



# JOINT FORUM OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS IN WEST LOTHIAN

## **The New Community Councils of 2021 and beyond**

### **A BLUEPRINT FOR A NEW FORM OF LOCAL DECISION MAKING AND DEMOCRACY**

The opportunity to discuss and map out the future for local decision making, local democracy and community engagement has been well and truly grasped in West Lothian. The Joint Forum of Community Councils accepted the challenge from the Scottish Government, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and West Lothian Council to design a new form of local Community based, democratic, decision making and have drafted a **Blueprint** for Community Councils of the Future.

The **Blueprint** is a direct result of our recent Conference of Community Councils in West Lothian and we are publishing it for further consultation in West Lothian to gain the support of the Community. We are also publishing it across Scotland as we want to influence the debate all over the country.

### **BLUEPRINT**

#### **COMMUNITY COUNCILS WILL HAVE LOCAL POWERS**

#### **The new Community Councils will have powers to decide very local issues such as:**

- Local Planning decisions
- Local Licencing issues
- Local Grants to Local Organisations
- Town Centre or Village Management
- Local Development Plans
- Local Traffic Management
- Local Community Growing Food Plans
- Local Community Hubs Management
- Local Bus Services
- Local Community Partnership Plans
- Local Wellbeing Strategies and Action
- Local Capital Investment Plans
- Community Choice Decisions
- Special Projects aimed at helping local people or local groups with local issues

#### **Community Councils will have the resources to undertake their powers**

- Revenue and Capital Budgets
- Special Project Grants
- Funding from other Funding Organisations
- Employed Secretaries or administrators
- Seconded Council Officers for projects and Community organisation and Community engagement
- Volunteers from the area
- The services of specialist Council Officers for reports, advice and policy development and finance management.

## **Community Councils will be more representative and democratic**

The next Community Council elections will be bigger and better than before with the ability to vote by email, text, website and polling stations open for a week including weekends. There will be a big drive mounted to attract more applicants and more diverse applicants and publishing of individual statements seeking support.

The Community Council areas may be split into areas to ensure wider representation and there will be a percentage of Community Councillors elected by random lottery from the eligible voters in the Community.

Community Councils will publish their meetings and business to be transacted at least seven days before their meetings and decisions will be published the following day.

All Community Councils will have websites and Facebook pages, postal address, email address and telephone number.

All Community Councils will have a Code of Practice and a Complaints System.

The names of all Community Councillors will be published and updated regularly.

Community Councils will be encouraged to have Youth Community Councils or democratically second local youths to the Community Council.

## **What needs to be done to bring this BLUEPRINT to life**

Local Councils will have to embrace the concept and hold discussion with local federations or associations.

Local Councils will have to agree to amend their schemes of administration and delegation.

Local Community Councils and Scottish Government would need to fund the change.

Existing Community Council Schemes will have to be reviewed and revamped and agreed.

The legal status of Community Councils would need to be reviewed with the possibility of Community Councils coming under the legal, financial umbrella of the Local Authority.

An investment in training for existing and aspiring Community Councillors would be required in community engagement, social media, financial management, employment practices, premises management, conduct of meetings, codes of practice, planning and licencing and other subjects.

A major public information campaign about the changes to local democracy and decision making.

An investment in participative systems apps and software.

An examination/review of the relationship between elected local authority Councillors and Community Councils.

## **What Next**

A consultation exercise with all Community Councils in West Lothian and the broader public culmination in a Public Convention.

An opening of informal discussions with West Lothian Council, COSLA and the Scottish Government and possibly a conference with other Scottish Community Councils.

A year of Implementation in financial year 2020/21.

Joint Forum of Community Councils in West Lothian

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