OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

Tuesday 14 March 2023

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Tuesday 14 March 2023

CONTENTS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, HOUSING AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
8th Meeting 2023, Session 6

CONVENER

*Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con)
*Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab)
*Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP)
*Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
*Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Valerie Arbuckle (Police Scotland)
Karen Jackson (South of Scotland Enterprise)
Mark McAteer (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service)
Dave McCallum (Skills Development Scotland)
Sharon McIntyre (Skills Development Scotland)
Derek Shaw (Scottish Enterprise)
Eann Sinclair (Highlands and Islands Enterprise)
Pauline Smith (Development Trusts Association Scotland)
Caroline Warburton (VisitScotland)
Stephen Wood (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Euan Donald

LOCATION

The David Livingstone Room (CR6)

Scottish Parliament

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

Tuesday 14 March 2023

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:30]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Ariane Burgess): Good morning and welcome to the eighth meeting in 2023 of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. I remind all members and witnesses to ensure that their electronic devices are on silent and that all notifications are turned off during the meeting. I convey apologies from Miles Briggs, who is unable to join us today.

The first item on our agenda today is to decide whether to take item 4 in private. Do members agree to do so?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Community Planning Inquiry (Post-Legislative Scrutiny of the Community Empowerment Act 2015)

09:30

The Convener: The next item on our agenda is to take evidence from two panels of witnesses as part of our post-legislative scrutiny of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, in our community planning inquiry. This is our third session in the inquiry into the impact of the 2015 act on community planning and how community planning partnerships respond to significant events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the current cost of living crisis.

The partnerships are a crucial part of ensuring that communities receive the support and services that they need—now, more than ever. They bring organisations together to co-ordinate their activities and to listen to and learn from each other. Today, we will hear from a number of national and regional organisations that are involved in community planning.

We are joined by our first panel of witnesses. In the room we are joined by Mark McAteer, who is director of strategic planning performance and communications, and Stephen Wood, head of service delivery north of Scotland, both from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, and by Pauline Smith, who is the chief executive director at Development Trusts Association Scotland. Online, we are joined by Caroline Warburton, who is destination development director at VisitScotland, and Valerie Arbuckle, who is national partnership development manager at Police Scotland. Welcome to the meeting.

We will try to direct our questions to a specific witness, where possible, but if you wish to come in, please indicate that to the clerks. Caroline and Valerie can do that by typing the letter R in the chat function. There is no need to turn your microphones on and off manually, that will be done for you.

Each member will explore a particular theme, and Annie Wells, who is joining us online, will start our discussion by asking questions about the challenges that communities face.

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): Good morning, convener and panel.

We have heard that inequalities are a moving target and that a lot has changed in the last eight years. What are your organisations' roles, as community planning partners, in helping to tackle inequalities? May I ask that of Mark first, please?

Mark McAteer (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service): As a statutory community planning partner, the SFRS's role is to support community planning partnerships and, through them, communities, across a range of outcomes. Although our focus is primarily on community safety—as you can imagine, that is the nature of an emergency service—we are involved in a wide variety of work around prevention not just in relation to fire but in relation to other things that lead to inequality in communities. That takes us into a range of areas where we work in support of partnerships.

We tend not to be the lead partner, but to play a part working with others. For example, in the Highlands, we are running a partnership with Home Energy Scotland. Because we are an organisation that is successful at getting into people's homes and at helping and supporting people, we are looking at how that partnership can work with the CPP to ensure that people have good access to energy efficiency information and things like that. That is typically the sort of role that we play, outwith the purely safety-related elements of what we do. We can broker relationships between communities and others and, through that, help them to address issues of inequality.

We are also involved in employability and employment partnership working on a similar basis. We are often a host organisation, particularly for young people, to help them either to find a place in the workplace or to pick up skills as part of their portfolio construction. That, too, is an important role for us because such work is typically targeted at young people who are finding it difficult to get into the workplace. As you can imagine, we are an attractive organisation to a lot of young people. They find the prospect of coming to work with us and picking up transferable skills to help them back into the workplace very attractive. That is the spectrum of work that we tend to be involved in.

Annie Wells: Does anyone else want to come in?

Pauline Smith (Development Trusts Association Scotland): I will come in.

Although we are not a strategic partner of community planning, we support development trusts across Scotland. We have 350-plus members. They face challenges with—a bit like what Mark described—employability and youth training. What we do is about supporting the most vulnerable people in their communities. Community anchors are there for the long term, and they need to overcome the challenges for all the people in their communities.

As you will know, one of the challenges is the number of assets that are being let go by local authorities. Community anchors and development trusts are very much at the forefront of asset transfer, so they are trying to find ways to save and run the assets in their communities. Community planning partnerships are aware that there are a lot of challenges for which they can provide support.

The Convener: Thanks for that, Pauline.

I believe that Valerie, then Caroline, would like to come in.

Valerie Arbuckle (Police Scotland): Hello. Police Scotland is really keen to tackle inequalities. One of the specific challenges that we see is how the existence of a criminal record exacerbates problems in respect of a person's ability to find work and so on. We, in Police Scotland, are doing everything that we can to tackle inequalities through diversion from prosecution and other alternatives in the community justice system. We are, as a community planning partner, very keen to develop local diversion strategies, so we work alongside the community justice partnerships, in particular, to try to effect that.

We also try to help to address poverty, which is a part of tackling inequalities that people might not think about in relation to Police Scotland. Through our divisional teams' community planning links, we have more opportunities to divert people to food banks and to help with fuel, food and other issues. Police Scotland does an awful lot—not only on its own, but as part of the wider community planning structure. Much of that is facilitated through our community planning partners.

Caroline Warburton (VisitScotland): Good morning, everybody.

VisitScotland is the national tourism organisation, so it is in a slightly different position, given that it is sector related. Our focus is on tourism and the visitor economy and how they can support communities. We, as one of the economic development agencies that are focused on the wellbeing economy, are led by "Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation". The impact of tourism on communities is very much part of what we are focused on.

We have seen, in recent years, the challenges that have been caused by Covid and the cost of living crisis. In the 2015 act, there is mention not only of communities but of communities of interest. From our perspective, much of our work is with communities of interest—for example, the business community and the tourism industry. Tourism touches every community in Scotland; there is no part of Scotland that is not affected, on some level, by the visitor economy. We feel that, as a statutory partner, we have justification for

being involved with the community planning partnerships.

The Convener: Thanks for that. Annie, do you have any more questions?

Annie Wells: I have one follow-up question. This subject was touched on in response to the last question. The 2015 act places a duty on CPPs to tackle socioeconomic inequalities. To what extent can CPPs help to prevent inequalities rather than deal with their consequences?

I will go first to Valerie, because she touched on the fact that Police Scotland directs people to food banks.

Valerie Arbuckle: The opportunity that we have to direct people to sources of help is increased by community planning. However, it can also be made more difficult by it, because we all have our own structures and objectives. Sometimes, we have to decide whether to do something on our own and, perhaps, more quickly, or to do it through community planning at a different pace. That pace might, however, be even quicker; it depends. It is all to do with the personality of the people involved and their ability to drive change.

There are definitely opportunities for us to tackle inequalities more at the grass-roots level with our front-line officers. One comment that is regularly made is that our officers are the eyes and ears of the community because we get into people's houses when they are in a crisis, so there is an awful lot that we can do to try to effect change—positive change—by referring people to other organisations that can provide help.

Stephen Wood (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service): To build on what Valerie said about the grass roots, although we are a national service, we are structured such that we reach into all communities. We have heard that there are differences among the partners in dealing with the issues that we face. We have been able to empower our staff at the local level. There is a real push to ensure that initiatives in the work that we do come from the grass roots. We have stations in all communities, and the crews are working really hard at the moment to listen to and to deal with local issues.

Some great work is going on that is worth noting. For example, we opened stations as warm spaces in the lead-up to Christmas. We badged it as "Brew with the crew". That has evolved. Now, we have "Coffee with the cops" and "Pepsi with the paramedics". It is about bringing partners and the community in. In some places, that works—there are good uptake and conversation. In other places, there are not those things. However, that demonstrates that there are differences across the country and that we need to take different approaches in order to tackle problems.

The Convener: That is great. I love that: "Pepsi with the paramedics".

Stephen Wood: I think that we are stretching it a wee bit, now.

The Convener: I know. [*Laughter.*]

Pauline Smith: Tackling social and economic disadvantage in communities has been done by communities for 40-odd years, and maybe longer. In order to be able to tackle disadvantage, the more money that goes directly to the communities the better. The more local funding there is, the more change can happen, the more direction can be taken by local people, and the more employment, training and so on can be created. Warm spaces were created within communities throughout the pandemic and those continue; people are adapting to whatever their local community needs are. I would say that help should be more local and more directed within the communities.

The Convener: Thank you very much for that.

The next theme is, fittingly, community empowerment, and will be led by Mark Griffin.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): I will put my question to Stephen and Valerie first. How is participation with communities affecting how your organisations work with community planning partnerships? Has that changed in the eight years since the 2015 act was passed, or are you just continuing as you were?

Stephen Wood: The SFRS has learned, as an organisation, to listen much more. Our role has expanded, as has our understanding of the contribution that we can make. Information comes to us from the grass--roots level. We have lots of staff embedded in the community, and we have the local crew: the on-call crew members are part of the community. There is definitely a route into us and through us within our internal structures into the planning partnerships.

There has been a general raising of awareness over the past eight years. Our prevention work in the past was always preceded by the word "Fire", but we now go far wider than that. We understand the causes of some of the issues that we face as a service, and we have been able to widen out what we do to tackle at source some of the issues. With partners, there is a shared understanding that a situation might conclude in there being a fire at some point, but the solution comes long before that point.

Our approach, as a national service, has matured and changed over the past eight years. The links with partners, through the community planning partnerships, have been greatly strengthened. I think that we have seen real change.

Mark Griffin: Has that been because of the reorganisation to a national fire service or explicitly because of the community empowerment legislation?

Stephen Wood: It has just been a natural evolution. There would have been pockets of such activity in the pre-national service. We have been able to harness that as a national service, and to put real national direction behind it and have cultural change in the service. I suppose that we have smoothed things out and established a real direction, as a service.

09:45

Mark McAteer: I will come in in support of that. I will use three words to describe what has happened: it has deepened, broadened and localised. That sums up our approach to the 2015 act. In the early days of the national service, post 2013, when we and Police Scotland were created, the first couple of years were very much about establishing the organisation, as you can imagine, because we were going through such a major transformation.

From that point onwards, it has been very much about how we have embedded ourselves further in community planning. There are 32 CPPs across the country, and we have certainly deepened our relationships with our partners. The work takes us into such a wide array of areas, as Stephen Wood has alluded to. It can include drug and alcohol partnerships, in which we are very much part of the work with and support for highly vulnerable people and people who are perhaps coming out of the prison system and into the community. We are one of the bodies that they will encounter, through our home fire safety visits, but those are really to touch base, to build relationships and to work with people. We have things like that, right through to victim support safety; for people who are victims of crime, we are part of the partnership that will look to support them.

Over the years, we have certainly deepened and broadened the range of partnerships but, at the same time, as Stephen Wood said, an important message from the corporate side has been that this is about localism and about how crews in an area work with their communities, so they can guide us as much as we guide them.

Localisation has probably been the most successful element of our internal approach. We allow people in local areas, within parameters, to work with the community and their partners in ways that work in their area. It is not about what things look like from headquarters' perspective; it is about what they look like in Wick or in Dumfries. Then, as Stephen Wood said, we build it up. That has been driven through the organisation: that local organic element of community planning very much encapsulates what we now do day to day.

Mark Griffin: Thanks.

Valerie, do you have any views on how participation with communities has changed since the 2015 act was introduced?

Valerie Arbuckle: The first thing to point out is that there is a kind of requirement or expectation that we consult the public regularly—all organisations, to a degree, probably have that. Police Scotland has the "Your police" survey, which has been running for several years and has gathered a lot of information from members of the public about what they think of the police service. We also have a customer satisfaction survey for people who have had contact with us as a single organisation. However, that extends into the community planning partnerships, which also seek to engage with members of the public to get information about how they are doing, so there is the potential risk of survey fatigue among the public if they are expected to regularly give a view.

I always think that it is not bad if somebody does not have a view about the police, because the majority of citizens in Scotland, I hope, do not need our service and are living peaceful and happy lives in their communities without any problems. However, for people who have issues, we obviously want to understand how they affect them.

There are examples of when we have used that to empower people. We regularly work with communities across Scotland. In one of the previous sessions, we spoke about the work that is happening in Wallacetown. I was one of the people from Police Scotland who was going out door to door in Wallacetown. We are also doing specific work in Wick to ask people from that community, which is described as "an island on the mainland", what they think of the service—not only our service, but the wider services that are available to them. We are doing work in Perth to understand the needs and wants of communities there, too.

An awful lot of the time, we find that we are a connecting organisation because of our staff being in the different areas. I suppose that the uniform sometimes helps: perhaps it encourages people to come together, because it is a police officer who is saying it. It is a suggestion: let us come together and talk. It really helps to bring together members from the other agencies, and that working together definitely helps to empower the communities. Members of the public then get the opportunity to be heard because, across all agencies, there is an impetus to encourage customer participation, if you will, to make sure that we are designing services properly.

The other thing to say is that, back in 2020-21, Police Scotland introduced its own design team, which follows Scottish design principles and tries to encourage participation and empowerment in how we create new services. A lot of the services that we create are not just for us but extend to other partners in community planning.

The Convener: Thanks, Valerie. It is really interesting to hear that Police Scotland has a design team. I love that.

Caroline Warburton: In 2003, VisitScotland was not a statutory community planning partner. We were brought in by the 2015 act, which changed quite significantly how we work with communities. As a result, we have been engaged, certainly at the initial stage, with all the community planning partnerships. We have been brought into the conversation about communities and about how our remit, roles and responsibilities can contribute to local outcomes.

I will give you a couple of examples. During Covid, there were a number of issues with visitor management. In places, too many people were visiting the countryside and certain towns and villages. Through our links with the community, we were able to be sensitive to how the tourism industry was responding to that. We were also able to give key messages and provide a partnership approach not only nationally but locally.

I will give a couple of examples of where we work directly through the community planning partnerships. In East Lothian, we are part of the connected economy group, which looked at recovery. Similarly, West Lothian community planning partnership had a short-life cost of living emergency working group, and, again, we were part of that conversation. We can therefore ensure that our work contributes in a small or a large way to tackling inequalities in communities.

Pauline Smith: I come at this from a slightly different angle, not being from a statutory community planning partner. I have lots of stories of development trusts or communities working with Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service over the years. We are talking about empowerment through community planning structures, but a lot of it sometimes happens directly with the police and fire brigades. We do not necessarily hear about it, or about how it happens in communities, through the community planning partnership structures. It sometimes happens organically through Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service being proactive. I could be wrong, though, as it could be coming through the community planning partnership structures.

From the community side, I would say yes—empowerment through community planning has improved. However, we have to acknowledge that the picture is different across Scotland. I am sure that you have heard that said many times. Different regions work in different ways.

We have heard from our members that more emphasis needs to be placed on having communities around the table. For instance, third sector interfaces are represented, but community anchors and other community organisations should be around the table as well. That is still a work in progress. Things have definitely moved on since the 2015 act, but there is still lots more to do.

The Convener: Do you have any more questions, Mark?

Mark Griffin: Yes, convener. I will put this question to Pauline Smith first. How do your membership organisations ensure that all voices are heard? I am thinking of particular communities of interest or identity across the spectrum. How do those sometimes minority groups get their voice heard at community planning partnership level? What are your membership organisations doing to facilitate that?

Pauline Smith: I suppose that any development trust is, at its heart, for the whole community. It is not just for a community of interest but for the full community, which means working with young people, elderly people, adults, people with disabilities and people with additional needs. They do that proactively through their community action plans. They actively engage the community at all levels of their work. It would be very rare to find a development trust or a community anchor organisation that provides just one type of service for whichever demographic in the community. They constantly engage the community, and that is why, from a community planning perspective, the voice of those community anchor organisations needs to be listened to. It is a very strong voice that speaks about what is at the heart of their community. From day to day, they engage with a wide section of the community.

Mark Griffin: How is Police Scotland engaging with particular minority communities of interest or identity to support them in getting their voices heard?

Valerie Arbuckle: Obviously, an awful lot of it is governed by legislation. One of the aspects that we see daily in relation to minority groups is hate crime. Tackling hate crime is very much to the fore in our organisation and feeds into an awful lot of things that we do, such as trying to make the reporting of it more accessible.

We take our insight into the problems that are affecting local communities to local community

planning partnerships. We see the issues in local communities and the problems that are experienced by seldom-heard voices, or, as I sometimes like to describe them, seldom-listened-to voices. That helps us to understand a bit more about what is happening on the ground in local areas. Our representatives on local community planning partnerships can take that information straight into those partnerships for discussion about what needs to be done to help them to live safe, happy and healthy lives in their communities.

Undoubtedly, we could do more. Our ability to engage in situations where there has not been a crime can be difficult, but we have local groups and teams across the country that are trying to encourage participation from a range of organisations, such as those who represent people with disabilities and those who represent minority groups, including new Scots who have come into the country. We have had an awful lot of involvement across the board from people who are not standard white Scottish and from people who have impairments. We definitely have a key role to play in hearing those voices and bringing them into community planning.

Mark Griffin: I will direct my final question to Caroline Warburton initially. You said that, sometimes, there is a conflict between the demand for tourism services and the impact on communities. What role does VisitScotland have in giving communities a voice in how services are designed? How do you manage the conflict between what communities want and what demand there is for tourism services, particularly when it comes to the impact on deprived or marginal communities? Tourism has a great economic impact in Scotland, but some communities feel the burden more than others. How do you manage that?

Caroline Warburton: That is a big topic, but I am happy to touch on it today. It is about balance, listening and collaboration.

Covid has probably changed the way in which we listen to communities. The market changed: previously, we were focused on bringing people into the country, which we are now looking to do again, but when people were not able to come into the country, the market was very much a local one, with local people out and about. We listened to visitors, but we also listened to the destination organisations that we work very closely with. Whether it was at a local authority level, destination level or local tourism association level, our network, which listened to what was happening on the ground, really came to the fore. During Covid, particular communities were struggling, so we made sure that we were listening, either by reaching out to them directly or through that network of associations and groups.

There were areas in which, arguably, there were, at times, too many visitors. We worked directly with those communities and switched our marketing off or on, depending on how that worked. With regard to less-visible communities and their access to tourism and the right to have a holiday, we have done a lot of work that looks at accessible and inclusive tourism. In particular, we had the ScotSpirit programme, which was providing short breaks to carers, low-income families and people with disabilities.

We recognise that we have a role to support everybody's right to have a break, and we do what we can, through projects such as ScotSpirit, to enable them to do so.

10:00

Mark Griffin: Does anyone else want to touch on how they are supporting marginalised or deprived communities? Mark, I know that you were doing that last week.

Mark McAteer: I will add a couple of things to build on the point that Pauline Smith made. Through community planning, we have built relationships with a wide range of partners. It is very much the case that, in working with them, you work with the front line, if you like. That is the community itself.

We are part of the fire enforcement in houses in multiple occupation, so we work with local authorities as they establish the licensing arrangements for an HMO. That allows us to work with the housing partners, and we pick up intelligence and use that to reshape what we do.

We also work with communities. For example, in Glasgow, working with HMOs, we come across new migrants to Scotland. We build relationships that are primarily around fire safety but also about making them feel welcome and included in the community. We use the intelligence that comes from those daily interactions with the community, or partners who work more closely with the community, to get that insight.

We have asked our local officers not only to shape their local plans around our strategic plan, which is a national plan for Scotland, but to shape them around the local outcomes improvement plan and the intelligence that they pick up through their day-to-day interactions. It is within their gift to use the resources in their area to make sure that they are hitting the right priorities for the community and that it does not just come from us sitting in headquarters in Cambuslang, where we have responsibilities for the strategic plan. That is the balance that we are trying to work out. As Stephen Wood said, you empower local staff to go and build the relationships and you use the insight from that to shape what they do on a day-to-day

basis, working directly with those communities. It is really powerful when you see it happen, and in our submission we have given you some examples in which you can see the effect that building those relationships has for us.

The Convener: That sounds like a great and dynamic process of discovering what is on the ground and then feeding that into your strategy.

I will move on to the next theme, which is the role of the third sector in communities, and that will be led by Paul McLennan.

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): Good morning, panellists. Last week, Dr Oliver Escobar of the University of Edinburgh mentioned the need for community anchor organisations to be included as community partners. He mentioned housing associations and development trusts. I will come to Pauline Smith first on this. To what extent is that happening across the country now, and what can be done to improve the situation in the future? I used to chair the community planning partnership when I was on East Lothian Council, and, at times, I used to bring in some of the development trusts.

Pauline Smith: The key point is that they just get invited now and again. What we would like to see, and what our development trusts are asking for, is that they get something out of it. It is different in different regions of Scotland. Some of our members have certainly got a bit fed up and said, "I am going round the table just to get told what has happened". I am not saying that that happens everywhere, but there is a feeling that, if it is going to be across the board, everyone should be there for a purpose and know what they are going to get out of it. People in community anchor organisations and development trusts are all very busy, as you will know, so it must not be piecemeal. There must be a seat and equal partnership at the table.

I mentioned TSIs before. A structure has been implemented, which, again, works better in some regions than in others. However, if we are going to be serious about it, we must recognise that community anchors have a lot to give around the table. Our membership would like to strongly say, "Bring us around the table; we want an equal say there and also on the ground", where it has worked really with thematic groups and so on for some of our members. The operational side of things works well as long as they have the power in their area rather than it still sitting up here. Decision-making powers should lie where they are, sitting round the table, meaning that those people know that they have a say in what happens in their local communities. It has improved in some areas, and it still has a way to go in other areas. I suppose that that will always be the way. Our membership would definitely welcome the chance to have more of a say at the table.

Paul McLennan: Does it come back to the top level of the community planning partnership board? The thematic groups are really important. I will come to Caroline Warburton in a wee second to ask about the connected economy group, because she mentioned East Lothian, which is my area. Does involvement need to be at the top level and thematic level, because that is just as important? You can have the strategy, but whether it is implemented is the key thing.

Pauline Smith: Absolutely. That is where the thematic groups—the operational ones on the ground—sit. More of that could be encouraged.

Paul McLennan: How do you find involvement when it comes to development trusts? Is it mixed?

Pauline Smith: It is mixed across the board. In some regions, they feel that they are listened to in the thematic groups. Other regions do not have thematic groups. It is not strategic, with LOIPs and local area plans rather than community place-based plans. There needs to be commonality across the board. Every community is different, so it is not an easy job; everyone realises that. It is about inviting development trusts that realise that it is difficult and want to be round the table to make it better, so that communities can improve where they go.

Paul McLennan: I come to Caroline Warburton. You mentioned the thematic group and, particularly in relation to Covid, the connected economy group. As a councillor, I was part of that group, and the approach worked. Is that approach used across the rest of Scotland, or, like Pauline Smith, do you find that it is mixed? I know that there needs to be variability in different parts of the country, but one of the key lessons for us is to pick up on what works and what could work and to share best practice. Across the rest of Scotland, what is your involvement in the thematic groups and at community planning board level?

Caroline Warburton: It is very mixed. There are some community planning partnerships that we are not particularly involved with, which is about the priorities and outcomes that they are striving for and the degree to which tourism and the visitor economy is seen as part of that. In East Lothian, during Covid, a number of subgroups from various CPPs looked at recovery, and tourism was part of that.

I will use Dundee as an example of our involvement on a more formal basis. In the Dundee partnership, which is the CPP for the city of Dundee, there is a work and economy subgroup, which is called a "board", and the Dundee tourism leadership group feeds into that. Our involvement is through the Dundee tourism leadership group, and a report that goes regularly

to the work and economy board feeds into the main board.

There are some partnerships with which we have little involvement; with others, we are a permanent part of subgroups; and there are other areas—Argyll and Bute, for example—where we work with the local destination organisation and provide an update twice a year. It goes back to what is relevant for the community: there is no one-size-fits-all approach, and we are there to respond to the degree to which the visitor economy and tourism can help to deliver local outcome impact plans.

Paul McLennan: Thank you. I will move on to the next question.

The Convener: Actually, Valerie Arbuckle wants to come in on this question.

Valerie Arbuckle: Not long ago, we had an event on mental health, and the most impactful speakers at it were from a third sector organisation, a housing association and a further education college. Sometimes, it is the organisations that might not necessarily pop to the front of your head as being the most appropriate to invite that have the most to give.

It is important that we open our ears to organisations that have a role to play in a community: the anchor organisations, as you say. The third sector interface teams are small, and we in Police Scotland know how much work is involved in community planning—the administration, the preparation and the involvement—so it is a huge ask of third sector interfaces to participate at the level that is required. They require more support, because the third sector that they represent is crucial to the work that needs to be done, particularly in the world of early prevention, given the inequalities that we see.

I cannot speak highly enough of the third sector, and it needs a place at the table to drive change. We must also listen to voices from other anchor organisations that are in the community planning structure. Whether that is at executive or thematic level is for local teams to decide, but the third sector—possibly another couple of organisations, as well—definitely needs to be involved at executive level. As I said, you do not understand what another organisation has to give through its involvement until you start to scratch the surface and understand a bit more about the role and responsibilities that it sees for itself in a particular subject matter.

Paul McLennan: I fully agree with the points that you have made. That takes me to my next question, which is about the role that CPPs should have in delivering community wealth-building aspirations—your answer touched on that. It seems as though those groups hold the local community together to a certain extent. You have kind of answered the question about what role CPPs should play in helping to deliver that, so it was a great lead-in.

I will ask Stephen Wood and Mark McAteer for their thoughts on that question. Mark, you touched on the kind of work that you do to embed the community wealth building that goes on. Can you build on that?

Mark McAteer: I will kick off and then hand over to Stephen.

In reflecting on the Covid period, I found that it came through quite strongly that resilient communities coped better with the impacts of Covid. There is not a real surprise in that. We saw that people and organisations stepped up in the more challenging communities, which might have been because many people were working at home through the pandemic and had time, capability and capacity to offer to communities. For organisations such as ours, it meant that there was a vast amount of resource to work with locally. It meant that we got intelligence about the most vulnerable people, and we could ensure that we were there as partners to support them by, for example, bringing them shopping and prescriptions—you name it. It gave us capacity and a reach into communities that we had perhaps struggled with before in some areas.

How to build and sustain that outwith the pandemic is a massive challenge, which goes back to Pauline Smith's point about anchor organisations in communities. If we can get community relationships through anchor organisations, we can build resilience and use it for other purposes—not just an emergency response to a pandemic but the day-to-day activities that empower a community—and that will help to address some of the other issues that we spoke about last week. It is an important agenda for us.

Whether those organisations should be at the CPP table and whether that should be at the thematic level is, as Valerie Arbuckle said, a matter for local decision making. I would certainly welcome them as a statutory partner, because they have something to offer that the rest of us struggle to have. Stephen is much closer to the local level than I am, but it is an incredibly powerful area to reflect and build on, given the experience that we had in the pandemic.

Paul McLennan: Does Stephen Wood or Pauline Smith have anything to add?

Stephen Wood: I agree whole-heartedly. The CPPs are an excellent forum and network. Our local practitioners do not see what badge people wear; it is about what you can bring—your

solutions and your ideas. I fully support the view that the more ideas that go into it, the better. The Covid period forced organisations to revisit a different set of challenges, and we can capture and build on that momentum. We demonstrated some really resilient communities through that period, and we should try to use that network. Continuing to build it in supporting those communities is key.

Pauline Smith: I absolutely agree about community wealth building during Covid. There are development trusts and anchor organisations that do community wealth building in communities across the country. Does it sit with the CPPs? An element of it probably does, because asset transfers sit within local authorities, usually under a community planning structure of some sort.

We have not mentioned the local governance review, but that definitely goes hand in hand with community wealth building, as do the CPP inquiry and reviews. It will be interesting to see what comes out of the review; I believe that it is back on agendas, which is great news. If the local governance review comes out with something that looks at each individual CPP, sees what the local areas and cities require and considers how local it needs to get or how local people want it to be, that will be really interesting. Ultimately, it is about whatever makes it better for communities and supports councillors and local authorities to do the job in the communities that are directly within their area.

10:15

There is a long journey to go in community wealth building to change the balance of power. That is where the local governance review will build trust in communities that they can make things happen and deliver on contracts in just the same way as services and organisations can. Communities can do it. However, there is still a question mark over whether it will sit under the community planning structure. The local governance review will be able to highlight where the areas are and where it sits.

Paul McLennan: That is a good point.

The Convener: Our next theme, which has already been mentioned a little, is LOIPs. Mark McAteer talked about the dynamic between the LOIPs. It is great that he raised that and talked about what is going on on the ground.

Valerie, how does your organisation align its priorities with those in the LOIPs and locality plans? You may have touched on this, too, but do you find that there might be a conflict with your organisational priorities? How would you work with that?

Valerie Arbuckle: Like the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Police Scotland tries its best to align its local policing plans, which emanate from the annual policing plan for the whole force, with the LOIPs. There are aspects of the annual and local policing plans that the community might not necessarily see as being relevant to them but which are still important: things in relation to radicalisation, counterterrorism et cetera. However, on the whole, we try to make sure that our local plans align with the LOIPs.

The only niggle is that, with all the plans coming to the same place, the main LOIP, having gathered too much information from too many people, can become a huge document, which is difficult. It becomes demoralising for members of the community planning partnership as they start to see that they will not necessarily be able to achieve all the aims and objectives in the period that has been set. We try to ensure that we align our targets, aims and objectives with the LOIP, but it is important that we do not put absolutely everything into it, because that would be unfair to the community planning partnership.

I listened to the contribution of Dr Escobar the other day. In some areas, a small group may be responsible for the community planning management of an organisation and, if we put too much in the plan, it can become overly burdensome. We have to be realistic about what we can achieve in the time that has been set. Sometimes that means that organisations such as ours should hold stuff that is specific to us as opposed to fitting it into the community planning LOIP.

The Convener: We have a few more minutes to discuss LOIPs. Does anyone else want to comment?

Pauline Smith: The regions work differently, but LOIPs work best where community action plans take a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down one. It is relevant to note that community action plans from community anchor and third sector organisations are not always the first step; sometimes, they are just joined in. That means that they are not at the head of the table or at the forefront of influencing. That could be improved on.

This may be more of a personal opinion and not that of our membership, but we talk about investment more than improvement. It is about investment in communities rather than always being about improvements. It is about long-term planning. It would be interesting to see some changes to the terminology in that regard.

Caroline Warburton: We all work with lots of plans and strategies, and understanding the interlinkages is often a challenge, particularly at

national organisations, where we work to strategic themes. Integrating those themes across the 32 community planning partnerships is a challenge.

As I said, we are linked to the national strategy for economic transformation and, within that, the national tourism strategy, which is "Scotland Outlook 2030: Responsible tourism for a sustainable future". The community is very much embedded in the national tourism strategy through two themes: "Our thriving places" and "Our passionate people".

Whether we look at it from the top down or from the bottom up, I hope that the linkages between the different plans and strategies can be made clear. We work at the local authority level largely through the destination strategies. For example, the Fife tourism and events strategy is led by the local authority, so it links into the LOIP. There may not be a direct route into it, but I make the point that clear links can be made between the tourism strategies that we deal with and the LOIPs.

As a national agency, we also work at a regional level through the regional economic partnerships. As they start to develop, we need to consider what the link is between LOIPs, community planning partnerships and the growing amount of regional activity that is happening. Are there things that can be dealt with at a regional level rather than at a community planning partnership level?

The Convener: It is interesting to hear your perspective on the cluttered landscape of plans and strategies and how we can get coherence across them, not just in relation to community planning partnerships, but across the field.

Our next theme is measuring impact. Marie McNair, who is joining us online, will lead on that.

Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): Good morning, panel. I direct my first question to Stephen Wood and Valerie Arbuckle. Last week, we heard how difficult it can be for CPPs to demonstrate impact. Given your role as statutory bodies, how do you think that CPPs can measure the impact of activities and make connections between local activity and broad outcomes?

Stephen Wood: I will go first, if that is okay with Valerie.

It is a difficult question. Given that a lot of the work that we are talking about is preventative work, how can we measure the things that have not happened as a result of that work? I will give a couple of examples.

Recently, we carried out an initiative in Aberdeen that related to the number of secondary fires. There was clear ownership of that: it sat with us and it was measurable. We have done a significant piece of work with Police Scotland,

rangers, schools and local media, and over a period we have driven down the number of fires. We have proved that success, but we cannot measure the impact that that has had on the local community and on services. People were habitually taking wheelie bins away and setting fire to them in the local wildlife reserves. That impacts on quality of life and on wildlife. There are a number of aspects that we cannot measure, but in that example there was something that we could.

Another example is safe spaces around violence against women. The stations are open and available and we can connect to different organisations, but how do we measure how that is impacting on the community? The stations are available, but we do not have a specific number that we can put against that.

We have employability schemes across the country, whether they are for offenders or for school-age children through our youth volunteers. Those schemes are all about preparing people to go into the workplace or on to positive destinations. We can see the outcomes over a lengthy period of time, but it is very difficult to measure how much of that impact is a result of the work that we do.

We have a number of tools that we use to evaluate initiatives. In the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, we have an initiative library whereby an area will produce an evaluation and we will share it across the areas and improve as we go. Likewise, the Scottish Community Safety Network has a case study library that we and other organisations feed into. The production of those case studies and evaluations is quite time consuming. Some areas are much better at it than others, but that does not mean that those other areas are not producing the work or the results.

We need to co-ordinate that evaluation work and have a simple method to demonstrate outcomes and understand them better. As an organisation, we have historically been quite poor at doing that. We state that we are going to drive down a certain type of incident, but I am not sure that we want to take that approach. It is more about building capacity in the community and informing and educating people. Our aim should be to give people tools, skills and knowledge, rather than to look only at the measurable bits.

I hope that that answers some of your question. I have probably just clouded the situation slightly more.

Marie McNair: No. Thank you for that.

Mark, as you were here last week, do you want to add anything before we hear from Valerie Arbuckle?

Mark McAteer: I wear two hats. Last week, I was here as a representative of the Community Planning Improvement Board.

Stephen Wood touched on something important, which is how we collate and build information on impact. Not everything can be done on a quantitative basis, but a good case study will sometimes give us more insight, value and understanding than anything else. Through case studies, we can also tease out some of the issues around replicability. How can we take the learning and apply it somewhere else in a way that will work in a specific community? It is important to make sure that intelligence on that flows between the partnerships.

The CPIB has a role in that regard, but the SFRS is also involved, as Stephen Wood said, in collating and gathering that information. The SFRS published a national overview report for the first time last year and we will replicate it this year. The report covers the breadth and depth of what we are involved in and you will find in it some of the detail that sits beneath all of that.

The best approach is to begin to show the impact of what we are doing rather than necessarily to measure the impact. As we said last week, it will be decades before we truly know whether some of what we are doing has had an impact, but the case studies at least give us the ability to say, "This is the impact that we can show now." Even if that is qualitative rather than quantitative information, it can be powerful. Dr Oliver Escobar said something similar last week. We need more of that, but the important thing is that we share it and learn from it, rather than it just being an interesting story.

Marie McNair: Absolutely.

Valerie Arbuckle: Prevention takes time, trust and money. When I mention trust, I mean trust that something is happening in the background. Police Scotland has an internal saying, which is "We cannot arrest ourselves out of this." That refers to the sticking plaster effect when it comes to doing something that will make a change. It is really important that we take a longer-term view of some problems. As part of a public health approach to policing, we are encouraging our officers to think of the causes of the action as opposed to the obvious answer to the question, "Why are we here?". For example, we may be somewhere because someone has stolen something, but why did they do that? What is going on behind the scenes that caused that criminality to happen?

We use a lot of data and we are very data driven. We use not only our own data, but data from the Scottish Public Health Observatory and community planning data from the Improvement Service to provide that extra insight. However, one issue is that the data might be gathered over three, five or 10 years. Because of that, it is more difficult to understand what we are doing and the effect that it is having.

Over the past couple of years, we have developed an opportunity to share potential suicide data. We are not specifically saying that a person has taken their own life, but we have started to share that more quickly with public health colleagues in order that we can try to understand what is happening. It is not statistics; it is management information, but it is giving us a bit more in real time about what the effect is. It helps us and it helps them to look at cause and effect.

10:30

When we do a small test of change in an area, we may have to try and fail a couple of times before we hit the nail on the head with a project that we want to deliver and which will make a difference. Those small tests of change can be done only by getting dynamic information from other data sources. At the end of this year—2023, 10 years down the line—we will see a single crime system across Scotland. It has taken us a long time to get single systems. It will be just one such system—we still have more to do—but we will have a single system for crime. That will add to the single systems that we have for command and control, vulnerable persons et cetera. We are continually developing that, but it takes time and money.

When we look at what is available across the 32 local authorities, we see that they are all on different platforms and they all record slightly different information. That makes it more difficult to compare what works in different areas. The information is not as accessible as it could be in order to help to influence decision making for other organisations.

We have to be data driven, but I totally agree with Mark McAteer's point about the importance of qualitative information from members of the public. Are they seeing a difference? Are they feeling a difference? That is important, but I think that we can sometimes be too quick to go back and ask that question. Sometimes we have to do it on a more regular basis, and that takes us back to the question of whether we are engaging enough with our communities. We need to make sure that we are engaged continually and purposefully to ensure that we get the answers that we need to mould the services that we need.

Marie McNair: That takes me neatly on to my next question, which has obviously been covered a bit, on data sharing. To what extent has data sharing between partners improved since 2015?

What more can be done to ensure that various bodies use local data to target interventions? I put those questions to Police Scotland first.

Valerie Arbuckle: A lot of data sharing goes on. An awful lot of organisations come to us and say, "Could you not share more information and data?" Part of the problem has been that, until more recently, we have been unable to have single data sources, with single data rules, across the whole force. Similarly, that single data rule, which affects access to a single platform that can be used for research, becomes a problem when we look at other data sources.

Various sources are available, and Police Scotland is actively engaging with the Scottish Government and other organisations on which platform to put our data on in order to share it. It is complicated, however, and we need to consider security issues and so on. What information should we share? How much should we share? What does it do? There is a level of ethics behind the work, and we are learning from organisations such as the national health service and Public Health Scotland.

There are definitely things that we can do to provide more information. Organisations tell us all the time that it is really important that they have our information. We are very willing to provide it but, at the same time, we need information from them, too. Single data sets and single platforms are the barrier. There is not a lack of will, but the technical and hardware aspects will possibly cause us a problem.

Marie McNair: What improvements, if any, have you seen since 2015?

Valerie Arbuckle: There have been improvements, because we are now aware of data that we were not aware of previously. We work closely with the Improvement Service and Public Health Scotland, so we get to see that information. Before that, we were in a bit of a Police Scotland bubble; now, we look outwards. Through discussions with CPPs and other groups, we are able to say, "Do you know that we've got that information? We have that data." That is much more helpful, but it is about whether there is more out there, and I am positive that there is.

Marie McNair: Absolutely. I will pop that question to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Mark McAteer: I will touch on those issues briefly. I agree with a lot of what we have just heard. Data sharing has got better over the years. In a lot of ways, the general data protection regulation has helped us to clarify when it is appropriate to share data and how to do that in a safe fashion. Without going down the rabbit hole of GDPR, I think that it has helped.

The key issue relates not so much to data sharing but to the insight and intelligence that comes from the data and how we share that with one another. Sharing data just for the sake of it does not get you anywhere. It is about what the data tells me and how I use that data within my organisation so that initiatives are targeted and we get close to the right communities and households in order to safeguard them and keep them safe.

With regard to partnerships, there is more that we can do to pick out data from across all our data sets and to ask what it tells us. What is giving us an issue across our community? What, therefore, can we do to intervene in a way that is meaningful to that community? We need to do more of that, rather than just sharing raw data.

In that regard, the partnerships that we have are critical, and not just those across statutory bodies. For example, through our relationships with universities, we can use their skill and insight, and work with the research community, to help us to mine data and use it in a much more productive fashion, rather than just having data and sharing it but not actually doing much with it thereafter. Across the partnerships, I am keen to see further development in relation to our use of data and the insight and intelligence from it.

The Convener: I will have to wind up this discussion and move on, as we are scooting quite far past our time for this session.

Marie McNair: No problem.

The Convener: I will ask some questions about the culture of public bodies. I will combine two questions, in the interests of time. With your experience of working across all CPPs, what, in your view, makes for successful community planning? Has the 2015 act led to shared budgets and a sense of collective responsibility?

Mark McAteer: A number of things make for successful community planning. As we discussed last week—I am sure that you have heard this from others—relationships matter. Even though there are changes in personnel across organisations over the years, community planning has allowed organisations to interact much more. That tends to result in an understanding building up that other people can contribute to the resolution of our problems—Stephen Wood gave some good examples of that from a fire service perspective—and, in return, we can contribute to other organisations' priorities. Relationships really matter.

It is important to have clear priorities for an area, and those should be shared priorities and we should understand why they are priorities. In the light of the Covid experience, I have seen a real sharpening of the LOIPs. There is greater clarity on what the local priorities are, which is helpful.

Does that lead to the sharing of budgets? Not really but, as we touched on last week, what is important is not the sharing of budgets but what is done with those budgets.

Invariably, across all public bodies, budgets are about employing people and ensuring that people are tasked, in the right way, with working with a local community and partners to do what is necessary to address the issues that the community faces. Certainly from a national perspective, my experience is that that is happening more since the 2015 act came into force. We routinely share more resources.

Some good examples of joining up resources have been cited today. A really good example relates to Wallacetown in South Ayrshire, where we have come together to share resources across the community in ways that we perhaps would not have done without community planning. That is probably more important than the budget side of things. Budgets are controlled through a variety of means that are nothing to do with community planning. You can share a resource across public bodies in a way that you cannot share a budget.

The Convener: That makes sense. How is it going in Police Scotland?

Valerie Arbuckle: As Mark McAteer said, one of the things that creates a successful community planning partnership is having clear priorities. That comes through from all our regions of Scotland that participate in community planning.

Another issue relates to having partnerships in practice, not just in name. We have an awful lot of partnerships. We have community planning partnerships, community justice partnerships and health and social care partnerships—we have partnerships coming out of our ears. The question is whether we have the shared ambition and shared responsibility to require a partnership and whether we have the relationships.

With the Improvement Service, we participated in the collective leadership for Scotland programme. We trialled that in three areas of Scotland. It proved to be successful, but people then moved on, so relationships were broken. There needs to be consistency in relationships, because it is relationships that make a partnership not just an okay partnership but a really good one. It is important to understand colleagues' drivers and inhibitors in relation to progress and what is holding them back.

In relation to clarity, it is about streamlining. Some people who are involved in partnerships are not necessarily able to give it their all, because there are so many meetings within those structures. Some streamlining within community planning partnerships is definitely necessary to make them successful.

In relation to shared budgets, as Mark McAteer said, it can sometimes be frustrating that we cannot provide budgetary input, but we always provide resources when we can. That might involve providing a design team with access to our resources—not only physical resources such as officers but premises and so on. We do whatever we can to encourage sharing, without necessarily providing budget.

The Convener: Pauline Smith, can you give the community perspective?

Pauline Smith: I agree with the majority of what was said by Valerie Arbuckle and Mark McAteer. There should definitely be clear priorities, but they always have to be reviewed. The needs of communities continually change, and they are sometimes not reviewed often enough. For example, LOIPs might stay as they are for a period of time. Generally, there need to be regular reviews with communities, in the same way as with community action plans.

With relationships, there has to be respect and trust. That goes back to the point that I made about getting community anchors round the table and people having an equal say. I will not repeat myself, but there needs to be respect and trust among all the partners to make sure that public bodies and communities respect and trust one another.

The Convener: Thanks very much.

Our final theme, which is local leadership, will be led by Willie Coffey.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): Hello, everybody. I want to round off this session by talking a bit more about leadership and its value, what it actually is and what it looks like locally. At a recent evidence session, somebody said that it is hard to describe an elephant but you know one when you see one. Is good leadership like that?

I have been picking up from you all, as the conversation has developed, that there are examples of good leadership. Valerie, you talked about it being to do with personalities and people's ability to drive things forward. I invite a few comments, from each of you, to describe what you see as being the key ingredients in the leadership of a CPP to drive it forward. I will start with Pauline.

Pauline Smith: It is about trust and respect, is it not? There is not one type of leader in any community; every community is different, so the leaders are different. They have to be open to lots of people's views, to be able to listen and then to put that into practice.

The leadership roles also come in different forms. I talk about community anchors and

development trusts, but, in those areas, there are third sector organisations, such as housing associations, that all take slightly different approaches and have different leadership roles in the community.

It is about respect and trust, listening to people and being able to adapt. Sometimes, it is about letting go of control. It is not always about the control that councillors have or that government has; local people have a lot of control there. As I think I said earlier, working together makes everyone's job better, does it not? It improves the community if you let go of a bit of control, power or whatever you want to call it. It is very much about inclusiveness across the board.

10:45

Willie Coffey: Thanks for that. Do Stephen or Mark want to comment?

Stephen Wood: Pauline summed it up well. It is worth noting that the work of the partnerships has been challenging over the past few years because of Covid. You had to attend meetings that were entirely online with people whom you had never met. It was quite a challenging environment in which to build a team and to have that leadership. We did it quite well, so I have a lot of hope.

We are starting to get back round the table. We have been through something, but we are now in a position to push on. We will see that trust develop. The sharing of power locally is part of the culture now, and we will see that happen. We did it, and we are now in a position to advance. That is my take on it from my experience in my organisation of the partnerships.

Willie Coffey: Thank you. I will hop to Valerie and then Caroline.

Valerie Arbuckle: I go back to my previous point: a good leader facilitates as opposed to instructs and directs. They facilitate the conversation, keeping it on track and focused. The ability to ensure that the community planning partnership has a clear focus is the most important aspect.

The saying that I always use is: "You can't eat an elephant, so don't even try to". That is an important aspect of what we are trying to do here. An awful lot of work could be done in a community planning partnership, but you have to become more focused on what you can do in three, five or seven years—whatever the target is.

What about are aspirations? Aspirations are one thing, but it is also about what we will achieve with our partners in a short time and whether we have everybody signed up. The leadership must facilitate that and have some of those off-table conversations. The leadership must build trust and

relationships, as well as connect people across organisations to facilitate that better conversation.

Caroline Warburton: I agree with all the points that the other witnesses have made. For me, it is about having the skill to bring people together and to maintain the focus on the priorities so that the CPP is seen as being effective and, arguably, is effective.

CPPs need to recognise that a degree of agility is required. They need to understand that other agendas might come in and they must have a broad scope if they are to understand all the organisations' positions and to facilitate those so that everyone feels that they are contributing.

Finally, there is a huge difference among the organisations that sit around CPPs, from national organisations to small community groups. The skill of local leadership is in ensuring that everyone feels as though they have a part to play in the CPP, whether it is at a small level or at a significant level. For me, the essence of whether a CPP is succeeding is whether it is able to involve everybody, no matter what they bring to the table. That is quite a challenge. As we have, I hope, demonstrated, some CPPs are delivering on that.

Willie Coffey: Thank you. I will ask one final question.

Again, I think that I have picked this up from your comments, but I want to ask whether you agree that we are seeing more shared leadership in the community planning partnerships than was perhaps the case when they began a long time ago and that that was very much driven by local authorities. Are you seeing a broadening and widening of leadership roles? I will give Mark McAteer an opportunity to come in.

Mark McAteer: Yes, I am seeing that. I am old enough and long enough in the tooth to remember when community planning first came in 20 or so years ago and facilitated discussions across some CPPs. It was evident then that, for the first time, some of those organisations were coming together. People, never mind the organisations, did not know one another. Individuals did not know one another.

There are exceptions. We have heard about some bodies perhaps not being as fully represented in community planning as they might be. However, I cannot envisage the scenario of 20 years ago happening now. Local organisations talk almost daily. People know individuals. I can pick up the phone and speak to Pauline, because I have seen her at meetings and discussed issues with her. That building of relationships over the past 20 years has been one of the key strengths that have come out of community planning, whether intentionally or just by circumstance. You can take your pick. That has given us a platform,

and you therefore get that built and shared understanding of local priorities across the leadership in communities. That is invaluable to making community planning work.

That is something that we should have a look at and learn from. How do we maintain that quality of relationship at a local level and ensure that those organisations are talking not just about the business stuff but outwith that and building the quality of relationships? That is what really drives things.

Willie Coffey: Would that be your broad experience as well, Pauline?

Pauline Smith: Yes. The situation definitely has improved. I feel like a broken record saying that different regions do it in different ways. There are definitely pockets of the country that perhaps do not do it as well and could improve. A standard tool for community planning or something like it might be needed so that there is learning going on across the country about the ones that are doing it really well and that are involved in the communities.

I never want to take away from any communities, and I am not going to name names, but we should learn from one another. Communities learn from one another all the time through social community planning partnerships and from what works well in other areas.

In general, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 has definitely made a difference, with communities being taken more seriously. There is still a way to go, however, because there is more and more that communities want to do for themselves, and local leadership in those communities is, quite rightly, being encouraged and supported in that by the Scottish Government through the 2015 act and through other things, which will include the proposed community wealth building bill.

There is lots more to do, but, in general, the situation has moved forward. We just need to keep talking about what else needs to be done.

Willie Coffey: Perhaps I can get last comments from Valerie and Caroline just to wind this up.

Valerie Arbuckle: We have seen senior Police Scotland officers chair community planning partnerships across Scotland: not often but regularly enough. We have 13 divisions, and there are 32 local authorities, so that is 32 community planning partnerships. Trying to spread that with equity across the board is difficult for any single organisation, particularly a national organisation.

The other thing to say is that it is not only about the chairmanship of the community planning partnerships but about their administration. The administration can be and will be difficult. We have

just heard what a good leader is, and being able to do that as well as your day job is a big ask of anybody on the executive team. It is a big commitment, and one that must be shared. There is no easy way in which to do it, but we always try. There is not one organisation involved in community planning that would shirk that responsibility unless really pushed because of other demands.

Caroline Warburton: I agree. I was going to make the point that Valerie made about the administration of community planning partnerships, which, in the main, continues to fall to local authorities. Providing that important continuity is an essential role that they play. Being able to rotate the chair would help, and sharing the load a little has been my experience with the Angus community planning partnership.

It has been a success bringing together what was potentially a disparate group of organisations over the past 20 years—more recently for us—and it has been a really useful exercise. We have more understanding of what we are doing as different organisations and how we can work collectively. There is also a better understanding of what communities want and need. If we can do that more efficiently and effectively, that has to be a good thing.

Willie Coffey: There is a little bit more time than I thought, and the convener is allowing me to ask another question. This one is probably more for police and fire colleagues. The Improvement Service has a checklist for community planning that includes understanding issues about governance and duties to facilitate community planning and so on, and you have to take reasonable steps to make sure that that happens carefully and properly. How do you make sure that you comply with such a requirement?

Mark McAteer: Stephen can perhaps add to my response. We are represented on the CPP board across each of the 32 areas. We will also be active across a range of partnerships that sit under the CPP itself. We make sure at national level that those arrangements are in place, and, through the planning arrangements, we make sure that the LSO—the local senior officer—for an area has the ability to adapt the local plan to suit local needs. That is very much the approach that we take.

Stephen can speak more from his experience of being at the sharp end of all this, but that has been a very important message for us. Our strapline is that we are a national service that is delivered locally, but you can only do the local part if you are embedded through the CPP, with your partners, in the community itself, and that is very much part of the DNA of the organisation.

Do you want to add to that, Stephen?

Stephen Wood: Valerie touched on the difficulty for a national service. We are structured in such a way that we have 14 local senior officers trying to service 32 CPPs, but we have local commanders in each area that are responsible for that. As Mark said, it is about us delegating power and very much listening to and learning from what we hear on the ground, then supporting that as a national body.

Willie Coffey: Valerie, how does Police Scotland ensure that it meets the requirements that were just outlined?

Valerie Arbuckle: The Improvement Service provides an awful lot of information to prospective members of community planning partnerships. It is important that we try to adhere to that. However, the situation is that we have people attending not necessarily at the executive team but possibly in the thematic groups. That might be delegated and potentially even delegated again because of the volume of meetings that our officers have to attend, particularly our senior officers.

As I said, a community planning partnership is just one partnership, but, of that partnership, there are many others of equal importance such as those concerning community justice, community safety and children's panels. A huge amount of other work is involved.

Our preparation for officers who are moving into community planning could be better. However, it tends to be the case that they have all had an opportunity to dip their toes in the water as they have been promoted through the ranks, because they will have been involved in locality groups and thematic groups all the way up to the executive group.

Willie Coffey: Okay. Thank you very much for those contributions.

The Convener: I want to direct another question to Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. Section 16 of the 2015 act places a duty on the Scottish Government to promote community planning. We are interested to hear to what extent that happens in, for example, ministerial letters of guidance, budget decisions or national strategies. Do you have a sense of that? I will go to Mark, and then to Valerie.

Mark McAteer: As a national service, we have to operate against "Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2022", which is essentially the Scottish Government's priorities for the service. In the national framework, there is a clear direction to us about the importance of partnership working, particularly through community planning but, as we heard from Police Scotland, not exclusively so.

The importance of partnerships is very much part of that message and that priority setting from

the Government. In turn, that is reflected in our strategic plan. We have set a priority and an outcome around that so that we can meet the national ask, and that then tiers its way down through the planning frameworks of the organisation. Culturally, it is very much about how you empower people to act within that framework.

Part of the Government's ambition for the fire service is for it to be that active partner in community planning, which adds to community safety and therefore helps us to achieve the outcomes that we have set out to achieve. We are very much in partnership—no pun intended—with the Government on that; it is a strong message.

The Convener: It is heartening to hear that there is a framework that puts that partnership work right at the centre.

Valerie Arbuckle: Section 32 of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 requires us to work in partnership and to work on prevention, so, yes, that is very much part of our organisation's culture. That is set out in legislation, but it is also our wish to work in partnership with other organisations. As I said, that aspect comes from the initial legislation that governs our actions and processes.

11:00

In relation to other aspects, we participate across the board. We have close links with a variety of departments in the Scottish Government. The only fly in the ointment is the fact that some of the issues that community planning partnerships deal with fall across so many different departments. It is not just the safer communities team or the safer communities directorate in the Scottish Government that deals with them. Community planning covers a wide range of things, including health, homelessness, income, enterprise and regeneration. An awful lot is involved in it. It is not just one department; it is about connectivity between Government departments. Connectivity helps to make community planning a bit more real.

The Convener: Thank you very much for that. That brings us to the end of the session. It has been interesting to hear from all of you the different experiences of community planning work and how embedded it is. Clearly, there is a bit of a direction of travel, and the challenge is how to get everybody round the table and not to have an overwhelming strategy plan, as I think somebody said, so that people feel that they can get the action on the ground. It seems to be a dynamic process, and it has been really good to hear from all of you today.

I now suspend the meeting to allow for a change of witnesses.

11:01

Meeting suspended.

11:05

On resuming—

The Convener: For our second panel, we are joined by Derek Shaw, director of innovation and place with Scottish Enterprise; Karen Jackson, director of strategy, partnership and engagement at South of Scotland Enterprise; Sharon McIntyre, head of career information, advice and guidance at Skills Development Scotland; Dave McCallum, head of operations south-east at Skills Development Scotland; and Eann Sinclair, area manager for Caithness and Sutherland at Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

I welcome our witnesses. As was mentioned to the first panel, we will try to direct our questions to a specific witness where possible but, if you would like to come in, please indicate that to the clerks by typing R in the chat function. Sharon and Dave, in the interests of time, if you could decide in the background who will answer, that would be great. Alternatively, maybe colleagues will direct a question to one of you, and that will, I hope, get a response.

We will start with the theme of challenges facing communities. Annie Wells, who is also online, will lead on that.

Annie Wells: Good morning. Scottish Enterprise's submission states that its customer base is the business community. How well are businesses engaging with CPPs, and what more can be done to ensure that small and large businesses can help to identify and meet local priorities? I will go to Derek Shaw first.

Derek Shaw (Scottish Enterprise): Scottish Enterprise is represented on 24 community partnerships as a statutory partner. You rightly commented that our experience is about the level to which economic development and job creation feature in the discussions around community planning partnerships. That extends to involvement with business organisations. There is a community of interest for businesses to play a greater role in community planning partnerships and ensure that we are focused on the discussions that we have on the CPP boards about job creation in local communities and how that dovetails with the plans of CPPs.

Annie Wells: Does anyone else want to come in? The question was probably more specifically for Derek.

Karen Jackson (South of Scotland Enterprise): At South of Scotland Enterprise, we have a slightly easier job than Scottish Enterprise, because we engage with two CPPs. That

economic focus is really important. I think that you will hear quite a lot from SE, HIE and us about regional economic development. The CPP in the Borders, in particular, has agreed that the regional economic partnership should take on that area of economic development. We have business members on the regional economic partnership, so that voice comes through in that way. The situation is slightly different in Dumfries and Galloway, where there is an economic forum that picks up that business voice.

As Derek Shaw highlighted, it is important that we ensure that we hear directly from business. We and Highlands and Islands Enterprise carry out a regular business survey to take the pulse of businesses in our areas. Again, we can feed in a good understanding of what businesses want and need and the challenges that they face.

Eann Sinclair (Highlands and Islands Enterprise): Good morning. I will build on what Karen Jackson just said. We have begun to gather quite a bit of data on how we interact with businesses on community planning. We have also managed, over the past 12 months, to do a "My life in the Highlands and Islands" survey, which has encompassed businesses and communities. One thing that I noted from our Covid experience has been just how much broader and deeper that engagement has become, both between us and businesses and between businesses and the community sectors. That has been a really interesting process to observe, and that is an on-going process that we will learn more from.

Annie Wells: My next question builds on that. What role do the enterprise agencies and Skills Development Scotland have in promoting fair work at a local level? Do you have examples of where the agencies have influenced CPPs or LOIPs? I will go to either Sharon McIntyre or Dave McCallum on that one first.

Dave McCallum (Skills Development Scotland): We try to influence that, and it is becoming a topic of significant importance. We influence young people from schools. Our career advisers talk about fair work from when they are at an early age in broad general education from secondary 1 to S3 and right through the senior phase. When we talk about employability and the opportunities that are out there, we bring up fair working. We talk about fair work not just with the young people whom we support but with our adult customers.

Has it been embedded in the LOIPs? It is being spoken about more now, and I definitely think that we will start to see it more in the LOIPs as we move forward. I have not seen it specifically in the CPPs that I have supported so far.

The Convener: Does anyone else want to come in on that question?

Derek Shaw: At the macro level, Scottish Enterprise was an early adopter of fair work first, requiring businesses that receive our support to commit to fair work principles, including paying the living wage, and to implementing the fairer Scotland duty, which asks listed public sector authorities and agencies, including Scottish Enterprise, to do more to tackle the inequalities caused by socioeconomic disadvantage. That is part of our wider economic impact assessment, which is a way for us to check policies and projects that we are supporting and to assess how they are impacting targeted groups.

At the CPP level, colleagues from Scottish Enterprise regularly raise the importance of fair work in the context of discussions on economic development and job creation. Going back to the earlier point, some of those conversations can be limited overall just by the wide-ranging remit of CPPs.

Eann Sinclair: I was going to say something similar to what Derek Shaw said. We, too, were an early adopter of fair work, and it is a condition of all our assistance. That has been met positively, I have to say, by our businesses and social enterprises. It has also helped us in our participation in programmes such as developing the young workforce. That shows that we are walking it like we talk it.

11:15

Karen Jackson: I just want to reinforce what colleagues in Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise said. Fair work is central to everything that we do. We are the newest of Scotland's economic development agencies, and fair work is embedded in the South of Scotland Enterprise Act 2019, so we live and breathe it. We have something that our act describes as a workers' interests committee. That committee helps us to understand what is impacting on workers across the region, and we can take that intelligence into the conversations that we have. As colleagues have highlighted, fair work is conditional on the support that we give to businesses and community organisations, and that conditionality is being strengthened.

Annie Wells: Thank you.

The Convener: Our second theme of the morning is community empowerment. Mark Griffin will lead on that.

Mark Griffin: How is community participation influencing how your organisation operates? Has that changed in the eight years since the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 was passed?

Sharon McIntyre (Skills Development Scotland): I represent the careers information, advice and guidance directorate of Skills Development Scotland. However, SDS as a whole is a key partner across 32 CPPs, and we play an active role in supporting at executive level on themes, and through themed groups around tackling inequalities. As an agency, we have always had a deep commitment to our communities. CIAG is an all-age service so, as well as providing our services in schools, as Dave McCallum mentioned, we work with adults. We have always had a focus on supporting our communities' needs and on understanding them by our local presence. CPPs give us an opportunity not only to work with partners in our communities' interest but to represent them. We are in touch with customers—adults, young people and children—every day, so we feel connected to them in their communities.

For the past two years, we have been working on a new career services blueprint—you might have heard of our report "Careers by Design— Report of the Career Review Programme Board". That work is about how we enhance our community presence. One of its key recommendations is about working with partners across the careers and skills ecosystem to do much more community delivery and engagement. It is not just about delivery and engagement; it is about how we design services with our communities.

We are very aware of the areas that need a focus on supporting good outcomes. For the areas where we know that outcomes are not as good by comparison with other communities, we have a wealth of data in our customer service system— the data hub—from which we share information through CPPs. We bring local market intelligence but, through our direct engagement with customers, we also bring intelligence and data about what we see happening in communities.

Our new career review report was launched just last week. We are looking to bring a much closer focus on the skills and careers ecosystem and on how we deliver services for customers. A big part of that is putting lived experience at the heart of how we operate our services. That is something that we bring to CPPs as well: where is the community when we talk about the specific agendas of housing, poverty, skills and employability? We see ourselves as a driving force for the community, as well as in working with partners to deliver in relation to real community needs. Those needs have changed since Covid, but we are still seeing the same community

challenges, I would argue, that we saw 20 years ago in different shapes and forms.

The CIAG directorate has a clear poverty focus. When we look at how we deliver services, we see that some of the barriers that our customers face, now more than ever, are related to poverty. We are working with Morag Treanor, a well-known professor of children's studies. She is being a critical friend to SDS on what we are doing to tackle poverty as a national skills agency.

How do we bring that focus to community planning partnerships? In the past, it may not have been thought that a skills agency could play a direct role and have a direct impact on that agenda. We can see in the development of CPPs, since the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, an understanding of how important our role is to that agenda. That represents a move away from sector silos before CPPs, and certainly before the 2015 act, and it has allowed us to work across areas, agendas and priorities that affect our local community. Like other organisations, we are a national organisation, but we very much deliver locally and are connected to local partners. I hope that that answers your question.

Mark Griffin: Thanks, Sharon.

Derek, do you have anything to add from Scottish Enterprise's point of view?

Derek Shaw: Several years ago, Scottish Enterprise put in place a place team in response to a number of things, including the 2015 act—[*Inaudible.*] As part of that place team, we put in place partnership teams in each of the seven regions for which Scottish Enterprise has responsibility. Those partnership teams, and colleagues on them, work on the 24 CPP boards that I outlined at the start. There are about 15 colleagues in total from Scottish Enterprise attending or participating in CPP boards and subgroups, so that is not an insignificant SE resource.

Over the past 12 months in particular, we have tried to ensure that the resource that we deploy on CPPs is proportionate to the overall outcomes and is where we can add the most value. Guidance on the 2015 act states that the specific contributions should depend on the extent to which CPPs' local priorities reflect the roles and responsibilities of individual bodies, and that is the case with us. We have limited resource, both personnel and financial, so it is important that we prioritise that scarce resource to where it will have the greatest impact.

As Karen Jackson mentioned, often, and increasingly so, our focus is on working with regional partners through regional economic partnerships and strategies to develop approaches for how Scottish Enterprise can deliver activity to support those ambitions at a regional level while still working closely with CPPs through the resource that we put into them.

Mark Griffin: Thank you, Derek.

I will come to Karen Jackson and Eann Sinclair with my second question. How do you go about building capacity in more deprived areas and more marginalised rural areas? How do you build capacity in those communities to make sure that they can contribute effectively and have their voices heard on how services are delivered for them?

The Convener: Karen, would you like to respond?

Karen Jackson: Yes. I am sorry—I am having problems with my R button.

Listening to communities is essential for us. It is how our organisation has shaped itself as it has become established. Last year, our chair and chief executive did 23 events across the south of Scotland to listen to what communities wanted of us. The phrase "of the south and by the south" has been really important to us as we have developed our regional economic strategy. Similarly, listening has been really important. By the end of the process, we had heard from more than 2,000 people across the south through online surveys, one-to-one conversations and various workshops. We used different ways of gathering insight from communities.

The point that you highlighted about rural communities is key for us, as we work in a predominantly rural area. In SOSE, we have an enterprising communities team, which is out on the ground, working with communities across the south to build capacity and capability. It is involved in community asset transfers, from big to small. Langholm is one of our biggest ones, but in other areas there are smaller ones that require different kinds of support. Through that capacity and capability building, communities across the south are able to engage more effectively in community planning and in unleashing their ambitions.

Mark Griffin: Eann, do you have any insight to share?

Eann Sinclair: [*Inaudible.*] I am sorry—it took a while for the mute setting to go off.

I agree with what Karen Jackson said. The community capacity-building element to HIE's work has been there for a long time. At the moment, that involves rebuilding capacity. During Covid, a resilience and survival instinct kicked in for a lot of our communities and social enterprises. We are now in the rebuilding phase, having moved on from the resilience and survival phase. Speaking from my local perspective in the north of Scotland, we are investing in boots on the ground

to help with that process, because there is no substitute for that.

Mark Griffin: I had a final question, but Derek Shaw covered it in his answer.

The Convener: Dave McCallum would like to come in.

Dave McCallum: At SDS, our job—not just in relation to careers information, advice and guidance, but across skills—is to link people from local communities, especially those in some of the most deprived and rural areas. It is important to include the role of some of the sub-groups that feed into the CPPs and the intelligence that they bring. Along with our local employment partnerships, we and other agencies help to shape how that provision is deployed to support employment opportunities, empower the community and embed some community asset transfers.

Having boots on the ground helps, but it is necessary to have the flexibility to deploy those resources. That is the good thing about a national agency: we can deploy those resources flexibly and direct them to where the need is. That is challenging at times, but the key is to work collaboratively with partners. That means that, when SDS goes in, it is not alone: it is joined by other partners from the local employability partnerships, the third sector, the NHS, the fire service, the police service and others to support communities.

The Convener: We move on to our third theme, which is the role of the third sector and communities.

Paul McLennan: Good morning, panel. These questions are about your involvement with the third sector and how you involve it in decision making and community planning. Karen Jackson, you mainly deal with rural communities, and the same applies to Eann Sinclair. How do you engage with a rural community that is quite dispersed? How do you engage with the third sector in particular and take that engagement into your local community planning discussions?

Karen Jackson: We have really proactive relationships with the third sector interfaces, particularly in Dumfries and Galloway. We have regular conversations with Norma Austin Hart, the chief executive of Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway, to understand what the organisations that she represents are experiencing. As you say, that rural piece is really challenging. We need to be able to understand the challenges facing rural communities across the region, particularly during the cost of living crisis, which are different for rural areas, and the TSI and our other contacts help us to understand those.

11:30

The Borders is in a slightly different place. Its third sector organisations are now coming together in a TSI, so there are some changes there. Again, we have close relationships with them through our communities team and other conversations. Both TSIs are represented on our regional economic partnership, so they have seats around that table, and other third sector organisations and social enterprises are there as well.

The TSIs are key at regional level. In the west of the region, Norma Austin Hart has been doing a bit of analysis about how we see the TSI and how it is engaged—that ladder of engagement piece— to ensure that it is an equal partner and that its voice is heard. That theme of respect, equality and equality of representation came out in your previous session, particularly in what Pauline Smith said. The TSIs on both sides of our region are at the table, and their voices are heard.

Paul McLennan: Eann Sinclair, you are from another part of the country—the remote HIE area. What is your experience in that regard?

Eann Sinclair: Absolutely fundamental to any progress that we make in the CPPs is the presence of the third sector at the table, and in a meaningful way. Before Covid, we were already working collectively across the Highlands and Islands on that principle but, as I have said before, Covid brought the need for that starkly into relief. We saw how effectively the third sector stepped up when some CPP structures simply ceased because partners had other priorities.

To show how the third sector stepped up, I will speak briefly about my own area. I chair the Caithness community planning partnership, which is a sub-regional version of the Highland community planning partnership. During Covid, that was effectively co-chaired by me and the local TSI. It was the resilience effort that went in there that has formed the basis of the recovery plan that we are now coming out the other end of. Without that presence, and without those boots on the ground, that would not have been possible and we would not have been able to bring in communities of interest. We now have a phenomenally well-developed women's health organisation up here. It came through Covid and is up and running, delivering positive messages and visibility to conditions that were not talked about previously. All of that is happening within a community planning structure that is inclusive rather than exclusive.

Sharon McIntyre: I support Eann Sinclair's point. I was up in Orkney for the launch of the new employability hub, which depends on the third sector. The third sector partner is critical to how

that will serve the community with us and other statutory partners.

The third sector has a role deep in communities, and a focus on customers in that area, primarily, and on what more could be done. It is a significant voice on the need for customers and communities not to have to tell their story a number of times through having a joined-up and integrated approach. We have a duty to do that. The third sector is absolutely vital.

We in SDS do all that we can to promote our work with the third sector. We have a strategic agreement on developing the young workforce, but we have extended that to MCR Pathways, the Prince's Trust and YouthLink Scotland, because we cannot do what we do on our own. The value that they bring as partners is incredibly powerful, and we recognise that strategically as well as locally. Even in Glasgow, SDS is making some changes to its estate strategy. As you know, we have a centre in every city. We are looking at why employability hubs cannot be much more integrated and why we need separate premises; maybe they should not be too distant from one another.

The third sector is driving that focus with us, and given the tighter fiscal environment that we all face, we have a fantastic opportunity to get back to the 2015 act and to talk about how we are helping customers and communities to help themselves, and how they support the direction of services locally as well as nationally. For us, there is a massive focus on the third sector.

Paul McLennan: That point about shared services is a really important one to make.

Derek, from a Scottish Enterprise point of view, looking at the issue from a much broader national base, how do you involve the third sector?

Derek Shaw: I echo the points that Sharon McIntyre made. Having the input, knowledge, experience and locality of the third sector is absolutely critical. What is really interesting is that latter point about co-development and co-location, so that we bring together partners who know and understand the remits of each of their organisations and how we can work together to benefit the local community. In the current challenging fiscal environment, those opportunities are coming to the fore more. That includes the opportunity to work with the third sector. We encourage that and support its contribution to CPPs and the supports that it operates.

Paul McLennan: Thank you.

The Convener: We will move on to our next theme, which is LOIPs and locality plans. I have a couple of questions. The first one is around alignment, and the second one is around prevention. Your answers are great, and we really want to hear from you, but in the interests of time, I would be grateful if you could keep them as succinct as possible.

I will direct the first question to Derek Shaw, then to everybody else. We have heard that LOIPs are the foundation of community planning. I would be interested to hear how your organisation aligns your priorities with those in the LOIPs and the locality plans. At times, are there conflicts between those plans and your organisational priorities?

Derek Shaw: Thanks for that question. We, as partners, very much see the benefit of LOIPs in directly assessing and agreeing priority outcomes that can be taken forward for delivery and can bring together partners and local community groups that will have an important role in identifying priority outcomes.

For us, the key is in ensuring that the plans are stretching but achievable, and are not a long list of activities that, ultimately, partners are not able to deliver. We need to ensure that we are clear about Scottish Enterprise's strategic priorities and about where we can add value at the regional and local levels by including our roles and responsibilities as part of the process.

On an earlier point, I note that we also recognise that a lot of the outcomes and actions within LOIPs and CPPs more generally are outwith the remit of SE, but we are clear about where we can add value relative to our strategic priorities, and CPPs have been clear about how that relates to prioritised outcomes as they relate to LOIPs and how we can potentially support delivery of them.

Karen Jackson: SSE has a slightly broader remit, in that we cover economic, social and environmental development. That remit puts us across most elements of what community planning partnerships are working on. For us—you have heard this from other national agencies— "Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation" sets out what we do nationally. Regionally, we have our regional economic strategy, with a focus on creating a green, fair and flourishing south of Scotland. The community plans fit into that.

Somebody earlier described the situation as a cluttered landscape; perhaps, rather, it is a complex landscape, but we see alignment through the plans and how they join together. We do not see any conflict with the LOIPs and the local plans. We see ourselves contributing across the piece. There is a good fit with what we do as an organisation.

There is also a focus on place plans. Again, those are for slightly smaller geographical areas, and we are involved with local authorities in developing them. Some of that flows from our

Borderlands growth deal. There are lots of plans, but we see a link between them.

The Convener: It is great to hear that you are managing to pull that link through.

Eann, how is it going in the Highlands and Islands?

Eann Sinclair: I would echo most of Karen Jackson's thoughts. The only thing that I would add is that we are pretty much at the halfway point in the LOIP. In your previous evidence session somebody referred to the need to make sure that those are refreshed. With the Highland CPP, we are embarking on that process, and that will help us with Covid recovery.

In several areas of the Highlands and Islands, we have found locality plans to be less useful, because of the very small communities that we deal with, all of which tend to have expressed similar needs, pre-Covid and during Covid. So, we are increasingly looking at area plans, rather than locality plans, to encompass the fragile geographies that we deal with.

The Convener: Thanks for that, Eann. Just for a little bit of clarity, when you talk about area plans, what kind of geography are you covering?

Eann Sinclair: In the Highlands, it could be Lochaber, Sutherland or an area like that that is a more coherent geographic area.

The Convener: Great. That is helpful. Thanks very much.

Dave, do you want to come in?

Dave McCallum: SDS feeds into the LOIPs. We support evidence around participation measures and local labour market information, with a focus on areas where young people are maybe not transitioning to positive destinations. We work closely with partners to make sure that we identify those young people and give them the right support.

We also want to look at areas where there is more adult unemployment. We will focus on those areas and deploy our services to support them. That feeds back into our strategic plan, as well. That is the link to our statutory responsibility to support all ages in Scotland.

The Convener: Thanks very much for that.

We will move on to prevention. I am interested in hearing from Karen Jackson first. To what extent has your organisation taken a more preventative approach since the 2015 act was passed? What role have LOIPs and community planning had in your organisation's consideration of prevention?

Karen Jackson: When it comes to prevention, SSE is about creating opportunities, if that is the same kind of area of focus. As an enterprise and development agency, we work with businesses and community organisations to help to realise their ambitions. We see creating opportunity as being key. Our funding and the direct work that we do with one-to-one support in helping communities to develop capacity and expertise helps us to prevent problems downstream.

SSE will celebrate our third birthday at the beginning of April. We are proud of our record in the south of Scotland. We have worked with businesses to safeguard jobs and to create jobs. About 2,200 jobs were safeguarded last year, and more than 800 jobs were created in businesses. There was similar support in community groups, where about 150 jobs were safeguarded and 80 new jobs created. For us, it is about creating opportunities so that people have decent, good employment and can unlock their ambitions as they move forward.

11:45

The Convener: That is great work on safeguarding all those jobs, which is critical for your part of the country.

How is the preventative approach going in the Highlands and Islands?

Eann Sinclair: I have been taking a similar approach to that of Karen Jackson in relation to our ability to unlock opportunities and to help people to unlock opportunities. I mentioned that we have geographic and demographic communities of interest in the Highlands and Islands.

When it comes to prevention, there are a lot of food banks, which are hugely important at the moment. We are lucky, however, that we also have in our area social enterprises that are talking about community growing projects. I regard those as preventative projects.

We have lots of examples, which you can see if you look beneath the surface of some of the investments that we make. That is as much the case in social enterprises as it is in business development, and it is good to see it in both.

The Convener: I am strongly supportive of community growing, so it is great to hear that that is happening.

Dave McCallum: On prevention, we are in a unique position with our data, working with local authorities and with education, through schools. We know the aspirations of young people who are leaving school: we know the employment sectors and trades that they want to go into. We try to feed information about what our young people want to

do when they leave school to our partners—the Department for Work and Pensions, the LOIPs, the CPPs and so on—and we try to pair that information with the opportunities that come from employers, because there is sometimes a mismatch. It is then about trying to share that information with our wider partners and the employers.

It is also about raising awareness of what employers can do in offering apprenticeships to young people, especially in rural areas, and of the opportunities that apprenticeships can bring. We have teams that go around and support employers to talk about fair work and to look at the opportunities to move their bases to the north of Scotland or to more rural areas.

We are data rich, and we share that data with our partners to try to make sure that anything that is designed impacts positively on local communities.

The Convener: Thanks for that. Apprenticeship schemes are critical to keeping people locally based, so they are good for repopulation or for maintaining a population.

Derek Shaw: I will build on the point that Karen Jackson made. I guess that Covid taught us, as an enterprise agency, the importance of prevention when working with companies on resilience. That is about ensuring, through our account management service, that we have foresight of potential future challenges that companies will face, and that we work with them proactively to avoid situations that could ultimately lead to their reducing employment or, potentially, going under.

We work with companies not only on growth opportunities, which are critical for preserving jobs and creating new jobs, but on resilience and productivity. We work with them to increase their productivity and improve their overall financial position in order to mitigate the risks of financial challenges for businesses.

In 2021, we supported the creation of about 7,000 jobs that pay the real living wage. That is a demonstration of how we can work with companies to protect existing jobs, as well as—[*Inaudible.*]. Resilience is important, as are the opportunities for business growth in a number of sectors in which Scotland has a real competitive advantage.

The Convener: Thank you very much for that. I am interested in your perspectives on prevention and the idea of creating opportunities.

We will move on to theme 5, which is about measuring impact.

Marie McNair: Good morning.

We heard last week how difficult it can be for CPPs to demonstrate impact. Given your role, how can CPPs measure their impact and make the connection between local activity and broad outcomes? I put that question to Skills Development Scotland, first.

Sharon McIntyre: For us, impact is critical. There is a real focus on how we can work towards solutions. There is a big input focus but, given what Dave McCallum said about our data-rich position, we would also like to be a bit more outcomes-based. For SDS, in our annual report, especially on CIAG after a year, and in our new strategic plan—"Skills for a Changing World"—we say that we would like to be able to translate and communicate what we have achieved in CPPs. I know that that is challenging, because we are involved in 32 of them and they are run, led and delivered in different ways. However, moving to a more outcomes-based accountability model is important for us and CPPs going forward, in line with the original intention of the 2015 act around community empowerment.

We can see real opportunities to make it clearer quantitatively where results have been achieved but, like all things for which there is a programme of work or a project, it is completed then we move on to the next focus. There is a lot of focus on priorities and on ensuring that we use people's time effectively across the partnerships to deliver on those priorities, but we also need to make sure that we build in time to assess whether the priorities, the way in which we handled them and the solutions that we designed, with the community at the heart of that thinking, had the desired outcome that we, as partners, wanted.

That is a space that we would all, especially SDS, like to grow more into in order to make an impact and make sure that we maximise our role strategically as an organisation, nationally and locally. We are in a very privileged position in that our role is, in essence, preventative and is about building resilience in communities around career advice and skills support—employer-led skills support, in particular. I would particularly welcome much more focus on, and perhaps space to look at, how we can capture outcomes more in the future.

Marie McNair: Thank you, Sharon. Derek, do you want to add anything?

Derek Shaw: As an organisation, SE can point, case by case, to where there have been impacts on the outcomes from our input to and involvement with CPPs. There is not consistency in terms of there being a framework across all 32 CPP boards, however. To go back to the LOIPs, I will ask this: what are the outcomes that we are looking to achieve, what accountability do different partners have to deliver those ambitions and,

crucially, how do we measure the impact? We do not have in place a consistent framework to allow us to assess that, other than case by case or project by project.

I come back to my earlier point about SE's role in economic development and job creation. That brings it down the level of how we input to the delivery of a particular activity and how we measure its outcomes and impact. There would be benefit in looking at how we might take a more consistent and streamlined approach to measuring the impacts and outcomes of the LOIPs.

Marie McNair: Karen, do you want to come in?

Karen Jackson: It is important to recognise the long-term nature of what community planning partnerships are about—the generational return that other panel members have highlighted. There is, sometimes, a risk that we report on the process rather than on the actual impact.

As others are, I am keen to explore the outcomes that community planning partnerships are getting. We have lots of data, but we do not always have the right sort of data. There is also the question "So what?" when it comes to data. You will have heard that postcode data from rural areas can hide deprivation because the postcode areas are so large that it is really hard to get behind what the data means.

There is something really powerful about case studies and telling stories, but numbers hide some of that. The job numbers have been very small for some of the projects that we have been involved in, but they have had a real impact on the community and its resilience through creation of spaces, houses and opportunity. Numbers just do not tell us about that. Mark McAteer, who was on the previous panel, focused on storytelling.

In the work that the Scottish Government is doing as part of its regional policy review, we see that it has highlighted the importance of intelligence hubs, which bring together organisations and regions in order to get into what is behind the data. As Derek Shaw highlighted, it is about doing it once and doing it well, rather than doing it lots and lots of times.

There is an opportunity. There is also something in community planning partnerships about relationships. One of the real impacts is on trust and how organisations understand one another in different ways. Again, that is not a numbers-based thing that we can measure.

Marie McNair: Thanks.

The Convener: As always, that was very interesting on challenges with data and its importance.

I will pick up on the theme of the culture of public bodies and will combine two questions. I will start with you, Derek; you know that it is coming. Given SE's experience as a statutory partner, I am interested to hear how CPPs operate in practice at the local level. Has anything changed since the 2015 act? Also, based on your experience of working across CPPs, what makes for successful community planning? The questions are about work in practice, whether it has changed and successful community planning.

Derek Shaw: Thanks for those questions, convener. Since 2015, we have seen partners coming together and being aware of what the other partners and organisations do. Building relationships has been key since 2015. We have seen greater collaboration and knowledge and intelligence sharing among partners, as well as among local organisations, which has been hugely beneficial. What have been successful and important in those relationships are the ability to share data and insight; how we use data intelligence to set out priorities at the local level; engagement with community organisations to get their input on issues, challenges and opportunities; and the ability to work collectively to develop plans to take action.

For me and for Scottish Enterprise, success in the change since 2015 has been about the ability to bring together partners, organisations, communities and community organisations, and to share information and knowledge and to build relationships. Scottish Enterprise perhaps did not previously have that to the extent that it does now.

The Convener: It is clear that relationships and trust building are so important. I am interested to hear from Eann Sinclair on those questions.

Eann Sinclair: I agree that relationships are absolutely fundamental. There are good examples in the Highlands and Islands of CPPs working well because they have effective leadership structures, but they also have effective leadership structures that do not stand or fall on individual personalities. That is really important.

We also find that horizontal integration is sometimes easier than vertical integration, which sounds a bit counterintuitive. We have been very good—possibly across Scotland, but certainly in the Highlands and Islands—at collaborative horizontal integration. We have found more challenges in vertical integration, from senior leadership to thematic work to area or geography based work. That continues to be an issue for a number of our CPPs, partly because of their size and partly because of geographic location. It is a work in progress.

12:00

The Convener: Thank you very much for that insight.

What about the south of Scotland?

Karen Jackson: SSE has been involved for less of that time because we are a new organisation. SSE started a week after the first lockdown, so our experience of working with colleagues has been online, but that cemented some strong relationships right from the beginning. We came into a global pandemic such as nobody had experienced before and which nobody was expecting, but that ensured that we were focused on one thing, which was to make sure that our communities and businesses were able to survive through unprecedented circumstances.

South of Scotland Enterprise, our two local authorities, VisitScotland and Skills Development Scotland created "team south of Scotland". We are still meeting weekly in order to have clear and focused discussion about what needs to be done. At first, we were focused very much on getting money out the door to businesses and community groups. That has cemented trusting relationships that are standing us in good stead as we move forward. It has also enabled us to explore how we might come together on jointly funded projects with partners, including the third sector and development trusts. I am not sure whether that is formally badged as community planning, but it is certainly a good demonstration of partnership working.

Dave McCallum: I am lucky to have sat on 10 CPPs in my time with SDS. I know from speaking to colleagues that CPPs differ across the country. They need to be slightly different in order to serve the communities to which they are responsible, but there has also to be some consistency to support that.

The previous witness panel talked about leadership. Our CPPs have strong leadership, but we need to share leadership across partners. That is quite hard for our national organisation, because we do not have resources to support administration. That is usually down to local authorities There is something to be said for sharing leadership.

It also helps to build relationships online, but we need help with consistency in messaging and, maybe, in structures in order to have consistency across the 32 CPPs. However, we still also need nuances to ensure that CPPs serve the communities to which they are responsible.

The Convener: Yes—it is something of a balancing act. We need a nuanced approach, but we also need consistency.

Sharon McIntyre: In terms of the crucial recipe for success, the complex role that we have in balancing partnership and participation is very challenging. CPPs work very well in having an ethical commitment to communities that continue to experience poor outcomes, or which experience them at particular times. There is also a need to form a collaborative culture, as we can see from quite a few CPPs, and there is a need for more facilitative leadership. That has come through in feedback to the committee and it has come through this morning. That is about bringing organisations together and understanding what they can and cannot do around particular priorities.

Even when thinking of the different shapes, sizes and nuances, there are opportunities to look at guiding principles, because what we talk about as being the culture needs to be constantly focused on and supported. It goes back to the roots of why we are here and what we have set out to do. A charter or guiding principles would help people to learn how others are operating, rather than there being a one-size-fits-all approach. That would help all partners to be more effective.

The Convener: Of course, that would come from Skills Development Scotland, would it not? We all have to develop our skills in that respect.

I move on to local leadership, and bring in Willie Coffey.

Willie Coffey: That has led us nicely on to the question about broader issues around leadership. We expect and hope that, since the act came into force in 2015, there are more examples of shared leadership among community planning partners. Several of you have mentioned that, as did the previous panel. Is it your experience that leadership is broadening out, or do you still see the leadership role sitting largely with local authorities? I will start with Eann Sinclair, because he made some comments earlier that were quite apposite.

Eann Sinclair: That is really important. Our experience in the Highlands and Islands is that the process is not led or seen to be led by local authorities. Measures that have been put in place—such as the chair of the CPP rotating regularly between partners—help with that; a sense of shared leadership is inherent in that.

I will go back to Highland community planning partnership level. It is important that there is local leadership on the ground. We have been quite lucky, in that not only have we managed to find good clear leadership, but we have been able to combine that with our aspiration to bring in the third sector, where we can. Relationship building has been particularly good. Our co-chairing with

the third sector during Covid has stood us in really good stead for where we are now. From a Highlands and Islands perspective and in relation to other CPPs, we are in a much better place than we were in 2015.

Willie Coffey: Could Derek Shaw from Scottish Enterprise offer a perspective on that?

Derek Shaw: Every CPP and authority is different. By and large, in our experience on the CPPs and the sub-groups that we are involved in, leadership has come from local authorities. On Eann Sinclair's point, any opportunity for shared leadership is to be welcomed. We need to recognise the strengths of the individual partners in the CPPs and the value that they can bring, and we must also recognise areas of activity where we cannot add value. That goes right up to leadership. However, more shared leadership is to be welcomed, and it is good to ensure that partners on the ground at the local level have the ability to shape and influence the future direction.

Willie Coffey: Can we have a comment from Skills Development Scotland?

Dave McCallum: I agree that the picture is mixed. In some areas there is shared leadership, but in my experience leadership is mainly from local authorities. I see shared leadership in the sense that local authorities have community planning officer groups at which the key lead officers, if you like, from the local authority and partners come together to set the agenda for CPPs. I have also seen six-monthly rotations of leadership from the various organisations.

We need to ensure that there is shared responsibility in leadership of CPPs. It is challenging to support resourcing of the minuting, setting agendas for and organising of meetings, and that usually comes back to the local authorities. Perhaps there is a different way, but those always come back the local authorities.

Willie Coffey: Thanks, Dave.

Lastly, I ask Karen Jackson to answer on behalf of South of Scotland Enterprise.

Karen Jackson: Similar to others, we see different organisations picking up on different themes. For example, there are good examples of the third sector leading on digital exclusion. Organisations tend to lead in areas in which they have strong interest, expertise and perspective. In the Borders, the police led on the Borders being a good place to grow up, live in and enjoy a full life. It was interesting to see the reaction to the police leading on that theme, because it got the service into just transition and climate change issues. It was a real demonstration of how committed Police Scotland is, as an organisation, to the process of community planning, that it picked up on that

priority. Mixing of people leading on different themes is important.

It is also important that leadership works throughout the organisation, not just at board and councillor level but through officers and officials. That is what makes it real; there is commitment at high level that filters down through organisations.

Willie Coffey: Thank you.

My last question is about section 16 of the 2015 act, which imposes a duty on the Scottish Government to promote—actually promote—community planning. To what extent is that happening in practice? For example, do we see ministerial guidance letters, budget decisions directing community planning or national strategies? I suppose that the question is about top-down leadership. I will start with Karen, who is currently on screen.

Karen Jackson: Obviously, we have had a slightly different experience of guidance letters because of the focus on Covid and responding to the pandemic, but our last guidance letter absolutely picked up on partnership working; there was a focus on collaboration and on driving forward our regional economic partnership. Words were coming through from the Government. "Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation" puts us in a good place for collaboration. On the themes in it, as has been highlighted we cannot do it alone, but have to work with others. We see a focus in the Government on collaboration and partnership. Its review of regional policy puts us in the same place.

Sharon McIntyre: Our guidance is very similar to Karen Jackson's. It is strong on collaboration, partnership working, locality planning and national outcomes. It is a really good fit for us. We also have a focus that comes through the new careers by design ecosystem, which means that we work collaboratively and are integrated with other agencies, colleges, universities and training providers—the whole careers landscape comes together. We will support careers services in overseeing that. It could not be more the topic of today—collaboration and the Scottish Government's promotion and support of it, including my interface with the Scottish Government sponsor team. I give updates on partnership working, CPPs and how we are integrated with partners to maximise our role and impact.

Willie Coffey: Derek, are you seeing in practice the Government's duty to promote community planning?

Derek Shaw: Yes, absolutely. I will echo the points that Karen Jackson made. Our guidance letters from the Scottish Government always emphasise the importance of partnership working

and collaboration with stakeholders and partners in line with national and regional strategies and at local level. That recognises that, through connection with partners and stakeholders, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Our guidance letters from the SG encourage partnership and working in collaboration.

Willie Coffey: Thanks very much.

Lastly, I ask Eann Sinclair the same question for the perspective from the Highlands.

Eann Sinclair: I will say briefly what everybody else has said and add that that is similarly reflected by our chairman and our board, so it comes down through the organisation as well, which is good to see.

Willie Coffey: Okay. Many thanks, everybody.

The Convener: That concludes our questions for today. Thank you all for joining us online and for giving your time so that we can understand more fully your perspectives on community planning partnerships.

Subordinate Legislation

Non-Domestic Rates (Restriction of Relief) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 (SSI 2023/28)

Non-Domestic Rate (Scotland) Order 2023 (SSI 2023/29)

Non-Domestic Rates (Levying and Miscellaneous Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 (SSI 2023/30)

Non-Domestic Rates (Transitional Relief) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 (SSI 2023/31)

Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2023 (SSI 2023/36)

12:15

The Convener: The next item is consideration of five negative instruments. There is no requirement that the committee make recommendations on negative instruments. Do members have any comments?

Members *indicated disagreement.*

The Convener: Does the committee agree that we do not wish to make any recommendations in relation to the instruments?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: We agreed at the start of the meeting to take the next two items in private. As that was the last public item on our agenda for today, I close the public part of our meeting.

12:16

Meeting continued in private until 12:41.

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