THE EDINBURGH PARTNERSHIP

# Best Value Assurance Audit – Edinburgh Partnership Response

## 1. Executive Summary

1.1 The City of Edinburgh Council has recently been subject to a Best Value Assurance Audit with the report published on 26 November 2020. An area of focus was partnership working and community engagement and while the audit relates to the Council, given the legal duties of partners, the recommendations made around partnership working are of concern to the Board and, in particular, statutory partners.

1.2 In response to this, the Edinburgh Partnership Board agreed in December 2020 to establish a short life working group tasked to develop a response to address the findings of the audit with this to be reported to the Board by March 2021.

1.3 This paper outlines the working groups recommendations for improvement actions to further strengthen community planning in the city for consideration by the Board.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 The Board is recommended to:

i. Rebuild Priority 3 of the local outcome improvement plan as a public health led approach and a broader definition of health and wellbeing post pandemic and develop a delivery plan to take forward the new approach.

ii. Develop a partnership plan to deliver the 20 minute neighbourhood model with a focus on shared public, commercial and third sector services models and public service hubs.

iii. Coordinate on the development of, and model for, operationalising community anchor organisations through the co-production of a shared definition and associated tools and processes.

iv. Recognise and support the role of these community anchor organisations acting as voluntary sector hubs; to be places of community empowerment, social renewal, community building, regeneration, opportunities to volunteer as well as vehicles to deliver local services and activities jointly and through, basing the approach on strong community empowerment principles.

v. Promote and rally the support of Anchor Institutions and more broadly develop plans to collaborate on the delivery of the Community Wealth Building agenda.

vi. To strengthen and enhance the Community Empowerment plan in development and ensure it clearly outlines how community influence and involvement in community planning can be supported and increased.

vii. To continue to support local community empowerment and engagement through the neighbourhood networks, with strengthened resourcing and capacity provided by the City of Edinburgh Council to enable them to realise their potential.

viii. To develop, with the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils and the community councils, a framework for collaboration to ensure they can fulfil their statutory function in representing local communities, to build a productive relationship with all community planning partners and the Council in particular.

ix. To develop future ways of working with the new End Poverty Edinburgh citizens group to ensure that the voices of people with experience of poverty continue to inform the way the Partnership plans and delivers services.

x. To establish an implementation group, comprising partner nominees, to agree plans to deliver the improvement actions which will be brought back to the Edinburgh Partnership Board by June 2021

## 3. Main Report

3.1 Over the last 12 months the strategic context for the city has fundamentally shifted as a result of the pandemic putting increased emphasis on economic recovery in a city that was previously flourishing and increasing the risk of poverty and inequality within communities. Ensuring that the city's recovery is fair, sustainable and delivers a more resilient and healthy place to live is more important now than ever before.

3.2 These strategic challenges are also opportunities for partnership working to improve how community planning partners collaborate to make a meaningful difference to the outcomes for citizens and communities.

3.3 The strength of work carried out in the city collaboratively by statutory, voluntary and community sectors during the pandemic provides a strong foundation to build upon.

3.4 This new reality is the context within which the Partnership must address Audit Scotland's Best Value Assurance Audit findings on partnership working and community engagement published on 26 November 2020. The five key findings are set out below:

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**Audit Scotland Findings on the Partnership**
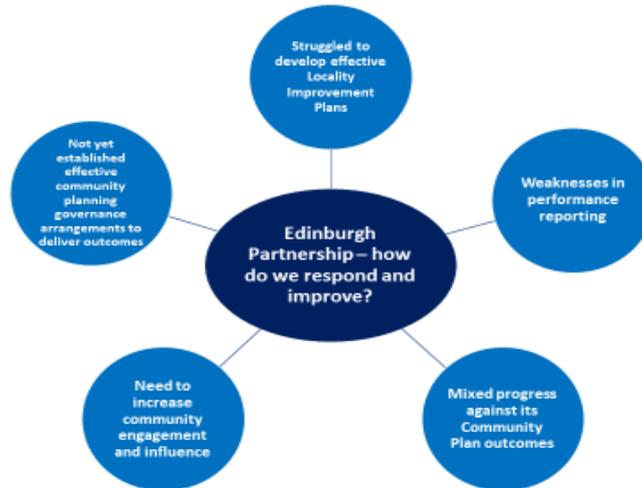
3.5  Any response to these findings, in addition to taking account of the new strategic context for the Edinburgh Partnership, needs to recognise

   3.5.1  recent and current activity, notably the review of Edinburgh Partnership governance, and the ongoing development of the local outcome improvement plan and revised locality improvement plans.

   3.5.2  the programme of development and improvement activity already agreed by the Partnership including developing a model of facilitation and support for community planning, performance and communications.

**Opportunities, Challenges and Actions**

3.6  The working group has identified three key themes for improvement based on discussion of the findings of the Audit Commission.  A summary of the opportunities and challenges for each of these is set out below, together with proposed actions by way of response.

**Governance to deliver outcomes**

3.7  The current governance arrangement (see appendix for descriptors) provides for deliberation and partnership activity at all levels in the city and is as follows:

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Edinburgh
Partnership Board

Partnership Group:
Locality Community
Planning
Partnership (*4)

Neighbourhood
Networks

Partnership Group:
Community
Learning and
Development
Partnership

Partnership Group:
LOIP Delivery
Group

Partnership Group:
Community Safety
Partnership

Partnership Group:
Children's
Partnership
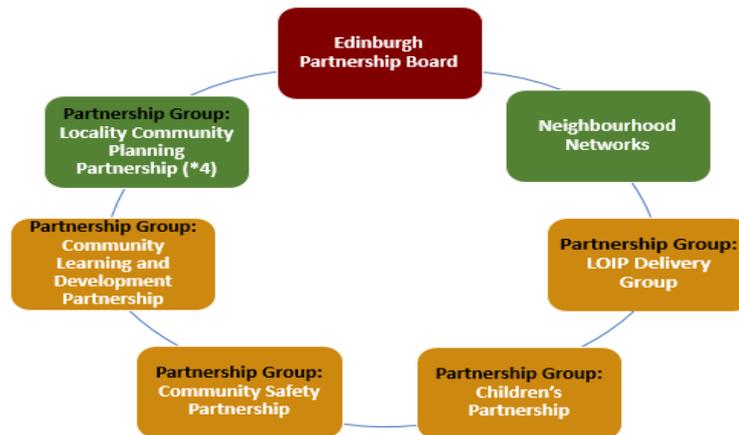
3.8 This structure was the result of an extended period of review and is considered still relevant within the new strategic and operational context. However, it is recognised that challenges exist to achieve shared ambitions for community planning and to respond effectively to the legislative requirement set out in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

3.9 The power of partnership is in *delivering* outcomes and the structures should facilitate this rather than being the overriding focus. However, to allow this to happen, the effectiveness of the Edinburgh Partnership as a vehicle for agreeing and delivering collaborative action to address the challenges faced in the city needs to be improved as part of a delivery plan to take forward the recommendations set out below.

**Strengthening the strategic focus of the Partnership**

3.10 The Local Outcome Improvement Plan and its focus on poverty and inequality continue to feel relevant and in need of a shared strategic focus by community planning partners. However, Priority 3 'a good place to live' could be strengthened to more explicitly take account of the post pandemic challenges the city faces.

3.11 Focus to date has largely been on infrastructure improvement which is not in itself enough to address the determinants of inequality, which need to be addressed if outcomes are to be improved for individuals and communities across the city. Recognising this, it is proposed to rebuild this priority to 'creating vibrant, healthy and safe places and communities'.

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3.12 Doing this will reinforce wellbeing as a policy outcome and embed the public health agenda at the core of the partnership. This outcome also reflects the national Public Health Priorities as well as Public Health Scotland's 2020-23 objectives (see box). Public Health Scotland's four post-pandemic priority areas are broadly in line with the priorities of the refocusing of community planning outlined in this paper.
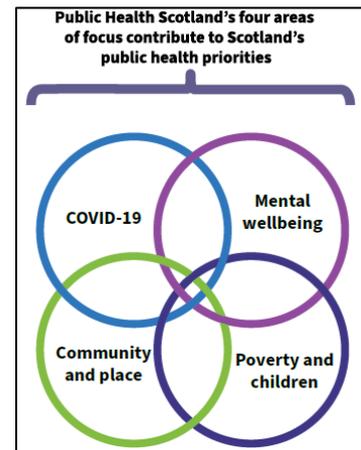


3.13 A re-structuring (currently being implemented) of the NHS Lothian public health department is intended to include the establishment of a new Edinburgh team to deliver on the place-based approach outlined in the national priorities. The NHS Lothian public health workplan for Edinburgh will be the basis for work with the Edinburgh Partnership and the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board and Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership. Closer and more co-ordinated working relationships between the health sector and other community planning partners should provide a strong basis for this public health approach to Priority 3. It will also enable the role social connectedness and participation in civic life has in creating healthy communities.

3.14 As such, deeper consideration of what 'good' means is vital to ensure that aspects of wider community health are included. This does not restrict itself to people's physical and mental health but must also include economic health and sustainability through opportunities to support and engage in a thriving local economy. Such consideration should broaden our understanding of what a 'good' or 'healthy' neighbourhood feels like for its residents, aside from its physical assets and the buildings in which they live.

3.15 There is also an opportunity to actively collaborate on the Poverty Commission call for new service delivery models to respond more effectively to the needs of communities, strengthening the collaborative action between the public, third and community sectors while building on and strengthening citizen and community empowerment.

3.16 Significant within this is the collective role partners could play in delivering the proposed 20 minute neighbourhood model which seeks to establish a shared service approach and the creation of public service hubs across the city. A '20 minute neighbourhood' should also include access not only to public services, but also to SMEs (e.g. local commerce and employers), outlets for physical activity, and opportunities for people to engage in culture and the arts, which will further enrich the lives of communities within the immediate local area.

3.17 Strengthening Priority 3 to include sustainable community development; 20 minute neighbourhoods; community hubs and new preventative service models

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would ensure the LOIP remains fit for purpose post pandemic; is focused on impactful actions as the city and organisations reopen; and give due priority to the importance of public health.

3.18    Recognising the above the proposed improvement actions for the Partnership are to:

3.18.1 Rebuild Priority 3 of the local outcome improvement plan as a public health led approach and a broader definition of health and wellbeing post pandemic and develop a delivery plan to take forward the new approach.

3.18.2 Develop a partnership plan to deliver the 20 minute neighbourhood model with a focus on shared public, commercial and third sector services models and public service hubs.

**Ways of working and strengthening the role of the third sector**

3.19    There is an opportunity to learn from the experience of the pandemic to recalibrate relationships and capitalise on how the public, third and community sectors have connected in different ways to deliver action on the ground. There is a need in building on the Covid-19 response to address inequality and bring the community led response to the fore in shaping future working.

3.20    There is potential within this, for the Partnership to take an active role in the development of anchor models of delivery in the city, to foster active communities and provide real opportunities for participation and collective decision making, supporting the wellbeing and community wealth building agendas.

3.21    Community wealth building provides a mechanism for harnessing the collective strength of local communities, organisations and anchor institutions to support the development of strong local economies and has an important role in supporting effective community engagement.

3.22    The proposed improvement actions are as follows:

3.22.1 Coordinate on the development of, and model for, operationalising community anchor organisations through the co-production of a shared definition and associated tools and processes.

3.22.2 Recognise and support the role of these community anchor organisations acting as voluntary sector hubs; to be places of community empowerment, social renewal, community building, regeneration, opportunities to volunteer as well as vehicles to deliver local services and activities jointly and through, basing the approach on strong community empowerment principles.

3.22.3 Promote and rally the support of Anchor Institutions and more broadly develop plans to collaborate on the delivery of the Community Wealth Building agenda.

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**Community Empowerment**

**A shared understanding of community engagement and empowerment**

3.23 Whilst community empowerment sits at the heart of community planning, and is central to current policy agendas, (many of which are predicated on different relationships with individuals and communities based on an asset based and reciprocal approach) there is currently no common expression and understanding of what this means for the Edinburgh Partnership and how this is meaningfully achieved and resourced.

3.24 The absence of a clear articulation and corresponding plan to embed community empowerment in community planning, presents a challenge and leads to siloed working and duplication of effort; an absence of pooling of resources to invest in the capacity building of communities and staff; limited sharing of intelligence, learning and resources; and a variable experience for communities leading to reputational damage and a lack of trust.

3.25 An empowerment plan for the Edinburgh Partnership is being developed to establish a shared understanding and response that covers all aspects of the community:

- Voluntary and community sector – including community groups (geographic and thematic)
- Community councils

3.26 Within this context, the Edinburgh Partnership should seek through its plan to increase community influence and involvement in community planning to achieve greater:

- Devolution of power
- Participatory and deliberative decision making
- Collaborative delivery
- Community Commissioning

3.27 Learning and ensuring account is taken of the current wider work of partners is critical to the overall approach. Activity such as the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership's Edinburgh Wellbeing Pact and community commissioning programme and the Council's approach to prevention and the 20 minute neighbourhood should support and inform the Partnership's response.

3.28 Key recommended action is as follows.

3.28.1 To strengthen and enhance the Community Empowerment plan in development and ensure it clearly outlines how community influence and involvement in community planning can be supported and increased.

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**Structures to support empowerment**

3.29    The primary means for communities to shape and influence community planning in the city is through the neighbourhood networks.  This is only one part of the community infrastructure and should not be considered in isolation.  This includes community councils which have a statutory role to represent the views of the communities they serve.

3.30    Key challenges exist with the neighbourhood networks in relation to their role and how they are resourced to successfully deliver. Currently the networks are part of the governance framework, which provides for a level of formality which is at odds with their intended role as dynamic and fluid collectives driven from the bottom up, tailored to the needs and aspirations of local communities.

3.31    Responsibility for resourcing both neighbourhood networks and community councils currently sits with the Council.  Competing demands and pressures have limited the capacity within the Council to meaningfully support the development of the networks as originally intended.  The pandemic also resulted in a pause in the ongoing work with local communities to shape the networks at a critical stage in their development.

3.32    Proposals are currently being considered by the Council to create an Empowerment Team as part of an internal review process.  The Team, once established, will have an important role in supporting community empowerment at a local level.  A key responsibility for the Team will be supporting the neighbourhood networks, together with the locality community planning partnerships.

3.33    Improving the relationship with community councils is also an important issue, recognising their statutory function within the democratic landscape.  Given this, the Council intends to strengthen its support by making this a key role of the Empowerment Team.  This will ensure the provision of dedicated officer support and provide a first point of contact on matters relating to Council services.

3.34    In addition to this support for community infrastructure that enables community engagement and empowerment the Edinburgh Partnership has accepted the Edinburgh Poverty Commission recommendation that it directly involve people with lived experience of poverty in community planning.  A new independent citizen led group, End Poverty Edinburgh, has been established to support this ambition.  Careful thought needs to be given as to how this group can be encompassed into the overall approach to community empowerment.

3.35    Key recommendations are as follows.

3.35.1 To continue to support local community empowerment and engagement through the neighbourhood networks, with strengthened resourcing and

capacity provided by the City of Edinburgh Council to enable them to realise their potential.

3.35.2 To develop, with the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils and the community councils, a framework for collaboration to ensure they can fulfil their statutory function in representing local communities, to build a productive relationship with all community planning partners and the Council in particular.

3.35.3 To develop future ways of working with the new End Poverty Edinburgh citizens group to ensure that the voices of people with experience of poverty continue to inform the way the Partnership plans and delivers services.

**Next Steps**

3.36    The Board's agreement of the strategic actions set out above represents phase 1 of the programme of work.  Further work will then be required under phase 2 to develop the granular actions which will be required under each recommendation and the corresponding performance measures.  Much of this work will be carried out by the LOIP Delivery Group as it relates to Priority 3 and will form part of the LOIP delivery plan which will be presented to the Board for agreement.

3.37    However, to further support the overall delivery of the improvement programme, it is proposed to establish an implementation group, comprising nominees by partnership members.  This group will have responsibility for overseeing the programme of work and reporting progress to the Board.

**4.    Contact**

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**Group Roles and Responsibilities**

<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan Delivery Group</u>

This group is responsible for the development, delivery and joint resourcing of the local outcome improvement plan, working collaboratively to make sure people have enough money to live on, access to work, learning or training and a good place to live. The core membership is statutory bodies, educational institutions and the third sector.

<u>Locality Community Planning Partnerships</u>

There are four locality community planning partnerships across the city in the North East, South East, North West and South West.  Each Partnership is responsible for the development, delivery and joint resourcing of the locality improvement plan for their area and on reporting progress to the Edinburgh Partnership Board.  The core membership includes statutory partners, third sector, elected members and representatives from the neighbourhood networks.

<u>Neighbourhood Networks</u>

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Neighbourhood networks bring communities together to encourage discussion on issues of shared interest.  They:

- work with partners to develop appropriate service solutions at a neighbourhood level;
- develop new methods of engagement, particularly to ensure the participation of residents who are not heard through traditional routes; and
- have a role in deciding on the allocation of devolved budgets

They provide a route for communities to inform and influence the outcomes and priorities of the local outcome improvement plan and local improvement plans.  There are thirteen in the city.  The networks have the flexibility to develop their own operating and their membership comprises community bodies (such as community councils, tenants' organisations, 'Friends of' groups, parent councils, community trusts), elected members for the relevant wards and third sector organisations.

Community Councils

Scottish community councils date from 1976, when they were established by district council and island council schemes created under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.  The Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994 abolished regional and district councils and transferred responsibility for community council schemes to new unitary councils created by the same Act.  Community councils are the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland.  As such Scotland's 1,200 Community Councils are a layer of local democracy and distinctly different from the voluntary sector.  Local authorities are required by statute to consult community councils about planning applications and licencing matters.  Community councils bridge the gap between local authorities and communities and help to make public bodies aware of the opinions and needs of the communities they represent.  Further because of their public accountability they have the capacity to be empowered by local authorities in service and infrastructure delivery.

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