

Carnegie UK response to NILGA Call for Evidence for the Review of the Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors

March 2024

Carnegie UK is an independent charitable foundation established with an endowment from Andrew Carnegie over 100 years ago. Our purpose is better wellbeing for people in the UK and Ireland. We focus on collective wellbeing, which is about everyone having what they need to live well now and in the future. We believe that collective wellbeing happens when social, economic, environmental and democratic wellbeing outcomes are seen as being equally important and are given equal weight.

- Social wellbeing: We all have the support and services we need to thrive.
- Economic wellbeing: We all have a decent minimum living standard.
- Environmental wellbeing: We all live within the planet's natural resources.
- Democratic wellbeing: We all have a voice in decisions that affect us.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this NILGA call for evidence on the roles and responsibilities of Councillors in Northern Ireland.

What do you think councillors should be focusing on leading?

At Carnegie UK, we believe that improved collective wellbeing should be at the heart of our policymaking. For us that means working with local people and stakeholders to identify shared priorities, and developing policies to improve social, economic, environmental and democratic outcomes.

Do you think continuous learning and development would assist councillors in discharging their role?

Yes

Which of the following do you think should be provided for all councillors:

Induction and training (including mentoring)

Are there any other comments or suggestions you would like to make?

Organisationally, we have a long history working in Northern Ireland. From 2017 – 2021, we ran a programme titled 'Northern Ireland: Embedding Wellbeing in Local Government'.

We are pleased to highlight relevant programme recommendations in this survey, and to share the wider research outputs with this working group.

Our research highlights that in 2015, the reform of local government in Northern Ireland gave

the 11 newly created local authorities the responsibility for leading community planning processes for their respective districts. Community Plans identify priorities for improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of local districts and their residents, community cohesion and local quality of life, beyond local government electoral cycles into the long-term. The Community Plans have the potential to act as local wellbeing frameworks in which local authorities and their partners as Community Planning Partnerships must take an outcomes based approach to their work.

Independent analysis commissioned by Carnegie UK confirmed that all of the Community Plans, to varying degrees, adopted both the language and substance of the wellbeing agenda and the outcomes model. However, local government was charged with the responsibility for developing Community Plans with little financial or other support.

It is vital that the relevant support and training for effective delivery of community planning legislation is provided. This should be embedded in Councillor inductions, as well as in ongoing training as relevant.

Our 2023 [Life in the UK](#) research shows that democratic wellbeing (including trust in government) is a particular challenge in Northern Ireland, with lower levels than the rest of the UK. 59% of people in Northern Ireland feel they cannot influence local level decision makers. Addressing deficits in Community Planning capability could help positively address these challenges.

The full published outputs from our Embedding Wellbeing in Local Government Programme can be found at the following links:

[Working together for collective wellbeing: Report of the Northern Ireland embedding wellbeing in local government programme](#)

[Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland - Report of Co-production Symposium \(Community Places, Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland and Carnegie UK\)](#)

[A Toolkit for Co-Production in Community Planning \(Community Places, Queen's University Belfast, Carnegie UK\)](#)

In addition, you may have an interest in the work Carnegie UK undertook with the North of Tyne Combined Authority to develop a wellbeing framework, which included working with both elected members and local experts:

<https://www.northoftyne-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Wellbeing-Framework-for-the-North-of-Tyne-full-report-Jan-22.pdf>

<https://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/the-north-of-tyne-combined-authority-inclusive-economy-boards-wellbeing-framework-for-the-north-of-tyne/>

<https://www.northoftyne-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Evaluation-of-the-Roundtable-on-Wellbeing-in-the-North-of-Tyne.pdf>