1. **Introduction**

Scottish Enterprise is delighted to contribute to the Committee’s scrutiny of this Bill. As directed by the Committee’s call, and in line with our remit, we have focused primarily on Part 2 of the Bill, on Community Planning.

In contributing to the delivery of the Scottish Government Economic Strategy, we are committed to a strong partnership approach, recognising the real benefits and outcomes that can be achieved from clear alignment and engagement behind a common goal. For each Community Planning Partnership (CPP) in Lowland Scotland (27) we have a designated Location Director, a senior member of SE staff, who leads on our contribution to ensure there is purposeful alignment between our work and that of the partnership.

As statutory partners in Community Planning we have welcomed the renewed focus the Scottish Government has given to improving the process to ensure greater impact and this Bill will contribute to that. We have, in this submission, highlighted aspects of the Bill and what they would mean for our involvement in Community Planning.

2. **Local Outcome Plans**

One of the key things introduced in Part 2 of the Bill is the Local Outcome Plan. This plan will take into account the needs and circumstances of the local area and any representations arising from the consultation that the CPP must undertake during its development. Each outcome to be improved must be set out, along with a description of the improvement and a timescale.

We welcome this focus on an evidence-based approach to setting tangible, time-bound outcomes. Through an assessment of the opportunities and challenges in an area, the CPP will be better able to identify areas that will benefit from partnership activity. This should also recognise what the appropriate contributions should be from national and local bodies in improving the outcome.

In looking at the needs and opportunities, it is important that each Local Authority area is not treated in isolation. Therefore it is vital that the outcome improvement plan development looks at the regional opportunities through, for example, supply chains or travel-to-work areas. We would suggest that the Regional Advisory Boards are included in the consultation process.

SE’s own activities are informed by, and developed in line with, a robust evidence base and we subject all of our programmes to rigorous evaluation to ensure they deliver the best possible impact. For example, our Account Management service underwent a substantial evaluation last year which identified much strength in the programme, to be welcomed, but also identified areas for improvement. These areas have been looked at and have resulted in an improved service better focused on ensuring businesses get the right service at the right time. Targeted outcome improvement is something with which we are very familiar.
A good example of such evidence-based partnership working to improve a local outcome is Team North Ayrshire. This example (box) shows how SE and a Local Authority can work together to improve local outcomes, through aligning our key strengths and assets.

North Ayrshire has experienced many years of economic challenge and it was clear that there was a need to expand and increase the business base, improve skill levels and redevelop town centres to provide a basis for future improvement.

Acknowledging this challenge, SE and North Ayrshire Council (NAC) developed an Economic and Regeneration Strategy to support the area's businesses, increase economic growth and attract inward investment.

Partnership working, across both public and private sectors, and ensuring that resources fully supported delivery, were crucial to the success of the strategy. SE engagement was informed by our strategic framework based on the principles of supporting growth, maximising opportunities, developing partnerships and facilitating full engagement. This framework approach led SE to bring its expertise, experience, knowledge and networks to the table and help form an alliance-based partnership.

Reviewing the existing business support model, and with support from SE, NAC created an Economic Development and Regeneration Board consisting of both public and private sector board members. This mixture of public and private working allows an appreciation of the concerns raised by the business base whilst also accepting the structure in which progress can be delivered.

This work culminated in the board's principal goal, to deliver tailored business support to approximately 150 North Ayrshire companies. From there, the result was the formation, in December 2013, of Team North Ayrshire: a network of public and private partners dedicated to driving the area's business growth and offer local access to expertise and financial support.

In supporting this development, SE's Company Growth team brought invaluable expertise, for example sharing best practice from SE’s Account Management Programme and the SE Competency Framework for Account Managers.

Team North Ayrshire is now providing local businesses one dedicated, streamlined single point of contact for advice, support and assistance. The partnership is growing and already includes representatives from the education, tourism and hospitality sectors. SE will continue working alongside the council as the new economic strategy develops.

3. Involvement of Community Bodies

A vital part of the evidence base for any outcome improvement plan is the views of the end user of the service being improved. As such, we welcome the prominence given in the Bill to the involvement of the community in developing the outcome improvement plans and involvement in the CPP.

In particular however, we would like to draw attention to the importance of involving the business community. This has, in the past, been quite difficult due to the high level nature of
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the Single Outcome Agreements. Given the focus on sustainable economic growth it is critical that the business voice is heard. With evidence-based improvement plans focused on tangible outcomes however, local businesses and business groups are more likely to become involved.

This being the case, and recognising the past difficulty, we would like to see the guidance on community involvement explicitly mention the business community.

The Team North Ayrshire example shows that, with such a solid evidence-based plan, it is possible to get private sector participation at thematic level in Community Planning. It also shows the value in having service delivery agents and representatives of their customer base working together in the delivery of a strategic plan.

4. Participation Requests

SE is mentioned as a public sector authority in relation to part 3 of the Bill on participation requests. This provides for community participation bodies to request involvement in an outcome improvement process.

We would welcome further clarification in guidance on how this will work in practice. 17(2)(a) refers to an outcome resulting from a service provided to the public by the authority. SE does not deliver services to the public at large but to a particular subset of businesses which have growth potential. It would therefore be helpful to clarify what form the community participation body could take, and in what way they can be involved.

Involving our customers, and the business community, in the identification and improvement of our services is standard practice in Scottish Enterprise. At the strategic level, our approach to industry sectors is informed by sector strategies, developed for and by the industry itself through Industry Leadership Groups (ILGs), which are majority private sector bodies providing strategic leadership and advice to both industry and the public sector in Scotland.

As mentioned above, we subject all of our programmes to a rigorous evaluation, both to ensure that they are delivering as they should and to identify areas for improvement. In this, engagement with customers in receipt of the service is crucial. For example, at the core of the Account Management evaluation last year was engagement with 601 companies which had been account managed at some point over the previous four years.

5. Conclusion

We hope this submission proves useful to the Committee in its consideration of the Community Empowerment Bill. We look forward to discussing this further at the round table on 1 October.