

SUMMARY REPORT – JOINT CPIG / FSB SEMINAR ON ROLE OF SMALL BUSINESS IN COMMUNITY PLANNING – DUMBLANE 3 FEBRUARY 2004

MAIN THEMES

Contribution of the business sector to CP

A key theme from FSB members at the workshops was that the important contribution small businesses bring to the CP process not be overlooked. Local Authorities, CPPs, their partners and the Executive were all called on to increase their awareness of the contribution of small businesses and how it can add value both to the CP process, and to communities.

CPPs and their partners were asked to ensure that the particular difficulties that the small business sector face in engaging with CP process are taken into account. They were asked to think about the needs of the business community when planning, for example, the timing of meetings so that the sector are not excluded from CP.

There was also a clear message to business that they had a responsibility to become proactive in their involvement in Community Planning and to be receptive to understanding the challenges that the public sector face in developing Community Planning and in ensuring that as wide a range of interest and communities are involved.

Communication

Communication processes were seen as being important on several levels. It was necessary to communicate the importance of CP as a policy and to talk about the potential benefits of CP to the business sector. Workshops also discussed the importance of the business sector communicating the value and expertise that they can add to CP.

CPPs and their partners were asked to ensure that they use inclusive language and that they do not exclude the business sector through the use of jargon. Further, CPPs and their partners were challenged to be more proactive in seeking the views of the business sector and ensuring that they do this at all levels of the process, recognising that there is no 'one size fits all' model and that the small business sector is diverse.

Benefits of CP

There were many benefits to be realised from CP process and several FSB members present discussed how their business and their community had benefited from being involved. For others however there remained work to be done to communicate the benefits and sell the message of CP to ensure the engagement of the business sector. CPIG and the Executive had a role to play in ensuring that examples of good practice were disseminated and that the benefits of CP were more widely spread.

Role of the FSB

It was agreed that the FSB had a role in promoting its membership's involvement in the CP process and in encouraging FSB members to get involved at a local level. They had a role as a collective voice of small businesses in influencing the agenda at a national level and in

monitoring the involvement of business in Community Planning, as well as in helping their members take issues forward to the CPP at local level.

CPIG Secretariat
Community Planning Team
Scottish Executive
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