

Glasgow City Council

Supplementary Guidance for Community Councils

**The Supplementary Guidance for Community Councils
should be read in conjunction with the
Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils**



Supplementary Guidance for Community Councils

This Guidance has been designed to meet the needs of all community councillors in Glasgow and particularly, new members who may be unfamiliar with the work of their community councils or with local government in general.

The Guidance should be read in conjunction with the City Councils' *Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils*, which can be downloaded as a PDF document from the following web address –

<http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/Residents/YourCommunity/CommunityCouncils/Relations+with+the+Local+Authority.htm>

The aim is to provide some of the essential background information that community councillors will need in order to operate effectively within their community council, together with a brief summary of the main skills required.

The Guidance has been designed to be kept up-to-date and for new sections to be added in response to any changing circumstances or requests from community councils for more or additional information.

This Guidance should only be viewed as providing complementary advice and information to the governance clauses contained within the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils and associated documentation; any final decisions by Glasgow City Council which may or may not affect the status of community councils will be solely based on the governance clauses contained within the Scheme.

This Guidance was originally informed by the work of the Scottish Government's Community Council Working Group in 2009, including the Good Practice document produced as a result of the group's recommendations.

Further information on the Working Group can be found at:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/local-government/CommunityCouncils/RelevantPublications>

| Contents | Page |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Community Councils | 5 |
| 1.1 Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils | |
| 1.2 Constitution | |
| 1.3 Liaison with the Local Authority | |
| 2. Membership | 7 |
| 2.1 Importance of Being Elected | |
| 2.2 Public Visibility | |
| 3. Meetings | 8 |
| 3.1 Agendas | |
| 3.2 Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Special Meetings | |
| 4. Members' Interests | 12 |
| 4.1 Register of Interests | |
| 5. Working Effectively | 13 |
| 5.1 Working Effectively at Meetings | |
| 5.2 Using Time Effectively | |
| 5.3 Establishing Priorities | |
| 5.4 Preparation before and action afterwards | |
| 5.5 Key roles for the chair | |
| 5.6 Key roles for others | |
| 5.7 Using working groups | |
| 5.8 Annual General Meetings | |
| 5.9 Venues for Meetings | |
| 5.10 Quick Checklist for Meetings | |
| 5.11 Public Liability | |
| 5.12 Promoting Equality | |
| 6. Role of Office Bearers | 18 |
| 6.1 The Role of the Chair | |
| 6.2 The Role of the Vice Chair | |
| 6.3 Formal Role and Enabling Role | |
| 6.4 The Secretary | |
| 6.5 The Treasurer | |
| 7. Development Planning | 21 |
| 7.1 Introduction | |
| 7.2 To View Applications | |
| 7.3 The Procedure You Should Follow | |
| 7.4 The Deadline | |
| 7.5 Material Considerations | |
| 7.6 How Your Representations are handled by the Council | |
| 7.7 How To Get Help In Making Representations | |
| 7.8 Objections To New Commercial Properties | |
| 7.9 Houses In Multiple Occupation (HMOs) | |
| 7.10 Planning Aid Scotland | |

| | | |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 8. | Working Strategically | 25 |
| 8.1 | The Reactive Role | |
| 8.2 | The Proactive Role | |
| 8.3 | Examining what is going on inside and outside the community | |
| 8.4 | Reviewing the options | |
| 8.5 | Making strategic decisions | |
| 8.6 | Setting the Objectives | |
| 8.7 | Developing the Strategy | |
| 8.8 | Summary | |
| 9. | Report Writing | 27 |
| 9.1 | Stage 1 – Planning the Report | |
| 9.2 | Stage 2 – Preparing the Report | |
| 10. | Media and Publicity | 28 |
| 10.1 | Dealing with the Press | |
| 10.2 | Handling Press Interviews | |
| 10.3 | Keeping People Informed | |
| 10.4 | Quick Do's and Don'ts | |
| 10.5 | Sample Press Release | |
| 11. | Divergent Views | 31 |
| 11.1 | Dealing With Conflict | |
| 11.2 | Conflict Within Community Councils | |
| 11.3 | Personality Clashes | |
| 11.4 | Conflict over Community Issues | |
| 12. | Ex-Officio Members | 32 |
| 12.1 | MEPs, MPs, MSPs, Locally Elected Members and MSYPs | |
| 13. | Allowances & Accounting Procedures | 33 |
| 13.1 | Acceptable Areas of Expenditure (AAE) – Administration Allowances | |
| 13.2 | AAE – Discretionary Grant Fund | |
| 13.3 | AAE – Area Partnerships | |
| 13.4 | AAE – Other Sources | |
| 13.5 | Accounting Procedures (AP) – Cash | |
| 13.6 | AP – Expenditure | |
| 13.7 | AP – Annual Accounts | |
| 13.8 | AP – Inventory | |
| 14. | Procedure for Suspension & Dissolution | 35 |
| 14.1 | Suspension of a Community Council | |
| 14.2 | Dissolution of a Community Council | |
| 15. | Unacceptable Actions of Community Council Members | 38 |
| 15.1 | What actions could Partner Agencies consider to be unacceptable? | |
| 15.2 | Examples of how Agencies may manage aggressive or abusive behaviour | |
| 15.3 | Examples of how Agencies may deal with other categories of unreasonable behaviour | |
| 15.4 | Actions Agencies may take | |
| 15.5 | The process Agencies follow to make decisions about unreasonable behaviour | |
| 16. | Summary | 40 |

1. Community Councils

It would be wrong to think that all community councils are alike or that they do the same thing. In practice they vary a great deal in terms of how they are organised and the issues they get involved in.

This is because the legislation that sets out the remit for community councils speaks in general terms as to their purpose. The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 that originally set up community councils states their general purpose as:

"To ascertain, co-ordinate and express to the local authorities for its area and to public authorities, the views of the community which it represents and to take such action in the interests of the community as appears to it to be expedient and practicable."

However **there is other more general legislation to which all community councils are bound and this includes the general duty to promote equality**. Therefore, community councils in carrying out their functions should have due regard of the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

1.1 Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils

Within the basic principles stated in the Scheme, each community council is allowed to reflect local needs, with regard to membership, election of members e.g. demographic, geographic etc. In the event that there is any ambiguity or conflict, the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils (the Scheme) will take precedence.

There is a responsibility on behalf of Glasgow City Council to review the Scheme from time to time. For example, this may become necessary if communities outgrow the boundaries of their particular Community Council, and it is considered appropriate to have one or more community councils reflecting the interests of the area.

1.2 Constitution

All community councils adopt a Constitution which has been agreed by Glasgow City Council – the Constitution is a written set of aims, objectives, and rules which set out such matters as the rules by which the community council will operate and by which office bearers will be appointed. The Constitution forms part of the Scheme, as does the Code of Conduct and Standing Orders.

It is important that you get from your Secretary a copy of your community council's Constitution so that you can make yourself familiar with its rules. It is also useful to obtain a list of all the other members and how best to contact them.

1.3 Liaison with the Local Authority

In terms of community councils, the City Council's responsibilities are as follows: -

A) To prepare, publish and review the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils (the Scheme), after due consultation with community councils and the public.

On receipt of a petition from 20 or more electors of the area, the City Council will, in terms of section 52 (7) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 arrange for the formation of a community council in an area where one does not exist;

In the circumstances where a petition is received from electors within the boundaries of an existing community council, then the City Council will consult with both parties and aim to reach an agreeable outcome.

In the event that agreement cannot be reached, then the City Council can proceed in accordance with Section 53 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, by initiating the statutory eight week public consultation period seeking to amend the Scheme.

This will require formal verbal and written submissions to be made to the appropriate Committee or Sub-committee of the City Council specially convened for the purpose of enabling the City Council to consider the matter and to reach a decision appropriate to the given circumstances.

B) To provide financial and administrative assistance to community councils, subject to the various financial and resource constraints placed on the City Council.

The City Council may provide an Annual Allowance to community councils to meet the costs of the community council undertaking its statutory duties including:

- (i) representing the interests of the community council or community councils
- (ii) stationery and small items of office equipment;
- (iii) postage
- (iv) printing, promotion and advertising, including costs for maintaining a website
- (v) secretary's expenses, and travelling expenses for community council members
- (vi) audit costs

The Administration Allowance shall be for administration and/or promotion purposes only, and shall not be expended on any other purposes. The Discretionary Grant Fund (DGF) may support additional items and/or activities (see clause 5 of the DGF guidelines).

C) The City Council has a statutory obligation to consult with community councils regarding planning applications.

This is achieved via the Development and Regeneration Services (DRS) Department circulating a weekly list of planning applications to community councils. The list is also available online at <https://publicaccess.glasgow.gov.uk/online-applications/>

Select your community council from the drop down list, and enter the relevant date range. A list of all applications for your area will then be displayed, as well as options for more information, such as drawings of the planned development.

A strict timescale is laid down in legislation which requires the City Council to determine planning applications within a period of two months and any consultation undertaken by the City Council must be completed within this period.

The community council then has only seven days to request further information from DRS regarding any particular application. Thereafter a fourteen day consultation period commences on the date that the DRS issue these further details.

D) The City Council will help increase public awareness of community councils by providing publicity for common election dates i.e. annual AGMs and Elections in October of each year.

It is hoped that this will emphasise the special role of the community council, highlight the close co-operation with the City Council and also reduce expenditure by individual community councils on advertising elections.

E) The City Council will continue to provide information and facilities for capacity building for community councils via support provided by Democratic Services. The City Council generally provides a range of support to community councils within the area:

(i) ensuring that a Scheme for community councils is prepared which sets out things like their boundaries, constitution, finance and arrangements between the City Council and community councils for keeping each other informed about matters of mutual interest

(ii) it may make additional discretionary contributions towards the administrative expenses of community councils

(iii) it may support training events, provide accommodation, insurance cover etc, on terms that may or may not require payment

To summarise, community councils as the elected body closest to local people, can play a major role in ensuring decision making remains as close to those concerned as is practicable. For this to happen, all community councillors should do all they can to engage in this process, and in their contributions to local government.

If community councils do not take an active part and involve themselves in the decision making process, then matters of vital concern to their local community may well be decided upon without their input.

Glasgow City Council shares with the community councils the same aims and objectives in so far as both want to ensure that quality services are provided which meet the needs of local communities and are responsive to local demand.

2. Membership

2.1 Importance of being elected

Community councillors are elected by the local community. They have this in common with City Councillors, Members of Parliament, etc. Even if, due to a shortage of nominations, your 'seat' was uncontested and no actual election took place, the Constitution provides for nomination and election. If properly nominated you are as much elected as would be the case in a contested election.

For this reason, it is important that each community council distinguishes between its voting members and non-voting members, and others present at meetings.

As a member you may attend meetings, speak and (if permitted by the Constitution) vote, as of right. You serve for the term allowed by your Constitution. As a member you should represent all the community, not any specific group, although inevitably different members have particular areas of interest and localities. Such diversity can add to the collective strength of the community council.

The community council may also appoint associate members, to give advice on specialist, technical or any other matters requiring particular expertise. Associate members principally speak on agenda items relating to matters relevant to their area of expertise, they may not vote, and their attendance is not be counted towards the quorum of the meeting.

Most community councils invite representatives of local service providers, community police etc., to attend their meetings on a regular basis, and others e.g. City Council officials, to attend and speak to the meeting by special invitation. Such 'guests' can make an important contribution to the meeting, but it is important to remember that they are attending as, 'guests'. It should be made known to 'guests' at the time of invitation if appropriate, that they do not have voting rights and may only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.

All formal meetings are open to the public unless in the case of confidential matters which the Scheme and Constitution permits discussion in private (see clauses 7e vii and 11k respectively).

2.2 Public visibility

All Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and regular meetings are open to the public (the electorate), and members of the public should be encouraged to attend. Meetings can be advertised via local housing organisations, the local press, announcements at local churches, even community radio stations (more information on dealing with the media is provided in a later section of this guidance).

Every community council should have three or more public notices displaying the time and place of meetings, and notices of interest to the public such as the agenda for the next meeting. Special items can be highlighted to attract local interest. Ideally, a list of meeting dates for the year should be made available.

From time to time, every community council may have matters that must be discussed in private. These matters should be discussed 'in Committee' with only elected and ex-officio members present, although where special expertise is required, others may be invited to attend i.e. associate members. Such meetings are confidential and an approved redacted minute may be made available publicly, although it may be appropriate to record any conclusions reached, at the next regular meeting of the community council.

The approved minutes of all meetings should be circulated to all members and copies should be made available to the public at local libraries or in other public places. An approved copy should also be sent to Glasgow City Council within 14 days of the date of the meeting which approved them, which can then make them available for public inspection upon request.

There is a dedicated email address set up to receive electronic copies of minutes, at ccrc@glasgow.gov.uk Once in possession of a copy of the minutes, the CCRC can then be in a position to respond to email requests for minutes from members of the public and/or otherwise.

Good relations should be established with the local press and, if its reporters do not attend AGMs or regular meetings, a suitable press release could be issued highlighting important matters discussed and conclusions reached.

From time to time it may be advisable to issue a formal press release stating the community council's views or clarifying facts. This is particularly important when a controversial issue divides the community or when, in the opinion of the community council, their discussions have been either incompletely reported or misrepresented in the media.

3. Meetings

This section looks at the importance of meetings, what should be covered, and the different kinds of meetings a community council may have (see clauses 7 and 11 of the Scheme and Constitution respectively, and the Standing Orders).

Effective meetings are important not just in making sure the community council progresses what it should be doing and decisions are made, but in keeping members and others involved and interested.

Meetings that drag on and on, with people straying off the point, not listening or being discourteous, can be a disincentive to even the most committed member. Good meetings are not just about getting things done but about respect and consideration for others.

3.1 Agendas

For all Ordinary, Annual General and Special meetings, an agenda must be published by the Secretary at least seven days prior to the meeting taking place so that members and the public know what is to be discussed and can be prepared in advance. A standard format for agendas could include:

Meeting of the NAME Community Council at TIME on DAY, MONTH, YEAR in the VENUE

AGENDA

- i. *Recording of membership present and apologies received.*
- ii. *The minutes of the last meeting are submitted for approval.*
- iii. *Any matters arising are addressed*
- iv. *Correspondence*
- v. *Consideration of other agreed items of business; as directed by the Chair*
- vi. *Reports i.e. Treasurer, Councillor; Police; Weekly Planning List*
- vii. *Any other competent business.*
- viii. *Questions from the floor.*
- ix. *Chairperson to declare date of next meeting and close meeting.*

(a) Apologies

The apology of any community councillor who is unable to attend should be recorded in the minutes. This is important as the Constitution automatically bars community council members who fail to attend regularly and/or miss a specified number of consecutive meetings without good reason (see clause 14(i) of the Scheme).

Clause 14 of the Scheme also includes the following, "*a community council can at their discretion, decide to grant a leave of absence in advance or retrospectively for individual members in instances of them being affected by matters of a personal nature. This leave of absence can extend up to a maximum of 6 months or until the next AGM, whichever period is sooner.*"

It is also important to record who was present, so that it will be known in the future which community council members put their names to any particular motion. A member present who strongly disagrees with a motion adopted by the community council on a majority vote can ask that his/her opposition be formally recorded in the minutes.

(b) Minutes

It is a requirement of the Constitution that formal minutes be kept. This is the responsibility of the Secretary but the community council may agree to appoint from within itself or engage for payment or otherwise, a Minute Secretary. This can free the Secretary to take a more active part in the discussions. The Minutes to be approved should be circulated to all members, and to those whom you wish to confirm the accuracy of the minute.

The Chair should ask whether everyone is in agreement that the minutes are a true record of the meeting concerned. If any member wishes to query any point this is the time to do it. Once the minutes are formally approved they can not be changed. Any suggested amendments are discussed and, if agreed, a suitable alteration adopted. It must be stressed that only the record of the previous Minute can be discussed and agreed at this stage. Discussions on the merits of any previously recorded decision should not be opened up at this point in the proceedings. It is the Chair's responsibility to rule accordingly. A member then proposes the formal adoption of the minutes, subject to any agreed amendment.

Many community councils require there be a seconder also. If there are still objections, the matter is put to the vote; otherwise the minutes are adopted unanimously. This is recorded in the minutes

of the current meeting. As in any other disagreement, a member whose views are not accepted and rejected on a vote can request that his/her objection(s) be recorded in the minutes.

(c) Matters arising from previous minutes

By going through the minutes of the previous meeting, just approved, item by item, much time is saved by avoiding rehashing old arguments and avoiding the necessity for each item to be listed on the agenda. This procedure ensures nothing is forgotten and that actions promised at the previous meeting have, in fact, been carried out. As all discussion is recorded in the current minutes, items completed drop out, and items still ongoing remain; to automatically come up at the next meeting. Any correspondence received relative to matters being discussed is best read out by the Secretary at the appropriate point.

(d) Correspondence

During correspondence any letters (also email, faxes and telephone calls) received since the previous meeting are read out by the Secretary and any necessary actions decided. To save time, long, complicated and/or routine items, e.g. local authority minutes, entire Weekly Planning Lists are not normally read out but referred to and made available for perusal.

Good practice would include a Secretary compiling a correspondence 'bullet' list which can be circulated with the agenda and draft minute seven days prior to the date of the next meeting. In addition, attention should be given to any short timescales or deadlines for responding; as such the Secretary and Chair at least should discuss the most appropriate action to be taken e.g. sharing information prior to scheduled meeting dates.

(e) Special Interest Items

When there is an item of special interest it should be given its own spot on the agenda. It may be a presentation by a visiting speaker - in which case the Chair may advance the item to the start of the meeting so the visitor does not have to sit through the routine business. This is not only common courtesy but particularly important if the speaker has far to travel, enabling him/her to get away as early as possible.

(f) Reports

So far the meeting has involved only the community council members unless the Chair invited comment on any particular item from others present. Reports is the point in the meeting when regular attendees such as the local community Police, City Councillors, and community council representatives to other groups, are asked to give a brief report to the community council. This is the point at which the community council learns what others are doing and in the subsequent discussion can advise on what the community council and local community think. Some reports will be regular, i.e. to every meeting (Treasurer's report, Weekly Planning Lists), others occasional (Special Interest Items).

Treasurers Report

The Treasurer can report on the financial situation of the community council, on any money received and spent, and consider other budgetary related activity. At the very least, the Treasurer should state the current bank balance taken from the monthly bank statement.

Weekly Planning List

Planning is often a key concern of community councils and to the public in their areas. Community councils should have a regular slot on their agenda to deal with planning matters. These can range from considering development planning applications and how they should respond to these, to dealing with current and/or emerging Local Plans or considering responses to other forms of

consultation. Some community councils have established sub-committees or working groups to deal with planning issues given the short timescales involved, and the degree of scrutiny often required.

(g) AOCB

Any Other Competent Business (AOCB) gives members the chance to raise issues and, in particular, matters brought to them by the public. Ideally, the Chair will move round the table giving each member the chance to raise topics in turn (time permitting!).

(h) Time and place of next meeting

It is important where possible that everyone present knows, or is reminded of, the time and place of the next meeting before the meeting breaks up, even if there is an existing published timetable of meetings.

Note – Formal motion

A formal motion is a proposal, the wording of which is agreed precisely and recorded in the minutes. It can be passed unanimously, or be subject to a vote.

In the case of Annual General Meetings (AGM) and Special Meetings, the wording of the proposed motion is set out on the agenda calling the meeting as per the Constitution (see clause 11j).

The results of any vote must be detailed in the minutes and, if they so request, the names of those opposing the motion listed.

3.2 Annual General Meetings (AGM) and Special Meetings

The Constitution and Standing Orders rule on the notice required and the matters that can be considered at Annual General Meetings (AGM) and Special Meetings.

The procedure for elections will be as detailed in the Constitution. Normally the outgoing Chair will hold the position until the new Chair is elected unless they also are standing for this office. In which case another member, but not associate or ex-officio member, of the community council who is not standing for office should preside. On election, the new Chair takes on this role for the rest of the meeting. Under some circumstances meetings could be more efficiently conducted on the basis that the outgoing Chair fully concludes the meeting before handing over.

Normally, no other matters may be raised at the AGM; the AGM agenda must be published at least seven days before the meeting; and **for convenience, the Secretary should circulate the minutes of AGMs at the next scheduled Ordinary meeting of the community council for approval in principle, as well as 12 months later for final approval.** A typical AGM agenda should include:

The Annual General Meeting of the NAME Community Council at TIME on DAY, MONTH, YEAR in the VENUE

AGENDA

- i. Record membership attendance and apologies received;
- ii. Approve the presented minutes of the last Annual General Meeting (AGM);
- iii. Approve Chairperson's annual report (written or minuted at the AGM);
- iv. Approve Treasurer's submission of Independently Examined Statement of Accounts;
- v. Current office bearers step down;
- vi. Election of office bearers;
- vii. Note the appointment of an Independent Examiner of accounts for the next year;

- viii. Note the appointment of associate members.
- ix. Chairperson to declare date in October of following year for the next AGM;
- x. Chairperson closes meeting.

The agenda for Special Meetings must be restricted to only those items raised in the motion calling for the meeting. No other matters must be discussed. Any special resolutions should be passed or rejected as printed on the agenda. Any alteration should only be with the consent of those present and then only if the Constitution allows for the printed resolution to be amended. A typical agenda for a Special Meeting could be:

Special Meeting of the NAME Community Council at TIME on DAY, MONTH, YEAR in the VENUE

AGENDA

- i. Recording of membership present and apologies received.
- ii. The nature of the calling notice for the Special Meeting.
- iii. The business for debate, as described in the calling notice for the Special Meeting.
- iv. Chairperson to close meeting.

Voting will be as allowed by the Constitution, but generally all community councillors present may vote; there is no provision for proxy votes. Minutes will be taken of the meeting and considered at the next regular meeting unless the meeting was held in accordance with clauses 7e vii and 11k of the Scheme and Constitution respectively.

4. Members' Interests

4.1 Declaration of Interests

A member shall declare in advance any financial or other interest however minor that they or their immediate family may have in any matter which comes before the community council for consideration. The member shall withdraw from the meeting during consideration of this item of business and shall take no part in the discussions or decision thereon.

If a member is unclear as to whether something is sufficiently material so as to require him or her to make a declaration of interest he/she will declare it nevertheless to the community council for guidance; the community council shall then decide if the member should make a declaration of interest and accordingly withdraw.

Unless those members present to whom the request for guidance has been made are not in a simple majority (see clause 8b of the Constitution) that the matter does or does not require a declaration of interest, then the member will require to make a personal decision whether to make a declaration of interest and to withdraw.

It should be fully understood that all members are bound by the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils (the Scheme), which includes the Code of Conduct for Community Councillors, which itself includes the following clause 3: ***Integrity – “If you have any private and/or personal interest in a matter to be considered by the community council, you have a duty to declare this and if deemed necessary by other members, withdraw from discussions and the decision making process with regard to that matter.”***

If it is subsequently established that a member had an interest in an item of business dealt with by the community council but had failed to declare that interest and to withdraw, the item of business shall be placed on the agenda of the next available meeting of the community council for re-consideration. Any earlier decision made by the community council may be upheld or changed.

At that next available meeting of the community council, the community council will also consider the position of the member who failed to make the declaration of interest and having considered this issue will be entitled to censure and/or disqualify the member by a simple majority vote from all meetings or activities of the community council for a period not exceeding 12 months (see clause 14 of the Scheme).

Upon a simple majority vote for censure and/or disqualification being reached, the member who failed to make the declaration of interest will retire from the meeting with immediate effect and absolutely prior to the reconsideration of the item of business in question.

5. Working Effectively

5.1 Working effectively at meetings

Meetings are of crucial importance to the work of community councils. It is at meetings that opinions, ideas, feelings, good intentions etc. get translated into hard decisions, and it is those decisions that will ultimately be translated into practical action in your community. **If you really want to influence what is going on in your community then it is vital that you learn to participate effectively in the work of your community council's meetings.**

It is perfectly normal that, in any meeting, the individuals present will have different, sometimes opposing, views. For this reason it is important that meetings are chaired effectively so that there is a balance between hearing what everyone has to say on a subject and getting through all the items of the agenda.

If there is something of major significance that you want to raise at a meeting make sure that you tell the Chair; Secretary; and/or Treasurer in advance so that it can be included as an item on the agenda. This means that the person in the Chair can try to ensure that sufficient time is made available to discuss your item. If you do put an item on the agenda be prepared to give a short verbal presentation to the meeting setting out:

- the background to the situation (briefly);
- what you think the central issue is;
- what you think ought to be done about it.

Be prepared to actively listen to other people's ideas on the matter; they may have information on the subject that you don't, or they may come up with ideas that offer a better solution than yours. Remember that the key activity for a good community councillor is to make things happen in the community. 'Point scoring' at meetings could be viewed by other members as an unnecessary distraction

Sometimes you may be asked to participate in a working group e.g. sub committees, in order to research some points for the next meeting of the community council. Working groups can play an important part in clarifying issues so that decision making is easier at future meetings. Although working groups may involve some extra time commitment you should try as far as possible to get involved so that the work of your community council is spread evenly and you get a deeper insight into what is going on at community council meetings.

A formal record of what was agreed at meetings is kept in the form of minutes. Make sure that you agree with what appears in the minutes as these will usually determine exactly what action is to be taken.

As a general rule, it is much easier to influence decisions by working and co-operating, rather than by confrontation. This is equally true whether in meetings, in dealings with other members or in correspondence, e.g. when writing to officials of the local authority.

Community councils that make a positive contribution command respect, which can mean that City Councillors and officials will increasingly value their opinions, and will strive to actively consult them on any proposals affecting their community.

5.2 Using time effectively

For many people, participating in the work of community councils involves the giving up of valuable personal time. On the one hand people want to be active in the affairs of their community; on the other hand they want to ensure that there is the minimum intrusion into their free time.

In order to achieve this it is necessary to take a fairly disciplined approach to the use of time. This is particularly important when it comes to meetings. **Perhaps the single most damaging thing for any community council is unproductive meetings where the discussion is not focused on issues of importance to the community and where those doing the talking are more interested in their personal agenda than the agenda of the community council.**

For those less used to public speaking or debating, it is sometimes useful to write down in brief on a piece of paper or card the particular points which you intend to raise. This helps to concentrate thoughts and further discussion.

5.3 Establishing priorities

Another problem that some community councils have acknowledged is that it can be more difficult to deal with matters that are not practical issues such as 'grass cutting' or 'potholes in the road'. While these 'bread and butter' issues are an important part of the work of a community council it should never be forgotten that there are other matters, that may appear to be less obviously important in the short term, but which may have a future bigger impact on the community e.g.

- changing economic conditions
- population changes in the local community
- long-term development proposals

It is important that placing too much emphasis on 'everyday' issues does not overlook matters like the above, which are of strategic importance to your community.

The way to overcome this potential problem is for community council members to think likewise i.e. collectively. Try to be clear about which issues are most important for your community and to allocate most time to them. This may mean choosing between the short-term things like 'potholes in roads' and the longer-term matters, such as Community Planning. Always remember that strategic issues are important and should not be set aside simply because there is another issue that appears on the surface to be more urgent.

One way to get through complex issues that are important and long term is to break them down into chunks and deal with them one by one over a series of meetings. Another approach would be to split up the task and allocate responsibility for bits of the task to different individuals or working groups e.g. sub committees, in the community council.

Another way that community councils can deal with ongoing issues is for individual members with specific skills, knowledge or experience, to take on the role of 'looking out' for news on issues in local press or in the public sphere generally. This would also help in dealing with the wide range of consultation documents that community councils are asked to respond to e.g. Weekly Planning List contact and/or sub committees are often appointed to ensure that timely responses to applications are made (further information specific to Development Planning issues is detailed on page 22 of this guidance).

The community council should also seek to participate on other initiatives and structures, such as Area and Sector Partnerships, Local Housing Forums, and Community Safety Groups etc. Appointed representatives to these bodies can ensure that the communities' voices are heard. A substitute representative is also useful to ensure continuity of attendance.

5.4 Preparation before and action afterwards

Effective meetings don't just happen - there is a sequence of events leading up to and following on from a meeting that will help determine whether the meeting goes well or not.

Minutes out on time - to assist with preparation before and actions afterwards it is usual practice that the minutes are produced shortly after a meeting and sent out to community council members and/or sub committees so that people can see what was said; what had been agreed; and what would be done before the next meeting.

It is important to send minutes not just to those that were at the meeting but to others who missed the meeting or who may be expected to do something as a result of the meeting. It is all too easy for people who have been involved to inadvertently slip out of the information loop, by simply missing one or two meetings.

It is always important to make public the minutes of meetings so that the wider community has an understanding of what the community council and its members are doing. To assist in this process it is also important that the minutes are written in such a way that it is easy to identify what actions have been agreed and who is responsible.

5.5 Key roles for the Chair

The Chairperson - working with the Secretary and Treasurer or perhaps other agreed community council members - has a crucial role to play in between meetings in making sure people, working groups and others that the community council would like assistance from are on target to report back in time for scheduled meetings.

The Chair should ideally work with the Secretary and others as appropriate to set the agenda for the meeting, based on the priorities of the community council and any ongoing actions that are taking place between the meetings; and any other new and important emerging issues.

The Chair needs to run the meeting effectively. Included in this are starting and finishing on time; keeping people to the agenda; timetabling and managing the meeting so discussion doesn't get bogged down on one topic unless it merits it; and summing up at the end of each item so that action points are agreed and made clear, including who has been tasked with seeing an action carried out and within what timescale.

In order to manage the meeting in this businesslike way, it is important that the Chair has strong leadership qualities, as well as a range of personal and interpersonal skills that make for a productive experience for all.

This involves not dominating, making sure the views of all are heard and not just those of the most confident or loudest around the table. It means being able to foster an environment where people are happy to ask questions if they are unclear about something and to support each other's work and interest.

The Chair has to maintain a neutral point of view. Where an issue arises that the Chair has an opinion on, they can temporarily vacate the Chair (handing over to the Vice-Chair) in order to be able to state their personal viewpoint.

5.6 Key roles for others

It is often the case that members are championing specific areas of the community council's work, and they may be doing that through leading working groups. If this is the case then it is often important that they produce short summary reports for the community council meeting. They have a duty not to bring all the detailed discussions of a working group into the full meeting, but to summarise the key issues; the progress being made; and to highlight any decisions that need to be made by the full meeting.

Similarly the Treasurer should have produced a financial report for the full meeting to enable the community council to look at and go over the main points as required and highlight areas where decisions or action may be required.

One of the main roles at the meeting for the Secretary (and Minute Secretary) is formally recording and producing the Minutes of meetings. Taking formal Minutes is a commonly underrated skill. One of the main abilities within this skill is to be able to summarise a discussion focusing in on the important facts; any major decisions made; actions agreed; timescales; and who is tasked with any actions.

It's important that the Secretary asks for any points of clarification if he/she is unsure what has been stated, concluded, decided or agreed. In this clarifying role they can often quietly and legitimately support the role of the Chair.

And lastly **everyone on the community council has a role in supporting the Chair in his/her efforts to make the meeting businesslike, well-timed, pleasant and inclusive.**

5.7 Using working groups

Working groups often arise from a realisation that it is difficult to get everything done in one overall meeting of the community council. It is common for community councils to set up working groups to look at particular issues, or deal with work that has tight deadlines. An example of an ongoing issue would be planning, which requires inspection of the Weekly List of planning applications; this is because the deadline for responses can sometimes expire before the next community council meeting.

Working groups can prevent any one specific activity from overshadowing the agenda of a full community council meeting. In addition, a dedicated working group can focus on its specific project or task and spend more time on the detail, which can result in an increased achievement.

It then becomes important that there are good connections and feedback between the working groups and the full community council meeting. When a need for a working group has been identified, make sure that it has a clear remit for its work; what it can and cannot decide upon; and what has to be given final approval by the community council.

Remember the full community council holds ultimate responsibility for the recommendations and actions of the working groups, and therefore the full community council must agree any important decisions it makes.

5.8 Annual General Meetings

In addition to the scheduled meetings and any associated working group meetings, community councils are all expected to hold Annual General Meetings (AGM) in October of each year. The general purpose of AGMs is to report on the activities of the community council to the wider membership; report on its financial activities; elect new Office Bearers to replace any that are standing down at the end of the year; and to reappoint any external independent examiner of the accounts (see clauses 7d and 11 of the Scheme and Constitution respectively).

5.9 Venues for meetings

Lastly any meeting whether it is a regular meeting, working group meeting or AGM, benefits from a decent warm venue that is open for people arriving, with accompanying tea and coffee (if possible).

5.10 Quick checklist for meetings

1. Do your meetings start on time and finish on time?
2. Do your meetings never or rarely exceed two hours in length?
3. Does everyone turn up? Or if not have they put in their apologies?
4. Has everyone prepared by reading previous minutes and being aware of the agenda?
5. Do minutes go out early after a meeting?
6. Are the minutes usually a short and accurate reflection of what went on and the main things stated and if necessary agreed?
7. Are the action points on them clearly stated?
8. Are they sent to everyone who should see them?
9. Does the chair or other member e.g. associate member follow up in between meetings to see what progress is being made and that people are geared up to report back at the next meeting?
10. Does the chair work with the secretary and any others to set the agenda ahead of the next meeting?

5.11 Public liability

It is important that community councillors ensure that the public liability and other insurance protection provided by the local authority or additional policies taken out by them are adequate.

Community councils are currently constituted as unincorporated bodies, and as such do not have limited liability status. Glasgow City Council currently operates a group insurance scheme for community councils, the cost of which is deducted from the annual administration allowance.

Community councils can consider raising funds from private and charitable sources for example the National Lottery 'Awards for All', or alternatively, community councils can consider establishing Community Development Trusts to give the community a vehicle for funding projects and taking a more proactive role in development.

If a relationship like that above is established, it is usually reflected in a formal connection between the community council and a Community Development Trust with the community council having nomination rights to appoint one of their members to the Trust.

More information on community development trusts can be found on the website of the Development Trusts Association Scotland, at <http://www.dtascot.org.uk/>

5.12 Promoting equality

Community councils are responsible for ensuring their organisation complies with equal opportunities legislation. UK laws cover discrimination on the basis of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age, religion, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins and disability. For further information, see the Equality & Human Rights Commission website: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/>

Clause 16 of the Scheme states that *"It shall be the duty of every community council to ensure that its general responsibilities and activities are carried out fully in accordance with current Equalities legislation and Glasgow City Council policies and practices."*

As a community councillor it is important that you recognise from the outset that you are required to play a role in your community council. This means not simply offering your own views and opinions on local issues, or taking decisions that are based on your own self-interest.

The role of the community councillor is one that requires you to represent the views of your community. In practice, this will involve discussing issues with people in the community to clarify their views and assess the strength of their feelings on different topics.

It is also a good idea to encourage people to bring issues to you so that you can take them up at community council meetings. Try to check out the facts, however, before taking matters to the community council, and if there are two sides to the story, make sure that both of them are put forward. There is little point in taking up time at meetings to discuss problems that are based simply on misunderstandings or misrepresentations of the facts.

At some point it may be that you will find some conflict between your own personal views and interests and those of the community that you are representing. If such a situation does arise, make every effort to make sure that the views of the community take precedence. Experience shows that if the views of individuals on the community council are allowed to take priority then the community will very quickly lose confidence in the community council and its work may subsequently be devalued.

In some instances, it may be necessary and appropriate to declare an interest in the matter under discussion and to withdraw from that debate and decision-making (see Members' Interests section 4.1 of this guidance).

The task of any community council is to identify the needs and aspirations of its community and to take decisions that will lead to appropriate action in that community. At some point this might involve setting priorities on the competing or conflicting needs of different sections of the community.

Competition and conflict are normal in any community, so you shouldn't think of them as something that can be altogether avoided. What is important is that you approach competition or conflict in a fair and reasonable manner. This means taking a balanced view of your community's needs and aspirations and giving a fair hearing to representatives from different interest groups in your community. In particular, you should try to avoid being influenced by prejudice or bias, whether in the sphere of race, religion, gender or any other of the 'labels' which get attached to people and to local issues.

6. Role of Office Bearers

6.1 The Role of the Chair

The Chair has perhaps the most important single role to play in ensuring that community council meetings run smoothly. **But even a good Chair will find the task exhausting unless all the members of the community council give the role appropriate respect and support.**

The Chair is elected in accordance with the rules set out in the Scheme and the community council Constitution; the Secretary should be able to readily make a copy available. The Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils is very important; together with this guidance they provide the framework of procedures that will govern the work of your community council and the further good practice which can strengthen it further.

In essence, the Chair's job is to make sure that decisions are taken on all of the items that are on the agenda. In practice, this usually means that the Chair will have to make judgements about how much time to allocate to each agenda item. It also means that he or she may occasionally have to bring speakers back to the agenda and generally encourage people to make their contributions brief and to the point.

In regular meetings the role of the Chair is a *formal* one; all speakers will be expected to address their comments through the Chair. This helps the Chair to keep control of the discussion. In meetings, where proceedings need not be so formal, the Chair may be content simply to steer the general direction of the discussion – this may be described as an *enabling* role. The extent to which a Chair adopts one or the other of these roles will be dependent upon the circumstances at a particular time or occasion. Some of the characteristics of the two approaches are set out further below.

Perhaps most importantly of all, **the Chair is expected to know the rules by which the community council functions, and ensure that at all stages of its work the community council is operating in accordance with any procedures that are set down.** In this context the Chair may be called upon to act as an arbiter when there is a disagreement about how the rules should be interpreted.

For this reason, it is highly recommended best practice that a copy of the Scheme is at hand at every meeting of the community council.

It is important to recognise that the Chair's role extends outwith the meeting itself. The Chair may be called upon to act on behalf of the community council between meetings, or to represent the community council in dealing with outside bodies. This role may also be delegated by the community council to other office bearers or members.

Very often the Chair can be seen as the 'official' spokesperson for the community council and must be seen as authoritative and fair in all of their dealings with outside bodies, groups, individuals and the Press.

6.2 The Role of the Vice Chair

The Vice Chair has no specific duties other than standing in for the Chair when he or she is unable to be present. The Vice Chair post can be a useful preparatory role for a future Chairperson, by 'shadowing' the current Chair, supporting the Chairperson in their role, and taking over some of the Chairpersons work load when necessary or when asked to. This would be particularly applicable where the community council has appointed working groups to work on specific topics.

6.3 Formal role and enabling role

During meetings, the Chair can be described as having two main roles - formal and also enabling. The following table details the various elements of these two roles:

| THE FORMAL CHAIR | THE ENABLING CHAIR |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>General role and responsibilities</i> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure fair play • Stay in charge • Remain neutral • Have little emotional investment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an overview of the task/goals of the meeting • Help to clarify goals • Help the group to take responsibility for what it wants to accomplish and to carry out its tasks |
| <i>Agenda and timekeeping</i> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open the meeting • Introduce all agenda items • Be familiar with all agenda items • Get through the agenda in allotted time • Evaluate how the meeting went | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run through the agenda at the beginning and get the meeting's approval for it • Arrange in advance for someone to introduce each agenda item • Update latecomers • Keep track of the time |

| Discussion | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select speakers • Summarise discussion • End discussion • Ensure that people keep to the subject • Make it safe to share feelings • Suggest ways of handling conflict | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and help all to participate • Encourage expression of various views • Encourage people to keep to the subject • Clarify and summarise discussion |
| Decision making and voting | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure decisions are taken and agreed • Decide when to conduct the vote • Decisions | Suggest structures for decision making Look for and test areas of agreement Allocated |
| Rules | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that the meeting has been called in accordance with the rules • Have a thorough knowledge of the rules • Rules on points of order and procedure | |
| Outside the meeting | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act on behalf of the organization • Pursue decisions made in meetings • Pursue decisions made in meetings | |
| Tasks | |
| Ensure someone will carry out actions | Ensure that responsibility for action is made clear |

6.4 The Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for:

- Compiling the agenda for meetings (in conjunction with the Chair)
- Distributing the agenda in advance of meetings
- Taking minutes of meetings, or delegating this to a dedicated Minute Secretary
- Copying and distributing minutes in advance of the next meeting, by post or email.
- Answering any correspondence, as agreed by the community council
- Circulating a correspondence list to members along with the agenda
- Public relations, dealing with the media (the community council could decide to delegate this role to the Chair, or a dedicated media representative)
- Arranging the venue for meetings
- Liaison with officials of the local authority

To be successful, a community council must have an energetic and conscientious Secretary prepared to put in the necessary time and effort. It is more than desirable for all members, but especially the Chair, to spread the Secretary's load by, for instance, delegating some of his or her responsibilities to other members.

It is bad policy to overload your Secretary - you might find difficulty getting volunteers! The duties may be allocated to more than one person, for instance having someone to act as Minute Secretary i.e. taking minutes at meetings; **the circulation of minutes remains however, the responsibility of the Secretary!**

It should be considered essential that the Secretary has the necessary skills and capacity to fulfill their responsibilities e.g. access to word-processing and photocopying facilities, knowledge of IT, and a familiar user of the Internet i.e. electronic emailing.

6.5 The Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for receipt and banking of the Administration Allowance; issuing all cheques; and making payments on behalf of the community council.

The Treasurer must manage the bank account; account for all funds received, and ensure money is only spent in a manner which meets the objectives and approval of the community council and its members as recorded in the formal minutes.

The Treasurer must maintain the community council's financial records so that they disclose, with reasonable accuracy at any time, the financial position of the community council.

All cheques issued should be signed by at least two of three persons authorised to act as signatories by the community council members. These appointments need to be recorded in the minutes, and notified to the bank in writing. It is good practice to have more than two authorised signatories, in the event of someone being unavailable at short notice. **As a general rule, Treasurers should avoid paying out money except by cheque. This makes accounting for expenditure much easier.**

The Treasurer must keep proper accounts of all receipts and expenditure and prepare an Annual Statement of Accounts. Community councils need to use an independent, external auditor to approve the accounts. This need not be a professional accountant, but should be someone who has some relevant knowledge and/or is considered competent by Glasgow City Council, e.g. the book-keeper of a local community centre, local housing organisation (LHO), or housing association.

The statement of accounts must be formally approved at the next scheduled AGM, when the Treasurer must report and answer any questions raised by members or the public. When certified and approved it should be sent to Glasgow City Council, as part of the process of applying for the annual Administration Allowance (see clauses 8 & 9 of the Scheme).

The standard form of words for the Treasurer's Certificate is: *"I certify that the above accounts have been prepared by me and accurately reflect the financial provisions relating to the financial period"*

7. Development Planning - viewing & commenting on Planning Applications

7.1 Introduction

The environment in which we all live, work and enjoy our leisure time is shaped through the planning process. The Council wants to encourage the community to participate in forming the environment for these activities. The involvement of the general public is highly valued as this enables the Council to obtain a wide range of opinions from people who will be affected by development proposals.

This will help the Council reach a balanced view on these matters. This not only applies to the formulation of planning policy which, through the City Plan for example, will shape the environment over a longer period, but also to planning applications for developments which might have a more immediate impact.

Anyone (individuals, groups or organisations) can make comments or objections on any planning application: you might want to support an application or you might want to object to it. These comments for or against a proposal are referred to in this 'Planning Factsheet' as 'representations'.

The purpose of the Planning Factsheet is to give advice on:-

- the procedure you should follow;
- the deadline the Council sets for making representations;
- what 'material considerations' will influence the Council's consideration of the application;
- how your representations are handled by the Council;
- how to get help in making representations.

7.2 To view applications

Applications are available to be viewed through the Council's online Planning Service on the Council's web site: <http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/OnlineServices/Planning>

or via this link, entering the postcode or address:

<https://publicaccess.glasgow.gov.uk/online-applications>

If you don't have access to the internet locally, computers are available at 231 George Street during normal working hours – 9.00 until 17.00 Monday to Thursday and 9.00 until 16.00 on Friday.

7.3 The procedure you should follow

The Council will not consider verbal comments on applications, so if you want to make representations on an application, **you must do it in writing**. The usual ways of making representations are by letter, petition or email.

• **Letters**

Representations must be signed, dated and have an address for an acknowledgement to be sent to. They should clearly state the reference number of the application you want to comment on, and the grounds on which the representation is made. Pre-printed or standard copied letters of representation will be accepted for consideration, if they are individually addressed, signed and dated. These details are required so that the Council can send you or the persons making representations individual letters of acknowledgement that it has received the representation.

You should note that any comments you make will **not** be kept confidential: anyone will be able to see your letter of representation. Anonymous letters of representation will not be considered.

• **Petitions**

Petitions for or against a proposal may be submitted. These will be accepted and considered if: each page of the petition is headed with the objective of the petition; signatories provide their name and addresses in a legible fashion; and the name and address of the petition organiser is included, so that the Council can send a letter of acknowledgement that it has received the petition.

• **Email**

The Council will accept email representations on proposals. They should clearly state the reference number of the application you want to comment on, and the grounds on which the representation is made. Advising the Council of your address is helpful so that any physical relationship between your property and the application site can be understood.

• **Contact details**

Hard copies of all representations, either for or against an application, should be sent to

Development and Regeneration Services
Development Management
Glasgow City Council
231 George Street
Glasgow G1 1RX

Online representations should be sent to the following Development Management email address:

planning.representations@drs.glasgow.gov.uk

- **Note**

1. Letters, petitions or emails containing any material deemed to be racist or offensive will be disregarded and the material may be passed to the police to determine whether any further action should be taken.
2. Only use one method of making a single representation, i.e. don't email it to the Council then send it by letter or vice versa.

7.4 The Deadline - *the Council sets for making representations*

Glasgow City Council prides itself on being an open and accountable authority. It wants to be fair to both the person making the application and the people who might want to make representations about it. In Planning legislation there are certain timescales within which applications cannot be determined - usually 21 days.

As the Council is under considerable pressure to deal with applications within the statutory period - two months or four months in the case of certain applications such as National or Major Applications - it is very important that, if you want to have your say about a proposal, you should make any representations as soon as possible, otherwise you might be too late.

The Council has decided that 21 days from the date of a planning application being declared valid, or until any other statutory period (e.g. as stipulated in a notification in a local paper) has elapsed, whichever is the longer, is a reasonable period for any representations to be submitted. Any representations received after the published expiry date, or after the end of any other statutory period, if later, will not be considered.

7.5 Material Considerations

Material considerations are the matters the Council can take into account in deciding on an application. If you want to object, your objection is not considered material if it isn't made for legitimate planning reasons. This means that it will not be considered in the assessment of the proposed development. Here are some examples of material and non-material planning objections.

- **Material Planning Grounds**

1. Contrary to the Development Plan
2. Appearance (design, materials, scale, massing, etc)
3. Traffic, parking and access problems
4. Residential amenity (noise, overshadowing, overlooking, developing too much garden space)
5. Effect on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

- **Non-Material Planning Grounds**

1. Loss of a private view over someone else's property
2. Loss of the value of your property
3. Breaches of feu restrictions or other such burdens on the title of the property
4. Fire hazard
5. Competition amongst shopkeepers
6. Matters covered by other legislation e.g. Building Control (structural stability etc) where there's no overlap in legislation
7. Where no specific grounds of objection have been submitted

Non-material objections won't influence the Council's decision on the application, so it's important that you bring forward representations that are based on material planning considerations only.

7.6 How your representations are handled by the Council

If you make representations to the Council in accordance with the above guidance, you will receive an acknowledgement (unless the application has already been decided). The Council will take your comments into account if they are Material Planning Ground considerations.

Anonymous representations will not be taken into account nor will non-material objections, as mentioned above.

The local Councillors whose Ward includes the application site will be notified if you make a representation on a proposal. If the application requires to be reported to Committee for a decision – many applications are decided by officers under a scheme of delegation – your representations will be summarised by the case officer dealing with the application in the committee report and the original text of your representation will be available at Committee so that the members of the Committee can examine it, if they wish to. For applications dealt with under delegated powers, the case officer will take into account any material representations received timeously when considering it.

Once the application has been decided, you will be notified of the decision in writing and where full details of the decision can be seen. The Council receives a great number of applications every year and planning officers will not enter into exchanges of correspondence with objectors about a proposal prior to its assessment nor necessarily the way a decision was reached after an application has been determined. The way an application is assessed is documented in the Report of Handling which will comprise any committee report prepared or the case officer's report, if the application was dealt with under a scheme of delegation. The Report of Handling will be made available through the Online Planning facility.

7.7 How to get help in making representations

There are various ways you can get help in understanding the planning process and making your views known about an application. For general advice on the planning process, the Council's website carries useful information. You might also contact the Council, either by calling into the Council offices at 231 George Street or by phoning – 0141-287 2000.

If you want further details on a particular application, you should **always** look at the proposal in the application before making any representation – the application may be viewed online either locally or at Development and Regeneration Services reception. Plans will not be sent out to you. Please note that planners will be happy to clarify details of a proposal with you, but will not provide you with grounds of objection.

If you need help in making your representations, you might wish to consider contacting any local community groups such as community councils, tenants and residents associations and amenity societies.; for free advice on planning matters, you might also wish to consider contacting Planning Aid for Scotland; this organisation is staffed by planners, but is independent of Local Authorities.

Planning consultants will also offer you assistance on planning matters, but you will probably have to pay for this. A leaflet on planning consultants is available from Reception at 231 George Street.

7.8 Objections to new commercial properties

- It is a valid objection that there are too many in a particular area. e.g. restaurants: too many already (list them)
- Ventilation shafts up back of tenement are noisy and distribute smells over a wide area.
- Traffic generated
- Anti-social aspects: commercial rubbish collection and deliveries from 5.30am to 7.30am, noise of bottles, customers on street when closing, could be up to 3.30am, licensed premises (any objections to those)
- Additional traffic introduced into residential area.
- Deliveries in congested areas, or residential streets.

7.9 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

- These need planning consent for 'change of use' as well as a licence. (Legislation for planning and licensing is quite separate.)
- Grounds for objection (planning) to HMOs: There are more than 10% in any one street or block (it will be 5% in the new city plan)
- Inability of absentee landlord to maintain
- Insufficient dustbins
- Takeover of common areas to which not entitled.
- Lack of parking

Any other reasons you may have can always be listed but some may not be considered if they are not planning concerns. Other complaints about behaviour, management, etc may be conveyed to the HMO Unit, Protective Services, Glasgow City Council, and ask for any telephone complaint to be recorded.

The weekly list of planning applications for Glasgow is published on the Glasgow City Council website, at:

http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/Business/Planning_Development/DevelopmentControl/Sitehistoryse/arches/

You can also find advice here on how to object to a planning application, at:

http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/Business/Planning_Development/DevelopmentControl/Planningappeals/

7.10 Planning Aid Scotland

Planning Aid Scotland provide specialist planning information and advice. Their website is at: <http://www.planningaidscotland.org.uk/>

8. Working Strategically

Broadly speaking, there are two ways of working available to any community council on any given issue. It can choose to play a reactive role or it can choose to play a proactive role.

8.1 The reactive role

Some councils believe that their primary responsibility is to react efficiently to the problems and complaints that are brought to them by members of their community; and to correspondence coming in from other bodies; even other local authority departments.

A view that could be taken by community councils is if it is brought before the community council, something will be done about it. In such a council, the agenda would be made up almost entirely of issues such as street lighting needing repair, grass that needs cut, etc. Clearly these are issues of importance to the community, and therefore matters which need to be resolved.

Working in this way, however, is reactive in the sense that individuals and organisations outside the community council set the community council's agenda.

8.2 The proactive role

In contrast, some other community councils see it as their job, in addition to responding to issues such as those mentioned above, to facilitate an approach that does not wait for problems and issues to be brought before it. Rather, it would set out to identify the various issues that it thinks might affect the community, both in the short and longer term.

Having identified those issues as best it can, it would then proceed to set out some priorities for the community and the community council. This involves thinking what actions the community council might play in making things happen.

It also means taking a decision as to the overall direction in which the community council should move. For example, some community councils have identified the threat to their physical environment as the key issue for their community and have responded by developing a strategy which sets out a series of steps which they intend to take at local level to counter that threat. Other community councils have identified the improvement of community facilities as the key issue and have developed a strategy around that.

8.3 Examining what is going on inside and outside the community

The first step is to take a careful look at the ways in which your community might be developed. Examine the needs that are apparent in the community and try to identify any particular hopes and ambitions that might be translated into reality.

Then have a look at what is going on in the outside world. What are the major opportunities or threats? You might consider the likely impact of matters such as the availability of funding in this category. How could your community council take full advantage of the opportunities available, or take action to minimise the impact of any threats?

8.4 Reviewing the options

The next stage is to set out all of the possibilities, all of the things that the community council might get involved in to benefit the community. These are your strategic options and they need to be carefully considered before deciding which particular options to pursue. Try to be clear about how much time, energy and money would have to be put in to the various options, and establish whether or not those could be justified in terms of the outcome that you would want to achieve.

8.5 Making strategic decisions

Once you are satisfied that you have examined all of the options open to the community council it is possible to start taking decisions about which options offer most benefit, or make most sense given the circumstances. Effectively this means choosing a direction for the community council to pursue. Direction is important for any organisation since it allows the people involved to share a vision of where they are going.

Once you have chosen the overall direction, try to consult widely within your community. Find out whether people in general are behind you, and try to identify any particular concerns that they might have. **By consulting early there is a greater likelihood that the community as a whole will be supportive of any action that the community council takes subsequently. It also**

helps to minimise the risk that the community council moves in a direction that might alienate the wider community.

8.6 Setting the objectives

Once you are clear about what the overall aim is, it is possible to set very specific objectives. For example, if your chosen goal is to improve the cleanliness of the area your objectives might be as follows:

- to make local people aware of the issues;
- to involve local schoolchildren in projects;
- to carry out specific clean-up projects.

8.7 Developing the Strategy

When the objectives are clearly set out you can then consider the things that need to be done in order to achieve them. This requires you to think about which actions are likely to be the most effective in the particular circumstances of your community council; a Strategy can help to achieve this, which is simply setting down the steps to be taken in order to achieve the objectives.

8.8 Summary

Some community councils take the view that it is their primary responsibility to respond to matters that are brought to them either by their community or by other external bodies. Others take the view that their role extends beyond that of being a purely reactive body, to that of being an initiator of plans and activities for the community as a whole. Thinking and acting strategically involves:

- taking a proactive approach to community matters;
- examining the needs and aspirations of the community and the factors in the outside world which affect (or may affect in the future) the community;
- considering the options carefully;
- selecting a particular direction in which to move;
- setting clear objectives to get you to your chosen goal;
- developing a plan of action as to how those objectives will be met.

9. Report Writing

If there is a particular issue about which your community council feels strongly, or about which you happen to know quite a lot, you may want to write up a short report so that your fellow community councillors can make themselves familiar with the information before or after a meeting.

Some people find the thought of writing a report quite daunting. In actual fact, writing a report is very simple if you approach it in the right way. The stages of report writing are set out below:

9.1 Stage 1 - Planning the report

The first thing to do is to write down on a piece of paper why you are writing the report. You should try to become clear about what it is that you are trying to achieve by writing a report. Are you merely trying to inform your fellow Councillors about something or are you trying to influence them to take a particular decision on an issue?

Once you are clear about what it is that you want to achieve it is much easier to decide how to set about the task. Remember, very few people want to read reports just for the sake of it!

The next thing to do is to decide what information you will need to include in order to achieve your objective. The golden rule here is to make sure that you include no more information than is absolutely necessary. You can always supply additional information if anyone asks for it!

9.2 Stage 2 - Preparing the report

Having decided what you want to include you will then have to gather your information. This might involve taking statements from people, or doing some research of records. The important thing here is to try to make sure that your information is accurate and balanced. People are seldom fooled by a one-sided report; and remember the following points:

- Don't put in too many statistics as people generally find statistics hard to swallow;
- Keep your sentences short and 'punchy', and try to avoid using long words and formal language that you would not normally use;
- Start with an introduction that explains in a nutshell what the report is about;
- Go on to develop your ideas in the main body of the report then do a short summary of your case;
- Finish off with a conclusion that sets out clearly what it is that you are recommending the community council to do about the matter.

Glasgow City Council encourages its officers to follow a particular style in preparing reports. The template below may be useful for community council members.

REPORT TO NAME COMMUNITY COUNCIL - SUBJECT

1.0 Purpose of Report

Why the report has been prepared

2.0 Background

Past history of the subject matter, previous decisions by community council etc

3.0 Proposals

What you are proposing or recommending

4.0 Discussion

Discuss the issues surrounding the report, how and why you have come to the conclusions reached and what has led you to a particular conclusion or recommendation

5.0 Consultations

Which bodies, agencies, groups or individuals you have spoken to about your proposals and whether or not they are supportive.

6.0 Financial Implications

Describe the financial implications of the report and how they will be met. Distinguish between one-off capital costs and on-going revenue costs.

7.0 Other Implications

Does the project have any staffing or equal opportunities implications, is it sustainable in the longer term, how will it be managed.

8.0 Recommendations

List each of your recommendations in turn, highlighting specific matters requiring decision by the Council.

10. Media and Publicity

10.1 Dealing with the press

As a community councillor, someone may approach you at some time from the Press who is looking for a story. Alternatively there may come a time when, for whatever reason, you decide that you want to take information to the press. In either case it is important that you recognise how the press operates so that you can gain maximum benefit and avoid some of the common pitfalls.

Generally speaking the Press has two major priorities:

- to get 'copy'; that is to say, material to fill up newspaper columns;
- to get good 'stories', that is to say, articles that have a human-interest value and which have the effect of lightening up the contents of the newspaper.

When you are dealing with someone from the Press it is likely that they will make a quick assessment as to which category your information falls into, and this assessment is likely to be important in determining what actually happens to the information that you pass over. By giving your information a 'human interest' dimension it may be possible to get much fuller coverage than would be possible otherwise.

For example, if you wanted to publicise an event in your community you might simply pass details of the event over to a local paper. Alternatively, you might write a short article on the person who is organising the event and the particular problems that have been encountered on the way. If you choose the first option it is likely that the information will be tucked away in a corner of the paper where not many people will notice it, whereas if you choose the second option you may find that a fairly lengthy article appears with a photograph alongside.

The primary concern of the press is to sell newspapers and that means providing news and information that people will want to read. So try to make sure that you are providing material that will interest people as well as simply informing them.

Perhaps the best way to interest the Press is to issue a formal 'Press Release', which at its most effective is probably a half to three-quarters page of A4. It can be issued to both local and regional newspapers and on occasion may interest national papers. Don't forget local radio and television stations.

You should also keep in mind that journalists have the power to edit news items. In practice this means they can put an emphasis on particular words or events that you may not have intended and in this way the message that you were trying to convey may end up getting distorted. The solution is to try to ensure that you choose your words carefully; knowing that anything you say could end up as a headline. It is not difficult to make the headlines in a local paper, but it is sometimes difficult to live with the headlines that you make!

Try to remember also the constraints that local newspapers work under. They have tight deadlines to meet so make sure that you submit your copy in plenty of time. They also appreciate information and articles that can be printed without a lot of cutting and reorganising so try to make sure that the information you provide is to the point.

10.2 Handling Press Interviews

When a journalist is actually interviewing you it is necessary to be particularly careful about what you say. It is easy to be caught off guard and to say something that you didn't really mean. Be very wary about off the record comments because these may end up being attributed to you.

The best approach is to think out what you want to say before the interview starts. If that means taking a few minutes to prepare your thoughts, do so. Try to be clear about what sort of message you want to convey, and make sure that it doesn't get lost during the interview (what happens to that message later on is in the hands of the journalist!). If you are unclear, ask them to call back later, and do your research e.g. by checking with the Chair or Secretary before you commit yourself to comment.

Beware too that spreading erroneous or inaccurate information or indulging in abusive criticism of other parties, can not only devalue what may have been a reasonable case, but could also invoke legal action for defamation.

10.3 Keeping people informed

It is worth remembering that, for most people in your community, the only regular information about the work of the community council that they have access to, is what they read in the press. For this reason, it is a good idea that community councils make every effort to pass good quality information to the local press on a regular basis. The more informed members of the community are about local issues the greater the likelihood that they will want to get involved in what's going on. This may require providing information in other formats e.g. audio tapes, large print, Braille and in other languages

10.4 Quick do's and don'ts

- *Buy time* – don't respond off the cuff. A casual comment can be taken out of context. Prepare what you want to say – write it down if you want and then ring back. You will be asked for an immediate response and told about tight deadlines but be firm and take a few minutes to think about your response.
- *Don't use* an item of information as fact unless you're 100% certain of it.
- *Don't speculate.* Your conjecture will end up as somebody else's hard fact.
- *Don't hinder or obstruct.* The media are there to do a job and it is better to form a good relationship with them and give them the information you feel you can give. In emergency situations the media – particularly broadcast media – can be very useful in informing the public quickly of developing situations.
- *Don't say 'No Comment'; no comment* is a negative remark, and is seen as confirmation that you have something to hide.
- *Do explain* where media questions can be answered if you yourself cannot help.

Do remember that your attitude to the media and what you say reflects on everyone else involved.

10.5 Sample Press Release

The following format may be useful in compiling a press release. Remember to use headed community council paper, and use the full title of the contact person – community council Chair, or Secretary.

- Press Release for immediate action
- DATE e.g. May 5, 2008
- NAME Community Council to meet on May 25

NAME Community Council is to meet on Wednesday, May 25.

The meeting will take place in the Anytown Community Centre, Anytown Avenue, Anytown.

Members of the public are welcome to attend. The meeting will start at 7.00p.m.

The community council represents public opinion to Glasgow City Council and other public bodies. It discusses issues such as local planning applications, liquor (drinks) licenses and areas of concern to the community.

A spokesman said: "Anyone interested in attending the meeting, or speaking on an issue, would be more than welcome."

You can find out more about the community council by logging onto:

www.yourcommunitycouncil.org another@yourcommunitycouncil.org

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Please contact Ms A N Other, Chairperson, Anytown Community Council,
on 0141 123 4567 or 01234 56789
or emailing another@yourcommunitycouncil.org

11. Divergent Views

11.1 Dealing with conflict

Working in a community council may not, at first sight, appear to have much to do with 'politics'; indeed **all community councils should act as non-political bodies at all times**. However, it has to be recognised that the work of community councils does at times concern the exercise of power, albeit at a very local level. For example, there is the power to:

- get things done in the community;
- take issue on the other tiers of government;
- advise on allocating resources within the community.

Wherever power is exercised there is always the possibility of conflict developing. This may be because individuals and organisations find themselves competing for access to the same resources in the community. Or it may be simply that individuals or organisations wish to demonstrate their ability to wield power and influence in the community.

But whatever the reason, conflict can break out from time to time even in the most peaceful of communities. When it does it is important to know how to deal with it effectively so that major rifts do not develop in the community.

Because community harmony is so important community councils need to ensure that, as far as possible, they exercise their power in a fair and reasonable manner. They should also try to ensure that they work in a tactful and diplomatic manner, liaising and consulting with individuals and other organisations in the community wherever possible.

11.2 Conflict within Community Councils

It also has to be recognised that conflict can break out within community councils, just as in any other part of the community. It may be that conflicts are imported into the context of the community council from outside, or it may be that conflict breaks out because of a particular issue that is on the agenda. In any case it is useful to think about dealing with such conflict before you actually find yourself in the situation. This gives you a chance to work out a strategy before you get caught up in the emotion of the event.

11.3 Personality clashes

Conflict which relates to a clash of personality is perhaps the most difficult to deal with because the actual issue over which the clash takes place may simply provide an opportunity for the combatants to demonstrate their strongly opposing views. Where this is the case they may be less concerned with reaching agreement or getting through the community council's agenda than with addressing their own personal agenda.

Such personality clashes can make other community councillors feel uncomfortable, and can prove damaging in the long term to the work of the community council. In this situation it is worthwhile remembering that it is not usually possible to change a person's personality. What can be changed, however, is their behaviour, that is, what they actually do.

If there are certain things which someone is doing that cause conflict in the group e.g. rudely interrupting other people, or monopolising the discussion, it may be possible to find a way of persuading that person to change his or her behaviour. This can sometimes be achieved by the use of good-natured humour, aimed at making the person aware of the behaviour that other people find offensive. At other times it may be necessary to try to persuade the Chair to intervene more forcefully so as to prevent that behaviour leading to conflict.

In any case it is generally a good idea for community councillors to talk about how they feel about 'difficult' behaviour, otherwise there is a danger that communication will break down and conflict will emerge eventually in an even more damaging form.

11.4 Conflict over community issues

Another form of conflict that you might come across in meetings relates to the particular community issues on the agenda, rather than to more general clashes of personality. From time to time issues will arise that some community councillors feel particularly strongly about. This may be because of their personal beliefs or values, or it may be because they are representing the strong views that are held in sections of the community.

If you do find yourself in this sort of conflict it is important to show that, even if you don't see things the same way as others, you do recognise that they feel strongly about the issue, and you understand what their concern is. You should then explain your feelings on the matter, being firm but friendly, trying wherever possible to find concerns that you share with them. Then move on to the areas where you differ and try to use their ideas as a base on which to build a solution that is acceptable to all concerned. For example:

"I understand your concern about X and think that it's something that we ought to do something about. However, I would want to approach the problem from a different angle because I think that Y is important too. Why don't we do Z, which will meet your concerns about X and my concerns about Y?"

In this way it is possible to demonstrate to other people that you are able to listen to other people's ideas as well as presenting your own. By demonstrating your ability to listen you will also increase the likelihood that other people will listen to you.

In all types of conflict a community councillor arriving at the meeting 'all fired up' about a particular issue is unlikely to act constructively or agree compromise. An experienced Chair will, as early as possible, allow both sides ample time to state their case and then try to engineer a compromise.

Planning issues can often arouse considerable ill-feeling and/or conflict, and are potentially divisive. It is important that all sides are given the opportunity to make their views known and the role of the Chair can be crucial in managing a difficult situation. Depending on the circumstances, it may be useful to hear representations from prospective developers and from those that are either supporting or objecting to development proposals. It is important that equal opportunity is given to all sides and in these circumstances in relation to speaking time; number of questions asked etc.

12. Ex-officio Members

12.1 MEPs, MPs, MSPs and MSYPs

Members of the European, Westminster, Scottish and Youth Parliaments are ex-officio members of the community councils within their constituencies.

However, MPs' attendance, for example, at community council meetings is largely constrained by the fact that their day-to-day work takes place 400 miles away, in London. Nevertheless, all your ex-officio members should be provided access to minutes and agendas and be encouraged to submit written reports on relevant issues.

Generally speaking, due to the office that is held by ex-officios, their views on matters concerning the community council and/or the local boundary area should be actively sought.

13. Allowances and Accounting Procedures

13.1 Acceptable Areas of Expenditure (AAE) – Administration Allowance

Once a community council is established it will receive an Administrative Allowance of circa £500 plus 1p per head of the population included in the community council boundary area.

Further to this, the Administrative Allowance is paid annually, on submission of audited annual accounts covering all income and expenditure of the community council for the previous financial year.

The community council bank account number should be provided to the City Council. The purpose of the Administrative Allowance is to cover the costs in administering community council business. Examples of such costs are detailed below, although this list is not necessarily exhaustive;

- Production and circulation of minutes, agenda and annual general reports
- Accommodation lets
- Stationery
- Photocopying
- Postage
- Travel costs
- Telephone costs
- Insurance
- Auditors' fees
- Bank charges
- Affiliation fees
- Subscriptions
- Advertising
- General Publicity and promotional activities.
- Consultation with the community.

13.2 AAE – Discretionary Grant Fund

A community council can also apply for a discretionary grant provided that they have submitted; annual audited accounts covering all income and expenditure and all current bank statements; a signed Constitution; and all their meeting minutes are up to date as held by Glasgow City Council. As its name suggests this grant is given at the discretion of the City Council, and examples of what the grant can be used for include:

- the publication of a newsletter;
- the purchase of small items of equipment;
- any additional administration costs.

Where an application is made to the City Council for a Discretionary Grant; the whole financial circumstances of the community council will be considered to establish free and committed funds before the application for grant assistance is dealt with by the City Council.

13.3 AAE – Area Partnerships

Community councils can apply to the appropriate Area Partnership for additional funding e.g. for a festival/gala/community event.

Community councils which apply for such funding must keep separate accounts for the festival/gala, and those accounts must also be audited, cross referenced to the community council accounts and submitted to the City Council with the community council's annual audited accounts.

The festival/gala account must show all income generated for the gala and all expenditure incurred, not simply that expenditure covered by the City Council allowance. The City Council acknowledges that in holding a festival/gala the community council may generate income and incur expenditure in excess of the fund provided by the City Council.

13.4 AAE – other sources

Community councils may generate income from sources other than the City Council. This income may also be applied towards expenditure not covered by funding awards made by the City Council. The accounts of the community council will however disclose all income from whatever source it is obtained and will show all expenditure even where it is not simply the expenditure of the City Council Administration Allowance and/or Discretionary Grant Fund.

13.5 Accounting Procedures (AP) – cash

The community council should nominate three unrelated office bearers to act as signatories to the community council bank accounts (see clause 9b of the Scheme and clause 14e of the Constitution). All cheques and withdrawals should require two from three signatures. Any changes to authorised signatories should be approved by the community council.

Each community council should have a cash book and all income and expenditure should be recorded in it. The date, description, amount and receipt number should also be recorded. The cash book should be completed in ink. Errors should be scored through and initialled and the correct entry written. Correction fluid should not be used in the cash book.

All income should be receipted using a sequentially prenumbered duplicate receipt book. All cash should be held in a lockfast container and stored securely.

The level of cash held should not be excessive and the community council should ensure that bankings are made when the level of cash held reaches £50.00. Banking should be made intact. All income received should be banked and should not be used to meet expenditure. If funds are required for incurred expenditure they should either be paid by cheque or alternatively cash should be withdrawn from the bank.

Once banking has been made the stamped bank pay-in slip should be retained and checked against the bank statement or bank book to ensure that the income has been credited correctly.

13.6 AP – expenditure

All expenditure must be approved in advance by the community council. All expenditure must be accompanied by proof of purchase, either an expenditure voucher or receipted invoice. Receipts should be given a sequential number and filed accordingly.

Details of the expenditure should be recorded in the cash book as soon as the expenditure is incurred. Where a receipt is not available, the person making the purchase should complete a form stating the nature of the expenditure. The form should be authorised by one of the three 'signatory' members of the community council. A current account will normally be used for day to day transactions.

The Treasurer should await the bank statements and once received should carry out a bank reconciliation to ensure that the bank balance agrees with the balance recorded in the cash book. All bank statements should be retained.

Where petty cash is issued, all petty cash vouchers should be signed by the person requesting the money and countersigned by the Treasurer or other authorised signatory - this must not be the person who is requesting the expenditure. All receipts for items of expenditure should be retained and attached to the appropriate petty cash voucher.

Reimbursement of travel expenses should only be available to persons on official community council business. Claimants should submit a detailed record of dates, times, destination, reason for travel and mode of transport. Reimbursement of travel expenses (for example bus, taxi, train, parking fees etc) should only be awarded if accompanied by an appropriate receipt.

Where travel is by car a detailed record of distances travelled should be submitted and reimbursement should be made. Proof of the average miles per gallon could be used to calculate an appropriate rate of claim for mileage covered on community council business. Claimants should sign and date any claims for travel allowance and submit this to the treasurer.

If the community council requires telephone calls to be made, reimbursement of expenses can be made at the discretion of the community council. The person making the claim should submit the itemised telephone statement highlighting the calls claimed. Reimbursement will be authorised by the community council.

13.7 AP – annual accounts

An annual income and expenditure statement of all accounts including all income and expenditure must be prepared at the end of the community councils' financial year and must be audited by a person unconnected with the community council. The audited accounts must be presented to the community council and the original passed to Glasgow City Council immediately after the Annual General Meeting in October of each year.

13.8 AP – inventory

The community council must maintain an inventory detailing all the assets of the community council. The inventory should be updated on an ongoing basis for additions and deletions.

14. Procedure for Suspension and Dissolution

14.1 Suspension of a Community Council

A community council may be suspended from recognition in terms of the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils (the Scheme) by Glasgow City Council. This action will be taken only if the community council is found not to be conforming to the Scheme and will result in the community council losing the right to:

- (a) consultation on any City Council matter;
- (b) receive Administrative Allowances and Discretionary Grants

In these circumstances, the community council will revert to the status of a steering committee. The principal aim of the steering committee will be to review the current circumstances and to proceed to take the action necessary in terms of the Scheme to re-establish the community council.

The City Council will notify the Secretary of the community council in writing where it is considered that a community council is not conforming to the Scheme. Arrangements to discuss and resolve the difficulties within an agreed timescale will be made. If agreement cannot be reached or compliance with the Scheme cannot be achieved, the matter will be reported to the appropriate City Council Committee. Recommendations will be made to the City Council that the community council be suspended and given three months to take action to comply with the Scheme. The community council will be notified in writing of the City Council's decision (see clause 12 of the Scheme).

The status of the community council will immediately revert to a steering committee with no rights of a community council. During this period there will be an ongoing consultation process offering assistance and advice. This will aim to rectify areas of difficulty and allow the community council to be recognised as conforming to the Scheme and the restoration of full rights.

Each case will be considered on an individual basis; however, assistance offered to a steering committee may include the provision of an allowance to meet administrative costs.

At the end of a three month period a further report will be submitted to the City Council recommending:

- (a) restoration of full rights to the community council;
- (b) continuation of the matter in the hope of achieving compliance; or
- (c) dissolution of the community council.

A community council can decide to suspend voluntarily its operations but must notify Glasgow City Council immediately. The community council must advertise and convene a Special Meeting to consider this matter and must gain the approval of a majority of qualified electors present at the meeting. The community council will immediately notify Glasgow City Council of the decision to allow them to take appropriate action in the circumstances.

In exceptional cases the City Council reserves the right to suspend immediately recognition of a community council in terms of the Scheme. This action and the reason for it may be notified in writing by recorded delivery to the Secretary and/or the Chairperson.

14.2 Dissolution of a Community Council

A community council which is not conforming, and/or significantly diverging, from the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils can be dissolved by the City Council. The City Council will intimate the dissolution of a community council by a public notice and by writing to the Secretary and/or Chairperson of the community council. The rights and privileges of the community council will immediately cease and it must make immediate arrangements to terminate all its activities and transfer all assets to the City Council.

The normal process for the dissolution of a community council will follow from the consultation process laid down for the suspension of a community council. The City Council may however, immediately dissolve a community council in the following exceptional circumstances where reasonable grounds indicate that a community council:

- (a) has been abandoned and is no longer operating, or
- (b) is significantly diverging from the Scheme.

The City Council may give advance public notice of this intention and invite written submissions to be sent to them for the consideration of the appropriate City Council committee.

Any potential public notice could precede a written invitation sent to the Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer of the community council to make representation to the meeting of the City Council committee convened to consider the dissolution. Each, or all, of the Office Bearers would have the right to attend, be represented by, or accompanied by, a representative who may speak on their behalf. The community councillors and their representatives shall withdraw from the meeting after giving their submission to allow the matter to be considered by the City Council committee. The Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer will receive in writing an intimation of the decision of the City Council committee, whether or not they were in attendance at the meeting. A public notice in the area will also be displayed outlining the decision of the committee.

Where a community council is dissolved its funds and assets will be disposed of. To that end all members of the dissolved community council are required to co-operate with officers of the City

Council in the orderly disposal of assets. Every community council shall also provide its bankers with an instruction for the transfer of funds to the City Council on provision of written proof of the dissolution from the City Council.

A community council may decide on voluntary dissolution but must notify this intention to the City Council. The community council must advertise by giving at least 7 days prior notice and convene a Special Meeting to consider this matter and must gain the approval of a majority of qualified electors present at the meeting. If no such majority is forthcoming but the community council is still resolved to dissolve voluntarily then the matter must be referred to the City Council for it to take whatever appropriate action is necessary in the circumstances.

Where there is a majority in favour of dissolution at the Special Meeting, the community council will immediately notify the City Council of the passing of such a resolution. This will enable the City Council, in conjunction with the community council, to take such action as is necessary for an orderly winding up of the community council.

15. Unacceptable actions of Community Council members

This part of the Guidance is largely based upon the Unacceptable Actions Policy which is contained within the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman website. Further information on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, and specifically the Unacceptable Actions Policy, can be found at: <http://www.spsso.org.uk/media-centre/news-releases/spso-unacceptable-actions-policy-reviewed>

Community councils are voluntary bodies which exist within a statutory framework and which have been granted statutory rights of consultation. Their actions however, are independent of the statutory framework within which they exist; and their collective views should remain impartial and reflective of the wider communities' views.

Partner Agencies should believe that the communities' issues and concerns have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, on occasion, the language, behaviour or actions of individual members of community councils can make it very difficult for Agencies to effectively deal with an issue, concern or complaint.

In a small number of cases these behaviours or actions may become unacceptable because they involve inappropriate use of Agencies processes or take up a disproportionate amount of individual and/or wider staff time.

If this happens, Agencies (or the community council itself!) may require to take action to protect staff (its members); and to take time to consider the impact of the behaviour of individuals' actions on Agencies' (the community council's) ability to do their work and provide a service to others.

Sections 15.2 to 15.5 suggested actions seek to provide possible explanation of how Partner Agencies may approach these situations.

15.1 What actions could Partner Agencies consider to be unacceptable?

People may act out of character in times of real or perceived concern; misunderstanding or disagreement. There may have been qualifying circumstances leading up to a complaint being received by any Partner Agencies.

As such, Agencies may not view behaviour as unacceptable just because a complainant is forceful or determined. In fact, Agencies may even accept that being persistent can be a positive advantage when pursuing a complaint.

However, Agencies could consider actions that result in unreasonable demands on their office or unreasonable behaviour towards their staff to be unacceptable. As such, section 15 of this Guidance aims to inform community councils how Agencies might manage any potential actions.

15.1.1 Aggressive or abusive behaviour

Although Agencies might understand that many complainants are angry about the issues they have raised in their complaint. If that anger escalates into aggression towards Agency staff, it would be considered unacceptable. Any violence or abuse towards any Agencies' staff will not be accepted.

Violence is not restricted to acts of aggression that may result in physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language (whether verbal or written) that may cause Agency staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused, and may include threats, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and rudeness.

Inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations could also be considered to be abusive behaviour.

15.1.2 Unreasonable demands

A demand can become unacceptable if it starts to (or when complying with the demand would) impact substantially on the work of the Partner Agency.

Examples of actions grouped under this heading could include:

- i. repeatedly demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale;
- ii. insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff when that is not possible;
- iii. repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns.

An example of such impact would be that the demand takes up an excessive amount of Agencies' staff time, and in so doing would disadvantage other service users.

15.1.3 Unreasonable levels of contact

Sometimes it may prove to be the case that the volume and duration of contact made to Agencies' offices by an individual causes problems. This could occur over the short, medium; or long-term period and take the form of e.g. an inappropriately high number of phone calls or receipt of emails; inundation with copious amounts of information that has already been dealt with; or is irrelevant to the original complaint.

It may be considered by Agencies that the level of contact has become unacceptable when the amount of time spent responding to a complainant impacts on their ability to deal with that complaint, or with other service users' enquiries.

15.1.4 Unreasonable use of the complaints process

Complainants with complaints about Partner Agencies' staff members have the right to pursue their concerns through a range of means. They also have the right to complain more than once about an organisation with which they have a continuing relationship, if subsequent incidents occur.

However, this contact can become unreasonable when the effect of the repeated complaints is to harass, or to prevent an Agency from pursuing a legitimate aim or implementing a legitimate decision.

It should be considered that access to a complaints system is important, and equally important; it will only be in exceptional circumstances that Agencies may consider such repeated use is unacceptable – Agencies may reserve the right to do so in any exceptional cases.

15.2 Examples of how Agencies may manage aggressive or abusive behaviour

The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse or harassment towards any Agency's staff is likely to result in a termination of all direct contact with the complainant. Incidents may be reported to the police. This will always be the case if physical violence is used or threatened.

Agencies will not accept any correspondence (letter, fax or electronic) that is abusive to staff or contains allegations that lack substantive evidence. Agencies will tell the complainant that they consider their language offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful and ask them to stop using such language. Agencies will state that they will not respond to their correspondence if the action or behaviour continues.

Agency staff can end telephone calls if they consider the caller aggressive, abusive or offensive. Agency staff may be given the delegated right to make this decision, to tell the caller that their behaviour is unacceptable and end the call if the behaviour persists.

In extreme situations, Agencies may tell the complainant in writing that their name is on a 'no personal contact' list (if this has been established). This means that Agencies will limit contact with them to either written communication or through a third party.

15.3 Examples of how Agencies may deal with other categories of unreasonable behaviour

Agencies may have to take action when unreasonable behaviour impairs the functioning of their office. They may aim to do this in a way that allows a complaint to progress through their process.

Agencies may also try to ensure that any action they take is the minimum required to solve the problem, taking into account relevant personal circumstances including the seriousness of the complaint and the needs of the individual.

15.4 Actions Agencies may take

Where a complainant repeatedly phones, visits the office, raises repeated issues, or sends large numbers of documents where their relevance isn't clear, Agencies may decide to:

- i. limit contact to telephone calls from the complainant at set times on set days;
- ii. restrict contact to a nominated member of staff who will deal with future calls or correspondence from the complainant;
- iii. see the complainant by appointment only;
- iv. restrict contact from the complainant to writing only;
- v. return any documents to the complainant or, in extreme cases, advise the complainant
- vi. that further irrelevant documents will be destroyed;
- vii. take any other action that Agencies may consider appropriate.

Where Agencies consider continued correspondence on a wide range of issues to be excessive, they may tell the complainant that only a certain number of issues will be considered in a given period and would ask them to limit or focus their requests accordingly.

In exceptional cases, Agencies may reserve the right to refuse to consider a complaint or future complaints from an individual. Agencies may take into account the impact on the individual and also whether there would be a broader public interest in considering the complaint further.

Agencies should always tell the complainant what action they are taking and why.

15.5 The process Agencies follow to make decisions about unreasonable behaviour

Any member of Agency staff who directly experiences aggressive or abusive behaviour from a complainant may have the delegated authority to deal immediately with that behaviour in a manner they consider appropriate to the situation and in line with section 15 of these Guidelines.

With the exception of such immediate decisions taken at the time of an incident, decisions to restrict contact with the Agency should only be taken after careful consideration of the situation by a more senior member of staff. Wherever possible, Agencies will give a complainant the opportunity to change their behaviour or action before a decision is taken.

15.5.1 How Agencies let people know they have made this decision

If an Agency employee makes an immediate decision in response to aggressive or abusive behaviour, the complainant should be advised at the time of the incident. When a decision has been made by senior management, a complainant should always be told in writing;

- i. why a decision has been made to restrict future contact;
- ii. the restricted contact arrangements; and, if relevant,
- iii. the length of time that these restrictions will be in place.

This can ensure that the complainant has a record of the decision.

15.5.2 The process for appealing a decision to restrict contact

It is important that a decision can be reconsidered. A complainant can appeal a decision to restrict contact. If they do this, Agencies may only consider arguments that relate to the restriction and not to either the complaint made to them or to their decision to close a complaint.

An appeal could include, for example, a complainant saying that: their actions were wrongly identified as unacceptable; the restrictions were disproportionate; or that they will adversely impact on the individual because of personal circumstances.

A senior member of staff who was not involved in the original decision could consider the appeal. They may have discretion to quash or vary the restriction as they think best. They should make their decision based on the evidence available to them and should advise the complainant in writing that either the; restricted contact arrangements still apply; or a different course of action has been agreed.

15.5.3 How Agencies record and review a decision to restrict contact

Agencies should record all incidents of unacceptable actions by complainants. Where it is decided to restrict complainant contact, an entry noting this should be recorded in a relevant file and on appropriate computer records.

A decision to restrict complainant contact as described above may be reconsidered if the complainant demonstrates a more acceptable approach. A member of Agencies' Senior Management Team can review the status of all complainants with restricted contact arrangements on a regular basis.

16. Summary

To summarise, the work of community councils can vary from council to council, as do some of the methods of operation. Some community councils have demonstrated a great deal of imagination in interpreting their role in the community, carrying out tasks such as:

- environmental projects – clean up days, for example
- organising local galas in partnership with other local groups
- printing and distributing local newsletters, and running dedicated community council websites
- representing community councils on other organisations
- campaigning on local issues
- conducting local surveys
- organising public meetings on major development proposals

It should not be forgotten, however, that the main purpose of your community council is to represent the views of your community. Action on potholes, road-signs, graffiti, litter and such matters can give people a sense of community and of pride in their immediate environment. And even if your community council chooses to confine itself to this role alone, it will still be achieving a great deal for the community.

Given the broad legislative remit of community councils, the scope for their future development is very great indeed. The re-organisation of local government in April 1996, and the introduction of multi-member Wards, has brought with it an even more significant role for community councils as the elected body closest to the local community.