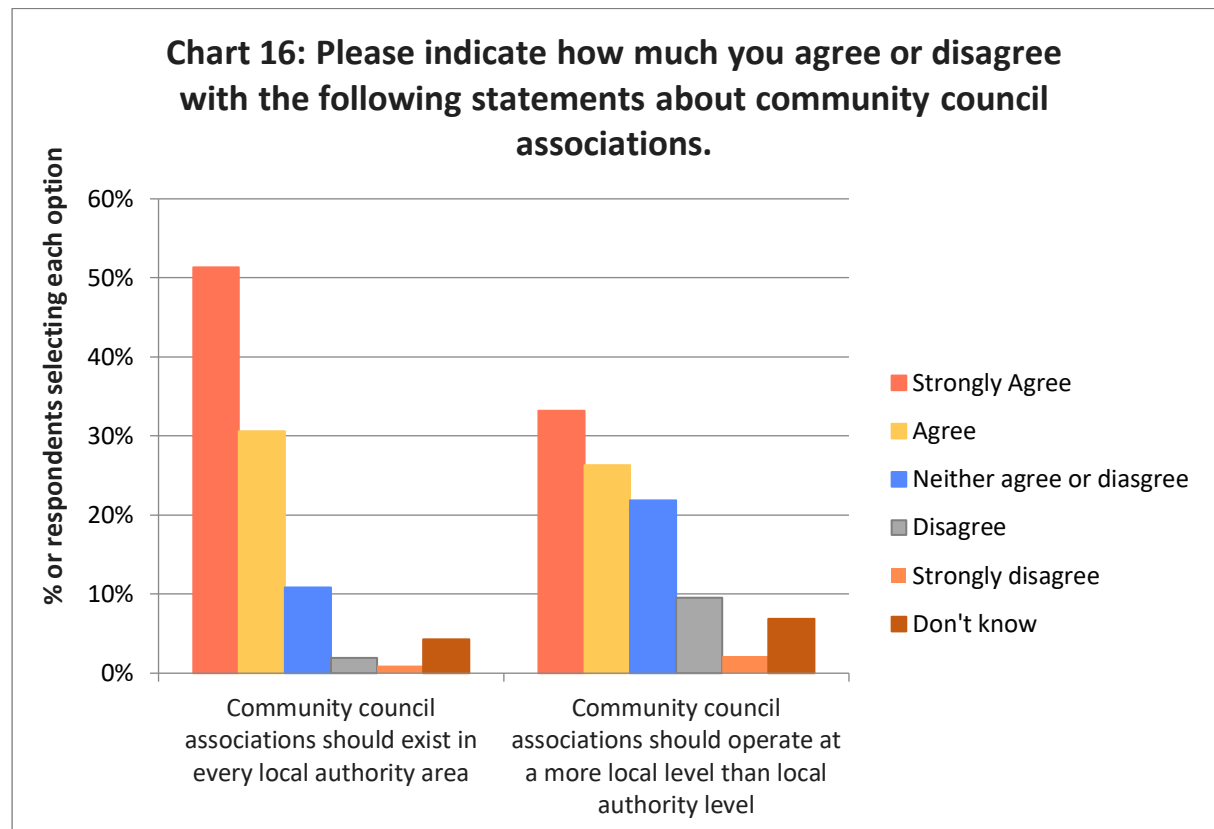
The association of community councils is vital but also some sort of forum for community councillors to talk to each other where ever they might be in the country e.g. a digital platform for CCs to communicate.

(Regional workshop participant)



³⁸ Naysmith, S. (2012) 'Calls for radical change to community councils' *The Glasgow Herald*, 21st August 2012, Society section, p21

These comments were backed up by survey findings, in which 82% (498 out of 608) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that community council associations should exist in every local authority area. 59% (362) agreed or strongly agreed that CC associations should exist more locally than local authority level (see chart 16).

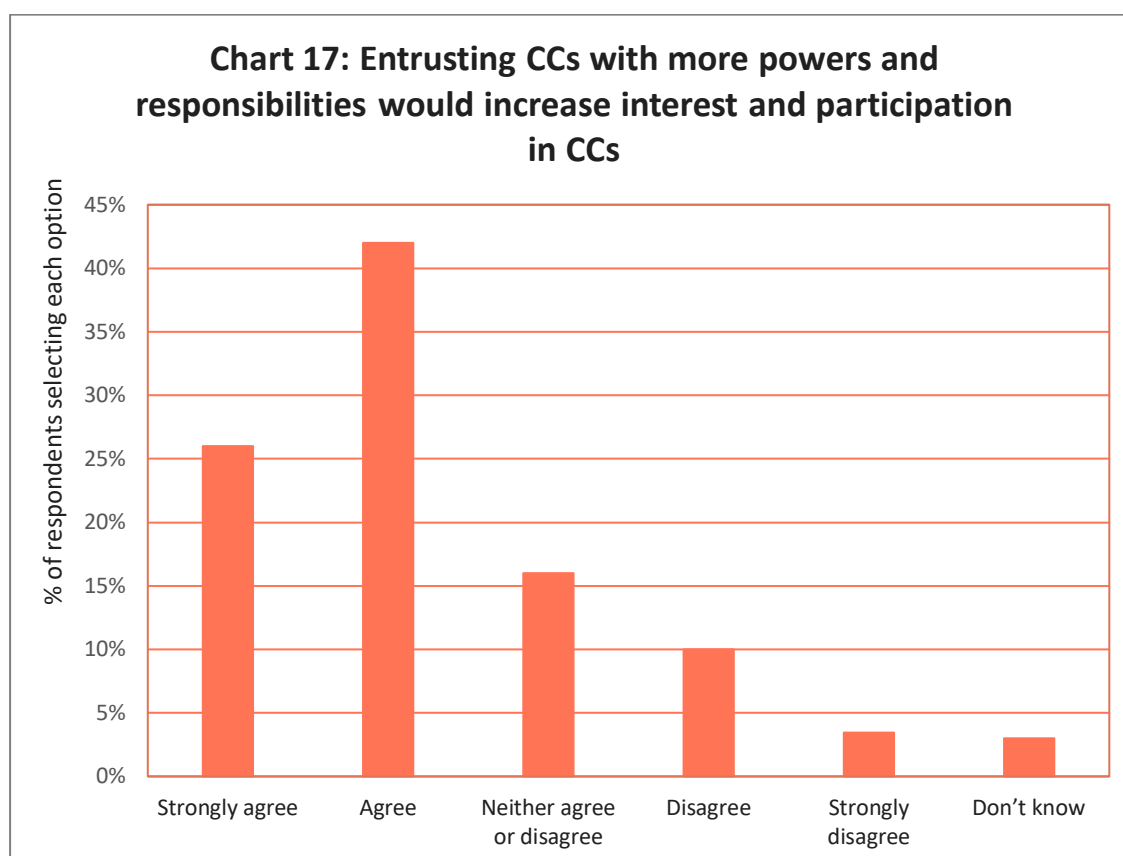


How the themes relate to one another

Power and participation

Community councils in Scotland have previously indicated a preference for having more powers and responsibilities, in the belief that this would help to attract more members.³⁹

As chart 17 highlights, 68% (396 out of 579) of respondents to our survey agreed that giving more power and responsibilities to community councils would increase interest and participation. Some participants in the survey and wider research elaborated on this.



If they [CCs] had more powers to do things or have things changed, then the local people would see that they are a powerful body and then have more faith in them and come to the meetings. (Survey response)



³⁹ Thomson, B., Mawdsley, G., Payne, A. (2012) *Renewing Local Government*. Edinburgh: Reform Scotland, p23-8



There have been occasions where the LA has failed to adequately explain their decisions to our CC, or to revisit their earlier decisions when the CC has identified apparent injustices which could be easily rectified. The CC should, in such instances, be able to demand that their opinion is taken into account. Otherwise, the local community will dismiss the CC as "powerless".

(Survey response)

Housing associations have contested elections in most of our communities – this may have to do with access to assets, feeling that real decisions are being made.

(Regional workshop participant)



Some respondents saw central and local government as largely unaccountable. This was seen to undermine any notion of CCs as being a democratic check on power. An explicit link was made between this power imbalance and a lack of interest in CCs.



Central government needs to be accountable to local communities and explain decisions when local views are over-ridden. This is particularly the case when planning appeals are granted by remote central government machinery despite an application that is blatantly at odds with planning policy. There needs to be a better means of investigating this which leads to cynicism and the view that local decisions count for nothing. This undermines the status of CCs and makes recruiting members difficult.

(Survey response)





The problem is not with the CC it is because there is no confidence in the LA. They have ignored the town for years, closed almost every building and apart from emptying the bins do little else. There is a complete distrust of the LA and people see how all the money gets spent on the west of the region. Because of this there is no interest in the CC and never will be unless the council officials start to treat everyone as equals and not selected areas. (Survey response)



Power was also linked to the issue of promotion. In response to question 12 in our survey (see appendix C) on promoting CCs at a national level, many community councillors commented that increased powers were essential. The types of power that were seen to help promote CCs at a national level included tax-raising powers, decision making power in spending areas, decision making in planning, stronger legal authority and making it mandatory for local councillors and MSPs to attend CC meetings.



CCs must be heard and legislation should be given teeth such that CCs are enabled to make a difference. Once that is in place everything else will follow.

(Survey response)

More power being devolved from National Govt to councils and from councils to community councils is the best way to increase the relevance of community councils. (Survey response)





CCs should be given responsibility for raising revenue for their activities in the same way as Parish Councils are in England. (Survey response)

Give CCs statute powers and responsibility for delivery of some local services and fund CCs properly, similar to Parish Councils in England, reduce the number of ward councillors accordingly. This would be self-promoting for CCs as the community they represent would be able to contact those responsible and accountable for delivering said services. (Survey response)



Participation and diversity

CCs are less likely to become more diverse if interest and participation remain low. This issue was recognised by some respondents in our research, who made a further connection back to a perceived lack of power and influence.



We make it clear to the community we are open to all in our own CC we have members from ethnic and LGBT backgrounds but as above when they see we have little say or respect from the LA then they just drift away which saddens us and makes us wonder ourselves why we do this. (Survey response)





Main challenge is the LA taking the CC seriously and demonstrate they are listening and adjusting to feedback. Then people of all diversity will come and give their precious time. (Survey response)



Of course, this is not to say that increasing power and influence is enough on its own to ensure that CCs become more representative of diversity. There is no guarantee that people who face additional, sometimes multiple, barriers to participation in local democratic structures will become involved as a result of a 'broad-brush' approach to increasing participation. As we show in chart 19 in the discussion section below, the right kind of support needs to be in place to increase participation of particular groups, and it may be necessary to consider more focused or targeted approaches to ensuring minority groups are represented.

Power and support

There was also a perceived relationship in the research between power and support. Community councillors observed their CCs would require additional support in order to take on extra power and responsibilities.



Community councils need to be properly funded to effectively carry out all the asks that are being made of them as local authorities continue to cut the services they provide due to the continued cuts from Scottish government funding. (Survey response)



“

In my opinion, the CC system works very well in our area. However, as I have outlined, we do not have the expertise, training or funding to take on a significant amount more than we do currently. (Survey response)

”

Respondents emphasised that community councillors are volunteers with limited time and capacity.

“

Too much is placed on the voluntary aspect of CCs. There are many wonderful volunteers out there but who are having far too much responsibility placed upon them without the necessary financial support. CC's are time consuming to the individual, recognise that. (Survey response)

Anyone involved in CC are not trained and are volunteers so tax raising power and such like is a step too far. (Survey response)

”

Support for engagement

One responsibility respondents felt they needed support with was engaging with the wider community.



A lot is expected of community councillors who are working hard without pay or even expenses and high expectations of expertise (eg planning). This is what puts candidates off putting their names forward - little diversity and too few individuals to represent large numbers within community. Too much responsibility is placed on them with little support and little thanks from the public! (Survey response)

Many CCs don't engage local people and just put forward views of those who are members. Unfortunately, there is not enough financial support / local authority support to undertake the task of ascertaining local views. (Survey response)

[We need] capacity to properly reach out to whole community and seek views. We've done a few community engagement exercises recently, and they are resource intensive. Difficult to engage people sometimes if they can't see what role CC plays in influencing change. (Survey response)

There should be further support for CCs in engaging with the community around them, and in particular those groups and even individuals who may be hardest to reach, or to hear from. (Survey response)



On its own, support for CCs to do community engagement is not enough. Some respondents highlighted the fact that people from excluded or marginalised groups would need support in order to participate.



Getting the volunteers with enough time in the first place. As a disabled, self-employed, working class single mother I sometimes don't have the time or health to attend meetings, I am not alone. (Survey response)

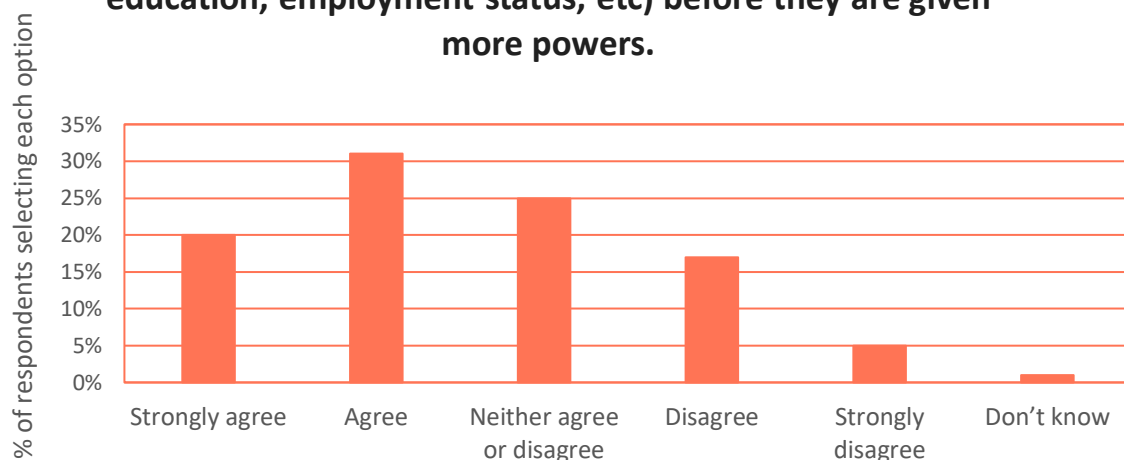
Disenfranchised groups may need additional support to be involved. Important that this is available for them. There should be support/training for the CCs themselves to help them become more representative and be supportive to reps from disenfranchised groups (e.g. setting up a buddy/mentoring system to support new community councillors). (Survey response)



Power and democratic legitimacy

Respondents were aware that CCs are sometimes viewed as lacking democratic legitimacy due to a lack of diversity and competitive elections. Chart 18 shows that 51% (294 out of 579) of survey respondents acknowledged that community councils need to be more representative of their wider community before they are granted more powers. Crucially, only 22% disagreed with this statement.

Chart 18: CCs need to become more representative of the wider community (e.g. ethnicity, financial status, class, education, employment status, etc) before they are given more powers.



Legitimacy is an issue when there are no elections.

(Regional workshop participant)

CCs need to ensure that they are representative and accountable to their community in terms of decision making. They should be transparent, willing to network and willing to share good practice.

(Regional workshop participant)

Formal representation should ONLY be permitted from a CC where their membership has been elected from a wider body of candidates, or else their views are simply not going to be representative of anything more than a group of people who put themselves forward for CC membership, rather than representative of the community. *(Survey response)*





There is a degree of mistrust with CCs being neither fish nor fowl - elections are often uncontested so there can be a perception of a lack of accountability and they can be seen to both have no power/influence/relevance and too much power/influence/relevance. (Survey response)



Discussion

CCs can play a crucial facilitative role, providing space to bring together diverse voices and perspectives to grapple with pressing issues and improve local outcomes. CCs have the potential to be key institutions for citizens and community groups seeking to mobilise and forge alliances for action on local priorities. As it is already the case in some CCs, they can provide collaborative spaces in myriad situations, e.g.:

- A resident wanting to raise awareness and tackle a local issue that affects the community
- A community group or organisation wanting to take action in collaboration with others
- A public authority seeking input into new policies or services
- A participatory budgeting process to be organised locally and in partnership with a local authority
- An elected member seeking community engagement that goes beyond individual constituent views
- A community planning partnership developing a plan for local action.

Stronger CCs could play a central role in such processes by combining online and face-to-face spaces, and deploying various participatory and deliberative formats to ensure inclusion of a cross-section of local voices and perspectives.⁴⁰

If CCs are better supported to mobilise and represent the voices of their community, this will be of benefit to authorities, partnerships and organisations that often struggle to engage locally. CCs with a strong local mandate, based on inclusive community engagement, can make a legitimate and meaningful contribution to a variety of policy processes and public services. This would be particularly beneficial for example in community planning partnerships, which often lack community participation and representation.⁴¹

Our research has explored the potential of CCs to be vehicles for community empowerment and democratic renewal in Scotland. Our findings make a strong call for reforming CCs and investing in local democracy. This reform is long overdue and there have been numerous missed opportunities to do so in the last two decades. Instead, CCs have been left in an unfair limbo. On the one hand, when some authorities and public services are content with the contribution of CCs, they seem to happily see them as a legitimate vehicle for ticking the

⁴⁰ See Lightbody, R (2017) 'Hard to reach or easy to ignore? Promoting equality in community engagement. Edinburgh: What Works Scotland. Open access: <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/hard-to-reach-or-easy-to-ignore-promoting-equality-in-community-engagement-evidence-review/>

⁴¹ Escobar, O., Gibb, K., Kandlik Eltanani, M. and Weakley, S. (2018) Community Planning Officials Survey: Understanding the everyday work of local participatory governance in Scotland, Edinburgh: What Works Scotland. Open Access: <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/community-planning-officials-survey-everyday-work-of-local-participatory-governance/> [Accessed 9th January 2019]

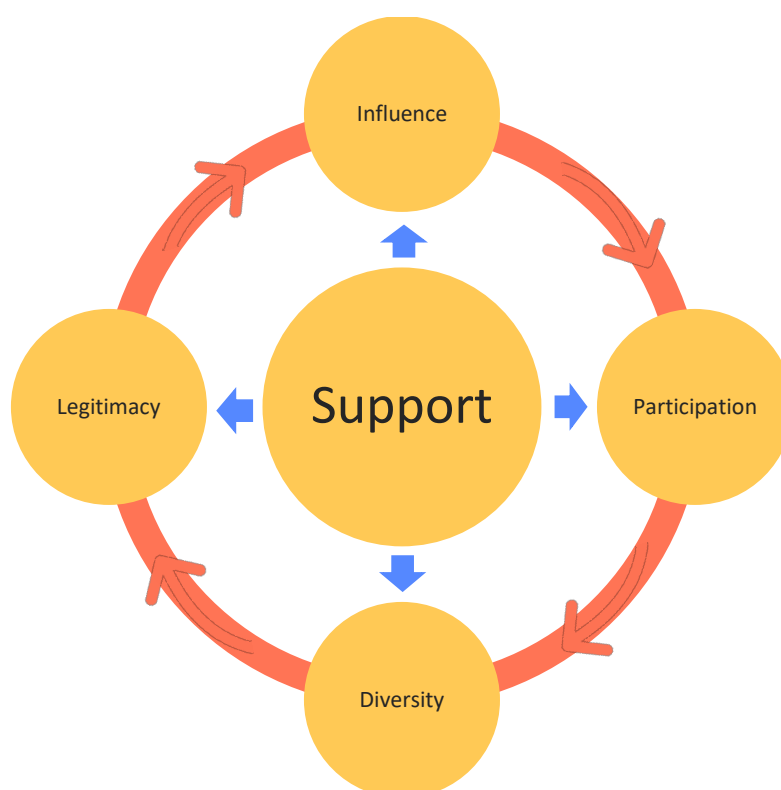
community engagement box. On the other hand, when CCs play a more challenging role in policy and decision-making processes, those very same authorities and public services seem quick to dismiss them as illegitimate and unrepresentative on the basis of some of the problems outlined in this report.⁴²

There is no easy way of breaking this vicious circle. Can CCs legitimately claim more power when they are seen to lack diversity, inclusiveness and capacity for broad community engagement? And can it realistically be expected that a diverse range of citizens will volunteer their time and energy to an institution that they may see as lacking relevance? So what should come first? Increasing their relevance through empowerment that may attract participation, or making them relevant through inclusive participation that may lead to empowerment?

We have put forward the argument that these dimensions need to be tackled simultaneously through reform. Chart 19 shows how, with adequate support in place, influence, participation, diversity and legitimacy could feed into one another in a virtuous cycle. Increased power leads to higher participation which in turn feeds into diversity and legitimacy. Finally, more powers are likely to be granted to CCs if they are seen as democratically legitimate, and the cycle continues.

⁴² Escobar, O. (2014) *Strengthening local democracy in Scotland: The Community Council's perspective*. Edinburgh: COSLA Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy, p 19. Open access: <https://www.localdemocracy.info/start-the-debate/listening-sessions/26-february-community-councillors/>

Chart 19: Growing community councils



The model suggests that there is no conflict or contradiction between the need for CCs to have more influence and the need for them to be democratic and representative of diversity. Increasing one of these will help to increase the other.

Careful thought needs to be given, however, to growing each of these dimensions and the support that needs to be in place for each. It is worth saying a bit more about this.

Growing participation and diversity

More people need to stand for election as community councillors and more people need to turn out to vote. Increased participation is also needed in order to make CC membership more diverse and representative of the wider community.

Support is vital to ensure wider participation. For instance, CCs require training and resources in order to engage with their communities and increase participation amongst all groups. If CCs are to have an enhanced and more dynamic role, they should be supported by community workers with expertise in community organising and participation. There is also a need to develop new partnerships and collaborations, for example with education

institutions who may help with the training and research needed to inform community deliberation and action.

Investment in people and technology is required, for example to help CCs to collaborate in-between meetings, to open up their conversations to community participation, and to develop more agile and responsive ways of working, prioritising and deciding.⁴³ It is important that we take into account changing trends in people's preference of how they wish to engage with the world around them, including with democratic functions.

Furthermore, we should not expect a small group of unpaid volunteers to take on so many burdens and responsibilities, while most other participants in various partnerships tend to be paid workers from the public and third sectors. The size of CC membership should be increased to allow for a division of labour that capitalises on the diverse interests and skills of community councillors. Compensation schemes should be put in place to support community councillors with accessibility, travel, caring responsibilities, and even loss of earnings.⁴⁴ Otherwise the system is not genuinely open to young people, single parents, disabled people, carers, low paid workers and the self-employed, etc. Without adequate support in place, CCs will remain spaces accessible mainly to citizens who can afford participating.

Much of the emphasis in the research workshops and the survey was placed on the need to improve electoral contests. But elections are not the only mechanism available for selection, and arguably they are not always the most democratic.⁴⁵ Despite lack of support by respondents to this survey, we think that there is merit in considering the role that sortition (selection by lottery) might play in reinvigorating CCs, bringing in participants who may not otherwise put themselves forward.⁴⁶ For example, a proportion of the seats in a CC could be allocated via sortition, using a formula that prioritises diversity.⁴⁷ Enabling some, but not all, CC places to be filled in such a way might help to address the concern that lottery randomisation of selection could somewhat undermine the voluntary nature of participation.

⁴³ For example, investing in crowdsourcing platforms that allow productive dialogue and deliberation online (e.g. Loomio).

⁴⁴ See Lightbody, R (2017) 'Hard to reach or easy to ignore? Promoting equality in community engagement. Edinburgh: What Works Scotland. Open access: <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/hard-to-reach-or-easy-to-ignore-promoting-equality-in-community-engagement-evidence-review/>

⁴⁵ Carson, L. & Martin, B. (1999) *Random selection in politics*, Westport, CT.: Praeger Publishers.

⁴⁶ Escobar, O. and Elstub (2017) Forms of mini-publics: An introduction to deliberative innovations in democratic practice, Research and Development Notes, newDEMOCRACY. Open access: <https://www.newdemocracy.com.au/2017/05/08/forms-of-mini-publics/> [Accessed 9th January 2019].

⁴⁷ Escobar, O. (2014) *Strengthening local democracy in Scotland: The Community Council's perspective*. Edinburgh: COSLA Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy, p. 19. Open access: <https://www.localdemocracy.info/start-the-debate/listening-sessions/26-february-community-councillors/> [Accessed 9th January 2019]

Growing power and influence

Giving CCs increased powers may attract more people to join and to take part in elections. CCs also require certain powers if they are able to help people in communities have influence over what happens in their community – which is what community empowerment is all about.

Our research has highlighted an appetite among CCs for taking on more powers, including more formal integration into community planning, earlier consultation in planning processes, increased influence in local authority decision making and budgetary powers. As the examples in appendix A illustrate, some community councils have already taken advantage of community empowerment opportunities such as participatory budgeting, asset transfer⁴⁸ and participation requests.

But community councils have also acknowledged the particular challenges they face. Our research highlighted that recruitment, community engagement, diversity and a lack of competitive elections are ongoing issues. Members feel under-supported and are concerned at being asked to take on too many responsibilities as volunteers without adequate support and training in place. There is a mixed picture in terms of how community councils describe their relationship with statutory officials and elected members. Although examples of constructive partnership exist, many community councils feel their democratic role is undervalued.

It is clear that support and investment is required. Ideally, a wide array of support would be offered. This would include resources for CC to carry out their enhanced role effectively as well as training across a range of areas. Assistance is also needed around promotion and networking, and local networks and national associations have a key role in this regard.

CCs will be at different stages and will require different levels of support. This will depend on factors such as the size and population of the local authority and whether a community council area is urban or rural. Support needs will vary between and within local authority areas and reformers must accept that one size will not fit all. The challenge is to support asymmetric devolution of powers that accommodates the different pace of development and level of ambition at play in CCs across different contexts. The important thing will be to shift power and resources in a co-ordinated way that enables power/influence and participation to grow alongside each other so that they begin to feed into one another, as illustrated by the model.

⁴⁸ CCs are unable undertake asset transfer themselves, but some CCs have set up development trusts in order to do this (see example of Alva Community Council in appendix A).

The case for reform

Throughout the research process that led to this report we explored the weaknesses and strengths of CCs, building an evidence base that supports a robust call for reform. The hundreds of participants who kindly contributed to this research may disagree on some aspects of that reform, but it seems to us that they are united on a basic principle: stronger CCs can deepen and strengthen local democracy and governance.

The Local Governance Review is fully underway, and different options for improving democracy at a local level will be on the table. Strengthening community councils should be considered as a serious way forward. However, in our experience working in community and policy contexts over the years, we have often noticed a lack of respect for CCs. Those who are critical of CCs often have good reasons, backed by some of the evidence in this report. However, the challenges faced by CCs are shared by many of our democratic structures and institutions. Addressing these challenges is part of wider and overall democratic renewal and revitalisation, as well as specific support to CCs.

At the start of this report we highlighted that community councils have a unique role as formal democratic institutions embedded in local communities. No other structure currently exists that combines the two elements of being democratic and community-led, yet no other institution of democracy would be left in the limbo that many CCs find themselves today, over four decades after their creation. It is time to reform CCs so that they can become respected, dynamic and effective institutions at the forefront of local democratic renewal in Scotland. Or let's have a serious discussion about creating a different system, taking the lessons learned from CCs and developing a new set of local institutions.

Either way, we must appreciate the amount of effort and time that community councillors currently contribute. The energy and commitment of local people should not be squandered by delaying reform of a system that has so much room for improvement. This reform should be seen as crucial to advance the current community empowerment agenda: devolving power, reducing democratic deficits, increasing community representation, and increasing capacity to tackle local priorities and improve people's lives.

The time has come for taking action that puts faith in the principles of local democracy and community empowerment. Community councils offer the potential of doing this.

Appendix A: Case studies

Aberdeen Civic Forum

The Civic Forum ensures that the views, priorities and issues of communities from throughout the city of Aberdeen are taken forward to shape strategies, services, policies to help the community planning partnerships make better decisions. The purpose of the Civic Forum is to enable and support communities in Aberdeen to participate in community planning and to bring the voice and the views of all communities to every possible level of decision making.

The forum has a broad and diverse variety of membership and representation from communities throughout Aberdeen. All Community Councils are entitled to membership, as are many more community groups, communities of interest and individual citizens. Some of the current partners include: Ethnic Minority Forum, Disability Equality Partnership, Aberdeen Women's Alliance and AB+. It is also looking to strengthen connections with other key groups such as Youth Council, LGBT(QIA)+ Networks and more.

The forum was founded around 20 years ago and offers the opportunity for community partners to address strategic issues and to connect with statutory partners. The Forum can take a strategic look at issues which may impact on communities, for example exploring how licencing policies connect with health and social care and impact on outcomes around reducing alcohol misuse or alcohol related illnesses. Most recently, the Forum has been discussing the City Centre Master Plan and the impact it will have on communities. Forum representatives have met with transport companies, elected members, developers, planning offices and sit on the City Centre Master Plan reference group.

The strength of the Forum is that it can present a collective voice for civic organisations, it draws on the wider intelligence of the community, it has an experienced membership, new members are joining the forum on a regular basis, members are supported to bring views forward and less heard voices are actively supported to have their say and raise issues to be discussed.

The Forum members regularly take issues or community priorities to statutory sector partners to influence resource allocations and service design. The Civic Forum can raise questions and provide robust challenges to decisions and strategies when needed, but also seeks to support, to collaborate with all partners and interested parties whenever possible.

The Civic Forum has a strong presence and brings forward a strong voice with communities throughout Aberdeen but it is not the only method for engagement. It promotes direct, broader and more consistent engagement with communities and works wherever possible alongside other bodies like the Community Council Forum to make positive change and lasting improvement in the City.

“It is important that these associations and forums do not replace the ability of the community councils and community groups who are part of their membership, but seek instead to focus on supporting them to raise views together, in partnership with communities and statutory bodies

In only specific circumstances approved by members, should views and recommendations be put forward by these bodies as a collective voice, and when they do should be fully reflective of the plurality of views shared by member CCs and their communities.” (Jonathan Smith, Chair of Aberdeen Civic Forum, Aberdeen Community Council Forum)

North Ayrshire Locality Partnerships

North Ayrshire’s community councils are represented on six Locality Partnerships representing different geographic communities across the authority. The Locality Partnerships have grant giving powers from a number of different funds, including Nurturing Excellence in Communities. They also oversee participatory budgeting (PB) in North Ayrshire including PB for mainstream budgets (supporting local people to make decisions about services which protect and enhance the built and green environment).

Within the context of North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership’s Fair for All strategy, a funding allocation has also been provided for the creation of a Community Investment Fund, an innovative fund to assist communities to address the priorities identified through Locality Planning Partnerships. This is distributed among localities as follows:

- Irvine - £754,000
- Kilwinning - £286,000
- Three Towns - £598,000
- Garnock Valley - £390,000
- North Coast - £468,000
- Arran - £104,000

The Locality Partnerships provide support for communities to tackle the issues which they have identified as priorities in their Locality Plan. In practice the Chair of each community council attends Locality Partnership meetings (where there are several community councils in a locality then all Chairs will be entitled to attend). The statutory agencies represented on the Locality Partnerships alongside community councils, include:

- North Ayrshire Council
- Health and Social Care Partnership
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Fire and Rescue
- Third Sector Interface

The Elected Members are also members of the Locality Partnerships which relate to their wards.

The Partnership meets four times each year. There are also supporting working groups which progress action to address the local priorities in between formal meetings.

The function of the Locality Partnership is to develop, review and implement the priorities of the locality plan, to monitor actions to progress the plan, to respond to strategic issues in relation to service delivery, to develop and implement participatory budgeting and to administer any other grant or financial payment to local organisations or individuals from within the area.

Dennistoun Community Council's engagement with the community and other local organisations

Dennistoun Community Council (DCC) uses a subcommittee structure aimed at breaking down actions into manageable chunks. These include sub-committees on parking and traffic, heritage, environment, strategic communications and one for the annual Alexandra Park Festival. Each sub-committee follows official sub-committee remits as per the Scheme of Establishment with a minimum of 3 community councillors. Sub-committee reports are circulated to all community councillors and are minuted at full council.

Through the Dennistoun Community Council Action Plan⁴⁹ (reviewed and voted on every year), DCC and its sub-committees work to achieve their goals within reasonable time scales. To give an idea of the work of a sub-committee, the Environment Sub Committee in 2017/18 carried out a survey of damaged bins, street furniture and mapped this out to share with partners and seek funding and resources to improve the walkways and land and environmental services in the Dennistoun ward. This work is reoccurring with regular walkabouts, and the data gathered is regularly requested by city councillors to inform their work.

Further community engagement activities by DCC sub-committees include:

- The Strategic Communications Sub-committee (SCSC) organised a General Election Hustings in 2017 for the community to debate and question the candidates standing for election. The group worked hard to make the event fully accessible (80+ attending the event), live tweeting, filming and streaming on Facebook Live (120+ members of public viewed the event) and hosting in a central Dennistoun location. The SCSC have also organised and run a Dennistoun Dinosaur Hunt in conjunction with shops in the ward to increase footfall into local businesses. 190 competition entries were received.

⁴⁹ <http://dennistouncc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/dcc-action-plan-2017-2018.pdf>

- The Parking and Traffic Sub Committee's campaign to increase attention of parking issues in the Dennistoun area and the impact of Event Day Parking. This has involved seeking the views of residents through online engagement, paper questionnaires at the local festival and working with city councillors, the local MP, MSP and officers at Glasgow City Council (GCC). A GCC public consultation is now expected in January 2019 as a result of DCC's consistent campaigning since October 2016.
- The PTSC and SCSC have secured funding for 5 community noticeboards to be installed in 2018 to share information, secure the views of and reach more of their residents, particularly those not online and without digital skills to communicate via social media.

More generally, DCC takes an approach of engaging as much as it can with the wider community, as well as other Community Councils, Housing Associations, the Local Area Partnership and other third sector organisations and professional structures.

"Dennistoun Community Council has established strong relationships with our community. Councillors attend meetings out in the community such as those held by Associate Members and other community groups which builds a good network of community relationships."
(Member of DCC)

DCC feels that community councils have a unique skill in identifying the core needs of their residents:

"We can formulate local plans quickly, without much bureaucracy and very much work to the notion of consensus and then compromise over outright democratic voting procedures."
(Member of DCC)

Working with a budget - East Lammermuir Community Council

In addition to an administration grant of £449, East Lothian Council annually provides community councils with a proportion of its Local Priority Scheme.

The Local Priority Scheme money, the amount of which is based on size of population, is for community councils to enhance their local environment for the benefit of their community. In 2018/19, community councils in East Lothian received £130,000 between them (an average of £7500 each).

East Lammermuir Community Council (ELCC) covers four small villages in East Lothian. ELCC uses its administration grant to pay for a postage, printing and secretarial expenses.

The community council acts as a channel for the Local Priority Scheme money to community associations (CAs) in each of the four villages. The CAs have an open membership and are made up from elected representatives from other local groups, including rural groups, flower shows, girl guides etc. ELCC membership includes representatives of the four CAs, all of which the CC works closely with.

The size of population means that £520 is allocated to each CA. East Lothian Council holds onto money until the CAs have representatives elected in and claim the fund. They use the money for a range of purposes, from putting on community events to looking after the local community hall. The CC has a role in encouraging the CAs to claim the money.

Although the amount is small, ELCC believe it is invaluable for civic participation. For instance, it can be a lifeline for community groups in need of a replacement boiler for their local venue. It can also be useful to have a small amount in place when searching for match funding.

“Money such as this has to hit the grassroots to make sure it has a positive impact on the people that live here. In the absence of any other funding opportunities for people like ourselves who live rurally, and where people’s income and time is restricted so they can’t support everything, what we get is really appreciated by these small communities as it goes a small way to maintaining quality of life. If the money was withdrawn not as much would be done in the community and we would feel that we were left to get on with it all ourselves – ‘let down’ would be the word I’d use.” (ELCC member)

Support from East Lothian Council isn’t just financial. ELCC appreciate the work of the dedicated community council liaison officer who links CCs and the CAs with the local authority and other structures.

Alva Community Council’s involvement in Alva Development Trust

Although community councils are not legally able to own assets such as land and buildings, community councils can take actions with a view to facilitating community ownership of local public assets. For instance, they can help to set up a development trust to take ownership of a local asset. They can also work with others in the community to carry out a community action plan, which can help to establish asset transfer as a community priority.

Members of Alva Community Council have done both these things as part of their ongoing efforts to initiate the Community Asset Transfer of the Cochrane Hall, a key community venue and hub in Alva, from Clackmannanshire Council.

The seeds of a community asset transfer were planted as far back as 2014, with the creation of Alva Community Action Plan Group (CAPlan) - a sub-group of Alva Community Council (ACC) consisting of community council members include as well as members of the wider community in Alva. CAPlan produced Alva Community Action Plan in 2015 following a survey issued to each Alva household.

In January 2018, at a local authority budget consultation meeting in Alva, Clackmannanshire Council proposed the closure of Cochrane Hall along with a number of other local community facilities. Around one hundred people attended the meeting as a result of the community council’s efforts to gain support for finding a way to keep the hall open. The strength of feeling towards saving the hall encouraged community council members to

invite volunteers to join the CAPlan group and get behind the setting up of a development trust.

Within a few months, and with help from Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS), the CAPlan Group had morphed into Alva Development Trust (ADT). An inaugural committee was created, tasked with taking over the hall by September, when it was due to be mothballed. At the first ADT Committee meeting in April 2018, it was decided that ADT would be independent of the community council, since a constitution and other governance was imminent. A series of meetings with council officers over the summer, and support from Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface and Community Ownership Support Service (part of DTAS) led to the signing of a three-year lease in October 2018.

The trust plans to finalise the asset transfer of Cochrane Hall within three years using provisions in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act. They hope to make the hall into a community hub for Alva, and are developing links with a range of agencies and community organisations with a view to them locating their services in the hub.

Some community council members volunteer with the trust and both organisations are keen to explore working together on a range of issues. Members acknowledge it can be a challenge to balance the day-to-day administration work of a community councillor with the development work involved in an asset transfer. As a result, the person who was Chair of the community council became Vice-Chair in order to commit more time to the development trust. At the same time, having different hats brings certain advantages, such as making it easier to work in partnership.

Working in collaboration: Community council involvement in PB in Moray

The Joint Community Councils of Moray (JCC) is an over-arching forum of which all community councils in Moray have membership. In addition to being a space for community councils to meet quarterly and share information, the JCC is a constituted group, is represented in Community Planning through its membership of the Community Engagement Group and represents the views of Moray's community councils to the Scottish Government through contact with local MSPs.

One of the JCC's most high-profile achievements is setting up then helping to run the community-led participatory budgeting (PB) initiative, Money for Moray. Chair of the JCC, Alastair Kennedy, set up the Money for Moray PB working group in 2016, together with 15 others from community councils, area forums and the Federation of Village Halls and Associations. Since being set up, the project has organised five voting events that have enabled people in Moray to decide how to allocate £275,000 of funding to local projects.

The majority of the money distributed through PB has been provided by the Scottish Government's Community Choices fund with additional funding provided by Moray Council. Advice came from Moray Council's Community Support Unit, Scottish Community

Development Centre and PB Partners. More recently, Money for Moray has worked with neighbouring Local Authorities in Highland and Aberdeenshire and with the Moray Health and Social Care Partnership.

The working group clearly has a strength in working in collaboration. Alastair feels the group has benefitted from having volunteers from different community organisations each offering a different perspective. Having a mix of volunteers from throughout the council area also allowed the working group to connect with more people throughout Moray.

Money for Moray has had a big impact locally. A total of 91 community groups and projects have received funding, which in turn go on to benefit the community by promoting social inclusion or economic development. A spin-off benefit for community organisation is that there is now wider awareness of their work, both within the community and among other community and voluntary groups. Some have even gone on to provide projects who weren't successful on the day with support to make their ideas happen.

The group has recently organised a successful PB conference and continues to lobby for PB to be introduced into mainstream budgeting. This activity is being supported by a grant of £3,000 from the last round of the Community Choices Fund.

For more information about Money for Moray, visit: www.moneyformoray.org/

"Being involved in the M4M group and PB generally illustrates the amount of other groups that exist and are doing great things in their communities. Community Councillors have made new links with many of these groups. This has in turn generated more interest in the work of Community Councils and has increased membership in some. It has also helped various groups that are trying to achieve similar aims to come together and work in partnership, thereby strengthening those groups. This is a benefit for Community Councils as word gets out and that ultimately helps the credibility of Community Councils with agencies which may previously have been non-committal in their dealings with them."
(Alastair Kennedy, Chair of the Joint Community Councils of Moray)

Midlothian's Federation of Community Councils

Midlothian's Federation of Community Councils (MFCC) consists of representatives from the 16 community councils in Midlothian. They meet to address issues of shared concern and are supported by Midlothian Council. They provide a collective voice for residents and invite senior staff from public and private organisations to jointly discuss and address challenges and opportunities in service provision and policy. MFCC has representatives on Community Planning Groups to ensure information is shared and community councils have a voice in local decision-making structures.

The Midlothian Federation makes it easier for all the CCs in the area to have a relationship with the local authority and to take up particular issues which are Midlothian-wide. With a

high level of involvement and a supportive local authority the Federation provides a platform for CCs to share information and issues about what is happening in their area. The Federation will very often invite speakers from within the local authority to update the group on council activities and budgets, and also from agencies like Scottish Water. The structure offers the opportunity for community councillors to have a voice at national consultations, for example, contributing to the Scottish Government's Flightpath engagement event.

The MFCC has recently created a traffic, roads and paths subcommittee. Material has been collated from around Midlothian about the condition of roads and paths. Individuals representing the statutory sector bodies for the roads have met with the subcommittee to discuss issues regarding traffic, roads and paths and the budgets available.

Scottish Water has made a presentation to the Federation regarding the new housing developments in Midlothian. Representatives find it easier to meet with groups of CCs and the Federation was able to ask questions about the existing sewerage system and the impact that large housing developments will have on the existing system.

Appendix B

Research Reference Group members

Chris Bruce, East Lammermuir Community Council

Ian Buchanan, Craigshill Community Council

Simon McLean, Torry Community Council

Julie Anne Butchart, Castlehill & Pittodrie Community Council

Jonathan Smith, Castlehill & Pittodrie Community Council

Donald Stavert, Bathgate Community Council

Ronald MacLeod, Bathgate Community Council

Norrie Smith, Prestwick South Community Council

Bill Fraser, The Pollokshields Trust

Angus Hardie, Scottish Community Alliance

Peter Cruickshank, Edinburgh Napier University

Bruce Ryan, Edinburgh Napier University

Lynn Sharp, The Improvement Service

Kristoffer Boesen, The Improvement Service

Nick Bland, Scottish Government

Oliver Escobar, What Works Scotland (WWS)

Paul Nelis, Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)

Andrew Paterson, Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)

Appendix C: Online survey questions

Community Council Research 2018

1. Introduction

This survey is part of wider research to explore opportunities for community councils to make a difference in the areas they represent. The questions are designed to confirm comments and explore opportunities discussed at the Edinburgh, Glasgow, Elgin, Kilmarnock and Aberdeen regional workshops (Nov 17- Jan18). This research is being carried out by [What Works Scotland](#) and [Scottish Community Development Centre](#). Read more about this collaboration [here](#).

When answering questions please refer to your own experience in connection with community councils.

Throughout the survey community councils are referred to as CCs and local authorities as LAs.

1. Your name

2. Email address (please provide if you want a copy of final report)

3. What CC are you associated with?

* 4. Are you currently or have you been a community councillor?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, what is your role with community councils?

* 5. Which local authority area is your CC based in?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Aberdeen City Council | ☐ Midlothian Council |
| ☐ Aberdeenshire Council | ☐ Moray Council |
| ☐ Angus Council | ☐ Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council) |
| ☐ Argyll and Bute Council | ☐ North Ayrshire Council |
| ☐ Edinburgh City Council | ☐ North Lanarkshire Council |
| ☐ Clackmannanshire Council | ☐ Orkney Islands Council |
| ☐ Dumfries and Galloway Council | ☐ Perth & Kinross Council |
| ☐ Dundee City Council | ☐ Renfrewshire Council |
| ☐ East Ayrshire Council | ☐ Scottish Borders Council |
| ☐ East Dunbartonshire Council | ☐ Shetland Islands Council |
| ☐ East Lothian Council | ☐ South Ayrshire Council |
| ☐ East Renfrewshire Council | ☐ South Lanarkshire Council |
| ☐ Falkirk Council | ☐ Stirling Council |
| ☐ Fife Council | ☐ West Dunbartonshire Council |
| ☐ Glasgow City Council | ☐ West Lothian Council |
| ☐ Highland Council | ☐ None. I'm not in a CC |
| ☐ Inverclyde Council | |

* 6. Please confirm that you are happy for your survey responses to be used for this community council research. Your data will be used inline with SCDC's [privacy policy](#). You can withdraw your consent at any time.

- ☐ Yes, I'm happy

Community Council Research 2018

2. Community councils and their activities

* 7. Is your Scheme of Establishment fit for purpose?

☐ Yes

☐ Don't know - I haven't seen it

☐ No

If no, how can it be improved?

* 8. Has your CC:

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Conducted a community consultation over the last 12 months.	☐	☐	☐
Campaigned on a local issue over the last 12 months.	☐	☐	☐
Taken ownership of a community asset (e.g. land or buildings) over the last 3 years.	☐	☐	☐
Setup a local vehicle for asset ownership over the last 3 years.	☐	☐	☐
Sourced funding for local projects over the last 12 months.	☐	☐	☐
Improved communication locally (e.g. community newsletter, website etc) over the last 12 months.	☐	☐	☐
Organised a community event (such as local galas) over the last 12 months.	☐	☐	☐
Made a participation request over the last 12 months.	☐	☐	☐

* 9. What areas of community life is your CC involved in?

	Is involved in	Is NOT involved in	Should be active in this area	Should NOT be active in this area	Don't know
Education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health & Social care	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transport	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community Planning Partnership	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community Safety	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leisure and recreation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other (please specify)

* 10. Do you agree that more should be done to promote the work of CC's and raise their profile?

☐ Yes
 ☐ Don't know
 ☐ No

* 11. The following organisations/individuals have a role in promoting CCs. Please rank them in order of who should take the most responsibility for doing this (those with the most responsibility should be ranked number 1).

	Community councils
	Community Council Liaison Officer
	Local authorities
	The Scottish Government
	The Improvement Service (which currently manages the www.communitycouncils.scot website)

* 12. How can the work of CCs be promoted at a national level? (tick as many as apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ National CC Association | ☐ Professionally produced promotional material being made available locally - Video/leaflets |
| ☐ National campaign to promote the role of CCs | ☐ None of the above |
| ☐ A Govt minister with CC responsibilities | |

Other ideas

* 13. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about community council associations.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Community council associations should exist in every local authority area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community council associations should operate at a more local level than local authority level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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3. Powers

* 14. Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
CCs have enough powers already.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CCs have enough responsibilities already.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CCs should be given more powers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CCs should be given more responsibilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Entrusting CCs with more powers and responsibilities would increase interest and participation in CCs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CCs need to become more representative of the wider community (e.g. ethnicity, financial status, class, education, employment status, etc) before they are given more powers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CCs are not currently provided with adequate resources to operate effectively	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CCs are able to spend their budgets flexibly as they see fit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

* 15. To what extent do you agree CC's should have the following additional powers?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
To be consulted earlier in the planning process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A percentage of the local taxable fund should go to CCs to develop their role and allow grant giving powers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CCs should have revenue raising powers like Parish Councils in England and Wales	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Responsibility for Participatory Budgeting in their area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Automatic place in Community Planning Partnerships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right to know when asset transfer requests are made locally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have responsibility for promoting and co-ordinating participation requests locally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased influence in LA decision making	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Direct input in to LA decision making	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

* 16. Should CCs be formally represented within the following bodies?

	Yes	No	Don't know
local authority	☐	☐	☐
community planning	☐	☐	☐
health and social care	☐	☐	☐

If you have answered yes to any of the above, how could this be achieved?

* 17. What improvements in the **planning system** would help CCs? By planning system we mean the development of new buildings, changes to the use and appearance of existing buildings, and other changes in the way land is used. (Tick as many as apply.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ To be consulted earlier in the planning process. | ☐ Third party right of appeal. |
| ☐ Right to have early dialogue with developers. | ☐ None of the above. |
| ☐ Right to be involved in place plans. | |

Other (please specify)

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4. Relationships

* 18. Based on your experience, could the relationship between CCs and other local community organisations be improved?

- ☐ Yes
 ☐ Don't know
 ☐ No, we have a good relationship
 ☐ Other (please specify)

19. If you answered yes to the above question, how might this relationship be improved? (Tick as many as apply.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ CCs should have a role as a focus for other local community organisations and community activity | ☐ CCs need support to engage with other local community organisations |
| ☐ CCs should be given more powers to increase their local legitimacy | ☐ The current model of CCs would need to change. (Please give more details below) |
| ☐ CCs are responsible for engaging with other local community organisations | ☐ None of the above |

Please use this box to add any comments

* 20. How would you describe your CC's relationship with the local authority?

☐ Excellent

☐ Poor

☐ Good

☐ Non existent

☐ Fair

☐ If you answered 'excellent' or 'good' what has helped develop your relationship?

* 21. In order of preference (with number 1 being your top preference), what would improve your CC's relationship with the local authority (LA)? Please rank below.

	Learning visits between CC and LA
	Increased transparency between CC and LA
	More accountability between CC and LA
	Making it easier to know who to contact within the LA
	Better representation of CC with LA
	Reduced restriction of CC budgets by LA
	An agreed code of conduct for CCs and LAs
	A national programme of locally facilitated discussions between CCs and LAs

22. What other actions would improve your CC's relationship with the local authority (LA)?

* 23. Please select the top five training needs for your CC.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Social media | ☐ Communication (PR/Marketing) |
| ☐ Digital skills | ☐ Facilitation skills |
| ☐ Spatial planning | ☐ Equalities awareness |
| ☐ Licencing | ☐ Financial management |
| ☐ Public participation/engagement | ☐ Running meetings |
| ☐ Finding funding | ☐ Mediation |
| ☐ Governance | ☐ Relevant legislation |

* 24. In order of preference (with number 1 being your top preference), who should provide this training or support? Please rank below.

	Community Council Liaison Officer
	Other local authority staff/department
	Independent support

25. What other training or support is needed for your CC?

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6. Democracy and diversity

* 26. How can CC elections be improved?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Compulsory voting for CC election and have multiple ways to vote (on-line and at local events). | ☐ Have a special CC election day and have multiple ways to vote (on-line and at local events). |
| ☐ Hold CC elections at the same time as local and general election. | ☐ Don't know. |
| ☐ Promote the work of CC's at a national level. | ☐ They don't need to be improved. |
| ☐ Other (please specify) | |

* 27. Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
CC membership should be open to new eligible candidates who work in the area, not just residents.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Disenfranchised groups (young people, minority ethnic, disabled groups etc) should have representatives on CCs where willing candidates put themselves forward.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A portion of Community councilors should be selected by lottery from the local census.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please comment on any of the statements

* 28. How representative of the wider community is your CC, e.g. ethnicity, sex, disability, education, socioeconomic profile?

- ☐ Very representative
 ☐ Not very representative
☐ Fairly representative
 ☐ Don't know

Please comment on your answer

29. What are the main challenges in ensuring that your CC reflects the diversity of the local population?

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7. Final question

30. Is there anything else you would like to add about how CCs can make a difference in their area?

