1. To what extent do you consider the Bill will empower communities, please give reasons for your answer?

Glasgow Life welcomes the Bill’s aspiration to improve the involvement of local communities in the design and delivery of public services. We particularly welcome the statutory focus on understanding, specifying and achieving outcomes as we believe this is a fundamental component of meaningful empowerment and participatory approaches. The focus on prevention and reducing inequalities specified in the new approach to Community Planning processes via the requirements for Local Outcome Improvement plans is also particularly important.

Our view is that the Bill will change the dynamic between well organised communities and public services and will go some way towards empowering local communities to drive positive changes. The main reasons for this from our perspective are:

- the new obligation on Community Planning Partnership (CPP) to consult community bodies in the development of local improvement plans and resource these processes
- increased clarity around the need to understand the complexities of local communities
- the simplification of asset transfer
- enabling community controlled bodies to make formal requests to public bodies regarding involvement in the outcome improvement processes
- a recognition that funding, staff and resources need to be committed by CPPs to support communities to engage

More excluded, fragmented or disparate communities with weaker infrastructure or capacity may continue to struggle to engage with public bodies. Power sharing among and across disparate stakeholders trying to address highly complex issues in an increasingly tight fiscal environment is also likely to result in conflict. If the Bill’s aspirations are to be achieved then the skills and capacity to manage this positively may need additional investment.

2. What will be the benefits and disadvantages for public sector organisations as a consequence of the provisions in the Bill?
From our perspective the likely benefits to public organisations will include:

- a more sophisticated understanding of community need and the diversity of communities we serve which will enable better planning, design and delivery of services
- opportunities to develop a more sophisticated and practical understanding of outcomes and impact and how to use these to shape services
- increased social capital in communities
- transfer of assets to communities which may facilitate access to additional resources

Possible disadvantages may include:

- communities with less power being marginalised in decision making or co-production
- skills development and capacity building around co-production for agencies and communities will require investment
- increased potential for tension and conflict given the diversity of communities and interest and the complexity of the issues

3. Do you consider communities across Scotland have the capabilities to take advantage of the provisions in the Bill? If not, what requires to be done to the Bill, or to assist communities, to ensure this happens?

Communities are fluid and diverse. Many are well organised and focused on achieving agreed objectives. However there are many facets to personal identities. Public agencies often (and often by necessity) conceptualise “community” in a manner which meets their service deployment needs but does not take into account these complexities.

Communities which are less well organised or have not developed common visions may struggle to fully engage with the Bill’s provision without sustained capacity building support. In addition in order for asset transfer to be successful and sustainable many communities are likely to need a level of support that agencies find it challenging to provide given the fiscal environment.

4. Are you content with the specific provisions in the Bill, if not what changes would you like to see, to which part of the Bill and why?

We would welcome more detailed guidance around the roles and responsibilities of “arms-length” public organisations such as Glasgow Life. We are part of the City’s Community Planning networks but it can also be inferred that we should be consulted by the CPP because of our other functions.

5. What are your views on the assessment of equal rights, impacts on island communities and sustainable development as set out in the Policy Memorandum?
We welcome Bill’s synergy with the aspirations of the range of equality and human rights legislation. Given our urban focus, we have no comments to make regarding island communities. We would welcome additional information regarding the definition of “environmental wellbeing” specified in the Policy Memorandum.