

# Annual Report

## Participation Requests

### Background

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Participation Requests are a legal duty under Part 3 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. Under the duty the Council is required to publish annually details of requests and any support and promotional activity undertaken.

This report details the participation requests received by the Council since the legislation came into effect on 1 April 2017 in line with the annual reporting requirement. An update on the work programme to support the delivery of this new duty is also provided.

An interim process for participation requests was agreed by the [Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee](#) at its meeting on 28 March 2017. This process has been applied to the participation requests received by the Council.

### Report

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The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 passed into law on 24 July 2015. The Act introduces a range of measures designed to support communities to engage with public bodies to improve outcomes. Part 3 of the Act, Participation Requests, came into effect on 1 April 2017.

Under the legislation, public bodies are required to report annually at the end of June each year on participation requests and specifically:

- the number of requests received;
- the number of requests agreed and refused;
- the number of requests which resulted in changes to a public service provided by, or on behalf of, the public service authority; and
- action taken by the public service authority to promote and support the use of participation requests.

In the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, the Council has received two participation requests as summarised overleaf.

## **Westbank Street**

Portobello Community Council submitted a participation request on 25 April 2017. The request was to be involved in the sale of the Westbank Street land, known locally as the 'Pitz' site. The request was agreed. After this submission, a further request was received from Portobello Amenity Society. On this basis, an Outcome Improvement Process was developed involving both groups.

The delivery of the agreed Outcome Improvement Process is ongoing. An extensive community engagement exercise has been carried out, including surveys and focus groups in the area, with the results informing the design bids for the development of the site. An evaluation session of all bids took place with representatives from both Portobello Community Council and Portobello Amenity Society, and elected members for the Portobello/Craigmillar ward. The final stage of the Outcome Improvement Process is for the preferred bidder to be presented to the Council for approval.

Following the completion of the Outcome Improvement Process, a report will be published in line with the legislative requirements. An evaluation process will also be carried out with the findings informing the development of the Council's policy for participation requests.

## **2050 Edinburgh City Vision**

A second participation request was received from Transition Edinburgh on 11 January 2018. Transition Edinburgh sought engagement in the process of achieving a carbon-neutral Edinburgh through the 2050 Edinburgh City Vision. The request was refused on the basis that the 2050 Edinburgh City Vision has not yet been formulated.

A commitment has been given to ensure that Transition Edinburgh are informed of the planned engagement process scheduled for the latter half of 2018 which will provide an opportunity to inform and influence the development of the 2050 Edinburgh City Vision.

## **Promotion and awareness raising**

Under the legislation, public sector bodies are required to promote the use of participation requests to communities, and provide support, where requested, to enable communities to participate in the process.

To support this activity, joint activity has been carried out with the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC), including being one of four learning sites in Scotland and the publication of SCDC guidance for community bodies on the Council website. Internal promotion has also been carried out and a staff toolkit published on the Council's intranet.

## **Policy development**

The report approved by Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee on 28 March 2017 proposed that a Council policy on participation requests would be developed in the last quarter 2017/18. As this was subject to a review of the existing approach it is proposed to await the completion and evaluation of the existing request with the findings from this informing the policy.

The evaluation will draw on the experience of the groups that have been involved, their reflections of the experience and improvements that could be made. The evaluation will also include a workshop with the Council officers who have led and delivered the participation request, including staff from Corporate Property, the Information Governance and Strategy and Insight Teams.

The policy implementation will be supported by the delivery of a refreshed work programme which will include a communications and awareness raising plan and capacity building programme.

It is also proposed to continue with the Partner Network Group established to share good practice and comprising representatives from Edinburgh College, Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council, Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Fire and Rescue, NHS Lothian and Police Scotland.