

Annual Report

Participation Requests 2018-19

Background

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 from 1 April 2018 until 31 March 2019 and provides a summary update on progress with these requests in line with the annual reporting requirement as at the end of March 2019.

An interim process is in place for participation requests which 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 since the legislation came into effect.

Report

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 2018 to 31 March 2019, the Council received three separate participation requests of which two were for the same subject as summarised overleaf. No requests were refused within the period.

Short Term Lets

A request was received by the Council on 22 September 2018 from a group seeking to influence the development of the Council's policy on the management of Short Term Lets within the city.

Initial discussions were held with representatives of both groups in October 2018 with the Council's Regulatory Manager to determine the full context of the enquiry and to fully ascertain the group's aims to help reach a decision as to whether to formally accept the request.

The participation requests were received shortly after the conclusion of an extensive national consultation on arrangements by the Scottish Government which the council had already made written representations to, which it had consulted upon prior.

Following these discussions, further details were requested of the membership of the group to help validate the request. This information was not forthcoming, therefore the request was placed on hold pending receipt of the information requested.

Portobello Golf Course

Two separate requests were received in late September 2018 from Portobello Golf Course Action Group and from Portobello Community Council. Both groups seeking to respond to a request from Edinburgh Leisure to determine options for increasing the use of Portobello Golf Course. Both requests were accepted by the Council.

Following joint discussions with both groups together, it was agreed that the Outcome Improvement Process would operate by organising consultation events at locations around Portobello to engage with the local community. A maximum of five questions being asked to gauge views and opinions at different venues across Portobello.

A supplementary online survey was also to be organised, hosted on the Council's Consultation Hub. Edinburgh Leisure staff attended events with support from Portobello Community Council and Portobello Golf Club Action Group.

The original proposed completion date for the outcome improvement process was to be the end of March 2019, however, the groups agreed to extend this to allow for a proper review of the findings of the public survey.

Policy development

Dedicated resources are provided by the Strategy and Communications Division to ensure participation requests are fully assessed in line with legislative requirements and services are fully supported throughout each stage of the process. Community groups are encouraged to participate in initial dialogue about their proposals and help is available to community groups at every stage in the process.

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 requests with the findings from these informing the policy. It is likely this will take place in early 2020.

The evaluation will draw on the experience of the groups that have been involved, their reflections of the experience and identify any improvements that could be made. The evaluation will also include a workshop with a selection of Council officers who have led and delivered participation requests, including staff from across participating services.