

Planning Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 2 October 2014

The Edinburgh Planning Concordat Engagement Fund

Item number	7.2
Report number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All

Executive summary

The purpose of the report is to update the Committee on the take-up of grants under the Edinburgh Planning Concordat Engagement Fund and proposes some minor changes to the eligibility criteria.

The Edinburgh Planning Concordat Engagement Fund was approved by the Committee on 8 August 2013 in conjunction with the Edinburgh Planning Concordat which seeks to promote consensual working between developers, the Council and community councils on major development in the City. The fund allows grants of up to £300 to assist community councils in engaging with the wider community. The Committee asked for an annual update of the take-up of the grant.

Since approval, there have been two applications for grant assistance, both of which have been agreed.

Links

Coalition pledges	P15 , P27 , P28
Council outcomes	CO7 , CO24 , CO26
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1

The Edinburgh Planning Concordat Engagement Fund

Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee
- (1) notes the take-up of grants from the Edinburgh Planning Concordat Engagement fund and;
 - (2) agrees to the proposed changes to the eligibility criteria to encourage greater take-up of the grant.

Background

2.1 The Edinburgh Planning Concordat Engagement Fund (EPCEF) was agreed in principle by the Planning Committee on 8 August 2013. The EPCEF was set up in response to community council concerns that they do not have the resources to engage more widely with their communities on major planning applications at pre-application stage. Pre-application consultation on major planning applications is required under planning legislation in Scotland. A budget of £5000 was set aside for the fund and the processing arrangements were agreed with the Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee.

2.2 The criteria for the grants were set out as follows:

- Maximum grant to be £300.
- Grants to be used for the following purposes and other communication methods in a similar format:
 - distribution of information such as leaflets, postcards, mail shots;
 - public notice boards in shop windows, GP surgeries, churches, community facilities, etc;
 - e-participation through websites;
 - public stalls/street stalls e.g. in a shopping centre;
 - door to door surveys;
 - special public meetings; and
 - Exhibition boards in public places.

All such methods should include details on how comments can be made to the community council.

- Grants will only be given where the information being distributed is impartial and genuinely seeks the wider community view.

- Grants will only be given where the community council has approached the developer for assistance and this has been refused. For instance, the developer could pay for leafleting exercises and this could form part of the discussion about the form of community engagement.
- All invoices and receipts should be submitted for auditing purposes.

Main report

Major Development Proposals since August 2013

- 3.1 To date, only two applications have been received for grant assistance from the EPCEF, to engage more widely with the local community. Currie Community Council received £234 for engagement on the Garden District site. Queensferry and District Community Council applied for £150 for the Ferrymuir site. Both grants have been agreed. In agreeing the grant for the Ferrymuir consultation, it was decided to waive the requirement for the developer to be approached first to fund the engagement as the community council felt this would potentially compromise its view.
- 3.2 Since 8 August 2013, there have been 48 Proposal of Application Notices submitted to the Council and community councils for major development in Edinburgh. The small number of grant applications reflects the circumstances of the last year as explored below.
- 3.3 New community councils were elected in October 2013 and details of the Edinburgh Planning Concordat and the Engagement Fund were only issued in December 2013 to allow for office bearers and training to be put in place. Therefore, there is not a full year's experience of the take up of the grant.
- 3.4 To date, 16 community councils out of 43 have signed up to the Edinburgh Planning Concordat and have given an undertaking to work consensually with developers and the Council when new major development is proposed in their area. Neither of the two community councils receiving grant have signed up but this is not a requirement.
- 3.5 Further training was carried out for community councils in May/June 2014 and the information on the concordat and the engagement fund was re-issued after that. It should also be noted that the Community Council scheme requires community councils to demonstrate how they are fulfilling their responsibilities as representative bodies. Guidance has recently been issued to community councils on how they can engage more widely and therefore provide evidence that they meet the requirements of the scheme. This is compatible with the aims of the EPCEF.

Feedback from Community Councils

- 3.6 All community councils which have had Proposal of Application Notices in their areas since August 2013 have been asked for comments on why they have not

applied for grants for consultation assistance. Eight responses have been received (44%). These are summarised in Appendix 1.

3.7 The main reasons for the lack of applications are as follows:

- Unaware of the availability of the grants but would use it in future;
- Developers have paid for leafleting and hall rents;
- Not found it necessary to date but would use it;
- Available funds are insignificant;
- Timescale is too short to prepare paperwork for grant assistance; and
- Prefer to rely on old fashioned, qualitative methods – small numbers of considered responses.

Comments were also made that community council funding in general should be increased but this is outwith the remit of the Planning Committee. It was also suggested that it would be useful if the money could be used to improve modern technology. However, the eligibility criteria already allows for e-participation through websites. Clarification was also sought regarding major developments in adjoining areas and whether grant assistance would be available for this.

Changes to Eligibility Criterion

3.8 The feedback from community councils suggests that there is a lack of awareness about the grants and this can be addressed through further publicity. However, take-up could be improved with some minor changes to the eligibility criteria. These are set out in Appendix 2.

3.9 Clarification can be given on the use of the grant for social media. In addition, it is clear that some developers are paying for publicity in some cases and this should remain a general principle but the criteria should allow for cases where community councils feel that it is inappropriate for developers to pay these costs. The main change suggested is that where a community council feels a major development in an adjacent area may have an impact, the grant should be available for engagement on this.

Measures of success

4.1 The measure of success will be increased take up of the grant and the development industry and local communities working together to engage constructively.

Financial impact

5.1 There are no financial risks arising from this report. The level of grant is small and can be accommodated within the overall Planning and Building Standards budget.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There are no perceived risks associated with this report. The report has no impact on any policies of the Council. Pre-application consultation on major applications is part of the statutory planning framework.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 An Equalities and Rights Impact Assessment has been carried out. This is limited because the grants are only available to community councils who are deemed to be statutory consultees on major planning applications in Edinburgh. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires existing policy and processes to be reviewed to ensure compliance with legislation. The opportunity has therefore been taken to establish if there are any barriers to the take-up of the grant and address any obstacles to participation.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The impacts of this report in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties have been considered, and the outcomes are summarised below:
- This report will have no impact on carbon emissions because the report deals with grants to community councils;
 - This report will have no effect on the city's resilience to climate change impacts because the report deals with grants to community councils; and
 - This report will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh because it promotes participation in the planning system.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Community councils were asked if there were any reasons why they had not applied for grant funding. Eight responses were received and these have informed the recommendations in the report.

Background reading/external references

Report to Planning Committee 8 August 2013: [The Edinburgh Planning Concordat 2013 and Engagement Fund.](#)

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Links

Coalition pledges	P15 – Work with public organisations, the private sector and social enterprise to promote Edinburgh to investors P27 – Seek to work in full partnership with Council staff and their representatives P28 – Further strengthen our links with the business community by developing and implementing strategies to promote and protect the economic well being of the city
Council outcomes	CO7 – Edinburgh draws new investment in development and regeneration CO24 – The Council communicates effectively internally and externally and has an excellent reputation for customer care CO26 – The Council engages with stakeholders and works in partnership to improve services and deliver agreed objectives
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1 - Edinburgh's economy delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all
Appendices	1 - Feedback from community councils 2 - Changes to Eligibility Criteria

APPENDIX 1 – FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY COUNCILS

PLANNING CONCORDAT ENGAGEMENT FUND EMAIL TO COMMUNITY COUNCILS AUGUST 2014

On 8 August 2013, the Planning Committee agreed the principle of providing a small grant to assist community councils in carrying out engagement on major applications, and approve the criteria for such grants to be paid. However, to date we have only had 2 applications for grant assistance. We would welcome some quick feedback as to why this is the case.

1. Is there a particular reason why you have not applied for grant assistance to engage with the wider community?
2. Are there any changes to the rules which would make it easier for you to apply for assistance?
3. Any other comments?

Community Council	Feedback
Northfield & Willowbrae	Northfield and Willowbrae is a sort of new CC and I am sure would apply for this grant if we had any “major” applications – which, at present, seems unlikely. It might be that when the planning for the new St John’s Primary School is in prospect, we will be applying.
Balerno	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I was unaware of this grant scheme, can you please forward info onto me.2. I don't know.3. Balerno is an area that is under siege from developers and we (Balerno CC) have opposed all of the proposals to build within our <u>Balerno Green Belt</u>. We are also busy in responding to other planning proposals, appeals, and proposed new Edinburgh Local Development Plans. We receive no payment for the many hours of work spent on planning matters, so if applying for grants means a lot more paper work then no thanks. The CEC should simply increase the CC funding to cover such work.
Ratho	To date the developers have paid for the leafleting of the local houses and the hall for the public exhibition. We have incurred costs for handouts at the subsequent public meetings we have held but no hall costs - we are lucky at present. As the handouts included the Community Council's initial thoughts on the points for and against (ie against) the proposals we understood that the grant was not available for this purpose. We would be delighted to be told we are wrong!
Cramond & Barnton	Since our CC has little spare cash after accommodation costs have been met we would certainly take advantage of the engagement fund. However, to date we have not found it necessary to impose on public money in this way. Despite this we are content that

	we have engaged comprehensively with our community and indeed see it as our primary role.
West End (secretary)	<p>As secretary and on Behalf of the WECC I was not aware of this grant and that could be perfectly possibly my own fault. However I can see that such grants would be most welcome as we are in the middle of great commercial changes which are affecting the character of a large residential population in the city.</p> <p>Due to modern living the social cohesion of the residential population is fragmented and far less influential in expressing and maintaining a meaningful dialogue with a succession of disengaged officials whose prime motivation is revenue generation or commercial exploitation and even worse. To engage with residents we need to publicise our community council in a more proactive way and I can think that some print media and other ideas not costing the earth may indeed help us. To that extent we would like to avail ourselves of this fund and will of course manage its use carefully in the direction it was designed for. Our next meeting is on the 2nd September but I have taken it upon myself to reflect the general opinion expressed so far that we would like to take advantage of your offer.</p>
West End (planning convenor)	<p>As far as the two current major applications in our area are concerned (The Haymarket and Douglas House/Belford House), I had not seen any need for WECC to undertake any extra engagement with the community that would require us to use our funds. It appeared that the developers in question were prepared to notify and advertise as WECC had suggested through the PAN process. (On checking up on the distribution of leaflets to advertise public consultation events, however, I found important gaps and will be commenting on this when the planning applications come forward.) In future WECC would consider producing its own flyers for example.</p> <p>WECC would find it helpful if funds were made available for developing our modern technology as a means of reaching a wider public, eg website update, Facebook, Twitter, as well as applying for support to deal with specific developments.</p>
Leith Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • available funds are insignificant compared to developers' resources • the timescales to deploy any funds are often very short: CCs who will often struggle to submit a considered response, don't have time to think about applications at this point • unless a consultation can address all relevant households (efficiently and reliably), any quantitative results are statistically irrelevant (or even unreliable, as we can't check the authenticity of individual responses); so, we rely on old-fashioned qualitative methods - small numbers, but free <p>Of course, CEC could automatically pay a consultation grant to a CC (proportionate to scale of application) as a major application is being submitted (and the processing fee is collected).</p>
Fairmilehead	<p>1 We have not applied for a grant as to date there have been no qualifying applications in our area.</p> <p>We received notification last week of a PAN for a major application but the developers are putting on an exhibition. They</p>

	<p>are being contacted to see what other publicity they will be giving the community.</p> <p>If the need ever arose then FCC would be minded to apply for a grant. There may be circumstances in the future, depending on the LDP, when we may need to apply.</p> <p>2 The existing rules appear OK.</p> <p>3 Clarification on developments just over our CC boundary and in another council area. For example, there are proposals for a major development next to the entrance to the Midlothian Snow Sports Centre. This is within the Midlothian area and would be dealt with by them but our boundary (and the city boundary) ends at the entrance to the snow sports centre. We objected to the previous plans several years ago and would possibly do again.</p> <p>In the south and south east of Edinburgh there may be similar situations of developments within Midlothian just over the boundary. Would such situations be covered if any of the adjoining Edinburgh CCs were affected?</p>
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APPENDIX 2 – CHANGES TO ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL PLANNING CONCORDAT ENGAGEMENT FUND FOR COMMUNITY COUNCILS

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CRITERIA

The **Planning Concordat Community Engagement Fund** has been established in recognition of the key role that Community Councils have in representing community interests and to allow them to engage more widely with their communities on major developments.

A grant of up to £300 will be available to Community Councils for proposals which meet the relevant criteria.

PLANNING CONCORDAT ENGAGEMENT FUND CRITERIA

Grants will be given:

- Where the Community Council has approached the developer for assistance and this has been refused. For instance, the developer could pay for leafleting exercises and this could form part of the discussion about the form of community engagement;
- Where the Community Council has given a reasoned explanation as to why it is not appropriate to request financial assistance from the developer;
- Where major developments in adjacent community council areas may impact on your community council area and so require wider community engagement;
- Where the information being distributed is impartial and genuinely seeks the wider community view.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS OF AWARD

- All funds and facilities must be used solely for purposes of the Community Council which are consistent with the terms and conditions of the Community Council Scheme.

SOME EXAMPLES OF ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Grants are to be used for the following purposes and other communication methods in a similar format:

- Distribution of information such as leaflets, postcards, mail shots;
- Public notice boards in shop windows, GP surgeries, churches, community facilities etc;
- E-participation through websites **including the setting up of social media**;
- Public stalls/street stalls eg in a shopping centres;
- Door to door surveys;
- Special public meetings; and
- Exhibition boards in public places.

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Please note the following:-

- Not all major developments will require wider community engagement;
- No awards will be made for day to day running costs or administration which should be met from the Community Council's annual grant;
- Grants must be used within 12 months of award;
- The maximum grant payable is £300;
- No retrospective awards will be made;
- Community Council representatives will bring forward their proposals for the use of the fund for presentation by Planning and agreement by the Neighbourhood Partnership;
- Community Councils will be required to keep a record of expenditure - all invoices and receipts should be submitted for auditing purposes;
- A report on the use of the fund across a neighbourhood will form part of the annual Community Plan report prepared by the Neighbourhood Manager;
- Each grant will be issued under the City of Edinburgh Council Standard Funding Conditions;
- Community Councils will be required to submit a report to the Neighbourhood Partnership at the end of the financial year detailing how the grant was spent. This should demonstrate how the initiative has contributed and added value to the local community plan.

Application packs are available by e-mail or by post by contacting:

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