



THE EDINBURGH PARTNERSHIP

Neighbourhood Networks Evaluation – 5th March 2024

1. Executive Summary

Neighbourhood Networks were established across Edinburgh in 2019 to provide a forum for partner and community engagement, largely succeeding the previous Neighbourhood Partnership model. There are thirteen Networks across the City which until April 2023 were managed through four localities. This, combined with local determination on the best way to engage, has led to differences in deployment across the City. The City of Edinburgh Council Culture and Communities Committee has now asked for an evaluation of the Neighbourhood Networks model.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Board is recommended to:

- i. Note the evaluation concerning Neighbourhood Networks requested by the Culture and Communities committee.
- ii. Agree to receive the evaluation report at the next Edinburgh Partnership Meeting following its presentation to the Culture and Communities committee.

3. Main Report

- 3.1 At its 7th December 2024 meeting, the City of Edinburgh Council Culture and Communities Committee agreed to evaluate Neighbourhood Networks, the full text of the motion can be found in Appendix 1. The motion asks for an evaluation of the current model of Neighbourhood Networks and community grant funding.
- 3.2 Neighbourhood Networks were established in 2019 following a review of the Edinburgh Partnership governance model. They build on the geographies used by the previous Neighbourhood Partnerships, comprise of thirteen neighbourhoods based on one or two Council wards, and cover the whole local authority area. Each Network was managed through one of Edinburgh's four localities and given flexibility in how it should operate based on the needs of its constituent communities. This flexibility has resulted in differing approaches and visibility across the City.
- 3.3 Through engagement sessions held as part of the governance model review, the Edinburgh Partnership identified a range of areas where NNs could bring value, including: as the centre for local community engagement, especially with regards to parts of the community which often find it difficult to engage; provide a flexible

structure to engage on both broad and specific topics; provide a forum for making decisions on small budgets for community projects; and, be responsible for sharing best practice.

- 3.4 The evaluation requested by the Culture and Communities Committee will be carried out through the first half of 2024, and Appendix 2 sets out the how this evaluation will be delivered. It will involve establishing evaluation criteria, using those criteria to provide a judgement on the success of the current model, and subsequently identify potential areas for improvement.
- 3.5 Each Neighbourhood Network has a corresponding community grants fund and the networks are engaged to make recommendations for distributing the fund. However responsibility for managing and making grant awards rests solely with City of Edinburgh Council. Therefore, the community grants element of the evaluation will developed separately from the evaluation of the Neighbourhood Network model.

4. Background

- 4.1 Edinburgh Partnership – 2 April 2019 – Item 2. Governance Engagement
- 4.2 Edinburgh Partnership – 2 April 2019 – Item 3. Governance Arrangements
- 4.3 Edinburgh Partnership – 11 June 2019 – Item 4. Governance and Resources Update

5. Contact

Michael Edwards - Community Empowerment and Engagement Officer

Andrew Field - Head of Community Empowerment & Engagement

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Culture and Communities Committee – 7 December 2023 – Item 9.4 Neighbourhood Networks

Appendix 2 – Neighbourhood Networks Evaluation – Briefing

Appendix 1 – Culture and Communities Committee – 7 December 2023 – Item 9.4 Neighbourhood Networks

By Councillor Thornley - Neighbourhood Networks

Committee notes;

1. That Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee recently received a briefing note showing that only 4 of 13 Neighbourhood Networks across the city meet regularly.
2. That Neighbourhood Networks can be complicated and inaccessible bodies for many and are frequently overly dependent upon a few key people to remain operational.
3. That Neighbourhood Networks replaced the Neighbourhood Partnership model in 2019.
4. The obligations placed upon the Council by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.
5. The stated desire in the Council Business Plan 2023-27 to ‘evolve Community Councils and Neighbourhood Networks to ensure they provide communities with direct input’.
6. That in some cases, Community Grants Funding is connected to Neighbourhood Networks, but not in others.
7. That no updates are currently provided on what is supported by Community Grants Funding, what criteria are required to be met to secure funding, and there for what is being achieved within communities.
8. A review of both Neighbourhood Networks and Community Grants Funding is currently ongoing.

Therefore;

9. Requests a report, within three cycles, providing an evaluation of the current situation of our Neighbourhood Networks and Community Grants Funding, including a judgement of the success of the current model, suggestions for how community engagement could be improved, barriers to that engagement removed, processes simplified to improve accessibility and how participatory budgeting can be preserved and enhanced.

Appendix 2: Neighbourhood Network Evaluation Briefing

**Culture
Place Directorate
14 February 2024**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The City of Edinburgh Council Culture and Communities Committee at their 7th December 2024 meeting agreed a motion to evaluate the current model of Neighbourhood Networks (NNs) and community grant funding.
- 1.2 An evaluation report will therefore be presented to Culture and Communities Committee, and will look to evaluate NNs based on their purpose and available best practice. It will also identify areas for improvement and suggest ways these could be addressed.

2. Background

- 2.1 NNs were established as part of the review of Edinburgh Partnership (EP) governance arrangements in 2019, with the aim of improving community and partner engagement across the City. Their operation is overseen by the EP, and Locality Community Planning Partnerships (LCPPs) in each of the four Edinburgh localities. Each LCPP Board has a position available for NN representation from each of their constituent Networks, although these positions are not filled for all Networks.

3. Main Points

- 3.1 The evaluation report will aim to assess the current situation of NNs and include:
 - 3.1.1 a judgement of the success of the current model [Phase one]; and,
 - 3.1.2 suggestions for how community engagement could be improved, barriers to that engagement removed, processes simplified to improve accessibility [Phase two].
- 3.2 Appropriate evaluation criteria will be established to support this process and will make reference to:
 - 3.2.1 The requirements of Neighbourhood Networks laid down by the Edinburgh Partnership governance arrangements in 2019; and,
 - 3.2.2 The aims and objectives identified by the Edinburgh Partnership through their engagement in 2019, supported by nationally recognised best practice, ie. National standards for community engagement.

3.3 A range of stakeholders have been identified as having a variety of experience supporting, as members, or a role in oversight of NNs. Table 1 sets out the key stakeholder groups and their current role regarding NNs.

Table 1 – Key Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Description
NN Chairs and LCPP representatives	Community representatives with recognised positions within the NNs structure, either chairing meetings or representing the NN on the LCPP.
LCPP members	Key statutory partners, third sector partners, and elected members, who have oversight of and may have used NNs as an engagement tool for their services.
NN Membership	All community and third sector organisations operating in each neighbourhood.
Staff	City of Edinburgh Council staff who have supported engagement through NNs. Additionally, staff from partner organisations who have supported community networks will also be approached.

3.4 Phase one – Evaluation of the current model

Using questions based on the evaluation criteria each stakeholder group will be approached for feedback. Table 2 gives an overview of anticipated methods to be used with each group.

Table 2 - Data collection

Respondent Group	Method
NN Chairs and LCPP representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview • NN Membership questionnaire
LCPP members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCPP Membership questionnaire
NN Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NN Membership questionnaire
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus Group

3.5 Phase two – Improvements and areas for development

Following the collection of stakeholder feedback through questionnaires, interviews, and a focus group, it will be analysed in order to identify where the model has been successful and where there are areas for improvement. This process will also include information from other available sources, including NN meetings and outputs from the EVOC survey of third sector network members conducted in late 2023.

3.6 Table 3 below sets out the timeline for development, data gathering, and analysis, before the report is presented to committee in May.

Table 3 - Timeline

Milestones	Due date
Evaluation criteria developed	Mid February 2024
Key questions identified for questionnaires and in-person sessions	Mid February 2024
Online questionnaires go live	Mid February 2024
Focus group held	End of February 2024
Interviews complete	Early March 2024
Online questionnaires close	Early March 2024
Analysis complete	Mid March 2024
Evaluation report drafted	Mid March 2024
Areas for improvement identified	Late March 2024
Committee report finalised	End of March 2024
Report presented to committee	Mid May 2024

3.7 A number of risks have been identified with this work and are set out in Table 4.

Table 4 - Risks

Risks	Mitigations
Potential for confusion of oversight roles between Edinburgh Partnership and Culture and Communities committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A report outlining the evaluation request from Culture and Communities Committee will be noted by the Edinburgh Partnership Board at its March meeting. • Request the Culture and Communities Committee consider any improvements are made jointly through the community planning partnership.
Short time to produce an evaluation meaning some respondents have insufficient time to take part.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise feedback from those directly involved in representing NNs at the LCPP or as a NN Chair. • Ensure the NN Membership questionnaire is issued to all NN members so all potential participants can respond.
Confusion caused by low awareness of NNs in different parts of the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear communication on the scope and purpose of the evaluation, which does not assume prior knowledge of NNs.

4. Recommendations

4.1 To note the approach set out in the briefing with regards to the evaluation of NNs.