



# THE EDINBURGH PARTNERSHIP

## Collaborative working with Edinburgh Association of Community Councils

### Executive Summary

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- 1.1 This report provides a progress update on the Best Value improvement action of developing a collaborative framework with the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils (EACC). It outlines progress to date in developing a bilateral improvement plan with the City of Edinburgh Council, together with proposals to take forward this work with the participation of Edinburgh Partnership members.

### Recommendations

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- 2.1 The Board is recommended to:
- i. note the improvement actions between City of Edinburgh Council and community councils as outlined in this report;
  - ii. agree to contribute to ongoing discussions with the EACC on developing a collaborative framework with the Edinburgh Partnership; and
  - iii. agree to receive a further report on this in March 2022.

### Main Report

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- 3.1 The Best Value Assurance Audit identified areas where further improvement was recommended relating to partnership working and community engagement. In response the Edinburgh Partnership set up a Working Group tasked with developing appropriate responses to the issues raised. The work of this Group culminated in the Edinburgh Partnership approval of an improvement plan in June 2021.
- 3.2 A key action under the theme of community empowerment was to:
- Develop a framework for collaboration with the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils and the community councils, to ensure they can fulfil their statutory function in representing local communities and build a productive relationship with all community planning partners and the Council in particular.***
- 3.3 To take this forward, a bilateral group was set up comprising City of Edinburgh Council senior managers and EACC members. Two meetings have been held to date and an improvement plan produced. The plan focuses on strengthening the relationship between the Council and community councils both in the short-term

and by addressing structural issues in the medium term. A summary of the actions is set out below.

### **Immediate way of working – communications**

- Information flow – actions to improve the information posted on the Edinburgh Partnership website, provision of structural diagrams and glossary of terms on community planning arrangements in the city and activity to raise awareness of community planning.
- Access to Council and Contacts – Council key contact list to be produced and maintained and contacts for community council chairs to be kept up to date.
- Communication and dialogue – Measures to strengthen senior management participation in EACC meetings, improvements to information sharing based on community councils identifying their areas of interest, briefing on community councils and community planning to be produced for Council officers.

### **Medium term actions - structures**

- Community council elections – to hold the next community council election in 2024 and to review the approach to marketing elections to identify improvements.
- Community council boundaries – to carry out a review of community council boundaries in 2023.
- Council support for neighbourhood networks and locality community planning partnerships – implementation of the Council Place review to establish a Community Empowerment Team.
- Support for community councils – review support arrangements for community councils, explore options for increasing information on Council business, develop a mechanism for information sharing within communities to support collaborative working, carry out a training needs analysis to inform a potential development programme for community councils.
- Maximise local information and capacity building – mapping of local networks to identify potential efficiencies and opportunities for sharing knowledge.

- 3.4 A significant issue for the EACC was the need for resources to develop the capacity and facilitate the engagement in representing community councils in strategic processes. Currently in line with statutory requirements, revenue support is provided direct to individual community councils by the City of Edinburgh based on a set amount per head of population in their area, with additional uplifts for accommodation costs where relevant. As a non-statutory body funding is not provided to the EACC although they provide a co-ordinating function and are members of the Edinburgh Partnership Board.



- 3.5 The Edinburgh Partnership until 2018/19 allocated an annual amount of £500 to the EACC to support its costs in participating in the Board. With subsequent budget decisions allocations to support the participation of the community of place (EACC) and community of interest (Edinburgh Equality and Rights Network) members ceased.
- 3.6 Significant discussion has taken place at the bilateral meetings on this issue. From an EACC perspective funding is required to:
- facilitate communication with all community councils in partnership activity
  - strengthen the role of community councils
  - support their independent status of community councils
  - provide for an independent executive resource to ensure community council representation and advocacy in policy fora.
- 3.7 Whilst this request is reflected in the improvement plan it is acknowledged that it is a matter for Edinburgh Partnership members, not just the Council, and needs to be based on a clear understanding and definition of the support required and an option appraisal for how this might best be achieved. The issue of funding for EACC needs to be considered within the wider context of the Edinburgh Partnership budget as noted elsewhere on the agenda.
- 3.8 Similarly a key issue for discussion with partners is the matter of EACC's desire to develop a written concordat with the Edinburgh Partnership on behalf of community councils. This is considered important if the parties are to move forward based on a relationship of trust and respect founded on a firm understanding of roles.
- 3.9 In raising the community council's concerns, the EACC has recognised that this is not just an Edinburgh issue but a national one. On that basis the Chair has approached CoSLA and the Improvement Service to open discussions with the Scottish Government on what can be done nationally to support change, with the potential to use the learning from Edinburgh to inform the approach.
- 3.10 The need to now progress this work with the input of partners recognises the original action under the Best Value improvement plan to develop a collaborative framework with the Edinburgh Partnership. Partners agreed at the September 2021 meeting to nominate representatives to participate in these discussions. To date responses have been received from Police Scotland, Edinburgh University, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and NHS Lothian. A further prompt is made to the remaining members to identify an officer to participate in discussions. An initial meeting is proposed to take place in January 2022.
- 3.11 The outcome of these discussions will be reported to the Board in March 2022.

## Contact

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