

# **Finance Committee**

## **Prevention**

### **Submission from the Falkirk Council**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 This document forms a submission in response to the Finance Committee's call for evidence on prevention, in my capacity as Chair of the Falkirk Community Planning Leadership Board. A number of the headings for which evidence has been requested have been combined due to similarity and / or duplication.

#### **2. Pace of Progress & Barriers**

2.1 While there has been strong support for the principles the Christie Commission set out we face significant challenges in implementing them. These include:

- Experiencing the impact of the most serious financial downturn in living memory and the resultant austerity for the best part of a decade;
- Within the public sector given the increasing demands on a diminishing workforce it is harder to priorities and therefore reap the benefits of Community Planning;
- The nature of the society means individual and community issues are often complex and deeper rooted;
- Many public sector organisation have traditionally operated within their organisational boundaries and budgets, and still do today;
- Many partners within the CPP have faced significant reform and/or change which has drained resources while this has been ongoing;
- Competing demands and accountabilities across partners can inhibit the achievement of local outcomes. Partners have local, regional or national accountabilities and often seek to address these pressures before looking at local priorities. This was one of the key issues noted by the Commission yet has not been addressed nationally. This is a significant challenge to local partnerships; and
- Given the increased focus on partnership to deliver on national agendas, there is a danger the place shaping / community leadership focus of partnerships is lost. This has been one of the

significant successes of community planning but is in danger of being lost as service delivery is driven through partnerships.

### **3. How Do We Address the Challenges?**

3.1 The nature of the challenges outlined above are significant but not insurmountable. We need fresh thinking as some of our current approaches are simply not effective. Some suggestions to address these challenges include:

- Placing trust and investing in local leaders so that they can be more radical, innovative and transformational in addressing change, by facilitating them to experiment and innovate. This needs to be balanced with effective risk management within partnerships. We need to create time and space for local leaders to collaborate across organisational boundaries co-creating their approaches on Community Planning focused on prevention and early intervention;
- We need to resolve national, regional and local accountability issues. While recognising that the Government will pursue its priorities through nationally led organisations, there must be a clear message that local accountability is equal if not more critical. The public sector delivers services to a generally local population and therefore must take that population's expectations into account;
- We have and will continue to experience diminishing resources to support a massive and challenging change agenda. The support for Community Planning and its various themes is cluttered, expensive and with mediocre outcomes. We need to find a new solution to support innovation and learning which is cost effective and secures benefit across all of Scotland. This could be addressed by regional learning hubs, with each hub being given responsibility for a defined aspect of the change agenda. Learning could then be cascaded across each hub by an agency such as the Improvement Service. This will provide more focus, spread the workload and make the best use of officer time; and
- CPP's have been juggling with the dilemma that is joint resourcing and resource shift for the significant number of years. Progress in this area has to a degree been blunted by a lack of national support, guidance and expertise. Effective national and local scrutiny working together will support this but it would be helpful to have access to appropriate national expertise and support resources.

## **4. Securing Change & Innovation**

4.1 We need to secure an increased pace and scale of change, supported by a culture of innovation. This can only be realised by re-thinking our collective approach and by being more practically focused. If we pursue some of the following suggestions made within this response, including:

- Focusing on a local approach;
- Building local capacity;
- Involving local leaders in more collaborative working;
- Progressing balanced national and local accountability; and
- Implementing a shared approach on learning and building on good practice;

We then have a platform which provides a more sustainable and pragmatic approach for change.

## **5. Digital Technology**

5.1 Digital technology is a tool which can improve access to services, allows us to operate more effectively, and properly supported can help realise change. It needs however to be driven by a commitment to change, underpinned by effective leadership, which has the ability to secure necessary cultural and organisational change. Technology is only a tool to support change but will not drive this agenda.

## **6. Further Developing Community Planning**

6.1 Bringing together the corporate planning and policy functions of key Community Planning partners, in a more collaborative manner, would improve the resource base, skills set and collective understanding would represent a significant step forward. CPP's should seek to develop collective evidence and a knowledge base that would form a resource to facilitate improved collaborative planning and service delivery.

## **7. Learning Lessons**

7.1 First and foremost we must improve learning across Scotland's 32 CPP's on good practice and effective approaches. There are many examples of good practice on innovation across the world. It is more a matter of how we access these examples easily and in a cost effective manner.

## **8. Implications of Not Securing Prevention**

- 8.1 If we are not successful there is a serious risk that we will not meet the future needs of our citizens and communities. There is also a reputational risk that failure brings for the future of Community Planning, and of going backwards and undoing the progress we have made so far. There is simply no other option but to change. We will not have the future financial or human resources to cope with demand, and as a result risk failing services and organisations.

I hope that you find the comments and suggestions made within this response constructive and progressive.

Councillor Craig Martin,  
Chair of the Falkirk Community Planning Leadership Board,  
Falkirk Council

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