Local Government and Regeneration Committee

Regeneration Inquiry

Submission from Glasgow Housing Association

Local Government and Regeneration Committee

Strategy and Policy Issues

1. How can the linkage between the various strategies and policies related to regeneration be improved?

Improved communication and sharing of information, distilling down key highlights or messages from the various relevant policies and strategies, and providing high level executive summaries would assist in the first instance. As part of policy/funding development, consider the links and possible joint working opportunities with the housing sector. Provide information on successful funding awards (as is the case with People and Communities Fund).

2. Can physical, social and economic regeneration really be separate entities? 
The Committee would find it useful to hear about projects distinctly focussed on one or more aspects, and the direct and indirect outcomes of such activity.

The different aspects of regeneration should be viewed as holistically as possible in order to identify the different potential benefits for individual projects from a variety of perspectives, and consider the physical, social and economic regeneration benefits that can be achieved by complementary activities – such as community benefit employment and training clauses inserted into contracts for construction. GHA has used community benefit clauses in this way since 2006, which has resulted in 1,947 new jobs created to date. Of these, 651 apprentices and 482 new trainee places have been supported, alongside the refurbishment and construction of new homes for tenants with improved warmth, security, comfort and layout.

Demolition and development of new homes has also been supported by community consultation and activities to help promote community safety, community learning, employability and arts and heritage activities – please see attached the example of the Shawbridge Transformational Regeneration area, recently featured in the CIH and Scottish Government publication “Regenerating Our Communities – A snapshot in Time”¹. The key challenges are having the flexibility to respond to the needs of different communities, and the timing of interventions to support communities through regeneration – which is not always straightforward.

¹ Pages 14-15
3. Are we achieving the best value from investment in this area? If not, how could funding achieve the maximum impact? Could the funding available be used in different ways to support regeneration?

There may be scope for further efficient procurement of both capital and service delivery projects, which can aim to initiate new or greater offerings or lower costs, and a wider range of benefits when procuring contracts. For example, additional community benefit beyond or in addition to employability opportunities, such as services in kind from contractors could be requested via procurement processes. This could encourage contractors to play an enhanced role in regeneration, as they would have a stake in the process as a competitive edge. In times of austerity, a variety of funding streams can also be used to help maximise partnership inputs and project viability.
Partnership Working

4. What delivery mechanisms, co-ordination of, and information on the funding that supports regeneration are required, to facilitate access by all sections of the community?

Clear messaging and different forms of delivery of information and guidance relating to different funding pots (avoiding overlap/duplication), clear processes and potentially face to face support, should be in place, if you wish to widen access for all sections of the community.

5. Should funding be focussed on start up or running costs? What is the correct balance between revenue and capital funding? Please indicate reasons for your views.

There is no one rule and the balance has to be considered case by case, particularly given the current economic climate. For example, continued revenue support may be required to support projects that are working well – there is an expectation that projects will become self-financing and that is not always going to be possible, even for those initiatives that have generated income streams and are producing successful outcomes. The risk is by cutting up-front costs, greater costs and poorer outcomes are incurred elsewhere.

6. How can it be ensured that regeneration projects are sustainable in the long term?

Scrutiny of outcomes and encouraging match funding and building on existing best practice rather than continual reinvention. Also consider the role of creative regeneration to keep communities engaged, with all agencies and the private sector recognising that they play a part. Physical, social and economic regeneration are inextricably linked and physical regeneration alone will not deliver sustainable regeneration outcomes. The wider economy and directives such as the welfare reforms also affect all players in regeneration, including private developers, residents, the voluntary sector, housing associations and statutory providers, and need to be responded to proactively to mitigate their effects if regeneration is to be delivered.

So while, for example, in 2011/12 GHA built 332 homes, we also helped over 600 people into work, training or apprenticeships and launched a partnership with Strathclyde Police and Strathclyde Fire and Rescue to tackle crime in our neighbourhoods. We aim in future to expand our employability programmes, such as our modern apprentice programme offering employment opportunities direct to our tenants and their children, and provide other benefits such as education grants, access to IT and money advice. We work with a wide range of partners to deliver such services, like Jobs & Business Glasgow, GCC and the voluntary sector – to help sustain regeneration and promote better lives in the longer term.
Practical Issues

7. What actions could the Scottish Government’s forthcoming community capacity building programme include to best support communities to ‘do regeneration’ themselves?

Communities need support to be a strong community voice and to be able to demonstrate the impact of that voice on service planning and delivery. Some actions could include:

- Access to ‘seedcorn’ funds for community groups
- Support from workers using community learning and development approaches.
- Opportunities for community groups to network and work together
- Identify and support existing or potential community anchor organisations that support engagement and influence. (e.g. housing associations, voluntary organisations, development trusts, community councils etc)

8. What role should CPPs play in supporting the community in regenerating their communities?

CPPs have a crucial role in ensuring that processes for community engagement in community planning are robust, multi-faceted and that they are underpinned by National Community Engagement Standards. CPPs need to ensure that they engage with communities across a broad range of place and interest and do not restrict engagement to one group, for example community councils.

CPPs need to ensure that community engagement is adequately resourced so that local communities understand how they can engage with CPPs and are enabled to do so in order to influence decision making.

CPPs also have a key role in supporting communities to understand who is responsible for delivering services and how they are accountable to communities.

9. How can CPPs best empower local communities to deliver regeneration? Please provide any examples of best practice or limitations experienced that you think the Committee would find useful in its scrutiny.

The recommendations to community planning partners in the Scottish Government’s recent Strategic guidance on community learning and development places increased expectations on community planning partners to assess community needs and strengths through engagement and continued dialogue with communities, and make better use of community learning and development (CLD) approaches.
Community planning partners therefore need to have a better understanding of deliberative approaches to engagement which could include deliberative polls, community mapping and consensus conferences.

Activities such as participatory budgeting which directly involves local people in making decisions on the spending and priorities for a defined public budget (for example, GHA’s Area Fund), should also be promoted.

CPPs could facilitate training to ensure that partners are aware of these techniques and how to use them.

The creation of ‘community organisers’ would enable local communities to be empowered to influence decision making with community planning partners. Community organisers would support community representatives on Partnerships but would also be tasked with developing the ‘building blocks’ of strong communities using community learning and development approaches. These staff could be based in the communities they support and be managed by a local CPP partner.

10. How can the outcomes of regeneration truly be captured and measured? What are the barriers to capturing outcomes and how should the success of regeneration investment be determined?

Regeneration is a long term process of reversing decline - in some areas, generations of unemployment, poor health, poor physical environments and low levels of engagement and inactivity can perpetuate. Therefore, there is no quick fix to measuring the outcomes. However, a variety of methods can be employed including research, such as the GoWell longitudinal programme, discussion and engagement with local people, and agreeing on the shared goals of regeneration at the outset and together committing resources to capture progress and achievement.

Success can be determined as well-functioning communities and individuals living in areas that are popular, thriving and aspirational – with bold but realistic expectations. Large scale area physical regeneration, satisfaction with new homes, neighbourhoods and environment are the most tangible markers of successful regeneration – but are not enough to illustrate success if there are still issues of ASB, low aspiration, poor quality of life, and unemployment impacting on these areas.

Glasgow Housing Association
14 March 2013