Community Council Fairer Scotland Event

16 September 2015

Question & Answer Session

Introduction

On 16 September 2015 the Scottish Government hosted a Fairer Scotland Community Council event to discuss how Community Councillors could help create a Fairer Scotland. The event was just one of hundreds being held by the Scottish Government throughout Scotland to help inform a Social Justice Action Plan to be published in early 2016.   A report from the event is available on the Community Council Website at www.communitycouncils.org.uk A range of Fairer Scotland Events have been held during October and November 2015, with different groups and communities. There have also been a series of Planning Events to prioritise the ideas and suggestions put forward.

The Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment, Marco Biagi, and Mark McAteer, Deputy Chief Executive at the Improvement Service took part in a question and answer session with delegates, which saw 81 questions posted for consideration. Although 21 of the 81 questions were posed as comments, this document attempts to provide the answers to the questions and where possible, to the comments. Frequently used names throughout the document will be referred to as follows:

- CCs for Community Councils
- CCLOs for Community Council Liaison Officers
- IS for the Improvement Service
- SG for the Scottish Government

Acknowledgements

The answers were possible thanks to policy leads in the SG's Community Empowerment Unit, Community Planning, Planning, Local Government Finance, Trunk Road and Bus Operations Directorate, Pharmacy Division, VAT Advisory Team, the Boundary Commission and also the IS and the CCLOs who provided a contribution.

Contact:

The CC mailbox at communitycouncils@gov.scot

Community Empowerment Unit
December 2015

Questions and Answers – 1 to 81

Q1: How can the SG help CCs have more influence than just having a voice?

Q2: Why are CCs not empowered? Individuals seldom act on behalf of communities.

Answer to Q1 & Q2: The SG welcomes the approach of those CCs who, by agreement with their local authority, undertake a wide range of roles and activities for the benefit of their community. Local Authorities are required by statute to consult CCs about planning applications and licencing matters. The SG has also ensured that through the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 CCs will have more influence. CCs will be able to put forward a participation request and must be consulted on the creation of a Register of Common Good Assets and in any changes in the use or disposal of those assets.

Participation requests are a new process which will allow a CC and other community bodies to enter into dialogue with public authorities about local issues and local services on their terms. Where a CC believes it could help improve an outcome provided by a public body it will be able to request that the public body takes part in a process to improve that outcome. We expect the <u>Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015</u> to come into effect by summer 2016.

Q3: Average level of funding for CCs is approx. £400 per year, could this be increased significantly to enable CC's to be more effective?

Q4: Why are CCs restricted to spending the annual allowance on administrative costs only? Leave responsible CC's to spend the allowance as they deem fit – within the remit of a CC.

Q5: Community engagement is not cost free - why no real funding resources to support CCs to do this?

Q6: Is there a role for volunteer bureau councils or voluntary service/ SCVO? Where is the support – in kind & in cash for CCs? How can CC's be expected to do their job efficiently on a voluntary basis?

Answer to Q3 to Q6: The SG does not provide funding to CCs as due to the diverse nature of CC activity, local authorities are best placed to decide how to fund them. An indication of annual grants provided to CCs by local authorities in 2011/12 can be found in the <u>Survey of Local CCs</u> report published in December 2013.

However, CCs can and do find income and support from other fundraising resources. For example there is a Scotland Local Authority External Funders Officers group and more information can be found here. Another useful source for funding information is the Communities Channel Scotland website which is funded by the SG and hosted by the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC). The SG has a range of funding programmes to support community-led regeneration and community empowerment and these are listed in a community funding map. These are only a few examples of what is available.

Q7: Lack of consultation with the community: surely this is/should be the most important effort of every cc? otherwise it's just the opinions of the cc who are quite often unelected.

A7: Consultation and engagement with the community they represent is critical for each CC. The general statutory purpose of CCs is to *"ascertain, co-ordinate and express to local authorities for its area, and to public authorities, the views of the community which it represents, in relation to matters for which those authorities are responsible, and to take such action in the interests of that community as appears to it to be expedient and practicable".* Therefore effective engagement with the community is essential to contribute towards bringing a local dimension to the development and delivery of local services.

Q8: Will you as Minister commit to co-resourcing some equivalent to the now-defunct Association for Scottish CCs by April 2016?

Q9: Set up a national CC body, of elected CCs, to liaise with SG & Public Services.

Q10: Why is the SG not supporting CCs more?

Q11: How can we ensure that CCs are listened to?

Answer to Q8 to Q11: The SG has no plans to commit resources for a new Association of Scottish CCs or a national body for CCs. Instead, the SG is working in collaboration with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the IS to further enhance the role of CCs. As part of this work the IS has developed the CC website to raise awareness of CCs amongst the general public and to provide a national digital source of information for Community Councillors to help them in their work. This will open up communication with the community represented, allowing for participation and engagement. The CC website also includes a CC Location Finder designed by academics at Edinburgh Napier University. This map will help members of the public find their nearest CC. Both the website and the CC Location Finder will be relaunched with a new look and new content in the near future. The link is: www.communitycouncils.org.uk

In addition, the IS facilitates a free online collaboration group for Community Councillors on the Knowledge Hub. The Knowledge Hub group provides the opportunity to network and for Community Councillors to receive support and inspiration from colleagues across the country. The SG and the IS similarly facilitates a network for Scotland's CCLOs. The IS can provide support for individual CCs and Community Councillors who would like to use the Knowledge Hub for collaboration on a free to use basis.

The SG has also commissioned Edinburgh Napier University to deliver a series of Digital Engagement Workshops for Community Councillors and more information can be found on the CC website.

Q12: How much does the SG give to councils to up skill CCs to develop their capacity?

Q13: Approx. 2% added to the council tax system would provide basic funding to allow CC's to grow.

Answer to Q12 & Q13: The vast majority of a local authority's funding is provided by the SG in the form of a block grant. It is the responsibility of individual local authorities to manage their own budgets and to allocate the total financial resources available to them, including any money they wish to provide to their local CCs, on the basis of local needs and priorities, having first fulfilled their statutory obligations and the jointly agreed set of national and local priorities.

Q14: Will the SG provide that Community Councillors are entitled to claim travelling expenses to attend meeting? [very important in rural areas].

A14: Supporting Community Councillors to attend national and local meetings whenever possible is important and would be encouraged.

Q15: What is the cost of developing, maintaining and curating the www.communitycouncils.co.uk?

A15: The cost of developing, maintaining and curating the CC website is part of the SG's package of support for CCs that the IS is leading on. The full cost for this package of support in 2015/16 is £20,000.

Q16: Is there a central system/support for CC's to set up a website?

A16: The series of digital engagement workshops run by Edinburgh Napier University will provide information and inform thinking on what support CCs need to set up a website.

Q17: What structures have been put in place to "encourage" networking, learning together sharing resources?

A17: As outlined above the SG in collaboration with the IS and the CCLOs are putting structures in place such as the website, knowledge hubs, digital engagement events and networking events to encourage networking, learning together and sharing resources.

Q18: More resources to engage with young people.

Q19: Colonising the young how? We are non-political.

A20: Solution – schools in every community use for c/c base meetings involve 5th/6th year schools.

Answer to Q18 to Q20: Social Media is the biggest resource to engage with young people today. Harnessing the potential of social media can bring many great benefits and provide a means to easily share information. Utilising the CC website will create more awareness among young people and the opportunities within their local CC. It is also important, not only for young people but for everyone, that the wider community is aware of the work of their local CC.

CCs may want to engage with <u>Young Scot</u> which is the national youth information and citizenship charity working with Scotland's young people to help them become confident, informed and active citizens.

Locally, by working with the CCLOs there may be opportunities for Community Councillors to speak to young people at the local secondary school before CC elections. This would raise the profile of CC work in the community and would inform young people of the Community Councillor's role.

Q21: Let's have a single date for CC elections – we could get big publicity and greater engagement.

A21: This is an often suggested proposal that has some merit. By having a single election day across Scotland and linking this to support for national publicity, the profile and awareness of CCs would be raised. This may also help increase turnout, although in the short-term there is the risk that this could highlight issues of low turnout. CC elections are the responsibility of Local Authorities.

Q22: We need an audit of all CCs (to include social & demographic info) and for this to be published as open data.

A22: This information would be useful but would need significant resources to collect, collate and maintain. The <u>Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)</u> is a useful source of information. Also the <u>Understanding Scottish Places</u> platform was launched in April 2015 and was commissioned by the SG to provide a mechanism for understanding the similarity of places across Scotland.

Q23: At present there is no real transparency/accountability regarding CC's. This must change especially if they (cc) are likely to be given increased powers.

A23: Local authorities have statutory oversight of CCs. The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 sets out the requirement that local authorities introduce CC schemes for their area, outlining various arrangements including elections, meetings, boundaries and finance. The Model Scheme provides that CCs must provide copies of their agendas and draft minutes to the CCLO within 14 days from the date of meetings.

Q24: Neutral – What support is there for resolving disputes between CCs & communities – is there a role for CVS (Community Voluntary Sector) & SCVO (the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations) here?

A24: The model <u>Code of Conduct for Community Councillors</u> is based on the Code of Conduct for local authority councillors and relevant public bodies as provided for in The Ethical Standards in Public Life etc (Scotland) Act 2000. As elected representatives of their communities, Community Councillors have a responsibility to make sure that they are familiar with, and if the model or any other Code is adopted in relation to their CC, that their actions comply with the principles set out in that Code. These principles include service to the community, integrity, objectivity and respect.

Q25: CCs just a middle class activity?

A25: A <u>Survey of CCs</u> published by the SG in December 2013 provided a snapshot of CC activity during October 2012. The questionnaire asked whether local authorities held demographic data about Community Councillors and the majority (87%) of local authorities did not hold this sort of information at that time.

Q26: If CC's are important what can be done to set them up where absent: often in areas of multiple deprivation?

A26: Each Local Authority has a CCLO working directly with active and inactive CCs in their area. To help CCs in their work Local Authorities have access to a number of <u>support documents</u> such as the Model Scheme of Establishment, a Model Constitution and a Model Standing Orders in addition to a Model Code of Conduct and Good Practice Guidance for Community Councillors. These were developed in 2009 by a group which involved the SG, COSLA and representatives of CCs and local authorities.

Q27: Can CC's be part of all CPPs (Community Planning Partnerships)?

A27: CCs are not listed as statutory partners of CPPs in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, this however, does not preclude them or other organisations from participating in community planning. The Act provides a legal framework to promote and encourage community empowerment and participation, by creating new rights for community bodies and placing new duties on public authorities, this includes the CPP and its partners taking reasonable steps to secure and support the involvement of community bodies throughout community planning.

Q28: Increasingly there is a focus on "improving outcomes" however, Community Councillors need an informed understanding of the local 'picture' to be able to advise on whether outcomes are better (or not).

Q29: Does the minister intend to consult directly with CCs on the local outcomes improvement plan?

Answer to Q28 & Q29: Local Outcomes Improvement Plans are developed locally and they set out the local outcomes which the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) will prioritise for improvement. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires CPPs to take all reasonable steps to secure the involvement in community planning of any community body which it considers is likely to be able to contribute to it. CPPs must in particular have regard to community bodies which represent those communities experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

Q30: (TSI = Third sector interface) LOIP Local outcome improvement plan at all levels published when & over what area? – ie by whom and with whom?

A30: Participation with communities lies at the heart of community planning. Before publishing their Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP), the CPP must take account the needs and circumstances of residents. It is worth noting that LOIP is the term that the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act

2015 gives to what are presently Single Outcome Agreements and there is no significant difference between these in practice. They must take into account representation received from community bodies having particular regard to those experiencing poorer outcomes. The CPP must prepare and publish their LOIP which sets out the agreed local outcomes that the partnership are prioritising for improvement. The CPP must review and report publicly on progress towards these plans for each reporting year. The report must include the extent to which the CPP has engaged with community bodies and also the extent to which that engagement has been effective.

Q31: Comment: Still no "Nuts & bolts" as to what this Bill contains.

Q32: Timetable for Community Empowerment Act? different parts – different dates? - Communities keen to get on lets go.

Answer to Q31 & Q32: The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 was passed by the Scottish Parliament in June and received Royal Assent on 24th July 2015. The Act will help to empower community bodies through the ownership or control of land and buildings, and by strengthening their voices in decisions about public services. There are 11 topics in the Act and different parts are likely to come into force at different times and the SG expects most parts of the Act to come into effect by summer 2016. For the most up to date information go to the CC website which also provides a link to the Frequently Asked Questions document on the SG website. The SCDC has also published a briefing to summarise and help community bodies understand the Act and what it means for them.

Q33: In reviewing the national standards of community engagement there should be CC representation alongside SCDC, GDA & what works.

A33: The SCDC in collaboration with What Works Scotland and the Glasgow Disability Alliance (GDA) has been commissioned by the SG to undertake a review of the National Standards for Community Engagement. SCDC has widely circulated information about the review inviting people to express interest in being part of the review process and a number of CCs responded to this. Targeted discussion sessions have been held with two CCs in an urban setting (1 in Glasgow and 1 in Lothian), and a separate focus group has been delivered with CCs in a rural setting (Stirlingshire). Opportunity was provided for CCs to attend the first community focus group in Glasgow.

Q34: What determines a town in respect of charrettes?

A34: The SG 2015-16 Charrette Mainstreaming programme was open to applications relating to settlements of all sizes and did not set criteria around the type of place that can apply. However, within the programme, Town Centres were highlighted as one of the SG priority areas for charrette funding.

The Scottish Planning Policy sets out some criteria that define what makes a Town Centre. For further information on population comparisons of Scotland's towns, please visit the Understanding Scottish Places website.

Q35: If you want CCs to have more say why are you looking at jury /panels as proposed by the lecturer from Edinburgh University, who will be paid to make decisions?

Q36: How can CC's participate properly planning when they know that all the power lies with developers and local authorities?

Q37: Do you think an equal right of appeal should be considered as part of a review of the Scottish planning system to redress the disparity of means that can exist between developers and communities?

Q38: Planning law & CCs & developers & LA's – When will balance of power & rights & responsibility be corrected?

Q39: Every local authority should allow objections to go to planning committees if a CC objects – this must include delegated application/decisions.

Q40: Introduce an equal right of appeal in planning.

Q41: Council need for 3rd party right of appeal in planning.

Answer to Q35 to Q41: The Programme for Government 2015-2016 (September 2015), announced the SG's intention to review the planning system to increase delivery of high quality housing developments, by delivering a quicker more accessible and efficient process.   The Review will look at community engagement and states:

"We will review the operation of the planning system in Scotland, identifying the scope for further reform with a focus on delivering a quicker, more accessible and efficient planning process, in particular increasing delivery of high quality housing developments. Our aims are to:

- *Ensure that planning realises its full potential, unlocking land and sites, supporting more quality housing across all tenures and delivering the infrastructure required to support development.*
- *Streamline, simplify and improve current systems and remove unnecessary blockages in the decision-making process.*
- *Ensure that communities are more engaged in the process.*
- *Continue to meet our statutory and international obligations in protecting and enhancing Scotland's nature and environment."*

In short, the Review aims to achieve a quicker, more accessible and efficient planning process in order to build investor and community confidence in the system. The review will be undertaken by an independent panel, chaired by Crawford Beveridge, and also including Petra Biberbach of PAS (formerly Planning Aid Scotland) and John Hamilton of the Scottish Property Federation. The Panel will provide a strategic perspective, and is expected to invite written and oral evidence during the course of the review. As such, the Panel invited written evidence from all interested parties, including CCs. The closing date for written evidence was 1 December 2015. This was open to 'gamechanging' views and ideas.

The Panel is expected to report in Spring 2016. Thereafter Scottish Ministers will respond to its recommendations with a programme for further targeted improvements to the planning system. Further details are available on the Review homepage which will be updated throughout the course of the Review.

Q42: CC's should be given charitable status.

A42: A framework for CCs was established by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, supplemented by the Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994. Established by statute, CCs comprise of volunteers elected to represent community views but do not have statutory duties or powers. Their intention is to act as a voice for their local community, representing the views of the community to local authorities and other public bodies operating in their area, to further the interests of their communities.

CCs are normally elected by their community. Charity trustees are normally elected by their members (the exact arrangements for election of trustees is set out in their governing document). The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) is responsible in Scotland for awarding charitable status. Organisations have to undergo a "charity test" to determine whether their "purposes" provide public benefit. The OSCR website explains the procedure in more detail.

Q43: If CCs are to move into more community projects can we get exempt from VAT?

A43: Exempt supplies for VAT purposes are set out in the 1994 VAT Act in line with European legislation. Exempt supplies relate to specific business activities or goods. Bodies as such are not exempt from the payment of VAT. The inability of a CC to raise funds through local taxation precludes them from entry into section 33 of the VAT Act, which would allow them to reclaim VAT in the same way as a local authority. More information can be found in this section of the HM Revenue and Custom's document which specifically mentions CCs.

Q44: To create a fairer Scotland – in Glasgow reduce the power of "delegated authority" of unelected public servants will the minister Alex Neil ask Glasgow City Council to do this?

A44: Local authorities must use resources as efficiently as possible and deliver services effectively to ensure taxpayers get the best possible value. How this is done is a matter for each area - local authorities are autonomous bodies, responsible for managing their own day to day business and answerable to their electorates.

Q45: Can we bring openness to CC's? e.g. City of Edinburgh conducts our elections but refuses to publish the names of those elected. LA councillors are public, why not CC's? Spoken to many in our community would be delighted to join CC's but scared of elections – non-political. How do we encourage?

A45: There are currently around 1,200 CCs active in Scotland. CC elections are led and managed by each of the 32 Local Authorities for their own local area. Election year and month can differ in each Local Authority area, and can be held every four years. Each Local Authority has a CC webpage where they post information relating to CC activity including elections.

Q46: What will be the effect of not addressing the grim situation where East Renfrewshire LA has totally disrupted CC's part way through their term e.g. on the behaviour of other LA?

Q47: Can CC's have an assurance that the 'East Renfrewshire' situations never occurs elsewhere?

Q48: Why has E Renfrewshire Council been allowed to abolish CC's for couple of months?

Q49: Last Friday East Renfrewshire Council (ERC) shut all 10 CC's mid-term. They brought in a new scheme which most believe to be unlawful. Last week an officer of ERC said "The SG are on board with this & want to roll this scheme out across the country". Do you support this unlawful scheme of ERC's? will you meet with a delegation of CC's?

Answer to Q46 to Q49: The SG is aware of East Renfrewshire Council's revised CC Scheme of Establishment (June 2015). Part of local authorities statutory oversight of CCs under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, includes the duty to review their area's CC Scheme of Establishment and if they consider it should be amended, to consult with the CCs concerned and the local community.

Local authorities must use resources as efficiently as possible and deliver services effectively to ensure taxpayers get the best possible value. How this is done is a matter for each area - local authorities are autonomous bodies, responsible for managing their own day to day business and answerable to their electorates. In that vein, local authorities are accountable to their community for how they fulfil their statutory responsibility for CCs. The SG has no statutory role for monitoring how they fulfil these functions. It is therefore for each of the 32 local authorities in Scotland to decide how they engage with communities at a local level, including CCs.

Q50: LA's should not have statutory role over CC's as LA's should be accountable to CCs not the other way round!!!

A50: Consultation and engagement with the community they represent is critical for each CC. Section 51(2) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 makes this clear: "In addition to any other purpose which a CC may pursue, the general purpose of a CC shall be to ascertain, co-ordinate and express to the local authorities for its area, and to public authorities, the views of the community which it represents, in relation to matters for which those authorities are responsible, and to take such action in the interests of that community as appears to it to be expedient and practicable."

The report *Strengthening local democracy in Scotland: The CC's Perspective* provides further insights.

Q51: Why has money been spent by the IS (itself a company employing 80 staff and fully funded by the SG) on the development of www.communitycouncils.co.uk and the curation of a social media profile when there is still no resourcing for national networking of Scottish CCs, which has been significantly hindered since the withdrawal of funding from the now-defunct of association of Scottish CCs.

Q52: How many does it employ?

Answer to Q51 & Q52: Currently the IS employs in the region of 40 core staff. But at any given point in time the IS has a range of additional staff, depending on available funding sources and current projects. At present the IS have in the region of 30 additional staff. The IS is funded by a variety of funders including Local Authorities and the SG.

Q53: When was the IS created?

A53: The company was incorporated in July 2005.

Q54: What is its budget?

A54: The IS's budget is broken down as follows:

Fund	Amount	Source
Core Grant	£1.656 million	Revenue Support Grant
Customer First Grant	£4.6 million	Revenue Support Grant
Specific Grants Variable	£750,000 to £1 million	: Variety of funders

In 2015/16 the IS will receive £1.656m Revenue Support Grant (funded by Local Government) to fund core programmes and £4.6m from SG to deliver the myaccount programme and services. The IS have also secured a number of specific grants to fund other projects and work streams, for example the CC project (more information below).

The IS received £20,000 for financial year 2015/16 from the SG to:
- support development and deliver content for the CC website www.communitycouncils.org.uk.
- Support the CCLO Development Network and Community Councillors Development Network Knowledge Hub groups
- Support SG and Napier University with their Digital Engagement activities for CCs

The funding is used and provided primarily for the employment of a full-time graduate to support this work.

Q55: What relationship does it have with the SG – including geographic location of offices?

A55: The IS has only one office premise based in Livingston, West Lothian. It is a company limited by guarantee. The IS is governed by a Board of Directors which meets quarterly and is Chaired by Councillor David O' Neill, President of COSLA. IS partners are COSLA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), both have an equal share of membership on the IS Board. SG are a key stakeholder of the IS and provide a range of specific grants which vary year on year. Further information about IS and products and services can be found on their website

Q56: We pay counsellor's high level of wages. Why do they need payment? They used to be voluntary.

A56: Councillors have an important role in representing their communities and taking decisions about local services. It is important that they are properly paid so as to reimburse them for their time and effort, and to ensure that as wide a range of people as possible are able to undertake the role. Salaries for councillors were introduced in 2007 to replace the previous system of paying

allowances. This was done on the recommendation of an independent committee, which had reviewed the previous system and identified a number of concerns such as overuse by some councils of the provision for higher "Special Responsibility Allowances". The current arrangements for councillors' salaries addressed those concerns by being transparent and applying equally to all councils, while rewarding councillors fairly for their work.

Q57: "Arm's length" organisations are they considered to be public sector i.e. is there a requirement for them to be an active partner on planning partnerships.

A57: Arms Length External Organisations (ALEOs) are not listed in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 as statutory partners in community planning, but they are not precluded from participating. ALEOs generally provide services on behalf of local authorities, so the priorities agreed by the CPP will influence the agreement between the local authority and the ALEO. The situation is similar for participation requests. These can be made to a listed public service authority in relation to any service provided "by or on behalf of" the authority – which would cover any service contracted to another provider, including ALEOs.

ALEOs are also in the category of bodies that can be designated by Scottish Ministers to be relevant authorities for the purpose of asset transfer, if they are wholly owned by one or more existing Relevant Authorities (i.e., no private sector involvement).

Q58: Why is digital not done in our local library?

A58: Scotland's libraries have a crucial role to play in delivering access to Information Technology, and in developing the skills and confidence of people who do not currently use the internet. The responsibility for public library provision lies with local authorities, who have a statutory responsibility to provide an "adequate" service. The SG provides the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) with a grant to facilitate good practice in the library sector and to support improvements to library services in Scotland. Through SLIC, the SG provides the Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix Fund (PLQIM). This is an annual fund of £500,000 for libraries to make improvements or provide additional services based on the findings of their PLQIM self-evaluation, such as increased WiFi Access, more PCs, and new training programmes for excluded groups.

Q59: Training issues. Unadopted roads – where to go after council refuse to adopt?

A59: The Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 places the statutory responsibility for local roads with Local Road Authorities, and the adoption of roads is not an issue where the Scottish Ministers or the SG would become directly involved. Local Roads Authorities are responsible for deciding how best to meet this duty on local roads in their areas. Part II of the aforementioned legislation gives information regarding the responsibility for the maintenance of private roads. As such, the Local Authority should be able to assist in helping the individual establish ownership and maintenance responsibility for any road in question.

Q60: Can you explain why the boundary commission will not attend public meetings?

A60: The Local Government Boundary Commission is currently consulting the public, including CCs, on its proposals for wards under the 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements. The consultation period ran from 30 July to 22 October 2015 and a number of requests to attend community events and public meetings have been made. The Commission will be considering all the responses it receives at the end of the consultation and will decide then whether it requires further information and if so whether to hold a local inquiry, or consult further, before making its recommendations. For that reason it has not accepted any invitations to meet at this stage although it has been happy to provide further information or explanation of its proposals on request. The Commission very much welcomes the views of CCs.

Q61: Property + parks left to the town for the people in early 19th century. Now taken over by local authority. Now buildings on the land – toilets, museums have been sold privately against the wishes of the residents & CC. No financial gain to the community. How is this fair?

A61: Assume the question is a reference to common good. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 includes a new Part which places a statutory duty on local authorities to establish and maintain a register of all property held by them for the common good. It also requires local authorities to publish their proposals and consult community bodies, including CCs, before disposing of or changing the use of common good assets.

Q62: Increase council tax! Stop free prescriptions FOR ALL.

A62: Scottish Ministers consider the current council tax system as a whole to be unfair; and, along with Local Government partners, have established the Commission on Local Tax Reform to consider council tax reform and replacement options. The Commission has cross-party and non-party

membership. The SG awaits the Commission's report, which is due this Autumn.   The SG continues to make the case that prescription charges are a tax on ill health, and are a barrier to good health for many people. This is particularly so for those with long-term conditions and those on low incomes who in the past have faced choices about which medicines they can afford to take. Evidence shows that this can lead to a deterioration in health, absence from work, or extra hospital admissions. The policy of free prescriptions has been fully funded by the SG at no cost to the National Health Service.

Q63: How can local elected reps/ward councillors who vote against the majority community now be held to account and/or sanctioned?

A63: Locally elected representatives are held accountable through local elections and the electorate.

Q64: There was a joke about the uninspiring language used by bureaucrats ('local outcome improvement plans') – surely we can do better than this?

A64: It is important that key messages are communicated in a clear and concise manner.

Q65: Is it reasonable for a local authority/regional council to stick to the 30 day rule to reply to a request from a CC.

A65: Public authorities, local authorities included will have regulations and timescales in place to provide an efficient and accurate response to requests for information from members of the public, including CCs.

Q66: Should Community Councillors be called something different? Other than councillors.

A66: Community Councillor seems an appropriate name as individuals put their names forward to be elected to represent members of their local community.

Q67: Could councils keep a register of decisions that CCs have influenced?

A67: This may not be practical because of resource issues and would be for each local authority to consider its merit.

Q68: Why can't CC's have the same powers as England's Parish Councils?

Q69: When are CCs going to get the same (or better) level of funding and powers as English Parish Councils?

Answer to Q68 & Q69: Different countries have different laws relating to the establishment and running of the CCs or parish councils and each one has varied powers and responsibilities.

Q70: Cutting down workshop discussion time – community disempowerment by the way.

A70: The timing of the agenda was reactive to the day's proceedings.

Q71: Governments recognition re our position with access to the Gov email addressing e.g. your cc@anga.gov.uk.

A71: The SG has no plans to explore this option.

Q72: At the community empowerment Bill conference in Edinburgh earlier this year an academic stated "CC are only good for hanging baskets or sorting dog fouling".

Q73: The afternoon's panel (at a recent conference) included a delegate who clearly shared a low opinion of CC's. Is this not contrary to today's event?

Q74: Good that this is the first time I've heard anyone in government or connected with praising CCs.

Answer to Q72 to Q74: The SG remains committed to supporting CCs to make a full and active contribution to the communities that they represent, and will continue to work in partnership with others who share this aspiration.

Q75: Where are the representatives from CCs north of the Tay?

A75: The invitation to the Fairer Scotland event was issued to all Community Councillors.

Q76: Will we get copy of his presentation?

Q77: Will there be hand-outs of the slides?

Q78: Will these presentations be available to us later on a website?

Answer to Q76 to Q78: All of the above are available on the CC website at www.communitycouncils.org.uk

Q79: What is that 'common duty'? and how can it work through community planning?

Q80: Where is & how does the NHS fit in?

Q81: Community – Based housing association have been over – professionalised. CCs are under – professionalised. Which is right?

Answer to Q79 to Q81: These questions need further clarification before attempting a response.