



COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE Updated March 2023

Context

Community planning focuses on promoting positive outcomes for everyone. It is about public, private, community and voluntary and social enterprise sectors (CVSE) working together, to plan and deliver better services which make a real difference to people’s lives. Communities are at the heart of process and community engagement is vital so that communities have a say in how public services develop and can be improved.

Connected: A Community Plan for the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough 2017-2030 is the overarching strategic community plan for the borough. It contains a long-term vision and nine long-term outcomes arranged under the strategic themes of Community, Economy and Place.

The Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Community Planning Strategic Partnership (CPSP) provides an overarching framework for partnership working within the borough. Additionally, there are a number of other structures that support governance and delivery of the plan. These structures have included a number of Thematic Action Planning teams, Communications and Engagement Working groups and the Community and Voluntary Sector Panel (CVSP).

In 2022, the following partnership structure was agreed. The diagram below illustrates how the CVSP feeds directly into the CPSP and its sub-committees.



Role and Purpose of the Community and Voluntary Sector Panel

The role and purpose of the Community and Voluntary Sector Panel is to;

Ensure the voice of the Community, Voluntary and Social Enterprise Sector is represented in community planning, by;

- Influencing the community planning agenda and decision-making processes through participation in all local community planning mechanisms and at national level where appropriate
- Strengthening the capacity of the CVSP and the wider CVSE Sector to organise, influence around the key issues and root causes of inequality and disadvantage affecting people within the Borough.
- Promoting and sharing good practice from within the CVSE and highlighting opportunities for positive development
- Assessing how proposals and actions of both the CVSP and the CPSP meet the needs of those most marginalised and disadvantaged over time.

Promote ongoing Community Engagement, by;

- Promoting and facilitating the active involvement and participation of under-represented Section 75 groups within the Borough in civil society
- Advocating to ensure the views, experiences and needs of those sections of the community who are seldom heard, are sought, acknowledged and considered.
- Working to ensure that decision making structures reflect the diversity of the local community within the Borough.

Support the development of Cross-sectoral Relationships and improved Partnership working, by;

- Facilitating effective communications and information sharing across the CVSE sector and with statutory and business sectors.
- Connecting with existing networks, partnerships, forums and inter-agencies within the Borough to encourage and strengthen networking and cooperation.
- Encouraging collaboration between CVSE, statutory, business sectors and national government around community planning actions

Underpinning Values and Principles

The Community and Voluntary Sector Panel seeks to ensure its work is informed by the following values:

- **Social Justice and Equality** – where we work for a more just and equal society which recognises environmental, political, cultural and economic issues.
- **Anti-discrimination** – where we respect, value, support and promote difference and diversity whilst rejecting and challenging any form of oppression, discrimination and sectarianism.
- **Community empowerment** – where we enable communities to develop confidence, capacity, skills and relationships to shape collective action and challenge imbalances of power.
- **Collective action** – where we promote the active and inclusive participation of people within communities, using the power of a collective voice and goal.
- **Sustainable Development** – where we promote development that respects and protects the natural environment, is based on climate justice and meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- **Working and learning together** – where we create and encourage opportunities for collective learning through action and shared reflection.

Code of Conduct

The Community and Voluntary Sector Panel has adopted the following **Code of Conduct**, which all members sign up to:

1. **Selflessness** – Actions and decisions should always be in the interests of the wider public and not for financial gain or other benefits for themselves, family or friends.
2. **Integrity** – CVSP members should not place themselves in any situation where other people or organisations might seek to influence them unduly for their own personal benefit or the group they represent.
3. **Objectivity** – In carrying out all CVSP business, members should make objective and non-judgemental choices based on evidenced need and/or merit.
4. **Openness and Accountability** – CVSP members should be as open as possible about all the collective decisions made and actions they take and ensure open and regular communication with others. Information should only be restricted when the wider public interest or the need for confidentiality clearly demands.
5. **Honesty** – members of the CVSP have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their role on the CVSP and to take steps to resolve any conflicts of interest arising in a way that protects the public interest.
6. **Leadership** – CVSP members should demonstrate leadership by showing respect for other members' views and opinions. Members should also demonstrate support for and trust in other members and by applying all these principles in all they do.
7. **Participation and Partnership** - CVSP members should actively encourage public participation from all sections of the community and promote a culture of partnership, collaborative working and shared responsibility.

Concerns about breaches in the code of conduct will be addressed through the appropriate adopted procedures.

Membership of the Community and Voluntary Sector Panel

Membership of the CVSP is open to individuals from CVSE organisations across the Borough. Membership is limited to two named people per organisation. There is no upper limit on the number of CVSP members. A minimum of one call for new members will be made each year to ensure membership remains open and accessible.

Criteria for membership

Following an engagement process with the CVSE Sector in 2018, the following criteria for membership were agreed. Across the breadth of membership, members should;

- Be either a Trustee/Director, volunteer or employee of a constituted community, voluntary or social enterprise organisation operating within the ABC Council area
- Be drawn from and reflect the diversity of the Borough and be inclusive of Section 75 groupings.
- be drawn from different geographical areas across the Borough and reflect a mix of rural and urban communities.
- Through their work, have a good understanding of the needs of different communities experiencing inequality and disadvantage across the Borough.
- Be committed and able to gather views of the wider CVSE sector to inform community planning processes and to disseminate and share information about community planning processes with the CVSE sector.
- Be willing to sign and committed to following the agreed code of conduct.
- Be committed to attending and actively participating in full CVSP meetings and willing to contribute to other areas of the CVSP annual work programme.

CVSP Members roles and responsibilities:

- Participating in 3 full CVSP meetings per year,
- Engaging with and contributing to working groups and other planned activities to support the community planning agenda across the Borough.
- Working with other panel members to identify actions, develop and agree actions and ensure delivery against planned outcomes.
- Taking a lead in actions when required
- Carrying out allocated tasks as agreed at meetings.
- Developing relationships across the borough to foster collaborative working.
- Facilitating effective community engagement in the development and implementation of agreed plans and actions
- Engaging with and encouraging meaningful participation of other CVSE organisations and communities within the Borough
- Promoting inclusivity by identifying and engaging with groups whose voices are seldom heard, using appropriate engagement methods.
- Contributing to the collection of relevant data for performance management
- Contributing to review and evaluation processes to support improvement.

CVSP working relations with the Community Planning Strategic Partnership

The Community Planning Strategic Partnership is a group made up of a wide range of partners including representatives from the thirteen statutory organisations, political representatives and community organisations. The Community Planning Strategic Partnership (CPSP) is the main decision body for community planning in the borough, it is focused on building relationships and seeking active participation of partners in all decisions and activities.

In addition to contributing to the strategic delivery of community planning across the borough, CVSP Members will benefit from engaging with the mechanisms established within the CPSP for information exchange, sharing of experience, mutual support, the development of new strategies, and the dissemination of services and ideas following the stated objectives and outcomes of the CPSP.

CVSP Members are also entitled to mileage reimbursement for approved travel costs incurred as part of CVSP activity.

CVSP Steering Group

A CVSP Steering Group will be comprised of a maximum of 10 Panel members. The purpose of this Steering Group is to plan and take forward CVSP actions with and on behalf of the wider CVSP through the year. The Steering Group has a collective responsibility to work on behalf of the CVSP. Steering Group members are not there to represent their own CVSE organisation. The Steering Group will delegate key areas of responsibility and representation on community planning work streams which will include the elected CVSP Chair and Vice Chair representing the CVSP on the CPSP.

Members of the Steering Group

Members of the Steering Group will be elected by and from the wider CVSP membership. Membership of the Steering Group is initially for a 4-year term, at which point the membership will be refreshed via a further nomination and election process. At this point, existing Steering Group members will be eligible to re-apply for one further 4-year term following the agreed nomination and election procedures. Steering group members cannot serve more than 2 consecutive terms of office.

Vacancies that arise within the Steering Group will be filled as required using the agreed nomination and election procedures.

Collectively the Steering Group members should bring a range of thematic expertise and geographic spread and seek to ensure a good sectoral balance. This should;

- Give consideration to geographical spread reflecting rural and urban communities across the borough.
- Reflect a breadth of CVSE organisations on the CVSP – e.g., residents’ groups, sports groups, volunteering organisations etc.
- Reflect the diversity of communities across the borough, particularly Section 75 groups.
- Reflect key thematic priorities and issues as identified in the community plan e.g., anti-poverty, health and wellbeing etc.

The role and purpose of the CVSP Steering Group is set out in a specific Terms of Reference.

Chair and Vice Chair

The CVSP Steering Group will elect from its membership, a Chair and Vice Chair who will each be appointed for a minimum 2-year term with the option of 1 further year extension subject to the agreement of the CVSP.

The Chair’s responsibilities include;

- Chairing meetings of the CVSP and the Steering Group and other meetings as required.
- Agreeing agendas
- Allocating/reviewing/co-ordinating actions between meetings
- Ensuring each action is attributed to an owner.
- Ensuring feedback from CVSP members attending any and all other community planning working groups
- Ensuring that the CVSP reports on an annual basis to members of the CVSP on the Panel’s activities and to other stakeholders as required.
- Representing the CVSP at, reporting to and contributing as a full member of the CPSP
- Agreeing and reviewing performance management

The Vice Chair’s responsibilities include:

- Deputising for the Chair in their absence
- Supporting the Chair in carryout delegated functions as agreed.
- Representing the CVSP at, reporting to and contributing as a full member of the CPSP

Decision Making

All CVSP members are required to demonstrate commitment and be willing to contribute to collaborative working. To enhance collaborative working decisions will be made by consensus as far as possible.

Conflict of Interest

Community planning and the work of the CVSP within it is an open and transparent process. Documentation in relation to the CVSP will be made publicly available. Conflicts of interest may arise. It is the responsibility of all CVSP members to identify any potential conflict and to declare it to the Chair. Any conflict of interest will be recorded in the minutes.

Reporting Arrangements

A consistent and concise reporting template will be developed to support the gathering of information and facilitate reporting. The Community Planning Strategic Partnership will report to the Department for Communities every two years and progress will also be reported to stakeholders and the wider community. The Planning Group will report on an annual basis to members of the CVSP on the Panel’s activities.

Review

These terms of reference will be subject to periodic review by the CVSP and the CPSP. The CVSP will also engage with and contribute to wider review processes undertaken by the CPSP.

Secretariat

The Community Planning team within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council will provide Secretariat support for the CVSP and the Steering Group. While not exhaustive, this will include;

- Assistance with making practical arrangements for CVSP and Steering Group meetings.
- Supporting the CVSP and Steering Group fulfil commitments within the CVSP work plan.
- Assistance to the CVSP and Steering Group with wider community engagement activities.
- Supporting the CVSP and Steering Group with communications and networking activity.
- Assisting the CVSP and Steering Group with monitoring and reporting of impact and outcomes delivered as a result of CVSP activity.
- Commissioning other areas of support to the CVSP as required. For example, facilitation support and technical support. This will be undertaken in accordance with Council procurement procedures.