

To: Kilsyth and Villages Area Committee	Subject: Review of Scheme of Decentralisation	
From: Liaison Director		
Date: 26 October 1998	Ref: CE012/023/003	

**1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report considers the first year of the Councils Scheme of Decentralisation and progress made towards the objectives of the scheme as approved by Committee in February 1997.
- 1.2 The report also considers the opportunities for and barriers to progress which can be realistically addressed over the coming year and the progress to date on the first phase of implementation - establishing Area Committees, Area Teams and Community Forums; developing Area profiles; investigating the feasibility of 'first stop' shops; and improving co-ordination at an area or sub-area level.

**2.0 Background**

- 2.1 At its meeting of 26 August 1998 the Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub Committee agreed the arrangements for the review which will be concluded at the Sub Committee meeting of 25 November 1998.

**3.0 Review**

- 3.1 The objectives of the Scheme of Decentralisation are:
  - bringing services and decision making closer to the public where this will result in an improvement to the services;
  - enabling the public to influence and shape the design and delivery of services and the way the Council serves its communities; and
  - providing more effective and responsive local government.

**4.0 The First Year**

- 4.1 In considering the progress and achievements of the first year it needs to be considered in the context of the approach suggested with the Scheme of Decentralisation of simultaneous changes on five dimensions:-

Localisation: making Council Services more accessible at a local level (local offices or 'first stop' shops)

Integration: working across traditional, professional and departmental boundaries to promote area focused corporate working (area based projects and inter-departmental service planning).

Devolved Management: pushing managerial decision making authority to the lowest possible level within a clear policy and procedural framework (local managers with responsibility for services and control of budgets).

Democratisation: enhancing the role of elected members as local representatives and developing participatory democracy which draws local people into the decision making process (multi-purpose Area Committees and local partnerships with community organisations).

Organisational Culture: promoting a public service orientation, where the needs, rights and responsibilities of consumers, citizens and communities are paramount and where co-operative, collaborative and responsive services develop.

4.2 It is acknowledged that the process of decentralisation is a long term process and that it is not conceivable to expect any progress in some of the above areas at such an early stage.

## 5.0 Issues for Consideration

5.1 Review of progress of the Area Committee has highlighted some positive features and some issues of concern:

- Clarity on the remit of the Area Committee
- Clarity on the role of the Area Team e.g. The Area Team developing with an area rather than service focus.
- Training for Liaison Directors, Elected Members and Area Team members on the Area Committee process.
- Resourcing and support for the process
- Public awareness of Area Committees

### 5.1.1 The Remit of the Area Committee

Although the Kilsyth and Villages Area Committee has over the past twelve months been offered the opportunity to actively consider a wide range of matters relative to activities and functions which have implications for the Kilsyth and Villages area, there has been limited opportunity to discuss policy and operational arrangements affecting Council services.

### 5.1.2 The Role of the Area Team

The Area Team within Kilsyth and Villages has been limited in its activity. Reports from Housing, Social Work and Leisure have been presented at Area Committee but assistance with the development of community forums and production of an Area profile for the Kilsyth and Villages Area has been restricted. Area Team representatives continue to view their role as Service representatives rather than as an Area based entity to consider cross departmental activities of benefit to the area. It is essential that there should be investment in developing the Area Team on a corporate basis to assist members to take a more positive support role.

### 5.1.3 Training and Support on Decentralisation for Liaison Directors, Elected Members and Area Team Representatives

The need for training has been highlighted as a result of the points raised above. It is acknowledged that decentralisation for many within the authority is a new and unknown quantity. Training and ongoing support would assist in generating a clearer understanding of the purpose of Area Committees, Area Teams and the benefits of local participatory democracy.

#### 5.1.4 Resourcing of the Process

Limited resources have been identified to support and to develop the Area Committee, Area Team and Community Forum process.

Dedicated support is required to progress the development of and issues raised at Area Committees and the ongoing development of Community Forums. Resources are required in finance and administrative support for the operation of the committee.

#### 5.1.5 Long Term Investment in Community Development

In order to encourage genuine and active participation from our communities, an investment requires to be made in the process of Community development across the Council as a whole. The Council's Social Strategy and Corporate Plan set out a strong policy commitment to community development which must be implemented if decentralisation is to be effective. Community development cannot be seen as the responsibility of one or two departments of the Council but as a process that requires to become part of the culture of North Lanarkshire Council. This would ensure a long term investment in our communities and assist in developing a more positive and pro-active approach to service delivery and decision making.

### 6.0 **Progress**

- 6.1 Despite the difficulties identified there has been some progress made and some important advances secured. The opportunity to review the Scheme of decentralisation is welcomed and scope for taking stock and making adjustments should be recognised
- 6.2 Development of the Area Team requires further consideration.
- 6.3 There has been a growing awareness of the role and contribution that the Area Committee might make.
- 6.4 The establishment of the Community Forum is seen as a positive step towards further involvement of local representatives in the democratic process, but it is acknowledged that a commitment to resourcing and supporting the forum requires to be made on a long term basis in order to ensure that its support and development needs are addressed.

### 7 **Conclusion**

- 7.1 It is acknowledged that important decisions are required for the next phase of the development of the Scheme of Decentralisation and the Area Committees.
- 7.2 The Area Committee and the Area Team roles and the relationships between Committee and the Community Forum requires further consideration.

### 8.0 **Recommendation**

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
  - i) approves the comments set out in this report on the Scheme of Decentralisation for transmission to the Chief Executive's department.
  - ii) remit this report to the Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub Committee for consideration; and

iii) otherwise note the contents of this report

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

**Liaison Director**