The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday 12 June 2013

Session 4

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE
19th Meeting 2013, Session 4

CONVENER

*Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP)
*Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab)
*Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)
*John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Pauline Barbour (Scottish Federation of Housing Associations)
Gavin Corbett (Shelter Scotland)
David Fletcher (Glasgow Housing Association)
Annette Hastings (University of Glasgow)
Dr Peter Matthews (Heriot-Watt University)
Dr Colleen Rowan (Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations)
Craig Sanderson (Link Group Ltd)
Professor Carol Tannahill (GoWell)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

David Cullum

LOCATION

Committee Room 3

Scottish Parliament

Local Government and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday 12 June 2013

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:00*]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Kevin Stewart): Good morning, and welcome to the 19th meeting in 2013 of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee. I ask everyone to ensure that they have switched off mobile phones and other electronic equipment.

Agenda item 1 is a decision to take business in private. Do members agree to take items 5, 6 and 7 in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Subordinate Legislation

Building (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 (SSI 2013/143)

10:01

The Convener: Item 2 is consideration of SSI 2013/143. Members have the paper from the clerk, which sets out the purpose of the instrument. The Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee considered the instrument and did not have any comments on it.

Members appear to have no comments on the instrument. Do we agree not to make any recommendations to the Parliament on the instrument?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Regeneration

10:01

The Convener: Item 3 is an oral evidence session on our inquiry into the delivery of regeneration in Scotland. This is the first formal evidence session that we have held in this important inquiry, although the committee has already undertaken fact-finding visits to Aberdeen, Cumbernauld and Glasgow to meet local communities and learn from their experiences of regeneration. We plan to undertake further fact-finding visits after the summer recess and to hear from community representatives at our meeting next week.

Today we have two panels of witnesses. The first will look at the importance of the housing sector to regeneration policy. I welcome David Fletcher, assistant director of regeneration, Glasgow Housing Association; Dr Colleen Rowan, membership and policy officer, Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations; Craig Sanderson, chief executive, Link Group Ltd; Pauline Barbour, policy consultant, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations; and Gavin Corbett, policy adviser, Shelter Scotland. I understand that, for some of you, this is your first time before a parliamentary committee. We do not normally bite, so just relax.

Gavin Corbett, would you like to make some opening remarks?

Gavin Corbett (Shelter Scotland): I am happy to go straight to questions.

The Convener: Does anybody else want to say anything? It seems that you want to go straight to the questions—I like you guys straight off. I will start the ball rolling.

The committee has been doing its rounds and it has been holding an inquiry into public service reform. We have looked quite closely at community planning partnerships, which obviously have a part to play in regeneration. What is your experience of community planning partnerships? Are they working for you or not? If not, what is not right about them? Gavin, I will pick on you again.

Gavin Corbett: That is fine. I will probably bow to some of my colleagues due to their experience on the ground, but I can give my perception of community planning partnerships in Edinburgh.

The purpose of integration between public authorities, the voluntary sector and other partners is important. At neighbourhood level, there is a big gap between what people regard as neighbourhoods and how neighbourhoods typically are characterised in partnerships.

I am thinking about where I stay in Edinburgh. In the community planning partnership that I am part of, there are at least 10 or 11 communities at neighbourhood level. That begs the question of how we reinforce the ability of those neighbourhoods, as people understand them, to play a meaningful part in community planning partnerships. We are a long way from getting that right yet, but I am sure that my colleagues can give details of their own experiences.

Pauline Barbour (Scottish Federation of Housing Associations): The main point that the SFHA membership would make on that question is that we have found that the community planning partnerships do not often include housing as standard in their membership, and we would really like to see housing at the table because of our involvement with health and social work. Everything has to be there, and housing is an integral part of community planning.

Craig Sanderson (Link Group Ltd): I agree. Since the demise of Communities Scotland, there has not been a high enough representation of housing interests at community planning partnership level. Communities Scotland used to have a place on all the partnerships, but the housing contribution to the debate is now sometimes missing.

We work across about 24 local authority areas. The performance of CPPs is mixed around the country, but we always get comments and feedback from local community members who do not feel that they are a strong enough part of the partnerships. The CPPs seem to be dominated by local authorities and by the other agencies; health agencies and the police tend to have a right to be on CPPs, but there appears to be scope for others to have a place at the top table.

The Convener: My experience tells me that some of the work that is done with housing is often done in sub-groups of the community planning partnerships. Is that your experience?

Craig Sanderson: That is correct.

The Convener: At that level, does the system work okay? Is information fed up the chain?

Craig Sanderson: Sometimes, yes. I could name local authorities that are doing better than others, but I will not—

The Convener: Please do.

Craig Sanderson: No, I will not. [*Laughter.*]

Housing has to be seen to have a place at the top table, as it is strategically important. There must also be community representation at that level.

Dr Colleen Rowan (Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations): I

echo the previous comments. The issue of representation and having a seat at the table has been a problem for our members. However, the community planning partnership structure in Glasgow is in the process of changing, and we hope to get a seat above the sub-group level. Our members want that representation, and we feel that it is an arena where we need to be represented.

I also reiterate the point about the geographical level at which CPPs operate. Decisions taken at that level often bear no relationship to what people at the micro or neighbourhood level want or feel is needed in their local communities.

David Fletcher (Glasgow Housing Association): I broadly agree with what my colleagues have said. I know from GHA's engagement, both at strategic level and at sub-group level in the Glasgow community planning partnership, that a lot depends on how organisations resource their involvement and what they invest. There will be an understandable mix of experience, even across the city, in that regard.

We need to guard against any misunderstanding of the language related to community planning. In a past life, I was involved in the Glasgow community planning task force—the forerunner of the community planning structures—when I worked in the Easterhouse area for the Glasgow Alliance. Much of the legislation tried to enshrine ways of working across mainstream partners, including police, social work and the local authority in all its guises, and there were complementary arrangements—at that point, they were still to be fully tested—for engagement with local communities. I think that we have a way to go to crack neighbourhood engagement and to connect better with that strategic way of working across the city.

The Convener: Are there representatives from regeneration communities in the membership of the bodies that the witnesses represent? If so, at what level are they represented?

David Fletcher: At city level, our chief executive and the chair of the board engage in strategic forums in community planning. Below that, at sub-city level, Glasgow splits into three strategic planning areas. Our respective area directors, who have housing management and regeneration staff within their functions, routinely attend the meetings at that level. You are correct that there is sometimes a plethora of other sub-groups and working groups that present themselves at more of a neighbourhood level. Area housing managers and the like normally participate at that level.

The Convener: Are there no ordinary punters, if you like, at board level or some kind of other senior discussion level in your organisation?

David Fletcher: In our own organisation?

The Convener: Yes.

David Fletcher: Yes. There are tenants at board level and tenant-led area committees.

The Convener: Do they have a strong voice in your organisation?

David Fletcher: Very much so. We try to reinforce that with some devolvement of moneys directly to tenant members in the area committees in order to support local programmes of activity.

The Convener: What about the others in your organisation, Dr Rowan?

Dr Rowan: Could you clarify the question?

The Convener: How many ordinary folk from regeneration communities take part at a high level in the organisations that you represent?

Dr Rowan: Local people involved in regeneration in communities are represented throughout our member organisations. Very often, they carry out projects and initiatives in conjunction with our members.

The Convener: Is that at significantly high levels in those organisations?

Dr Rowan: Yes.

Craig Sanderson: Link has a group structure. The parent company currently has three tenants on the board. Our subsidiary company, which performs all the housing management function, has a majority of tenants on its board. A lot of those tenants come from areas in which we are hoping to undertake regeneration activities.

The Convener: Pauline Barbour, what is the case with your member organisations?

Pauline Barbour: A number of members of the SFHA council are tenants. There is certainly quite a mix at board level.

The Convener: I do not suppose that the question really applies to Shelter, Gavin Corbett.

Gavin Corbett: That is right; my organisation is probably a bit different from the others here, in the sense that they represent organisations that work with neighbourhoods as neighbourhoods. Our role is primarily to work with disadvantaged people, most of whom live in disadvantaged areas.

John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): Good morning. I have a supplementary question that relates to community representation on the GHA board. My historical experience of GHA is that it tended to be very top heavy and top down in relation to communities. When community representatives came forward who were critical—or what GHA might describe as overly critical—of the strategy and direction of GHA, they were

refused a hearing and, in some cases, removed from the GHA. Does that practice still exist at GHA? Do you still vet who comes on to the area boards or the GHA board itself?

David Fletcher: No; we do not have that practice. I recognise that the question has been posed in a particular way, but for the avoidance of doubt I confirm that the chair of the GHA board is a tenant member. There are five tenant members on the board just now. In fact, tenant members make up the majority on the board and have done so over the life of GHA. That representation has been reinforced further by the area committee structure, which is also tenant led; tenants form the majority on those committees.

The Convener: For the record, you said that five tenants make up the majority of members. Does the board consist of nine people?

David Fletcher: I will double-check that, but I think that that is the case.

John Wilson: I sought that clarification because there is an issue about people who are trying to be representatives for their communities. Experience in the past was that some of those members felt that they were being blocked from going further or from taking up what they saw as their rightful place as elected representatives of their communities.

10:15

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): Good morning, everyone. I will focus on some of the evidence that we received from Dr Rowan that I think reflects the discussion so far.

Dr Rowan, you stated in your submission that it is important in

"the current economic climate ... to think innovatively and creatively about ... different models of regeneration."

You emphasised

"partnership working with communities and the third sector"

being very much involved in

"local delivery mechanisms"

to change the culture of public services and that, in particular, it is not about funding but about different

"ways of doing things."

Do you and other panel members have good examples of different ways of doing things for regeneration?

Dr Rowan: Yes. I will first give a bit of background for those comments in our written submission. Our members have been doing regeneration in one form or another for the past 30 years, so we have a lot of innovative examples. We work with communities, because it is local people who govern community-controlled housing associations.

There are myriad examples of partnership working. One example is the neighbourhood audit work that I described in our submission. The New Gorbals Housing Association and the Govanhill Housing Association have carried out neighbourhood audits in their areas. That work was done in the context of the results of the Christie commission and the upcoming community empowerment and renewal bill in order to look at preventative measures.

We had feedback from those organisations about some of the partnership working—the audits were really exercises in mapping the partnership working in those areas. They recorded the organisations and agencies that operate in the areas, and they looked at the close partnership working with the housing associations for specific programmes or initiatives, as well as the more intangible forms of partnership working where—

Margaret Mitchell: Can you give examples of some of them? I think that that would make the issue come alive.

Dr Rowan: Yes. For instance, in the New Gorbals Housing Association area, the local credit union was going to be shut down because of its premises—I do not know the exact story with the premises; perhaps they were condemned—but the housing association gave the credit union new premises, refurbished them and gave the credit union a start-up amount of money. The credit union is now up and running again. The housing association refers people to the credit union, and they work in tandem in that way.

Margaret Mitchell: That is good. I would like examples from other panel members, but I have another question for Dr Rowan first. You referred in your submission to the idea of community anchors. I think that you feel that the consultation paper on the proposed community empowerment and renewal bill missed an opportunity by not referring to community anchors. Can you expand on that point?

Dr Rowan: Yes. We were delighted to see community anchors referred to in the document "Achieving A Sustainable Future: Regeneration Strategy". We feel that not only community-controlled housing associations but other agencies such as local community development trusts have carried out the community anchor role over the past 30 years. That reflects that our organisations are very much rooted in their communities: they have trust relationships with communities; they have assets in communities; and they are self-funded.

I think that the definition of community anchor speaks to all that and to the roots of the

community-based housing movement. Calling an organisation an anchor shows that it is rooted in its community and that members of the community come to it not just about housing but about health issues and welfare issues, for example.

It would be good if the Government backed or acknowledged the community anchor role by stating explicitly that our organisations are community anchors and that the Government can work with us and that we can be a kind of host for other organisations or can initiate partnership working. We are keen to see that kind of recognition from the Government.

I do not know how the Government would go about it, but perhaps the recognition could be enshrined in the proposed community empowerment and renewal bill. Pauline Barbour and I have had discussions about the community anchor aspect and how important we think it is for our members.

Margaret Mitchell: That ties in very neatly with a suggestion in another written submission that, rather than all the funding going to CPPs, it might be better to fund directly identified community anchors—organisations that are well placed in the community—to deliver projects.

Do other panel members have examples of innovation?

Gavin Corbett: Yes, there are thousands—I am sure that we could easily spend a full hour giving examples.

Margaret Mitchell: One example will do.

Gavin Corbett: The purpose of the strategy—which I hope will come out in the inquiry—is to assess whether those examples have been transformative and led to lasting change. That is why the strategy is important. Other people might have examples, too. The real problem is not innovation—there is plenty of that—but the lack of sustained change.

Margaret Mitchell: Are you not going on to the outcomes a little? Unless you can say, "Here is an example of what we did and this is what it delivered", there could be a danger that people are simply talking about strategies at that level and not actually delivering.

Gavin Corbett: Yes, but equally there have been particular projects that were proven to be successful in their own right and were well received and even internationally applauded, and yet the area itself did not change. The main purpose of regeneration is to transform the area.

Margaret Mitchell: Can you give me an example of that?

Gavin Corbett: I cannot think of anything off the top of my head. I just want to emphasise that, although it is useful to celebrate innovation, that is not where the challenge lies. We could easily fill a big report with good examples of successful projects and initiatives, and I am sure that the projects that colleagues who are here today have undertaken would be among them. However, the question is whether a project has actually changed things and contributed to change in a whole area.

The Convener: You spoke about successful projects. That is interesting, because projects and regeneration areas are often deemed to be successful while the outcomes for people have not been that great. A project may be internationally renowned while making little difference in terms of outcomes. Would you agree that that is often the case?

Gavin Corbett: Absolutely. We have tended historically to judge outcomes on the number of buildings that are improved or the way in which the investment has been spent. One of the emerging themes, which has been emerging for a while—

The Convener: So we are looking at objects rather than people?

Gavin Corbett: Yes, absolutely. A key point—which I am sure is a widely held view—is that regeneration is not about places or property but about people, and the way in which we measure it must echo that.

We should be looking just as much at how we have built up social capital during the period of regeneration as at how we have revamped X number of buildings or transformed a brownfield site. We are not yet at the stage at which we value social capital improvement as much as physical improvement.

Margaret Mitchell: If you think of any examples and want to give the committee that information afterwards, it would be very helpful.

Pauline Barbour: As Gavin Corbett said, there are many examples. One example that I can give the committee straight away is Easthall Park Housing Co-operative, and its approach is echoed throughout the association movement. The housing association is linking up with a local college to provide opportunities for apprenticeships and jobs, and it is working on procurement issues with local contractors. Those are on-the-ground initiatives that work exceptionally well in getting people into employment and further education, and there are a lot of aspects to that work.

Associations do the majority of such work in kind; they are not seeking money to do it. Their staff apply to the people and communities fund for money to do a project on behalf of the community, or work with a local project that is on the ball about

what is needed in the area. Such initiatives work exceptionally well.

Organisations such as Link Group and NG Homes are doing exceptional work and engaging in innovative approaches that could be passed on for other organisations to learn from and use in their own ways for their own areas.

Craig Sanderson: I submitted a number of examples of things that Link Group has done over the years. If I was to choose one of those, it would be the dental surgery in Kirkshaws in Coatbridge.

We were going to build on a site that would accommodate two houses. A qualified dentist who had grown up in the area approached us and said that dental facilities in the area were not very good and that, if we built a surgery for him, he would provide an NHS service for the next 10 years. We went ahead with that.

We put in money and we got money from NHS Lanarkshire as well as wider-role funding from the Scottish Government and funding from the Big Lottery Fund and other sources. The dentist opened for business with the aim of getting 1,200 clients within two years, but he had that within two weeks. The day that he opened, a queue of folk snaked its way up the road towards Coatbridge centre. The outcome has been a significant improvement in oral health locally, because many of the people who went to the surgery had not been to a dentist for a long time.

Margaret Mitchell: That is good.

Craig Sanderson: There are plenty of other examples. We can do such things because we are fortunate to have been in business for quite a long time and we have built up reserves, some of which are free reserves, and we have surpluses. We feel that it is incumbent on us to reinvest those into the business, which is why we get involved in those sorts of things. Not every association can do that, but we think that we have an obligation to do so. Because we are in the fortunate position of being able to do that, we feel that we should do it.

Margaret Mitchell: That is helpful.

David Fletcher: Like Link, we have invested quite a lot of our investment moneys in supporting community regeneration schemes. Earlier, I briefly mentioned the area committee moneys, which are disbursed and prioritised by local communities to support projects from community garden initiatives to village halls and conservatories for sheltered housing complexes. Those are small-scale projects that are prioritised and significant locally.

Alongside that, at city level, we try to consider where we can best use our financial clout and the scale of the organisation to deliver programmes at scale. I will give a couple of examples of that. From humble beginnings in a project in Castlemilk, our community janitors programme has employed more than 1,500 people over the past seven or eight years. That is an employment training initiative with Jobs and Business Glasgow. On the outcomes, the scheme not only helps to respond to neighbourhood concerns about cleanliness, maintenance and estate management for local communities; it builds confidence and capability and has good job outcomes for participants in the programme, who are mainly, but not only, guys.

Our modern apprenticeship initiative, which we provide in partnership with Skills Development Scotland, gives a white-collar opportunity, particularly for young people. We are proud of how the programme has grown. The intake for the coming year involves 25 to 30 apprentices in our offices and partner housing association offices across the city and, we hope, beyond that.

I will give one other example. Pauline Barbour mentioned the community benefits legislation in the context of the Easthall Park Housing Co-operative. At the time of the stock transfer in Glasgow, there was great expectation that it would be a driver for jobs and training opportunities. We have been successful in designing the appropriate community benefit clauses into procurement practice, in that jobs and training outputs have been delivered and the practice has been shared with projects such as those for the Commonwealth games and the Southern general hospital and with the urban regeneration companies as they came along, including the one in Raploch. That has been a big part of the role that we have tried to take on.

The Convener: John Wilson has a supplementary question.

John Wilson: Mr Sanderson mentioned the Kirkshaws dental surgery and a package of funding for it. Who owns the building?

Craig Sanderson: We do.

John Wilson: So the Link Housing Association has taken ownership of the building. What was the financial contribution from Link Housing Association to the creation of the building? I am trying to get to the issue of funding. You mentioned the funding streams, which included Lanarkshire NHS Board funding, wider-role funding and some of your reserves. I just want to find out what housing associations are doing as a package. I am aware of the history of housing associations and the wider access role that they have played, and that moneys have come into them. As a percentage, what was Link's financial input into the project?

Craig Sanderson: I cannot tell you that now, but I could submit that information to you.

The Convener: That would be useful.

10:30

Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP): Good morning. Mr Fletcher mentioned the housing stock transfers just a moment ago. I have some questions not on any one particular transfer but on transfers in general. With such transfers, do problems or issues with regard to the ownership not of buildings as such but of common areas, pavements and so on arise, and is the issue used as an excuse—I was not going to use that word, but I have done so anyway—when it comes to regenerating a particular area? In short, is there any confusion about ownership of the areas around the buildings, with the local authority saying, "We still own that area," or, "We don't own it—you do"?

David Fletcher: We certainly encountered that issue with the common estate and, since the transfer, have deployed a number of strategies to improve joint working and the approach to the estate. In our experience, the footprint of the buildings and the hard-standing areas were transferred while, in the vast majority of cases, the green spaces and common areas outwith the immediate GHA estate remained with the city council. There must be strategic and good local working to ensure that we do not miss out any spaces that need to be maintained.

In direct response to your question, I should say that in a number of the environmental budgets and initiatives such as play parks, games courts and the like, we very much took the view that the important issue was community ownership and the community dimension. The question of who owned what was less important; we were happy to invest in land that we did not own and sought to put in place a good maintenance regime, which is delivered either by us or, in most cases, by the council. I am pleased to say that the arrangement is working well.

Stuart McMillan: Mr Sanderson?

Craig Sanderson: Can you repeat the question? I thought that you were directing it only at David Fletcher.

Stuart McMillan: With housing stock transfers, can issues arise not so much with the buildings—those contractual elements will be easy to deal with—but with the common land, the pavements and so on?

Craig Sanderson: Yes. We do not have David Fletcher's experience of stock transfers, but when we merged with what was then called Port Glasgow Housing Association we found that the owners of garages that were relatively removed from the houses did not want to contribute to the overall maintenance costs. Although that happened five or six years ago, we have still not resolved the issue.

Stuart McMillan: Are there any more examples?

David Fletcher: Perhaps as a brief supplementary comment I should set some context. First and foremost, local communities have seen direct and tangible improvements in their housing conditions through stock transfer. However, over time, the focus will understandably move to the wider environment and we have tried to reflect and respond to that in our own priorities, budgets and programmes. I know that you will take evidence from Professor Carol Tannahill from the GoWell programme about the longitudinal research, which has demonstrated—as if there were any doubt about it—the impact of the wider neighbourhood on wellbeing, confidence and people's place both in the world and in their neighbourhood.

The Convener: Before I bring in Dr Rowan, I highlight our concern about cases in which general maintenance that should have been carried out over the piece has been billed as regeneration and has received regeneration moneys. Have you done anything like that? Have you had certain areas that you have regularly maintained and other areas where stuff might not have been going on but where you have billed maintenance as regeneration and therefore received regeneration money? Does anyone have any admissions that they wish to make?

David Fletcher: I mentioned the area committee funds. We have tried to use those to respond to communities' concerns when they think that a particular environment—whether it involves walls or planters—is not appropriate. For example, the environment might have been appropriate when it was designed in the 1960s or the 1970s, but it no longer meets the community's needs. Such activity could be regarded as local regeneration, but we try, where possible, to make the best use of mainstream budgets.

The Convener: That is what I was asking about. Such activity is often billed as regeneration when, in other places, it would have come under general maintenance and would have been funded from mainstream budgets. Are you saying that, in Glasgow, such maintenance issues have, in the main, been dealt with using mainstream budgets rather than regeneration moneys?

David Fletcher: We use both. When we can, we tailor such activity to mainstream budgets.

The Convener: We will probably deal with mainstreaming versus regeneration in more depth later. For many years, I have been annoyed by regeneration moneys being used as a cash cow to prevent mainstream funding from being used for certain things.

Dr Rowan: I will pick up on what David Fletcher said. The same problems arise further down the line, with the second-stage transfers from GHA to our members. There is a bit of woolliness about who is responsible for some areas, which is to do with ownership and so on.

To reiterate what David Fletcher said, most of our members have been quite willing to take on responsibility for common parts and factoring in places where there might not be agreement among owners, or where there is disagreement or animosity in mixed-tenure closes or areas. Our members are mostly happy to take on responsibility for a lot of those common parts, either directly or through their factoring subsidiaries.

Pauline Barbour: In conjunction with communities, a lot of associations are doing innovative work on areas that might have been lying waste for a long time. Recently, I heard about an example of that at one of the wider-role meetings—we still call them that. The Shettleston community growing project took a bare patch of land that was owned by the association in the area and where nothing was happening and turned it into an extremely impressive community garden, in a section of which people have their own allotments. The project involves a bit of employment and training. It is quite an interesting little project. I am not saying that it deals with all the issues to do with common land not being attended to, but there are things that a community sees and such proposals come from the community. If a community wants to do something about an area because it is not happy about it, it can turn to the local community housing association—the anchor—and ask it how it can help people to approach some of the issues. That has worked really well, and not just for the Shettleston project—there are a few similar projects around.

Gavin Corbett: I want to pick up on where Colleen Rowan was going with her response. In some ways, the bigger fault line in policy is not to do with whether stock transfer has taken place. In some ways, the housing revenue account is meant to be self-contained, although stock transfer sharpens that analysis. The issue is more to do with the fact that there is no such thing as a council estate or a housing association estate, and that has been the case for quite a long time. All the estates are mixed tenure.

Over the past 10 years in particular, private renting has grown in those estates. That has happened under the radar and has quite often involved accidental landlords. I hear all the time that they are the hardest people to engage in regeneration, and that spills over into the debate about who is responsible for the neighbourhood as a whole. It might be the case that 10, 15 or even 20 per cent of properties are let out privately. That is a major challenge that I do not think that we have even identified yet.

Stuart McMillan: You must have read my mind because my next area of questioning is going to deal with that. I would like to ask the housing association representatives, in particular, whether they have any examples of extreme difficulties that have been encountered in liaising with the landlords in the areas that they cover.

Craig Sanderson: I will give an example that is close to Mr Pentland's heart. In Forgewood in Lanarkshire, we took on responsibility for factoring a large area of mixed-tenure properties. Our ability to maintain that area relied very much on contributions from owner-occupiers, but we did not get those contributions. Much against our wishes and the wishes of Mr Pentland, we eventually had to withdraw that service because we were subsidising it so heavily.

David Fletcher: I do not have any direct examples to offer. On alternative tenures and new housing provision, YourPlace Property Management, which is our large factoring subsidiary within the city, recently encountered some tricky issues with a new estate in north Glasgow where a private developer had responsibility. The developer had been perceived by the existing local communities as shirking from providing its services and not delivering for the community. We are collaborating with the council to broker delivery of a service that is more efficient and, we believe, better value for money than the existing poor and badly presenting service.

Gavin Corbett: On what we do about such issues, I feel strongly that, at the local level, if the price and condition are right, and if doing so fits into the stock strategy, there is a case for buying back properties. Some properties are so badly managed and in such poor condition that they are acting as a brake on regeneration and our ability to house some of the most vulnerable people.

At a national level, we have to look much more at where we are going with private renting. It is a major part of our housing landscape. We need to introduce greater security and stability and some certainty around affordability. That speaks to how national policy feeds into our local initiatives.

Pauline Barbour: A number of associations have been approached by people who have bought their properties and want to rent them on, with the association being asked to take on the management of those properties. That is quite interesting. I am not saying that the practice is widespread, but people have come to us to ask for advice on how it could be done. There are appropriate mechanisms that allow a local housing

association to manage properties that people have bought and want to rent out.

Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab): On the back of that question, I want to ask about people who have bought their property but are unable to sustain the mortgage. Are you familiar with buying over such properties?

David Fletcher: Such situations are very familiar. We get a number of inquiries—I was going to say every day, but certainly every week. We are participants in the Government's mortgage to rent initiative. In the past year, we have purchased around 40 properties throughout the city. That is very much in keeping with what Gavin Corbett said. People—sometimes individuals and sometimes, following a bereavement, family members—approach the association, looking for a bit of support. We see that as a growing role for us in the city.

Anne McTaggart: At the very start of the meeting, David Fletcher mentioned community involvement and the fact that communities are not really participating to their full capacity. How can we best improve the situation?

David Fletcher: I mentioned that in the context of community planning and the strategic structures, below city level but still involving large geographies, in which senior officers often operate. It is about finding a way of engaging at a neighbourhood level. Later, the committee will hear from Dr Peter Matthews, who has put together a paper with examples of different engagement structures that have come and gone over the past couple of decades.

It is also about finding a way of supporting organisations such as ours, which operate at the neighbourhood level, or other community-based organisations. There is no single answer. There needs to be a flexible approach to the definition of community anchors. However, housing associations can play a key role in helping to engage more people across the cities and beyond.

Anne McTaggart: Does it not always seem to be just the same group of people who are on all the committees within the community? How representative of that community are those people?

10:45

David Fletcher: The national standards for community engagement strongly recommend guarding against going only to people from a particular walk of life or a particular group of tenants or residents. That is a risk.

In our working lives, we have all seen a number of people who wear many hats and who often become exhausted by the community activity that they commit to. We have a responsibility to encourage more people to get involved through different forms of engagement.

Anne McTaggart: I have a question for the other witnesses about that. How do you encourage new people?

Gavin Corbett: That question goes right to the heart of what the regeneration strategy is about—building community capacity. We have all touched on the issue of burnout already—it is a big problem.

It strikes me that in these areas, there are a lot of people with additional challenges in their lives. We need to find ways to expand the work that we already do with those people. We provide housing support, for example, and Craig Sanderson's organisation also does a lot on housing support. Can we expand the scope of that work to give people the tools to enable them to become more engaged with their neighbourhood or their community?

In other words, we do not need to create separate work; we need to recognise that we work with a lot of people already and ask what skills they need to be able to engage more fully in their neighbourhood, as part of their own development as well as being part of how the neighbourhood might develop.

Pauline Barbour: A lot is to do with—I hate to say it—what funding is available when we are trying to encourage people in the community to get involved. As far as I am aware, a separate stream will run parallel to the people and communities fund to help community capacity building.

I would be interested to find out a bit more about the development of that stream and what it will mean for communities. It will be a wonderful asset to help people who may not have been involved in such things before grow and develop in their own areas and become a full, participating member of their community.

Craig Sanderson: Gavin Corbett mentioned our housing support services. At one time, we were probably funding those services to the tune of about a quarter of a million quid a year in order to keep them going.

It is essential to employ people to talk to other people and to build up good relationships. You can quickly find out whether somebody is not representative of their community, if you talk to them. In general, we have found that people are genuinely representative, but you have to put the resources in and put the time aside to genuinely engage with people.

Dr Rowan: Our members are based in their local community and people see them as being part of their local community. Staff are very often

local residents as well, which is important. The relationship of trust that I think I mentioned in our written evidence is key, and it has been built up over years and years.

I will give an example of one innovative approach to getting people involved who are not the same old faces. Ardenglen Housing Association in Castlemilk has decided to go down the route of getting them young, if you like. It has set up an initiative called teen zone, with local people filming events for a video blog newsletter. The association is also involved in trying to get those people on to the governance side, passing the baton to them from older committee members. Such approaches will get people involved and keep them as part of the decision-making processes in those organisations.

All our members are involved in employment and training initiatives, promoting financial inclusion, providing myriad community services and promoting volunteering in the community. You come into contact with a vast swathe of the community, not just one stripe or strand of it. All those things will continue to happen and approaches will be broadened out to reach different people in the community.

Anne McTaggart: As a former community worker, that is music to my ears. I really enjoyed hearing about the project that you talked about and the idea of shadow boards, because young people need to learn from others.

Dr Rowan: Exactly.

Anne McTaggart: Super. Thank you.

John Wilson: On the issue of engagement in Glasgow, could Mr Fletcher tell me how many tenants and residents associations there are in Glasgow?

David Fletcher: I would need to check the exact number, but my estimate would be 60 to 70, across the city. Previously, there may have been a larger number. I am happy to submit a written response to your question.

The Convener: That would be useful

John Wilson: I assure Mr Fletcher that, 15 years ago, there were more than 200 tenants and residents associations in Glasgow—I know because I conducted a survey to find out how many of them were actively engaged with Glasgow City Council at that time.

Are the targets or outcomes that are set for housing associations concentrated too much on financial performance and the building or improvement of houses and not enough on the economic impact on the existing residents of the areas that are being affected by the improvements?

Gavin Corbett: As I said earlier, I do not think that we pay enough attention to outcomes such as building social capital, as opposed to the issues of how much we have spent and how many houses we have improved.

You mentioned existing residents. That is an important issue. One of the questions around regeneration is, “How much have we improved place for the people who are there and how much have we improved place by displacing the people who are there, and what will happen to the people who have been displaced?” That is a question that, perhaps, needs to be answered by research. I think that regeneration is successful only if it works for the most disadvantaged people in the most disadvantaged areas. That is a big challenge for the regeneration strategy, and is a long-term aim.

Pauline Barbour: As most of us would recognise, it is easier to measure the bricks-and-mortar side of things rather than the social aspect. It is important to highlight that there is a duty on associations to report to tenants on their performance within the charter. I am not saying that that is a panacea or provides a solution to all the problems, but there is a duty on associations to say what they are doing in an area. Tenants have been involved in the development of the charter. That element has been present, but I am sure that more could be done.

Craig Sanderson: Traditionally, there has perhaps been too great a focus on the numbers of houses that have been built and on the finances of an association. We are experiencing a wee bit of tension—that is perhaps too strong a word—because the Scottish Government is encouraging us to embark on innovative projects and do good things with the money but the regulator is saying that we should not do so much of the wider-action stuff and should focus on keeping our nose clean and building more houses. There is a bit of a dilemma there.

As Anne McTaggart knows, I am a big fan of something called social return on investment. We could all be doing more of that sort of thing. That is a process whereby you can prove how much extra social and environmental benefit comes from a pound’s expenditure when, for example, you are building a new house. I think that we could be doing more social impact measurement.

The Convener: You said that the Government is encouraging you to use your reserves but that the regulator is saying that you should keep your nose clean and build more housing. Is that right?

Craig Sanderson: I would not say that the regulator is saying that outright, but it is implying that.

The Convener: The regulator is implying that.

Craig Sanderson: Yes. That might just be our experience, though. Others might want to comment.

The Convener: If anyone has any other comments on that, I would be glad to hear them.

Dr Rowan: I echo what Craig Sanderson said. That is our members' perspective, by and large.

David Fletcher: I do not have direct experience of that, but I understand exactly what Craig Sanderson is describing.

We have a series of targets that we set annually around what we call our better lives programme, which tends to drive away from a strict focus on finance, buildings and the estate. People-based programmes and employment and training are important. We endorse Craig Sanderson's comments.

On social impact investment, we did a piece of work with Heriot-Watt University a couple of years ago to examine the wider economic outcomes that were generated from the Glasgow Housing Association investment programme, and we need to do more of that.

We have other targets around engagement programmes, including bursaries, partnerships with the education department and supporting access to further education colleges and universities. We are particularly trying to reach people who have all the ability but maybe not the same opportunity, and we are taking on an advocacy and champion role to help to connect with them through our services and front-line staff. Hopefully, a large organisation such as ours is able to reach people at some scale.

John Wilson: Gavin Corbett picked up on the point that I want to raise. In a lot of communities, we carry out regeneration but do not measure the economic benefit of that to the individual household in the community. A lot of displacement has taken place over the years, with a lot of new-build owner-occupied projects progressing in tandem with the housing association work. That skews the overall economic impact for the existing residents, who do not see any real economic improvement in their household incomes despite all the money that we have spent on regeneration projects. There are areas throughout Scotland where, despite our having spent £20 million or £30 million on improving the area, the existing residents have not benefited economically. How do we measure that? Is enough being done to measure the economic impact not only on the area but on the individual households of the people for whom we are supposed to be carrying out regeneration to improve their lives?

Gavin Corbett: The research would probably need to be longitudinal rather than short term and would take quite an investment. Others may be better placed to comment on how valuable that would be. We would need to be able to trace things over time and follow individual people, not just the area as a whole.

You touch on one of the benefits that we might look at. The GHA written submission contains quite a lot of information about the additional benefits for employment, training and apprenticeships. At best, that is what happens with regeneration—we look at how people in an area benefit from activity in the area through using community benefit clauses and so on. However, I do not think that that is universal yet, and there is a long way to go to ensure that people in an area benefit.

Particularly when we have a crisis of unemployment among young people, we need to understand that, for young people who are furthest from the labour market and who may be at risk of causing the problems that a lot of communities rightly get distressed about, apprenticeships are too far up the line. We need to introduce people to simple activities such as getting up and ready for work and taking responsibility for themselves. I would like a range of more intermediate projects that would allow young people who are furthest from the labour market, who live in some of the most disadvantaged areas, to gain from the activity that is taking place around them.

The Convener: You are saying that some of the moneys that Government directs towards regeneration would be better off in such projects than in the physical projects that we have seen again and again in some places.

Gavin Corbett: Let us have the physical projects, but we must also consider how they can provide added value by directly engaging some of the people who might otherwise be quite distant from them. It is not a question of either/or; it is about how we can add value to those projects.

The Convener: Grand.

David Fletcher: We have embraced the GoWell programme, about which you will hear more from Carol Tannahill and her team. The programme has sought to follow people as they have stayed in their communities or moved. The committee will be aware that it is common in regeneration areas that are going through turbulent change—a lot of rehousing and demolition—that there is churn in the neighbourhood and a turnover of the housing stock. There are many challenges involved in trying to follow an individual on that journey. As Gavin Corbett acknowledges, it involves a significant amount of investment and requires the skills and experience to be able to do that right and follow someone over a decade or possibly more, as the GoWell programme has sought to do.

We have sought to invest in that programme and learn lessons from it not at the end of the period but as we go, through interaction with the principal investigators.

11:00

The Convener: We are getting quite tight for time now. I will allow a brief supplementary from Stuart McMillan.

Stuart McMillan: I have a question for Mr Corbett. A number of people have contacted me in the past regarding proposed developments. They are perhaps not happy with one or two of the outcomes, but they genuinely feel that they have been consulted. Is that common or is Mr Corbett aware of less consultation with tenants and residents?

Gavin Corbett: I suspect that every evaluation of a project will say that there were some things to learn about communication and consultation. Those can always be improved.

I am interested in how we consult. Projects such as participative budgeting, which are active forms of engagement rather than passive ones, seem to be particularly successful because they are not just about receiving views but involve an outcome and the distribution of resources. They seem to offer a way to go.

John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): For the record, I say a big thank you to Mr Sanderson for his support and, indeed, tolerance during the hard negotiations that we had on Forgewood.

The Convener: Tolerance. [*Laughter.*]

Craig Sanderson: I have never been called tolerant before.

John Pentland: The witnesses will be more aware than anybody that we now live in a difficult financial climate. Is their role in regeneration restricted because of the significant cut in the cost per unit for houses? I ask them to advise the committee what that means to them and what it has done.

Gavin Corbett: We are managing to keep the development programme moving forward at some scale in Glasgow. That creates other pressures and tensions but, so far, we have managed to do it successfully and we see our work in Glasgow at this time growing.

Pauline Barbour: If the grant levels were raised, associations could do more and could unlock private finance in light of the current lack of bank lending. Albyn Housing Society has discovered that, with £40,000, it can build 25 houses but, with £60,000, it can build 75 houses. If the grant was set at about 65 per cent, that could make a major impact on social housing provision.

The Convener: How would more grant money unlock more private finance?

Pauline Barbour: It would lever it in.

The Convener: We have heard that leverage is much higher now than it has been previously. Is that the case?

Pauline Barbour: I would have to check on that, but the example from Albyn Housing Society may be interesting to you because it has done some research into how it could manage with different levels of grant.

The Convener: That would be interesting, but we would need more than just the basics. We would need to see the business plan.

Craig Sanderson: I am on record as saying that, for there to be a long-term future for social housing, the subsidy level has to go back up to the 60 or 65 per cent level that it was at in 2010. Since 2011, it has been brought down to about 40 per cent. We cannot make social housing stack up in the long term at those grant levels.

We managed to do it by using some of our land bank and free reserves, but you can sell your organs only once. Our business plan gives us a healthy development programme but, after three years, we will fall off a cliff because our current financial arrangements, which are quite good because they were negotiated before the recession, will run out. As you suggested, future funding may be much more expensive if it comes from the private sector, so we have to compensate for that additional cost of borrowing by maintaining subsidy levels. It is only by building houses that we can continue to create jobs for people.

The Convener: Has there been any investigation of the use of pension fund moneys?

Craig Sanderson: Yes.

The Convener: How have you got on with that?

Craig Sanderson: We have looked at that and at bond finance. It is less convenient, if you like. At the moment we borrow from a bank by having what is called a loan facility, so we only have to draw down that money when we need it. If we hit planning delays, for instance, it does not matter. We are increasingly hitting planning delays; if we borrow money through a bond, we have to start repaying that the day we get it. Therefore we lose money if we cannot start on site and finish on time.

The Convener: Perhaps that will lead to more efficiency.

Dr Rowan: I would refer the panel to our submission to the Infrastructure and Capital

Investment Committee, which I can submit again. We gave written and then oral evidence last year that outlines our concerns and some of the barriers to reduced investment that our members see.

The Convener: Again, that would be useful.

John Pentland: Mr Sanderson, am I right in thinking that you said just now that if the unit cost does not rise in the next three years, some housing associations could fall off a cliff?

Craig Sanderson: No—I said that the delivery or provision of social housing may be impossible. We are already making more of our development programme available for what is called intermediate, mid-market or, sometimes, affordable rent. However, we feel that the greatest need, especially in regeneration areas, is for housing at social rent levels.

John Pentland: I have another question that follows up something that was asked earlier.

The Convener: If you are going to change the subject, I will bring in Mr Wilson for a supplementary question and then come back to you.

John Wilson: I want to ask about the subsidy issue. I have worked alongside housing developments as they took place. Can anyone on the panel comment on whether, when housing associations were being promoted, the wrong model of housing funding strategy was adopted? If we could start again, should we look at a different model? Some of the housing associations were started with almost 95 per cent grant funding, on the basis—as I understand it—that 95 or 98 per cent initial stage grant funding would allow them to become self-sustaining over a period of time. Given the levels of subsidies about which we are talking now—65 per cent, for example—are housing associations not self-sustainable? Will they continue to need high levels of subsidy? We are told that local authorities can deliver a house for a £25,000 Government subsidy, yet the committee has been told today that housing associations need a subsidy of anything up to 65 per cent.

Craig Sanderson: I will give that question a bash. You have got to be careful that you are comparing apples with apples. The reason that local authorities could build with less subsidy was because they already owned the land. When we are working out the feasibility of a project, we have to include the cost of purchasing the land. That is one reason why local authorities could deliver houses more cheaply.

On whether the model was initially flawed, no, I do not think that it was. The success of housing associations of all types, whether they are national, such as Link, or community based or regional—sort of in the middle—has been fantastic. Scotland needs to be proud of that.

The level of subsidy that was originally required in the 1990s had more to do with what was needed to keep rents affordable, rather than what was needed to sustain a business. With tenemental rehabilitation in Glasgow, 25 per cent of the cost initially needed to be subsidised because that amount of work could not be done with an affordable rent at the end of it. At least, that is my interpretation. I would say that the model is a good one and should be allowed to continue.

The Convener: For clarification, we need councils to tell us how much they pay for land. My experience is that unless the land is in the housing revenue account, which is often not the case, councils have to purchase land. We need to clarify that point.

John Pentland: We were given GHA's area committee fund post-evaluation survey, which shows the before and after of a completed project. Is your association's role in regeneration restricted by the pressures to maintain and improve existing stock and its energy efficiency? Are you using some of the grant moneys to pay for that?

The Convener: Can you go through that very briefly? I want to get all the other questioners in, if possible.

David Fletcher: I am not quite sure what grant moneys John Pentland is talking about, and it would not be our philosophy to be restricted. We would see our role as going far beyond the stock. We hope that it has been useful for the committee to see the examples and I hope that it endorses and supports some of my earlier comments about our role as champion or advocate in neighbourhoods in which often no other community structures exist. Where such structures exist, we do our best to work alongside voluntary sector organisations and others.

Will you clarify what you meant about energy efficiency?

John Pentland: Is your time being consumed by bringing up your older stock to the standard that meets energy efficiency targets?

David Fletcher: No; that is not the case. In the early years of GHA's programme, there was a massive push towards delivery of the investment programme, because much of the stock in the city absolutely needed to be brought up to warm, affordable standards.

Investment of £1.2 billion has been made in the vast majority of neighbourhoods, although not yet everywhere—far from it. That will allow for resource, staff time and committee and board time

to be invested in neighbourhoods in the period ahead in such things as better lives programmes and more community-based approaches.

The Convener: Does anybody else want to have a crack at that?

Dr Rowan: I echo what David Fletcher said. There are some problems with older tenemental stock in Glasgow, especially with wall insulation. We are trying to access innovative ways and funding to deal with that, in conjunction with the Scottish Government and energy companies. That is an on-going, rolling process, but most of our members' stock is already at that standard.

Margaret Mitchell: I think that you all indicated that you are in favour of community audits, but perhaps we did not tease out what they should include. There is an opportunity there, given what you have said about single outcome agreements, for example. I am drawing particularly on the Link submission, which indicated that there is not sufficient recognition of regeneration and there is sometimes conflict between the long-term aspirations of housing associations and other registered social landlords and the community, and the political realities, which tend to move the goalposts a lot. The people's community fund was mentioned, which gave a sizeable amount of funding for regeneration. That has now been withdrawn and a smaller pot of money is divided more widely, which has brought challenges. Will you comment more generally on the political realities of goalposts changing with different funding initiatives?

Lastly, when we have gone out to communities, we have come across the issue of procurement. Local authorities tend to look at procurement in a way that is very much officer led, rather than looking at the social benefits that could be incurred by relaxing how procurement works.

The Convener: Can we have very brief responses, please? Gavin Corbett can have the first crack.

Gavin Corbett: You mentioned community audits. My heart sinks when I hear the word "audit"; as I indicated earlier, I am much keener on more active forms of understanding communities. My experience is of using things at a small village level, through a rural project. If something is seen as being done to people, it is less useful than if it is more active.

The last point was on a wider assessment of procurement. We need to get that right at specification stage. If we wait until we are looking at the tenders that have been submitted, it is too late. We need to specify at an early stage what we want a project to deliver, and then invite and seek interest from organisations that are in that ballpark.

11:15

Pauline Barbour: Community audits are positive things—after all, it is good for communities to see what others are doing and to learn from their peers—but other panel members will probably have more involvement in their ins and outs and what they entail.

I wonder whether I picked up Margaret Mitchell properly. Were you talking about problems with funding streams to get projects going?

Margaret Mitchell: It is just that things are always moving. For example, the people and communities fund, which seems to have been very good, has been replaced with something that might not be so generous.

Pauline Barbour: One example that unfortunately has not worked out so well is the Raploch area, which David Fletcher mentioned. With the cut in the association's budget and a lack of financial capability and grant funding, the project stalled slightly. The problem is that the community's expectations are not being met and an association, if it is in the local area, tends to be the first port of call for people wanting to know why these things are not happening and why promises have not been kept. Despite all the good things that associations do with regeneration, such problems and issues still have to be addressed.

Margaret Mitchell: Are you able to make your case more strongly through the single outcome agreement to ensure that regeneration and how this or that project is achieving it are factored in?

The Convener: I must ask for a brief response.

Pauline Barbour: I can find out a bit more and report back to the committee.

Craig Sanderson: The fund that I was referring to that had been withdrawn was the wider-role fund. At one time, it was worth £12 million a year; it was cut to £6 million and then replaced with the so-called people and communities fund. Wider-role funding was available only to housing associations, while PCF is quite rightly—probably—available to others as well. It just means that there are more mouths to feed with a reduced amount of money.

Dr Rowan: The two members of our forum that as I mentioned earlier have carried out community audits—New Gorbals and Govanhill—found them to be very useful indeed. Moreover, they were not done to the community and they were not a matter of simply going round and counting assets. Focus groups were established, local priorities identified and partner agencies in the area spoken to about how they could work together better for the area.

David Fletcher: Like Gavin Corbett, I get a heavy heart when I think about community audits,

but I think that they have a role to play. It is tricky, because in the single outcome agreements the leadership on community planning was rested with local authorities, and I think that the audits need to be designed carefully to ensure that they fit. Earlier, we discussed how mainstreaming had been a key driver, and it is tricky to link both things together successfully.

The Convener: I have already talked about how in certain areas regeneration moneys have funded things that in other areas would have come from mainstream budgets; indeed, Peter Matthews's submission highlights the same point. Do you have any examples of regeneration moneys going into projects that should really have been funded from mainstream budgets? As a former chair of a social inclusion partnership, I have many, but I would like to hear from the panellists.

Craig Sanderson: I do not feel that I can comment on that.

The Convener: So you have no examples of projects funded by regeneration moneys rather than mainstream budgets. I believe that Mr Fletcher mentioned the point earlier.

David Fletcher: I agree with your earlier sentiment, convener. In a number of areas, we are responding to community priorities. Having been involved in the social inclusion partnership in Easterhouse for many years, I know that such partnerships often had to take a step forward and draw other mainstream partners to the table to deliver a community project. An example from a couple of years ago that comes to mind was Easterhouse's cultural campus—as it was known—called The Bridge, which linked the library, the swimming pool and John Wheatley College. The social inclusion partnership used significant resources from its own budget as the lever to create that initiative.

The Convener: I just find it very interesting that none of you can cite any examples.

Dr Rowan said that organisations with which she had been involved have been community anchors for 30 years. Of course, "community anchors" is one of those buzz phrases that come along from time to time, but if such organisations have been community anchors for many a year do they need to be defined in law?

Dr Rowan: They do not necessarily need to be defined in law, but it would not do any harm for them to be acknowledged as community anchors.

The Convener: But what happens if an organisation that feels that it is a community anchor is defined as such and another or an individual is not?

Dr Rowan: Well, I think that it is—

The Convener: I am sorry—I am just playing devil's advocate.

Dr Rowan: I suppose that that will always happen. However, it would be useful to have a set of criteria that people can see.

The Convener: Does anyone else want to have a go at that?

Pauline Barbour: The issue was raised during discussions around the formation of the people and communities fund, and everyone found it difficult to thrash out a definition of community anchor. A set of definitions has been formulated; some associations meet them absolutely and others such as development trusts meet all or most of them. The criteria exist and it is useful to have them.

Gavin Corbett: I heard the scepticism in your question, convener, and share your sense that the label of "community anchor" can be as much of a dead-weight if the organisation that bears it does not show how it has earned and continues to earn the title. Enshrining it in law would not be helpful because such an approach tends to fossilise things, but the metaphor is useful if it is used as a springboard rather than as a dead-weight.

The Convener: I thank the witnesses for their evidence. The session has run on a bit longer than you might have expected, but that probably shows that you were good witnesses.

I suspend the meeting for a change of witnesses.

11:21

Meeting suspended.

11:27

On resuming—

The Convener: We move on to our second panel. I welcome Professor Carol Tannahill, director of the Glasgow centre for population health and a member of the GoWell project; Dr Peter Matthews, lecturer in the school of the built environment at Heriot-Watt University; and Annette Hastings, senior lecturer in urban studies at the University of Glasgow.

I think that one of the previous panellists thought that I was scowling at them, but in fact I am in pain rather than scowling. I point out, because I know that for some of you this is your first visit to the Parliament, that we do not bite.

As no one wants to make an opening statement, we will go straight to questions—I love that. I will start with the first question that I asked the previous panel, which is about the role of community planning partnerships in regeneration.

What do you think of community planning partnerships in this sphere?

Professor Carol Tannahill (GoWell): First, the principle of bringing together all the main partners that work in an area in something like a community planning partnership is undoubtedly a very good idea. If community planning partnerships did not exist, we would all want to invent something like them. The principle is therefore very good, but there have been concerns and tensions about the two different roles that community planning partnerships often look to fulfil. The first role is about co-ordinating the resources, strategies and services of players at the level of the local authority. The second role is about the community bit of community planning: community involvement and reflecting the needs and priorities of the different communities that sit within a local authority area.

With regard to today's discussion, we need to recognise that community planning partnerships are often not in a position to have the detailed local knowledge that is required to inform local regeneration decisions. I like to think of it as a chain, with community planning partnerships being one part of that chain and also having a role in keeping the chain well oiled. They have a responsibility for ensuring that there is the necessary community infrastructure for local decisions, but they often do not have that localised knowledge of what is needed in some areas.

11:30

Dr Peter Matthews (Heriot-Watt University): I share those concerns. There is a key challenge in accessing the strategic local authority level in community planning. It is difficult for anybody to engage at that level, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 says that local authorities also have to deliver local community planning. My experience of watching community planning happen at strategic local authority level is that it is very much about the leaders of those organisations coming to talk to one another, just to make sure that they are on the same page at the level of partnership working. It sometimes gets towards deeper partnership working, but much of it is about ensuring, for example, that other organisations know what the health board is doing or what the police are doing.

At local level, more depressingly, a lot of the partnerships are just an arena for local community groups to voice their concerns in what can be an unconstructive way, and for different council departments—or even different parts of the same council departments—to come together to find out what the others are doing. That is the sort of partnership working that should not be taking place in community planning, which should move beyond that. The police are seen a lot at local level. I used to see Lothian and Borders Police and Strathclyde Police, before the reorganisation of police services, doing fantastic partnership working at local level, but the local general practitioners' practices, the local dentists or other partnership organisations that can make a difference in communities are not seen in that way.

To echo the point that was made by Gavin Corbett, there is a big question about local arrangements and what constitutes a neighbourhood. A lot of local authorities have resorted to using multimember wards as their basic geography; they are vast and they have cut a lot of former regeneration areas in two.

Annette Hastings (University of Glasgow): I would not disagree with either of my colleagues; I would add to the list of issues and concerns. At a city-wide or local authority-wide level, and at a more local level, community planning is a useful instrument for understanding the different levels of need for particular services. As a strategic body, the community planning partnership can bring services together, think about the multidimensionality of needs, and assess whether there are different levels of need in different parts of an area for particular services. They are useful as a strategic instrument, and that is at the heart of my submission. They are also a good instrument for tailoring provision appropriately to meet those needs.

The other aspect of community planning—keeping communities at the heart of community planning—is harder to deliver, but in an era when we are thinking about more community-led regeneration, it is helpful to have more detailed intelligence about the potential for communities to take the lead and do things for themselves in particular areas.

The Convener: Exercises in planning for real have been carried out in many areas. Is that the right way to do things so as to better inform community planning partnerships about what is required in communities, rather than having things done to them, as was said earlier?

Dr Matthews: I know of planning for real. It is a copyrighted product, and although I have not been involved in it myself, I know the type of approach that it involves.

The Convener: It is copyrighted by Aberdeen City Council, if I remember rightly.

Dr Matthews: There is a range of different methods of engaging communities and of allowing communities to come up with their own vision of where they want to be in the future.

The charrettes have been quite popular for land use planning in master planning new neighbourhoods successfully with the sustainable communities initiative. I would not say that there is one ideal method, as there is a range of methods. Increasingly, new technologies are changing the methods and how we might think about using different methods to engage with communities and allow a community to vision. However, when we are talking about regenerating communities, it is quite a big ask to expect people who might be struggling to think where their next meal is coming from to vision where their neighbourhood will be in 20 years. We must understand the capability of a community to carry out these visioning exercises.

The Convener: So, you would like planning for real with some kind of advocacy involved as well.

Dr Matthews: Yes.

The Convener: Grand. Thanks.

John Pentland: Will the panel define the role that the community plays in CPPs? Way back in 2002, when the matter was first discussed, it was advocated that CPPs should be about planning by the community and not just for the community. What is your view on that?

The Convener: Who wants to go first?

Professor Tannahill: I am happy to kick off. My experience is particularly in the Glasgow context. As was mentioned, community planning operates in different ways across the country, so I have a partial view of it. In Glasgow, we have seen a number of different approaches and efforts to enable community involvement in community planning, particularly through the more devolved, sector-based community planning structures.

The focus is currently on community council involvement. However, everyone recognises that that is limited and does not go far enough. We need to find new ways of involving the community.

Our experience in GoWell, which is not particularly focused on community involvement and community planning, is that people feel that they have an increasing influence over the decisions that affect them. We are seeing progress, over time, in members of the communities that we are studying feeling that they have some say over neighbourhood planning—master planning and so on—and over direct housing allocations and things such as that.

The influence is least in the areas that require the most regeneration. There is a gradient across the city in the extent to which people feel that they have influence. People in such areas also feel that they have least influence over the big decisions in the city.

The questions that we ask are on a scale, and range from the extent to which people feel that they have some say over issues that affect their home to the extent to which they feel that they have some say over issues that affect their neighbourhood and the extent to which they feel that they can influence decisions that organisations such as the council and the health board make. It is clear that, the further away decisions are from being directly about people and their households, the more the influence that people feel they have decreases.

There is a long way to go. As I said in answer to the first question, part of the solution will lie in further development of community planning, but that is not the sole answer for community involvement in decisions.

Annette Hastings: I have done no direct research on community planning in Scotland, so my comments are based on research on community engagement in other spheres that is more historical than current. Nevertheless, I speak to people who are involved in community planning and I have formed an impression of some of the difficulties.

I agree with Carol Tannahill that most of the evidence is that good community engagement takes place on the issues that are concrete and real in people's lives—issues about their home, their street and their neighbourhood. There is little evidence of ordinary people having an impact at a strategic level or of innovative approaches that enable people to make the leap between feeling empowered to make a difference at the local level and having the skills and tools at their disposal to make a difference at a more strategic level. Therefore, I am not sure about the potential of community planning as a vehicle for empowering ordinary laypeople. It provides a forum for some people to vent their spleen or to make positive, constructive suggestions, but real community engagement must be tied closely to people's immediate concerns.

Dr Matthews: I will link my answer to the question in the previous session about the usual suspects, because that is an undercurrent here, as well. When we talk about the usual suspects, one of the challenges is that we come at the debate uninformed about what representation is and what it means to be a community representative.

We all understand that the MSPs around the table are legitimate democratic representatives because they have been elected. That is good; it is clear to understand. There are other forms of representation that are understood by political scientists, which are about ensuring that the usual suspects have the capacity and the support to speak to their community and to represent it in the round. I accept that many of the usual suspects do

not do that. However, we should not blame them if we do not support them in trying to do that.

There is a role for community development to play in supporting such people, who are brilliant. They are volunteers who are willing to come forward and do such work. I am not willing to go to my local authority's neighbourhood partnership meetings because, frankly, they are quite dull. If those people are willing to do that for me, that is fantastic. People say, "Oh, they're the usual suspects; they just complain about the streets being cleaned," but if the streets were cleaned properly, they might stop complaining about basic everyday services not being provided and might move on to think about some of the bigger strategic issues.

The Convener: I am glad to hear that you think that MSPs are legitimate.

John Wilson: Good morning. Dr Matthews talked about how we deal with the usual suspects. I remember from my time working in community development that we used to refer to some of the usual suspects as the fingered elites—people who were selected by certain bodies and organisations to become legitimate community representatives.

As has been said, MSPs have stood for election and been democratically elected. I find that many of the usual suspects do not go through any democratic accountability process in their communities, with the result that the community becomes disengaged from them and they become part of an elite that is not accountable to the rest of the community. Some might become divorced from the community. How do we ensure that the usual suspects are accountable to the communities that they claim to represent and that, like councillors, MSPs and MPs, they are held to account regularly?

Dr Matthews: The question of accountability is difficult. As you say, such representatives are not elected. It is important to recognise that the issue affects not just regeneration areas but communities across Scotland.

I reiterate that it is the role of good, supportive community development to enable such community activists—the usual suspects—to engage with and listen to their communities and to take on that role actively. Many people in more affluent neighbourhoods are capable of doing that on their own—they might be retired professionals who have the relevant skills—but many of the activists or people who might want to become activists in regeneration areas do not have the necessary capacity or skills. There is a role for community development to play.

Professor Tannahill: We need to make the role of community activist more attractive. If we did so, more and more people would want to take it on. For that to happen, people must see value and influence in the role. That will require changes in the organisations with which such activists engage, as well as more community capacity building.

To echo a point that was made in the first evidence session today, we also need to have a future orientation. As we are all aware, there has been a decline in participation in voting and in a range of democratic processes in our society, so the issue does not affect just regeneration. Collectively as a society, we face a challenge in engaging people at a young age to participate in decision-making processes that affect them. That should be a priority in regeneration.

From the health perspective, we have a growing recognition of the importance of a good start in life. As you will all be aware, we want Scotland to be the best place in which to grow up. However, in the read-across to regeneration activity, relatively little is said about what regeneration can do for children and young people and how they can be engaged in regeneration processes. I would like much more to be done on that.

11:45

Annette Hastings: Implicit in John Wilson's question is the point that the problem is not the fact that certain people have the energy, enthusiasm and interest to come forward and become engaged in issues but what happens to them when they come forward. If their view differs from that of the senior managers or politicians around the table—they might have a more critical view that desires to hold other partners to account—to what extent is that valued and seen as a valid way in which to engage?

In engagement circles, there has perhaps been a bit too much of a culture shift towards expecting partnership to be about building consensus rather than articulating different and perhaps challenging views, which can be explored and debated in depth. Supporting the usual suspects to help them to retain their critical edge is a key issue.

Stuart McMillan: Good morning, panel. I have a couple of questions. My first question is directed to Professor Tannahill and follows on from her comments about the need to make the community activist role more attractive. If a community has had little attention or investment for decades, many of the folk in that community may feel totally disenfranchised. They will not vote, as you mentioned, but they might also have lost hope in their community. How do we then make the role attractive, as you suggested?

Professor Tannahill: I will use some of the GoWell data, as that is the evidence that I am here to talk about. When we have looked at processes

of community empowerment for GoWell, we have found that there has been more progress on community involvement in governance processes, such as tenant representation on committees. Some of that involves the people who have been called the usual suspects.

However, we have seen much less progress in wider community capacity building, and there is a clear relationship between those two aspects. People need to be confident in themselves—education and training are really important—and they need to be treated well. That is why I made the point about the need for organisational development as well as community development, because organisations need to learn how to make decisions in a different way that truly reflects community views rather than simply rubber-stamp what they have been given. People need to be respected in that role.

I am afraid that those are softer issues, which I do not think can be legislated for. The issue is not so much about the composition of committees as about having a different type of workforce that sees its job as being about—to use the now common term—co-production with communities rather than putting services into communities and simply consulting people about plans.

The Convener: As well as the educational aspects that you have mentioned, what about the practical aspects that stop people engaging? For example, young women with kids find that certain bodies do not provide crèches or whatever that would allow folks to participate. Folks might have older relatives who need constant care. How do we get over those practical issues? Are they a real impediment, or is that just exaggeration on my part?

Professor Tannahill: There is no doubt that those issues are an impediment. You asked for practical examples, and I have a good one to share. I have been struck by an initiative led by the Poverty Alliance, with Government support, called the evidence, participation, change—EPIC—project, which is about evidence of and participation in change.

Grant support—it is not a substantial amount—has been used to enable people who are experiencing poverty to be part of a programme over a period of years that allows them to engage with research and with policy decision making that affects the lives of people in poverty. The project does not require a huge amount of money—the amount is tiny in comparison with that for infrastructure development—but that money can be used to overcome the practical impediments that you highlighted.

Dr Matthews: What springs to mind are other ways in which people can be engaged. We tend to think about community engagement as communities—representatives of groups—engaging in formal partnership processes, and we do not explore how else people can engage with activities about their place and the local state.

On the latter, we do not really think about what I refer to as citizen-initiated action, which is picking up the telephone to ask the local council to get something done. The fact that people in affluent neighbourhoods might do that a lot more than those in less affluent neighbourhoods has an impact on service delivery. That differential impact needs to be understood.

I have been involved in a small project in Wester Hailes in Edinburgh called ladders to the cloud, which is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The project concerns a local housing association's activity, and historical photos of the neighbourhood—it has changed massively—have been put on a Facebook page. That page has had more than 2,000 likes by present and former residents who are just reminiscing about the place. That might not be fantastic engagement in relation to changing services, but it is people talking about their place, how it has changed and what value it has to them. It is important to value such activities, too.

Annette Hastings: On fostering wider engagement, the convener opened the questioning by referring to planning for real. Although such projects have shortcomings—they can raise expectations beyond what can be delivered—at their core is the provision of outreach work to a broader range of people. That allows those people to develop a sense that they are valued and respected, that their views might be welcome and that there is a possibility of change in their neighbourhood. That can set in course a virtuous cycle in which people who are further away from engagement processes realise that they could have a voice where they have never had one before.

Stuart McMillan: There have been various types of regeneration over the years. What lessons should we learn from what has happened in the past? What can we learn from the current regeneration models? How should urban regeneration companies amend what they do, bearing it in mind that the economic situation is different from that six years ago, when many of them were established?

Annette Hastings: Again, I qualify my remarks by saying that I have not done direct research on the URC model, although I have spoken to people who have been involved in URCs. I will make general remarks about one or two of the lessons that we have learned.

A lot of change is going on and the funding for the URC model is uncertain. Finishing the job is important. The GoWell evidence suggests—as does my research—the importance of having an end point to concerted and intensive effort. Such effort picks up the need to invest not only in housing but in the wider environment and quality of place. That is my submission; perhaps we will get a chance to talk about that later.

The evidence from people who live in regeneration areas is that the regeneration intervention is often the last straw and makes people want to leave a neighbourhood. Some long-standing residents decide that that is the time to move, because they do not want to live through all the dirt, noise, disruption and uncertainty.

Evidence from other research that I have conducted in very stigmatised neighbourhoods shows that outsiders—people who do not live in a regeneration area—can be attracted to the area if they understand that there is a master plan for the whole initiative, that something is on the horizon for the derelict space and buildings and that the holistic plan will be completed and delivered. That can build confidence, and a lesson to be learned from that is that finishing the job is important.

I welcome the more strategic approach that we have taken since the early 2000s in Scotland. We have thought about community planning, displacement effects and how, in addition to social inclusion partnerships, interventions in an area can nest in a more strategic approach to addressing need on a wider scale. That is important, but it is also important not to lose sight of the particular needs of the most disadvantaged areas. An important aspect of regeneration is having small pots of money that people can use innovatively and creatively, so that they feel empowered by deciding how the money is spent.

There must be a more strategic approach that operates at a higher level, but we still need small-scale projects and cash on the ground that will allow different things to happen than would be the case if there was only a strategic approach.

Dr Matthews: As I stated in my submission, it is important to unpick fully the place-based interventions, such as the urban regeneration companies, to see what impact they can have in changing places, building new homes and transforming what were pretty unpleasant urban environments to make them better. URCs can have an immediate benefit just in material wellbeing—GoWell has fantastic evidence on that—because moving from a house with damp to a modern house completely transforms someone's life. GoWell and the new deal for communities evaluation in England have shown how important the wider impacts of interventions on health and wellbeing are for families and individuals.

We must be clear about not only what place-based interventions can deliver but what people-focused initiatives can deliver, and we must understand how the latter work. The history of regeneration shows that we put in for five to 10 years people-focused initiatives that make an enormous difference, then we stop and, five years down the line, the neighbourhood is back to where it was. That is often because neighbourhoods are dynamic and the people who have benefited fantastically well have moved on. New residents often move into social housing, so they are in housing need and there is basically a like-for-like replacement of tenants.

Many of the people-based interventions must therefore be on-going. We cannot just presume that 10 years will provide enough of the medicine to fix a neighbourhood; to really transform people's lives requires on-going effort.

Stuart McMillan: Would doing that regularly or continually promote a dependency culture?

Dr Matthews: I would not say that basic literacy and numeracy programmes and basic back-to-work schemes result in a dependency culture. Such initiatives make a big difference to people's lives; they help people to access the labour market, transform household circumstances and enable people to move on in their lives.

Stuart McMillan: Folk who stay outside the areas that you are talking about might have the impression that, if they go to one of those areas, certain things will be done to them or they will be encouraged or forced to do X, Y or Z. I am not saying that such initiatives are bad things—I make it clear that they are very useful, worth while and required. However, the impression of people who live outside those areas might be, "Och well, that's that part that gets extra things done to it all the time." That might create a bit of an image such that people do not want to go there.

Dr Matthews: Annette Hastings might have something to say about that from her work on stigma, but my research indicates that the stigma that is attached to deprived neighbourhoods often helps to reinforce views that are expressed as, "Oh, well, in the past that was just a crap area, but now it gets everything."

We need concerted action in society to challenge that stigma around deprived areas and to recognise that those neighbourhoods can be fantastic elevators for people to get on in their lives. That is why they need the extra investment, the resources and the partnership office with the door that is always open for anybody to walk in with a myriad of problems, to get them the help that they need.

12:00

The Convener: As a resident of a socially excluded area, I do not recognise some of the things that are said about the place that I live in, but there we go.

Professor Tannahill: The large-scale URCs generally focus on infrastructure improvement. I have no doubt that investments of that scale are needed in parts of the country where, without the proposed level of physical transformation, things will not improve. We need to recognise that.

Infrastructure development is important for the resilience of areas. It allows the physical fabric—the transport connections and so on—to be in place. It is also important for the sense of progress in an area, which is good for the wellbeing of the people who live there and helps to address the stigma. A lot is really positive about infrastructure development.

We found that housing-led regeneration of the type that the committee heard about earlier has brought considerable benefits for people in terms of satisfaction with their homes and improvements in their wellbeing. Living in an aesthetically pleasing neighbourhood is good for people's wellbeing. We learned about the importance of aesthetics.

I will highlight some of the things that we have learned about what has not happened so well in approaches so far. Communication is an issue—communication with residents of such areas about their opportunities to influence decisions; about the pace of change; about how they can engage with change; and about the options that are available to them. That communication needs to be improved.

Another issue is the pace of change—in particular over the recession, when the pace has slowed and a lot of private sector development has not taken place. We learned that that has had an impact on the residents of regeneration areas. Some of their expectations that areas were going to become much more mixed have not been realised. Their expectations that they would be rehoused and that the area that they left would be transformed have not yet been realised. We also heard that there are issues to do with the fact that much more attention needs to be paid to the people side of regeneration. I am sure that we will talk about that a bit more.

I will flag up something that we found out that has not been mentioned yet, which is about the benefits of a good local media strategy, for want of a better phrase. That can help to alter people's understanding of what is happening in an area and what sort of area it is.

We know that the national media tend to focus on bad news stories—I am sure that we have all experienced that. Often, some of the areas that we are talking about are featured in that way. Countering the public perception of those areas with more proactive coverage of the good things that are happening is an important part of regeneration and we think that it is underinvested in.

Stuart McMillan: I have a question, if that is okay. It is a very brief one.

The Convener: It will have to be very brief, because I have a number of folk waiting to ask questions.

Stuart McMillan: Would you recommend that television programmes such as "Skint", which is on Channel 4, I think, and "The Scheme" on the BBC do not get made and that instead we should promote the positives?

Professor Tannahill: I am talking about balance. The public will not be convinced by some sort of sweet marketing of what life is like in such areas. Life is difficult in a lot of areas. We need balance but, at the moment, the balance is wrong.

Margaret Mitchell: How could we get a better distribution of mainstream services to disadvantaged areas? Annette Hastings, your paper talks about quality of place—everyone has mentioned that. In particular, on environmental services such as street cleaning, it would be good to get a little bit on the record about your informal experiment with the Dutch undergraduates.

Annette Hastings: That is quite a big question. In my informal experiment, I took a number of Dutch students around Glasgow a couple of weeks ago on a nice, sunny Monday morning. We went to a range of neighbourhoods, including four that have received significant regeneration investment over a sustained period, although they remain income deprived. I asked them to try to estimate the level of income deprivation, based on the physical cues in the area. They were, generally, able to do that. They recognised three of those four areas as being home to poor or very poor people. The only one that they were—shall we say—fooled by was the new Gorbals area, which they thought was home to average or quite rich people. Given the comments that they made to back up those evaluations, it seems that it is the quality of public space that is letting down the regeneration areas. One of them wrote, "Nice architecture, ugly grass." They talked about the lack of maintenance and the many undeveloped areas, as well as dirty streets and roads in disrepair. By contrast, the new Gorbals area looks finished. There is still work going on, but there is lovely architecture and there are good spaces in between the nice new blocks.

The issue of the quality of place and the quality of space is important. I suggest in my submission that there is something that we can tangibly do about the quality of space. A Scottish neighbourhood standard would go some way to ensuring that people who are poor do not have to live in poor environments. Environmental services are a relatively cheap service. In my submission, I talk about ways in which that service could be delivered in ways that could have the effect of improving the quality of place in the more disadvantaged areas, and I address ways of protecting and sustaining regeneration investment, as well.

Margaret Mitchell: Could you comment on the conflict between short-term and long-term aspirations? Often, there is pressure to deal with matters in the short term. How can we ensure that the necessary work continues to be done in order to keep a community or place looking the way that it should?

Annette Hastings: That goes back to the discussion that you had with the earlier panel about a lack of prioritisation of basic, routine services in neighbourhoods, whether or not regeneration intervention is under way.

In my submission, I provide evidence of the fact that more resources can be spent on routine, basic, everyday services in our better-off areas. There is conclusive evidence of that for environmental services, and Peter Matthews and I have done some secondary research that suggests that that might also apply in other services areas, but we do not yet have the data to enable us to make a complete assessment of that. We present quite conclusive evidence that there is a skew in the allocation of resources, which means that they unintentionally go to better-off neighbourhoods.

The Convener: Is it because people in those areas are more likely to complain?

Annette Hastings: It is partly because they complain, but it is also because, over time, managers and politicians build in the capacity of operational staff to pre-empt those complaints and work in ways that ensure that those complaints are not made.

Given the financial climate, this is a potentially large issue. We are talking about how we can best spend resources, and I would suggest that we are not spending resources in the best way if we are unintentionally spending more than we need to in better-off areas to the detriment of poorer areas.

Dr Matthews: To draw on the earlier session, which we had the good fortune to be able to sit through, in many areas, housing associations do a lot of good work on environmental services. They are willing to put in the investment and recognise the increased need for that. Neighbouring local authority housing and areas can look extremely poor compared with the housing association areas.

With regard to Stuart McMillan's point about the ownership of land, I have come across some examples where, when there has been a question about the ownership of land and whose responsibility a piece of land is, the housing association has been happy to say, "Okay, if nobody else is going to sort this out, we will. We need this to look better, because our tenants will be happier and will sustain their tenancies." Housing associations are a good example to follow in that regard.

The key element that came out of the review that Annette Hastings and I did on the issue of what we might call middle-class activism was leadership. I attended a neighbourhood community planning meeting in a community planning area that encompassed very affluent and very deprived neighbourhoods. A community activist from the affluent neighbourhood said to the police officer who is the head of community policing, "Our allotments have been broken into three times over the past six months. You have to do something about this. You have to send a police officer up there every night, inspector, and make sure that the tools aren't being stolen." Bravely and demonstrating fantastic leadership, the police inspector stood up in front of the meeting and said, "I'm sorry. I have to send all my police officers down to the deprived neighbourhood every night just so people can live there. Get insurance for your tools."

It will be very difficult to make such decisions—to turn round to neighbourhoods that have been used to having very high-quality services and tell them that they cannot have that level of service any more because the money is better spent elsewhere.

Professor Tannahill: We really welcome a focus on neighbourhood quality. That is one of the main priorities in regeneration as we go forward. In addition to the points that have been made about environmental management and ensuring that the green space is good quality, we would add two other dimensions.

The quality of the commercial environment needs attention. It is much harder to impose a neighbourhood quality standard that covers the commercial environment but, in a number of the areas that we are examining, the commercial environment is detrimental. The provision of less healthy options is dominant and positive options for people are rare. That needs to be taken into account when we think about neighbourhood quality.

It is also important to involve local residents in determining what the priorities are for the quality of their neighbourhood. In the equally well test site in Glasgow, which looked at how to integrate wider values into planning processes, there were examples of the different sorts of decisions that get made when local people are part of deciding about plans for their areas.

Margaret Mitchell: Do you have any comments on the procurement process and how it works or does not work for the benefit of communities?

Professor Tannahill: I have not looked at that.

Dr Matthews: I could not comment on it.

The Convener: Thank you for your honesty on that.

Anne McTaggart: In what ways has the relatively constant change of initiatives, funding streams—those were mentioned earlier—governance structures and responsible organisations impacted on community groups and the practice of social regeneration?

Dr Matthews: It is good to highlight the difference between neighbourhoods on that. If I lived in, say, Morningside, in the 1975 local government reorganisation I would have been given my district, region and community councils and those would have stayed the same until 1995, when I would have got my unitary authority. That would have stayed pretty similar until community planning came along and I would have got my local partnership. Over 30 years, there would have been about four or five different governance arrangements. However, if I lived just down the road in Wester Hailes, I might have experienced 10 different initiatives over that time.

In my research, I went back to two of the new life for urban Scotland neighbourhoods, which were heavily engaged in regeneration in the 1990s. It was striking how the resident activists who were still active—they were the usual suspects; they were fantastic people—could talk passionately about that decade because they knew that the partnership existed. It was on their doorstep, and they could go to it, knock on its door and say that they wanted something sorted and it would get done. However, they did not have a clue about community planning because so much had changed in the seven years since the partnerships had ended that they struggled to keep up.

With austerity biting, local authorities are looking again at their local community planning arrangements. They should stop, let the existing arrangements bed in and leave communities be. They have had too much going on. One good thing is that, in Scotland, we have not ended up in the situation in which England ended up in the 1990s and early 2000s, when there were often parallel partnerships operating in the same neighbourhoods. We have rarely got to that stage, but it has been alphabet soup and constant iteration, leaving communities asking what will happen next.

Anne McTaggart: Ultimately, it would be a good move to make things simple.

Dr Matthews: Yes.

The Convener: Annette, do you want to have a crack at that question?

Annette Hastings: Not really. The history of change is unsettling for communities. They certainly need stability. Perhaps we will come on to it later, but the uncertain financial climate at the moment is probably as damaging. There is a history of communities getting up to speed with a new initiative and it then moving on, which is challenging.

Professor Tannahill: Something more simplified would be good. We need to be realistic about the timescale over which change happens. Funding is often too short term. However, I would also say that change is entirely appropriate. Priorities change over time. Sometimes new evidence comes out that suggests that we need more focus on new areas. Although we should not see all change as bad, the timescale over which we should look for effects needs to be given more thought.

12:15

John Wilson: Good afternoon, panel. Dr Matthews, you told us about a public meeting at which somebody from an allotment site demanded that the police monitor the allotments every night and the inspector stood up and said that he has to go into a deprived area every night because people live there. We are talking about the regeneration of communities. Surely part of that is about people being allowed to live in those communities and about the underlying problems in those communities being dealt with by all the agencies. That is about partnership, so that people in deprived areas do not have to rely on the police coming into the area every night to resolve the problems. It does not need financial regeneration; it just needs something else to ensure that partners work closely together to allow people to live their lives free from the fear of crime, violence or intimidation.

Too many communities are living in fear and we are not tackling the underlying problems and dealing with the problem residents or tenants or other issues in that community. How do we achieve that? I said that the solution is not financial, but perhaps it is.

Dr Matthews: To go back to my story, that is an example of partnership working. It was a community police inspector leading a team of community officers, and that is the sort of activity that they were engaged in. It was not a case of, of an evening, in the neighbourhood—

John Wilson: Sorry, Dr Matthews. I am trying to get at something slightly different. Although the police are going in and policing an area, what about the other partners, such as the local authority housing department and the housing association? I do not know the area that you are referring to, but how are the housing association—if there is one—and any other landlords in the area engaging in the process to ensure that people live their lives in their communities free from the fear of crime? How do we get those partners involved? It is okay to police the area—we can do that and say that it is all the fault of the police—but surely other partners need to get engaged in the process to lessen the threat of criminal activity in those communities.

Dr Matthews: I can speak only from my experience, which is limited to a certain number of neighbourhoods. I cannot speak on a Scotland-wide basis. Also, I can speak only about the pre-Police Scotland structures. However, what I saw at a neighbourhood level was that, in many ways, they had cracked partnership working on the issue of low-level antisocial behaviour and criminality. Community safety teams were working with local community officers, housing officers and housing associations in a range of ways, such as ensuring that there were diversionary activities for local youth, so that policing was not being delivered as a reactive service—they were not sending the blue lights flashing every night; they were there as a community safety presence in the round in a neighbourhood, supporting that neighbourhood.

Annette Hastings: I would expand that by bringing the example back to environmental management and environmental services. In my submission, I talk about the opportunity to rethink environmental service provision as a form of preventative action. That is about getting basic, ordinary services right and commensurate with the level of need on the ground. Our research shows that, independent of social deprivation, other neighbourhood factors predispose some neighbourhoods more than others to littering and environmental problems. Environmental problems are related to housing density and proportions of young people. That means that a higher level of servicing is needed to create a level playing field for the people who live in those neighbourhoods. The Christie commission talks about reactive resources being misspent in disadvantaged areas. Top-up resources and regeneration investments are substituting for the lack of mainstream resources. That goes back to the convener's point. There is a lot of evidence of that.

The Convener: Can you give us examples?

Annette Hastings: There are the sort of examples that you mentioned in the context of a social inclusion partnership. There is evidence of substitution as a result of the new deal for communities programme in England. When regeneration provides a higher level of service, the mainstream service withdraws or draws back and pares back its service, so nothing changes.

Peter Matthews gave a good example. The problem is that people listening to the police officer in the situation that he describes think that the poor neighbourhood gets everything, that the police officer is always down there and that perhaps policing is not being done appropriately. That can give the impression that poor neighbourhoods are having more resources spent on them, so the view emerges that problems are not to do with a lack of resources but are perhaps to do with the behaviour of the people who live there. If we get the basic provision right and can measure it against needs, that can save money and can change mindsets, so that people understand that there are structural reasons why disadvantaged neighbourhoods need different kinds of services and more services than other neighbourhoods.

The Convener: We have moved on to regeneration money substituting for what should be normal mainstream spending. Do Peter Matthews or Carol Tannahill want to add anything?

My own feeling from my experiences over many a year is that regeneration bodies often become a cash cow to pay for mainstream services that elsewhere would usually be funded from other sources.

Annette Hastings: Extra regeneration investment is necessary only because the mainstream service is not doing its job appropriately and is not addressing the fundamental problems. If that bit were to be got right—it is in the gift of the Scottish Parliament to get that right—there would not be the deficit that makes you feel that regeneration investment is necessary.

John Wilson: I thank the panel for their answers to my question. I was trying to get at the point that it does not always take additional resources—as the convener said, regeneration resources—to turn a community around. It is about how we utilise the existing resources and how we deal with the issues that arise.

I am glad that residents who were involved in the Castlemilk partnership still recount their

experiences positively because, when I worked there for six years during the new life for urban Scotland initiative, I saw the hard work that had to be put in and the fight that it took to get the community's voice heard. Annette Hastings was around at the time, along with Alan McGregor, so she will be able to testify to the work that the community did.

Professor Tannahill said that, often, a community regeneration project finishes after 10 years and, five years later, the community has become run down again. We see that all too often. The new life for urban Scotland initiative was part of that community partnership process over the past 20 or 30 years. What can generate sustainable regeneration? Rather than having to reinvent the wheel every 15 years, how do we ensure that we get sustainable regeneration in communities into which we plough lots of resources and additional funding so that we do not have to revisit the area 15 years later to say, "Right, we need to invest"? It is about getting regeneration right, so that communities feel empowered and people continue to see their lives improve.

Professor Tannahill: I recognise the scenario that you describe, but it would be wrong for me to suggest that I have the answer. The general understanding now is that one reason for the emergence of the scenario that you describe has been an overinvestment in physical regeneration and an underinvestment in social regeneration. A lot of submissions to the committee's inquiry have made the case for more investment in the community aspects of regeneration.

The word "regeneration" suggests doing something again, or getting something back to what it was. We need to consider the future trajectory of those communities, and how the regeneration process will enable them to be sustainable and have different models of employment, given that some of the traditional employment no longer exists. There needs to be a link between employment and environmental sustainability, which is going to be increasingly important, and more connectivity to other areas. As well as investing in people, we need to encourage new models of life and work in those communities and pay attention to their relationship with neighbouring communities or other parts of the city. If we focus simply on one area, without thinking how it relates to other areas around it, that will be less sustainable than if we treat an area as part of a wider system or eco-system.

Those are three suggestions, but I cannot pretend that there is an easy answer to the issue of long-term sustainability.

The Convener: Gavin Corbett talked earlier about confidence building in people. The need is not so much to get people into employment as it is to get them to the stage where they are suitable for employment. On Monday, I visited Station House Media Unit. There is an initiative there to get kids involved in media, called ShmuTRAIN, which gives kids the confidence to move on. Have you got good examples of tracking people from the stages of those earlier interventions to when they actually gain employment—in some cases, very good employment?

Professor Tannahill: A word that has not been used today is resilience. It is fundamental for individuals to be resilient if they are to benefit from the skills development and confidence building that you describe. Community resilience is closely linked to that; resilient communities are ones where a lot of the residents have exactly the sort of skills of which you speak.

In terms of specific examples, I recommend to the committee one of the most innovative social regeneration projects in Scotland at the moment. Sistema Scotland, the big noise project, works with children and uses music as a way to build skills, confidence and teamworking. From the initial evaluation of its initiative in Raploch, it is really inspiring. Sistema is now being introduced in Govanhill and we will be evaluating it there. That is what I mean about thinking differently about regeneration. To me, Sistema is a very important social regeneration initiative that enables a different quality of life for children and their families in those areas.

The Convener: There was similar work in Aberdeen at one point.

Is the lack of confidence often brought about by the stigmatisation of certain neighbourhoods?

Annette Hastings: Absolutely. Confidence and resilience come from one's sense of having a place in the world and the potential to make progress. When we talk about the sustainability of regeneration and how we ensure that that is long term, we always come back to the fact that our society is going through major changes. The better-off and the worse-off are pulling apart; they are increasingly living parallel lives in different kinds of neighbourhoods. It is important to bring the wider picture to this story and, on a practical level, think about the interconnections between people who are on different pathways. For instance, we need to think about the distribution of the state's resources in relation to the different trajectories that people are on. If we do that—if we revalue people who are in disadvantaged circumstances—the other benefits of increased confidence, a willingness to take responsibility and a sense of personal and collective efficacy will increase. Those things cannot flourish when a group in society feels left out, abandoned and forgotten.

Stuart McMillan: It was put to me by music teachers that the Sistema initiative is yet another way of diverting financial resources from general music tuition in schools to a particular project. If any of you are going to work on Sistema, please bear that in mind.

The Convener: I asked the previous panel about the concept of a community anchor, which is a new buzzword. Peter Matthews spoke about constant change. Is that concept yet another example of constant change, as it attempts to define something that is already there?

12:30

Dr Matthews: It would depend on the nature of the community anchor and which organisations were to be defined as such. Picking up on the earlier discussion, I would not necessarily support a legislative approach, because of the problems that you highlighted—for example, what if another organisation said, "We're the community anchor"? A lot of these community anchors are organisations such as community-based housing associations, which have a long history that stems from activism in their neighbourhood to make it better. They still have a majority of tenants on their boards, and they do a lot of positive work to engage those tenants. They have their tenants coming in every day to the front desk to give them reports on what the neighbourhood is like and what the issues are on the ground. Such organisations are often small and dynamic, and they can tailor their services, implement preventative measures constructively and work with other local third sector organisations to develop innovative partnership activities. That is the type of positive organisation that acts as a community anchor.

Professor Tannahill: It is important to emphasise what these organisations offer and what their characteristics are. They provide stability and reach and are there for people whatever their needs are, and they are not hidebound by a particular silo responsibility. I agree that anchor is not a great term, but it is crucial that we foster organisations that do those things.

Annette Hastings: Community-based housing associations as a type of anchor organisation offer a different and more empathetic relationship between staff and ordinary people. One would struggle to identify many community-led housing associations at present, but what we have is a set of organisations that are very well resourced. We should not forget that much of their success depends on that resourcing regime, and on the positive policy infrastructure around those organisations that enables them to do things.

Success also comes from the sort of workforce development that we have been talking about, which involves a cultural shift from people providing a service to a set of recipients who should be grateful for it to a more positive, engaging and empathetic relationship. That is where community anchor organisations have something to tell the public sector more generally about the need for change and the need to re-engage in a much deeper and more fundamental way with the lives of ordinary people, not just those who harangue staff on the phone asking for an extra level of service but the silent majority who deserve to be treated better by the state.

The Convener: I thank you for your evidence, which has been very useful indeed.

12:33

Meeting continued in private until 12:48.

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