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PLAN 4 COWDENBEATH AREA

Local Community Plan 2023-2026

Published August 2023



Our vision

Our vision is to work together to meet the needs of individuals and communities in the Cowdenbeath Area. We will listen and engage with our communities, shaping local services to support them achieve their full potential. We will provide opportunities, resources and deliver services, based on what our communities tell us.

What is the Cowdenbeath Area?

- The Cowdenbeath Area consists of a number of communities covering two ward areas, wards 7 and ward 8. Communities include:
 - Ward 7 – Kelty, Cowdenbeath, Crossgates, Hill of Beath, Lumphinnans.
 - Ward 8 – Ballingry, Lochore, Crosshill, Glenraig, Lochgelly, Cardenden.
- With a total population of circa 42,000 residents the area owes much to their historical links with coal mining and extensive coalfields that characterised the area.

What puts us on the map?

- The Cowdenbeath area sits within central Fife, well connected with road and rail infrastructure. It is rich in heritage and natural green space.
- At its heart is Lochore Meadows Country Park, which attracts over 1 million visitors a year, providing access to nature, outdoor activities, leisure and social opportunities. It is also home to Fife Cycle Park, Cowdenbeath Racewall, Leisure Facilities, beautiful buildings and much more.
- The 2020 Narrative Enquiry identified that *“Cowdenbeath stands apart from the other areas because of the strength of its community spirit and connections.”*

What major challenges do we need to address?

- Poverty within the Cowdenbeath Area, its impact, and its consequences.
- Lack of Community empowerment and engagement – the communities we serve do not feel listened to, valued or empowered.
- Lack of aspiration within the communities – barriers and limited opportunities for individuals and their communities to reach their full potential.
- Anti-social behaviour throughout the area, the factors which drive this and resources available to tackle it.

Where are we just now?

The Cowdenbeath Area requires a new plan to ensure it delivers services and improvements which meet the needs of the community, recognising that the Covid pandemic has left a legacy of change and new challenges.

To ensure the Council, local partners and elected members work together, this new plan highlights the top priorities for Cowdenbeath Area so we can have a targeted approach in what we deliver and how we continue to support and develop our communities, putting them at the heart of all that we do.

This plan provides a guiding vision of what, collectively, we'd like to achieve by 2026. It was developed by the Cowdenbeath Area Partnership group, who are accountable to the Cowdenbeath Area Committee, for their ongoing contributions to the delivery of the plan. It is based on data* from various sources to ensure there's evidence behind what we're looking to achieve.

What do we want our communities' future to look and feel like?

- Individual skills and talents are recognised, nurtured and developed.
- People can set goals and aspire to achieve them, with support available from a range of services.
- Young people are an integrated and respected part of the wider community.
- People have the resources they need to thrive and live healthy, happy and fulfilled lives.
- Everyone in the community feels engaged with service providers and each other.

What do we want to achieve?

- People in our community are lifted out of poverty.
- People are provided with opportunities and are supported to reach their potential.
- Empowered communities, able to shape services in the area to improve opportunities and outcomes.
- Thriving places for all people of all ages, which instil a sense of pride.
- Maximise on our area's assets, improving accessibility and as a tool to support the communities aims (eg. Lochore Meadows Country Park, Community halls and centres, open spaces).
- All partners engage with communities in a consistent way, making use of the Community Engagement Toolkit.

*data sourced from <https://know.fife.scot/>

What are the priorities for the Cowdenbeath Area?

Information taken from the Strategic Assessment (2022), Narrative Enquiry (2020) and feedback from both the community and professionals working in the Cowdenbeath Area, was analysed to identify the main areas of focus for the next three years.

Three distinct priorities have emerged which will help all partners to deliver real improvement for our communities, while embedding these priorities throughout the work they undertake.



Tackling Poverty

Cowdenbeath has 19.6% of the most deprived SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) data zones in Fife, exacerbated by the cost of living crisis and a number of other factors. Lifting people out of poverty is critical to ensure our communities have access to the resources needed to live healthy, happy and fulfilling lives.



Raising Aspirations

Conversations between the community and members of the Cowdenbeath Area Partnership Group highlight a lack of aspiration, particularly with young people in the area. Providing greater engagement and opportunities is essential to creating strong, successful communities, which aspire to achieve and improve.



Community Engagement

Community engagement is key to building strong, resilient and empowered communities. It is essential that people of the Cowdenbeath Area are empowered to shape their communities, supported by services which are tailored to meet their needs. The Plan 4 Cowdenbeath therefore places an emphasis on Community Engagement to require partners to listen, respond to and empower local communities and their voices.

How does the Local Plan relate to the Plan 4 Fife?

The three priorities identified in this plan support the Plan 4 Fife, ensuring that there is a golden thread running from local service delivery within our community to the overall aims of Fife Council's plan to deliver for the people of Fife.

Opportunities for All

Tackling Poverty seeks to ensure all citizens have the resources to live happy and healthy lives.	Raising Aspirations aims to ensure that all citizens aspire to achieve and have opportunities and support to do so.	Community engagement helps organisations tailor support and deliver what our communities need to ensure everyone can thrive.
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Thriving Places

Tackling Poverty will be supported by the development of a thriving local economy and an environment which supports the most vulnerable in our society.	Raising Aspirations to encourage pride and ambition for the area, supporting communities to take pride in their environment and facilities. It provides encouragement for entrepreneurship and supports a Community Wealth Building approach.	Community engagement will allow us to understand the communities vision of a thriving place, so we can work in partnership to deliver on their aspirations.
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Inclusive Growth and Jobs

Tackling Poverty Supporting income maximisation brings money into the local economy. A community wealth building approach will help keep this additional money circulating, creating growth and jobs.	Raising Aspirations Encouraging entrepreneurship and providing support for new businesses develop will support growth. This is underpinned by creating a culture of encouragement and support in local communities.	Community engagement By establishing what local communities want and need, we can better plan and deliver growth, providing greater assurance to investors and businesses to come to Cowdenbeath.
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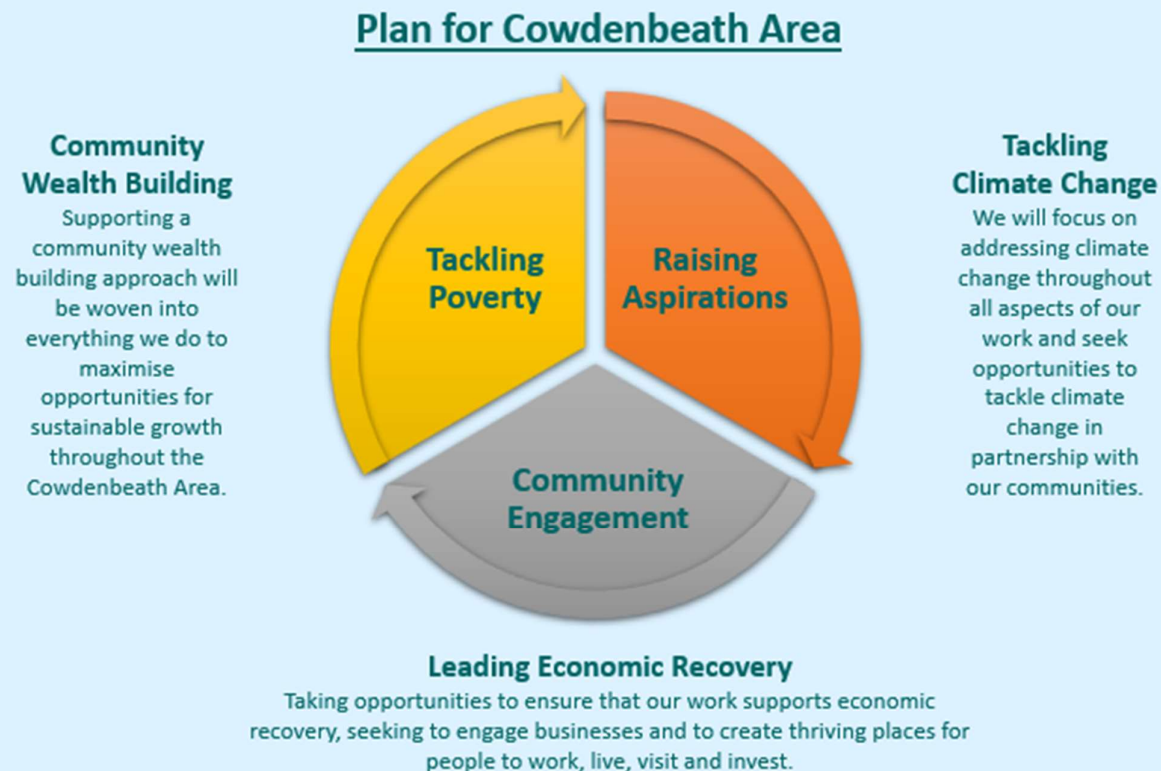
Community Led Services

Tackling Poverty Taking action to support people in poverty is delivered locally, tailoring our response to local needs and demands. Lifting people out of poverty required community led services, which are aligned to best meet their needs.	Raising Aspirations This can only be achieved where it is led by the community. They need to have opportunities and support from partners, but lead the way in identifying what their aspirations are to ensure they can take ownership of their journey.	Community engagement Working with the community to ensure they're able to contribute to shaping services in the area, in a way that they feel valued. Working with community groups to support them in achieving their aims.
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How does the Local Plan support Recovery and Renewal?

The three priorities identified in this plan will be delivered with a conscious focus on opportunities to extend Community Wealth Building, support tackling Climate Change and Leading Economic Recovery. These principles will be embedded into all projects and help guide service delivery throughout the area.

The principles in the Recovery and Renewal plan will support discussions with partners on service delivery through partnership meetings within the area.



Appendix 1 – Improvement plan for LCP

Area Priority	Current Challenge	Improvement Focus
Tackling Poverty	<p>Cowdenbeath has 19.6% of the most deprived SIMD data zones in Fife, with some communities being in the top 10% of SIMD zones.</p> <p>18.7% of children (15 and under) in the Cowdenbeath Area are living in relative poverty (under 60% of mean disposable income).</p> <p>13.6% of the Cowdenbeath population is employment deprived (9.4% for Fife) and 17.8% are income deprived (11.9% for Fife).</p> <p>Cowdenbeath Area has a number of challenges which deepen poverty including access to transport, access to low cost grocery shopping in some of our communities and limited opportunities for employment in the local area.</p> <p>Now high levels of inflation and substantial increases in the cost of living for basic necessities, such as food and fuel, are adding to the pressures felt by individual households. It is unclear when this situation will stabilise, and how this will impact on widening inequalities.</p> <p>Following the COVID pandemic there has been an increased demand for crisis support and basics such as food and fuel. While there are a range of services in place to support individuals and families, there is a recognition that more needs to be done to support people in moving out of poverty through fair work, training and learning opportunities.</p> <p>Further work is required to understand the barriers individuals are facing and opportunities that may be available to them. Cost of living is an ongoing and increasing concern for local people and there is uncertainty as to what the full impact of this will be in the medium to longer term.</p>	<p>Through the Cowdenbeath Area Partnership Group (CPAG), work with partners and communities to move from crisis support towards poverty prevention, unpicking the reasons for poverty and looking to address the problem at its root to make transformative change that creates a more sustainable, longer-term solution for individuals and communities.</p> <p>Work with CPAG to better understand the challenges faced in our community and tailor our services to deliver preventative work. Undertake community engagement around poverty challenges, with an engagement event to take place in five venues throughout the area during 2023/24.</p> <p>Work with partners to promote and maximise welfare opportunities to ensure we reach our most in need, offering additional support to those who experience barriers to self-service. This includes an increase in engagement at community groups and schools over the next two years, with the aim of delivering a welfare session at all of our schools by 2025.</p> <p>Develop initiatives to support families with the cost of the school day to both support family finances and boost attendance and participation in schools.</p> <p>Support businesses in Cowdenbeath Area to thrive and adopt 'good work' principles for employees. E.g. the real living wage, work placements and training opportunities.</p> <p>Develop, promote and deliver educational opportunities, which will upskill people to improve employment prospects and personal development.</p> <p>Investigate barriers to work, such as childcare and travel, so we can support people back into the workplace or increase working hours. Support breakfast clubs and after school provision, which offer good nutrition, socialisation and strengthen sense of community.</p> <p>Work to build capacity with community food providers to meet local needs, expand volunteering opportunities and strengthen communities. Support community food providers to become more sustainable.</p> <p>Develop community growing initiatives and promotion of 'grow your own' to support household access to healthy food, community food projects, local food security and to help address climate change.</p> <p>Deliver energy support and advice to our communities ensuring they are informed, confident and efficient when using home energy helping to reduce bills, fuel poverty and tackle climate change.</p> <p>We will extend our programme of free and low-cost activities to ensure people in all of our communities have access and opportunities to participate.</p>

		Deliver opportunities to improve access to social work, physical and mental health support services throughout the area.
	<p>Community Wealth Building – A community wealth building approach can support tackling poverty in many ways. Keeping wealth in the local community can support jobs, stimulate economic growth and provide increased opportunities for entrepreneurship. More localised businesses are better placed to support the real living wage and flexibility to support people into work. Partners can work with local businesses to achieve this, which provides a positive cycle of improvement within the area.</p> <p>Climate Change – The impact of climate change will affect low income households disproportionately as it raises costs of insurance, food, fuel, etc. There's a risk the poverty gap will widen. Considering climate mitigation and adaptation strategies will play a key role in addressing these impacts and in shaping future initiatives to tackle poverty. These considerations will also help to take a longer-term view on support provided.</p> <p>Leading Economic Recovery – Supporting those who are most disadvantaged and furthest from the labour market to secure and sustain meaningful employment; including interventions for disadvantaged groups and communities, supported employment initiatives, skills development and progression; and ensuring anchor organisations in Fife act as exemplars of Fair Employment practices and promote these values more widely with suppliers and other businesses in Fife.</p>	

Area Priority	Current Challenge	Improvement Focus
<p>Raising Aspirations</p>	<p>Community feedback shows care and maintenance around the area is in need of improvement and indicates a significant drop in the communities sense of influence and control. This has a negative impact on communities aspiring to improve their local area (Strategic Assessment 2022).</p> <p>Only 66.8% of 16-19 year olds are engaged in education, compared to 73% for Fife (Strategic Assessment 2022).</p> <p>Strong social connections are seen as a cornerstone of mental health and wellbeing and community resilience, which is key to raising aspirations. Mental health and wellbeing is a national challenge, which requires joined up service support to make a positive impact in our communities.</p> <p>Technology has become a necessity for keeping connected, working remotely, and accessing vital information. Personal use of the internet in the Area is 96.4% compared to 93.9% for Fife. While levels of internet use continue to grow, people can still be digitally excluded because they lack the skills to navigate the digital world confidently and safely (Strategic Assessment 2022).</p> <p>Feedback from the Cowdenbeath Area Partnership group indicates a lack of aspiration, particularly with young people in the area. Engaging with young people to support positive destinations is a focus for the area.</p> <p>Young people can feel excluded from decision making, with community groups having few young people actively engaged. Young people can provide fresh ideas, new perspectives and enthusiasm to established groups which hasn't been harnessed. This also creates challenges with succession planning for community groups.</p> <p>The Covid Pandemic has left a lasting impact on many within the community, particularly around mental health which can create a barrier to living healthy and fulfilled lives. Access to support can be challenging across the country.</p>	<p>Increase opportunities for individuals within the community to develop their knowledge and skills. Focus on reducing gaps which may be a barrier to building positive lives and improving job prospects.</p> <p>Work to reduce digital inequality by ensuring everyone can access services, support and opportunities. Deliver support and training within the community so people can unlock the opportunities digital skills can bring (information, dignity, independence, employment, etc) through the provision of digital skills courses, which are free to access.</p> <p>Raise awareness of volunteering and the benefits it can bring. Deliver a drop-in volunteering event which promotes volunteering opportunities and connects people with organisations.</p> <p>Engage with young people to support and understand their aspirations and work with partners to provide young people with routes to training, further education and employment ensuring they have an opportunity to reach their full potential (Developing the Young Workforce and the Young Persons' Guarantee).</p> <p>Promote volunteering opportunities to young people to support confidence building, helping them gain experience and make connections within their community.</p> <p>Create and deliver a youth work development programme, providing routes into youth work throughout the area, which will support local employment and provide opportunities for career progression.</p> <p>Promote and support new and existing businesses to grow and develop by continuing to look at investment opportunities, engaging with shop local initiatives, supplier development programmes and to make community connections ensuring our town centres and vibrant and alive.</p> <p>Work with partners to target wellbeing support within communities, breaking down barriers to accessing help and information. This includes supporting community initiatives such as welfare support, The Well and other wellbeing hubs, as well as ensuring information about services is available.</p> <p>Provide opportunities to improve mental health across all sectors of the community. Initiatives will include raising awareness of services available to support reducing social isolation. Improving knowledge that will help reduce stigma around mental health and opportunities for physical activities.</p> <p>Maximise on the potential of our assets such as Lochore Meadows Country Park, Community Centres, Fife Cycle Park and other third-party assets to support the economy, volunteering, education, employment and wellbeing.</p>

	<p>Anti-social behaviour can be a challenge in some areas, negatively impacting communities.</p>	<p>Identify ways to better use our community facilities through community engagement, putting them back at the heart of our communities. Work to enhance social connections, expand educational programmes/projects and encourage culture and creativity.</p> <p>Enhance the communities' sense of pride in local assets and open spaces through improvement projects and new initiatives.</p> <p>Work to understand the factors leading to anti-social behaviour, working collectively to address these factors and tackle anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Deliver opportunities to improve access to social work, physical and mental health support services throughout the area.</p>
	<p>Community Wealth Building – Work to raise aspirations in the community will be delivered in a way which supports Community Wealth Building. Using local organisations, suppliers and procurement will help to retain wealth locally and ensure local services feel supported and are positioned to benefit from initiatives. Embedding the CWB ethos into work undertaken with the community will help engage groups and individuals with the CWB principles, to start making CWB part of daily life.</p> <p>Climate Change – Working with communities to raise awareness of climate issues will highlight how everyone can be involved and develop sustainable enterprises with education, training and jobs linked to low carbon and renewable solutions. Individual and collective climate action can help raise aspirations and build resilience for community and their place.</p> <p>Leading Economic Recovery – Engage with the local economy and businesses when developing initiatives in the area, particularly around training/skills development, progression opportunities and wellbeing. Supporting development of thriving places, which supports the economy and tourism in the area. Promoting Cowdenbeath Area as an attractive destination for visitors.</p>	

Area Priority	Current Challenge	Improvement Focus
Community Engagement	<p>83.8% of people in Cowdenbeath Area would like to be more involved in the decisions Fife Council makes that affect their local area, where only 24.8% feel they're involved in their local community and only 10.7% feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area (Fife People's Panel, Survey 35, 2022).</p> <p>Fewer people think the council is good at letting people know about the kind of services that it provides or addressing the key issues affecting the quality of life in their local neighbourhood.</p> <p>Within the Cowdenbeath Area, only one in three people believe the Council provides high quality services and does the best it can with money available.</p> <p>Within the area, fewer people believe that the Council is good at listening to local people's views before it takes decisions or keeping people informed about what is happening in the local area.</p> <p>Knowledge gaps exist between service provision and local needs. Partners need input from communities to address these gaps to better tailor services.</p> <p>78.1% would be willing to work together with others on something to improve their neighbourhood (Fife People's Panel, Survey 35, 2022).</p> <p>54% of people report that they provide some kind of unpaid (voluntary) help to a group or organisation (46% of Fife as a whole). However, there is a need to provide support and recognition for volunteering throughout the area (Fife People's Panel, Survey 35, 2022).</p>	<p>Increase community engagement across the Cowdenbeath Area and develop projects to work directly with people and communities.</p> <p>Refresh community profiles across the area by the end of 2023/24.</p> <p>Deliver Participatory Budgeting work in 8 of our communities, giving the community a voice in developing community projects and helping to increase community aspirations.</p> <p>Develop outreach community engagement opportunities to increase the percentage of people in the Cowdenbeath Area who feel they can influence decisions that affect their local area (e.g. pop up stalls, focus groups, open days).</p> <p>Deliver projects to encourage inter-generational work to enhance community engagement across the generations.</p> <p>Continue traditional ways of communicating information to the community (e.g. posters, flyers, social media, community notice boards) and consider new ways of engagement (e.g. digital engagement opportunities and how we reach the hardest to reach voices).</p> <p>Commit to building community capacity by encouraging and increasing involvement, leadership and participation across all demographics including young people through youth Democracy & Participation in Schools and Community settings; adults and older people; communities of interest; protected characteristics; asylum seekers, refugees and the travelling community.</p> <p>Support social groups to establish and flourish, which can enhance the sense of belonging and social inclusion. These groups can also be key to supporting wider community engagement with the Council and partners.</p> <p>Work with communities to develop revised Community Action Plans and look to provide financial support so that actions can be delivered (Participatory Budgeting).</p> <p>Take advantage of the community engagement toolkit and National Standards of Community Engagement to provide a high quality and consistent approach to engagement. Train representatives from across the partnership to ensure a co-ordinated approach to reduce consultation fatigue.</p> <p>Build upon the positive engagement achieved around Lochore Meadows Country Park, using this as a springboard to continue engaging and listening to the Community.</p>

	<p>Community Wealth Building – While engaging with communities, a clear narrative around Community Wealth Building to build awareness and understanding can help achieve buy-in from communities which in turn will help support CWB. Where actions come from community engagement, they should consider how it supports a CWB approach.</p> <p>Climate Change – Raising awareness of the climate & biodiversity emergency can help encourage collaborative discussion on how to mitigate and adapt the future challenges. This will also help considerations we make in service delivery to be more easily understood. There are opportunities for community engagement activities around climate impact and action. For example, exploring what place-based climate action can be undertaken with individuals and the wider community collectively.</p> <p>Leading Economic Recovery – Engaging businesses as part of the community to create strong working relationships and broader understanding of support services available to allow future development and growth.</p>
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Appendix 2 – Cowdenbeath Area Partnership Group Membership

The Cowdenbeath Area Partnership Group (previously separate People and Place Leadership Groups) bring expertise from a range of different perspectives to deliver a new, more integrated model of working. They meet regularly to support delivery of the Plan4Cowdebeath. The core membership of the group includes:

- Community Manager
- Education Manager
- Children & Families Team Manager
- Family Support Service Team Manager
- Health and Social Care Representative
- Criminal Justice Services Team Manager
- Safer Communities Team Manager
- Housing Manager
- Community Development Team Manager
- Third Sector Reps
- Community Use Team Manager
- Transportation Lead Consultant
- Grounds Maintenance Team Manager
- Planning Services Officers
- Economy Adviser
- Employability and Skills Lead Officer
- Town Centre Development Unit reps
- Resource Efficient Solutions
- Street Cleansing Officer
- Policy and Place Reps

Representatives from other Services, partner agencies, statutory authorities (e.g., SEPA, Police Scotland, local tourism associations, local voluntary organisations) may be invited onto the groups as and when required.