

Equalities Participation Network – 30 March 2023

Present: Myshela Haywood (GREC), Shola Ajide (Fountain of Love), Dave Black (GREC), Karen Finch (ACC Community Councils), Roslynn Fowler (Aberdeen Action on Disability), Carol Hannaford (Sheltered Housing), Linzi Harrow (ACC Equalities), Zuzana Jatelova (Aberdeenshire Council), Fay Morrison (various community groups), Miriam Nwugo (GREC), Maria Jose Pavez (GREC), Mary Rasmussen (Guide Dogs), Bertha Yakubu (African Women's Group)

Speaker: Dave Black, GREC – on ACC's Community Empowerment Strategy

See attached presentation for details.

Speaker: Karen Finch – on Community Councils

As requested, Karen provided the following information to clarify what Community Councils are, what they do, and how to get involved. *Also see attached postcard.*

Community Councils: Set up by the Local Government Scotland Act 1973. The main purpose of a Community Council is to be the voice of their community. This means they are consulted on planning applications for their area and also Licensing issues relating to liquor or public processions/parades. They generally meet once a month, and there are elections for Community Councils every three years. Often it's not a contest because there are fewer candidates than places. The next elections are in 2024.

Community Councils are also involved in various projects and activities within their own area. Each Community Council will have their own priorities. For example:

- attend community walkabouts with Councillors and Council officers
- responding to various consultations from the Council, NHS and other organisations
- carrying out litter picks to try and keep the area clean and tidy
- work with local schools on any projects that they may have ongoing
- being part of the community resilience group for the area to help in emergency situations – floods, extreme weather etc
- producing a local newsletter to keep the community informed
- preparing and distributing community welfare packages (food, toiletries)
- community gardens
- community planters for flowers throughout the year
- community events such as galas, festive events, summer projects
- organising Christmas lights
- working with other local groups to support their projects
- arranging for public benches throughout their areas
- donating small amount of funds to local groups
- maintaining public paths

2 options for joining a Community Council:

Co-opted Member: Where there are vacancies, you can become a co-opted member. This involves completing some paperwork to check that you are eligible to be a member. To be eligible you

need to be on the electoral register for your address – so being able to vote in Local Government elections and being over 16 years old. Co-opted members become full members after 1 year and are able to fully take part in meetings with voting rights. You would count towards the total number of members.

Associate Member: This may be suitable if you don't have time to attend evening meetings on a regular basis but have particular skills that may assist the Community Council. These could be digital skills to help with facebook, website and other social media channels, gardening work – so you may be interested in looking after one of the local planters or an area of ground that the Community Council use as a green space/community garden. You may have admin or financial skills that the Community Council need to help them with minutes and for doing the annual accounts and other treasurer related duties. You may also attend community events to help set things up, or litter picks to help clean up the area. There is no paperwork for this role. You would just need to agree for the Community Council to hold a contact for you so they can contact you when they have projects of interest to you. You can also attend meetings without a vote.

Some relevant videos:

- [youtube.com/watch?v=Z_DQl1O-rXc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_DQl1O-rXc)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=z6Jlhl4H4w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6Jlhl4H4w)
- (Perth and Kinross) [youtube.com/watch?v=SaJDDClkoug](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaJDDClkoug)

Q&A / discussion

Are meetings in person or online? It's a mixture – some are in person, some online, some 'hybrid.'

What's the best way to involve new people? (this was a question both to Karen and to the group)

- Karen produced some videos in 2021, and also holds information sessions – where would be the best places to put information/leaflets to attract people?
- Noted that digital advertising does not reach everyone – good to network with other organisations – meeting groups where they are.
- The phrase 'community council' might put people off or be confusing – sounds very official – maybe something about branding it differently for the next round of elections, emphasising the 'community' part rather than 'council,' separating it from ACC branding.
- Suggestion of a website with relevant information and dedicated social media channels – there's already a website, needs to be promoted better. Also a website for the Community Councils Forum. Karen will look into social media – difficult because she doesn't have others to help. Maybe a job for a volunteer? Could be advertised at job clubs etc. Suggestion that the Community Council members themselves could take responsibility for this – works well for the city-wide multi-storey group.
- Suggestion that Community Councils give talks in the local area – some already do, others are less active – tricky because everyone is a volunteer.
- Print media is important – SHMU magazines for example (usually have a section for Community Councils) – community newsletters etc.

What's New?

Brief discussion of electric scooters on the Deeside Way, and pavements more generally. Also delivery bikes. Generally seen as a nuisance/danger, but police can't do much about it – especially scooters because there's not many rules. Might be possible to improve signage to encourage people to use their bell (or voice) to alert pedestrians, and to clarify where bikes are allowed, right of way, etc.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 27 April, 5:00-6:30pm

Topic: Intersectionality Workshop