1. Overview

The Local Strategic Assessment provides an overview of how a Local Area is doing. It collates a wide range of information and, through facilitated sessions with a range of individuals involved in the Local Community Planning process, provides a key input for the refresh of Local Community Plans and an input into the wider Fife-wide Strategic Assessment.

The current Levenmouth Local Community Plan is focused on delivering three key priorities:

1. Access to employment, education and training
2. Health, wellbeing and environment
3. Area investment and regeneration

Many of these issues came through strongly in Local Strategic Assessment.

Multiple issues emerged in relation to the priority of Access to employment, education and training. It is recognised that volunteering is of great importance in Leven, but that alterations to how volunteering is promoted could encourage more people to become involved. The new Levenmouth Academy is viewed as an opportunity to change the mind-set of young people about what is achievable for them, helped by improved links with further education and local businesses. Consolidation of high-speed broadband in the area, combined with a focused program to raise IT literacy, is seen as being important in helping people to transition into the workplace and take advantage of online opportunities. Access to employment opportunities outside Levenmouth is poor, largely due to a scarcity of direct transport links to major employers in other parts of Fife.

Health, wellbeing and environment must be viewed in the context of demographic changes and community cohesion. The need to minimise social isolation for a growing elderly population was highlighted, alongside a recognition that Levenmouth has a higher than average proportion of younger people who remain in the area after finishing secondary education. There is a perception that “the river divides” when looking at development within the area, with those areas south of the river seen as being left behind. A shortage of social/council housing is an issue, alongside an excess of poor quality rental properties.

Area investment and regeneration is a strong theme. Improved transport links are considered to be vital to the promotion of Levenmouth for business and tourism, with the potential rail link to Thornton thought likely to have a significant impact. Levenmouth is viewed as having great tourist potential – the coastal path, golf, a compact town centre – but there is a strong view that the area could promote these aspects more effectively. Improving the general appearance of the area is considered to be key to this approach, particularly dealing with vacant and derelict land and making streets look and feel safer.

There is a belief that Levenmouth is an area with a great deal of untapped potential, and that the community should be encouraged to get involved in community projects and shape the future of their area (e.g. Silverburn, Rail link.)
2. Local Assessment Findings

LEVENMOUTH

Local Community Plan
- Access to employment, education and training
- Health, wellbeing and environment
- Area investment and regeneration

Profile
- A 39% increase in older people expected by 2036
- Unemployment and the economy seen as major issues
- Healthcare and health facilities are of concern

Place
- Issues around work & local economy
- Skilled workers often brought in rather than grown
- Streets and spaces seen as an issue
- Identity and belonging lower than expected
- Need to promote itself better as a tourist destination
- Appearance of the area could be improved
- Better and affordable transport options seen as important

Community
- Significant areas of deprivation
- Volunteering seen as a key way to involve communities in improving the area
- Many parts of the area with low outcomes, most are improving though Methil East might improve faster.

Local Strategic Challenges
- A changing older population is a challenge
- Lack of ambition and poor perception of the area seen as a barrier
- Significant local assets which could generate tourist and employment potential
- Economic outlook is challenging

People
- People generally doing less well than similar people in other parts of Scotland
- Less transient population with low aspirations
- Lack of social housing holding some families back

Horizons
- Increasing older population could be challenging
- Local perception and lack of aspiration seen as a barrier to future improvement
- Step change initiatives such as a Rail link seen as key to the future
3. Profile

The Levenmouth area is made up of three main coastal towns (Leven, Buckhaven and Methil) and a number of smaller towns and villages. These sit on the north side of the Firth of Forth in the south east of Fife. The area is characterised by heavy and traditional industries, such as coal mining and the docks, which have steadily declined over recent decades.

In the Levenmouth area, local people identify the major issues as unemployment, the NHS / hospitals / healthcare and the economy. This is followed by issues relating to funding for public services, cost of living, pensions and benefits, and crime / antisocial behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>AREA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37,347</td>
<td>69.4 SQ KM</td>
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<tr>
<td>2% DECREASE expected by 2036</td>
<td>5% of Area of Fife</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.2% of Fife’s population</td>
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<tr>
<th>CHILDREN</th>
<th>WORKING AGE</th>
<th>OLDER PEOPLE</th>
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<tr>
<td>6,310</td>
<td>23,136</td>
<td>7,901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3% DECREASE expected by 2036</td>
<td>15% DECREASE expected by 2036</td>
<td>39% INCREASE expected by 2036</td>
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<tr>
<th>HOUSEHOLDS</th>
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<tr>
<td>18,919</td>
<td>61% owner occupied</td>
<td>68.7% with at least one car/van</td>
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<tr>
<td>3% DECREASE expected by 2036</td>
<td>30% social rented</td>
<td>5% of Area of Fife</td>
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<tr>
<td>6% private rented</td>
<td>6% private rented</td>
<td>6% private rented</td>
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<tr>
<td>£311 median weekly income (after housing)</td>
<td>35.7% live alone</td>
<td>27.8% in fuel poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.0% in low income</td>
<td>26.9% children in poverty</td>
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<tr>
<th>ECONOMY</th>
<th>MAIN EMPLOYMENT AREAS</th>
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<tr>
<td>64.7% Economically active</td>
<td>24.0% Education &amp; Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Of which</td>
<td>19.5% Wholesale Retail and Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.0% Employed Full Time</td>
<td>15.1% Finance &amp; Professional</td>
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<tr>
<td>22.1% Employed Part Time</td>
<td>13.9% Manufacturing</td>
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<tr>
<th>WELFARE AND BENEFITS</th>
<th>WELFARE REFORM CHANGES: EXPECTED LOSS TO LOCAL ECONOMY</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.9% Job Seekers Allowance</td>
<td>£14.3 million per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0% JSA (16 to 24 year olds)</td>
<td>£609 per working age adult</td>
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Figure 1 – Community perceptions of what is a major issue in the area (Fife People’s Panel, Survey 24, 2015)
4. Place

Place is an important element of Local Community Planning. Using the national Place Standard tool, local people were asked to consider aspects of the physical and social environment where they live and to paint a picture of the place and what needs to improve.

The Place Standard facilitated sessions identified the following improvement areas:

**Buildings and facilities** – a more co-ordinated approach for community projects by the trusts, the Council, partners and businesses would help to improve the quality of existing buildings and premises, and help encourage the community to come forward with new proposals and projects. This could include dealing with vacant and derelict land, bringing buildings up to an acceptable standard, making streets look and feel safer, and providing more facilities in the community to tackle social issues, for example, off-road areas for motorbikes.

**Tourism and Culture** – the area needs to promote itself more effectively as a tourist destination, highlighting its industrial heritage, the coastal path and golfing links.

**Street Scene** – work needs to be done to improve the appearance of the area by tidying up streets and footpaths, providing fewer better quality playparks and public toilets, making greater use of community art projects, and improving empty shop fronts.

**Transport** – buses in the area are seen to be expensive, do not operate at suitable times, and have no direct connections with major towns, such as St Andrews and Dundee. More investment in the cycle network would help ensure that the area is better connected. The area would benefit greatly from a Levenmouth rail link, park and ride facilities and other green initiatives, including a hydrogen powered bus service.

**Economy** – the area suffers from a shortage of employment, training and investment that is targeted at local people, resulting in skilled workers having to be brought in from other areas. There are no direct links to major employers in Fife for people living in the area. For example, three buses are needed to travel to work at Amazon in Dunfermline. The area lacks suitable visitor accommodation that could potentially provide additional income for the local economy.

![Place Standard - Where is improvement needed in the Levenmouth area?](image)

Figure 2 – Community perceptions of where improvement is needed in the area using the Place Standard. The outer part of the diagram (score 7) means little room for improvement, while the inner part (score 1) represents most need for improvement (Fife People’s Panel, Survey 26, 2016)

People living in Levenmouth identify a greater need for improvement across a range of themes than is the case for Fife as a whole, with the exception of play and recreation, public transport, and traffic and parking.

The areas for which people identified the least need for improvement were:
- Play and recreation, and
- Facilities and amenities.

The areas where there was considered to be the most need for improvement were:
- Work and local economy,
- Streets and spaces, and
- Identity and belonging.
5. People

All people are different, and simply looking at where they live only gives part of the picture. How well different groups of people are doing compared to others in the area and throughout Scotland enabled the following insights to be identified through a facilitated session.

Constrained city types account for a sizeable proportion of households in the area, and these groups are doing less well within the area, and when compared to similar types of people living elsewhere in Scotland. The area includes a number of hard-pressed household types, who are sitting around the average for the area and relative to similar households elsewhere in Scotland. Urbanites are doing well in the area, but less well compared to similar types of household elsewhere in Scotland.

The facilitated sessions identified the following issues:

Connectivity
The population in Levenmouth is less transient than other areas in Fife and generally has lower expectations and aspirations. Transport links and infrastructure are generally regarded as being poor and incompatible with the available work patterns and employers for low or unskilled workers in Fife.

Social connections & community
There are good levels of social and family connections, with less outward migration by younger generations, which helps some families in the area do better than elsewhere due to the support networks available to them. There is also a view that general life satisfaction in the area is better than it would appear on paper. Many people in the area are willing to volunteer in their communities, although a change in mind-sets is needed to enable real engagement and ownership. The presence of an isolated population of migrant workers, employed rurally and not fully integrated in the community, brings a specific set of issues, and needs. Learning from other areas’ approaches should be considered.

Housing
The area is very diverse. Although grouped together under the Levenmouth banner the various communities across the area are, in fact, very different from one another. There is a shortage of social/council housing and an excess of poor quality private rental with a number of problematic landlords. There is a perception that “the river divides” when looking at development in the area, with the areas south of the river being left behind. New-build private housing has developed a commuter community, with people living in the area but working elsewhere.

Work/Skills
Generational expectations and attitudes play a large part in people’s views about whether they can/should work or study and their ability or desire to change their situation. Literacy and numeracy levels are generally low in the area sometimes making it difficult for people to articulate their own need. The new school is seen as an opportunity to change the mind-set of the next generation and to raise their expectations about the opportunities that are available and achievable. There is a need to ensure that today’s young people leave education with the skills needed and that links between education and local business enhance this.

Tourism
Better promotion of the area for tourism is needed, based on the area’s assets, including natural coastal attractions and the beach, and involving local people who have a pride in their area. Learning from the Twin Town approach, and providing people who are new to the area with guidance and information (for example, through at local civic events) would help with integration.
6. Community

Insights into how communities are faring provide a critical input when considering local places. Through facilitated sessions, the following issues were identified:

Volunteering – is acknowledged as having many positive aspects, such as improving self-confidence and wellbeing, and creating a sense of belonging in an area. Much of the volunteering undertaken is hidden, unrecorded, and unpublicised, making it more difficult to encourage people to get involved as they can’t necessarily see “what’s in it for them”. Volunteering should also be less formal and easier to take part in.

Participatory budgeting - is seen as a useful tool to encourage people to get involved in community projects.

Community projects – are generally successful when a few keen individuals take ownership, and when it involves an issue that affects people in the area.

Getting better at listening – There is a perception that it is difficult for groups in the community to help themselves due to the bureaucracy and obstacles that prevent things getting done. If the Council gets involved, it generally sets the agenda, and does not take on board the community’s views. Any involvement or funding that the Council provides for community groups should be sustained over a longer time period to help keep local people engaged and projects sustainable.

Community councils – are only active in some areas and this is usually dependent on one or two key individuals who may dominate the group. Some views expressed suggest that community councils are not always representative of their local communities, and are not necessarily the most appropriate body for getting things done in an area. In some cases less formal “action groups” may be more appropriate.

Council support – It should be clearer to groups what support is available, with more workers on the ground being seen to provide this support.

Communication and engagement – partners need to get better at publicising community activities and consulting with people using language, media and methods that they can understand and identify with.

73% “I belong to my local neighbourhood”

“I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood” 75%

72% “I would be willing to work with others to improve my neighbourhood”

“I have given unpaid help to a local community group in the last year” 15%

Fife People’s Panel, Survey 25, 2016
Local community planning requires a good understanding of differences within and between neighbourhoods. The table below shows the overall pattern of outcomes for neighbourhoods in the area, and whether local neighbourhoods are improving over time.

It identifies how different neighbourhoods in the area are faring in relation to key life outcomes. This includes outcomes across early years, older people, safer and stronger communities, health and wellbeing, employment and economy.

The neighbourhoods with the poorest outcomes in the Levenmouth area are in Methil West and East, Buckhaven and Muiredge and Methilhill. Areas with better life outcomes include Largo, Windygates and Leven East and Bonnybank.

Methil West, Wemyss and Kenoway are doing worse than expected when compared to similar communities elsewhere in Scotland, while Largo, Windygates, and Methilhill are doing better than expected.

Neighbourhoods showing the least improvement in life outcomes include Leven West, Wemyss and Methil East. The greatest improvements in life outcomes are seen in Denbeath, Windygates and Methil West.

Methil West, Denbeath and Methilhill are showing greater improvement than comparable neighbourhoods elsewhere in Scotland, while Wemyss, Leven West and Largo Bennochy East are improving the least compared to other similar neighbourhoods.

**Figure 5 – How different neighbourhoods are doing on key life outcomes relative to other comparable areas**

Improvement Service, Community Planning Outcomes Profile Tool 2016
8. Horizons

It is impossible to predict the future. However it is possible to identify challenges which are already on the horizon. Through a facilitated horizon scanning exercise a number of future considerations were identified for the Area:

**Demography**
The forecast increase in the elderly population, coupled with an erosion of services as a result of budget cuts, will make it difficult to prevent social isolation for many older people. However, the increase in the elderly population is also seen as an opportunity to increase levels of volunteering and political/community engagement. The proposed rail link was seen as an important potential means of keeping the working age population in the area, as commuting would become a more achievable option.

**Environment**
The proposed rail link is viewed as a potential game changer in terms of the impact it would have on the Levenmouth area, resulting in a significant impact on tourism, trade, and access to employment and education. It would also help to remove the perception of isolation that affects Levenmouth, which is often seen as being in Fife but not part of it. In areas that are away from the A92, current transport links are poor.

**Economy**
There is considerable untapped potential in the area and a need for redevelopment and rebranding. The area has an attractive seaside location, good access to parks and golf courses, is located on the Fife coastal path, has a compact and accessible town centre, and is close to a number of sites of historic significance. However, many of these advantages are either under-appreciated or under-promoted. Improved transport links allied to more effective community involvement could transform the area into a leisure destination. The makeup of the town centre, and the potential to mix smaller bespoke shops, along with other types of activity (accommodation, offices, etc.), means that there is potential to create a thriving hub.

**Technology**
There is a need to ensure that high speed broadband is available in the area, and that more people are IT literate, taking into account the difficulties faced when IT access and training opportunities are lost when facilities close. The new college campus should provide additional opportunities for young people to transition from school into the workplace with the requisite IT skills.

**Organisational**
The Council should actively support local organisations with community asset transfers and think differently about how it delivers its services. The GRIEG Hub and links to the third and voluntary sector need to be strengthened. However there is a danger of this facility becoming more overstretched than it already is.