

# Policy and Sustainability Committee

10:00am, Tuesday 20 April 2021

## Edinburgh Partnership Best Value Audit Improvement Plans

Executive/routine  
Wards  
Council Commitments

Executive

### 1. Recommendations

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The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Approve the recommended actions agreed by the Edinburgh Partnership Board on 23 March 2021 in response to the Best Value Audit Partnership findings.
- 1.2 Agree that the following actions by the Edinburgh Partnership would be led by the Council:
  - 1.2.1 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.
  - 1.2.2 To strengthen the resourcing and capacity to support Neighbourhood Networks and the LCPPs through the establishment of new Community Empowerment teams by the City of Edinburgh Council.
  - 1.2.3 Develop a framework for collaboration with the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils and 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.
- 1.3 Note the further actions being taken by the Council to enhance its approach to community empowerment, engagement and consultation including in respect of its relationship with Community Councils.

**Andrew Kerr**

Chief Executive

Strategy and Communications Division, Chief Executive's Service

# Report

## Edinburgh Partnership Best Value Audit Improvement Plans

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report provides a summary of the actions agreed at the Edinburgh Partnership Board on 23 March 2021 in response to the partnership working and empowerment findings of the Council Best Value Assurance Audit for approval by the Policy and Sustainability Committee.
- 2.2 The improvement actions seek to strengthen the strategic approach of the LOIP to take account of the climate emergency and the importance of public health and to develop a shared partnership approach to 20 minute neighbourhoods.
- 2.3 The improvement actions seek to strengthen the delivery of outcomes by progressing with agreed improvement actions including around performance monitoring but also by strengthening the infrastructure to support community planning with the development of community empowerment teams
- 2.4 Finally the improvement actions seek to strengthen community engagement and influence by develop a joint approach to the role of community anchors; developing plans to deliver on community wealth being agenda and strengthen the role of community partners as anchor institutions and; ensuring that the voice of people living with poverty is heard within community planning through the End Poverty Edinburgh Group.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 [The City of Edinburgh Council Best Value Assurance Audit Report \(BVAR\)](#) was published by the Accounts Commission on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020.
- 3.2 At the Policy and Sustainability Committee (1 December), Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee (8 December) and full Council (10 December), elected members considered a report noting the findings of the BVAR, the approach to ensure a comprehensive and holistic response to the audit and provided feedback on priority areas for improvement.
- 3.3 Audit Scotland presented their findings at the December Edinburgh Partnership Board meeting and the Partnership agreed to establish a short life working group

led by the Council's Director of Place to develop recommendations and improvement actions to address the audit findings.

- 3.4 The working group met three times through January and February and a paper with recommendations and improvement actions was considered by the Edinburgh Partnership Board in March. This paper brings those recommendations to the Council as a community planning partner to approve the actions and in particular those actions which will be led by or impact Council services.
- 3.5 The report also summarises the separate but associated actions the Council is taking forward to improve consultation and engagement with communities and citizens.

## 4. Main report

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4.1 The Improvement actions identified in this report are in direct response to the Best Value Audit. However, they also try to take account of the changed context of the city having experienced a global pandemic.

4.2 The report below describes the Audit finding and the improvement action directly related to that finding.

### **Strategic Planning**

4.3 Audit Scotland found that there wasn't an easily accessible single strategic plan for the Council or the city.

4.4 The Council has already taken action to respond to this finding by publishing the Council Business Plan laying out three overarching policy priorities – Ending Poverty, Sustainability and Wellbeing and Equality.

4.5 The Council Business Plan was also aligned with the Edinburgh Partnership priorities contained within the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP).

4.5.1 Enough Money to Live on

4.5.2 Access to work, learning and training opportunities

4.5.3 A Good Place to Live

4.6 However, the Edinburgh Partnership Board recognised that much has changed since the LOIP was originally agreed, including a climate emergency being declared with consequence legislative targets being set; and the onset of a global pandemic and public health emergency. Much has been learnt about the potential of partnership working and collaboration by the city partners during the pandemic and also about the power, capacity and potential of empowered citizens and communities that partners were keen to maintain and grow.

4.7 The Edinburgh Partnership Board improvement action is to:

4.7.1 Review the LOIP priority – A good place to live - by June to reflect a broader definition of health and wellbeing that supports the development and growth of healthy, sustainable communities across the city.

- 4.8 This action will ensure a closer alignment between the LOIP and the Council Business Plan. It is also intended that Public Health Scotland will play a leading role in developing the theme and supporting the delivery plans associated with it.
- 4.9 In addition, and connected to this action, the partnership also committed to an improvement action to:
- 4.9.1 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.
- 4.10 This action also strategically aligns the Council Business Plan and the LOIP but more importantly ensures that the concept of a 20 minute neighbourhood goes beyond the plans of the Council into something which is supported and developed as a city approach across all the key statutory partners. It also brings the concept of sustainable places and communities to the fore alongside more accessible and better integrated services for people.

### **Delivering Outcomes**

- 4.11 Audit Scotland found the Edinburgh Partnership had:
- 4.11.1 Made mixed progress against Community Plan Outcomes
- 4.11.2 Not yet established effective community planning governance arrangements to deliver outcomes
- 4.11.3 Struggled to develop effective Locality Improvement Plans
- 4.11.4 Weaknesses in performance reporting
- 4.12 Since the Audit has been conducted, The Edinburgh Partnership Board has signed off reviewed Local Improvement Plans and these have or are being agreed by respective partners.
- 4.13 In addressing these findings, it was acknowledged that the audit had been conducted prior to the pandemic and that work had already been underway within the LOIP delivery group to address these issues. As such the Partnership improvement action is that:
- 4.13.1 Improvement activity already agreed by the Partnership continues to be implemented including developing a model of facilitation and support for community planning, performance and communications.
- 4.14 In addition, the Edinburgh Partnership Board acknowledged that not enough capacity and resource had been allocated to establish the new governance arrangements successfully in all parts of the city. This was further impacted by COVID and the lockdown of the city. The improvement action put forward below would be delivered by the Council.
- 4.14.1 To strengthen the resourcing and capacity to support Neighbourhood Networks and the LCPPs through the establishment of new Community Empowerment teams by the City of Edinburgh Council.

- 4.15 These teams would be established following the completion of the review of localities and life-long learning services which was put on hold as the Pandemic broke out. While the exact nature and role of the teams would be subject to a full consultation, the objective would be to ensure that there is increased resource deployed at community level to support community development and empowerment activity. The effectiveness of the teams would be kept under review to ensure they were effectively delivering on the empowerment ambitions and also to inform the organisational commitment to strengthen the Council's overall skills and capacity in this area.
- 4.16 In addition, the Edinburgh Partnership recognised that community councils have an important role to play in the City and that this is an integral part of the overall infrastructure that supports community engagement, consultation and representation. This role benefits the whole partnership as well as the Council and while the Council has a specific responsibility to and unique relationship with community councils, actions to improve their role, relationship and capacity involve the whole partnership. The improvement action agreed by the Partnership was to:
- 4.16.1 Develop a framework for collaboration with the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils and 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.

### **Community engagement and influence**

- 4.17 Audit Scotland found that there was a need to increase community engagement and influence.
- 4.18 The Edinburgh Partnership had already committed to strengthen the partnership approach to community empowerment and officers were already collaborating on the development of a city Community Empowerment Plan. The Partnership committed to progressing this plan with speed and to ensure that it clearly outlined how the Partnership would support and increase community influence in community planning.
- 4.19 In addition, the Partnership identified three specific improvement actions focusing on the role of community anchors; community wealth building and including the voices of people with experience of poverty in community planning.

### **Community Anchors**

- 4.20 The Council (in its Council Business Plan) and the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board (as part of the Edinburgh Pact) have both indicated in their respective organisational plans, a desire to develop and invest in the role of Community Anchors. This improvement action would ensure that the whole community planning partnership recognises and supports the role of community anchor organisations acting as voluntary sector hubs. These hubs would 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. The improvement action agreed by the Partnership is to

4.20.1 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.

4.21 At the Partnership meeting a further paper was tabled by EVOC developing the thinking around community anchors. Future work would be led by the Third and voluntary sector and would be integrated into the development of the 20 minute city.

#### Community Wealth Building

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

4.23 Major sectors have roles as anchor institutions to contribute to community wealth building through their spending, investment, employment and use of physical assets, including national and regional agencies, government, NHS, Universities, Colleges, the housing sector and other statutory partners. The Partnership improvement action is to:

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

#### Citizen voices

4.24 The Edinburgh Partnership and the Council accepted the Edinburgh Poverty Commission recommendation that it directly involve people with lived experience of poverty in community planning and decision making. A new independent citizen led group, End Poverty Edinburgh has been established to enable this to happen well and with impact. The Partnership and the Council need to give careful thought as to how this group can be encompassed into the overall approach to community empowerment and Council activity. The improvement action is to:

4.24.1 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.

#### **Council improvement actions**

4.25 In addition to the agreed Partnership actions outlined above, the Council has also taken a number of specific improvement actions relating to the wider findings of the Audit.

#### Consultation and engagement

4.26 A further paper on the Policy and Sustainability Committee agenda addresses the quality and inclusivity of Council consultation and engagement activity; setting a new Council policy to strengthen the Council's approach – including more rigorous

approach to closing the feedback loop with citizens and additional operational oversight of stakeholder engagement plans.

- 4.27 It also establishes a Consultation Advisory Group to provide expert evaluation of the engagement plans; ensure that there is coordination of Council activity and providing a means of escalating proposals in need of Corporate Leadership Team consideration and approval.

#### Participatory Budgeting

- 4.28 Prior to lockdown, Council officers were exploring opportunities to increase Participatory Budgeting across a number of service areas including Parks, Active Travel, Pupil Equity Fund, Early Years, and the Neighbourhood Environment Programme, Roads and Housing Revenue Account. This work went into abeyance due to the pandemic and has recently been resumed. Meetings have been held and the commitment of service areas to collaborate on the development of proposals that can be considered by the Corporate Leadership Team and brought to the Policy and Sustainability and the Finance and Resources committees for consideration.

#### Community Council Boundaries

- 4.29 As part of discussions with community councils which have informed the Partnership improvement actions above, a general concern about the size of some community councils has been raised with officers. This reflects the growth and development of the city with a recognition by all that this is a trend that is likely to continue. As such, the Edinburgh Association of Community Council (EACC) has asked to engage with the Council over the issue with a view to a future boundary review.
- 4.30 Officers are keen to hear the views of community councils on the issue and to work towards a boundary review at an appropriate time. A boundary review of the scale suggested by the EACC requires a scheme review which was last completed by the Council in 2019. The next scheme review is scheduled for 2023 with the next community council elections also in 2023. In 2019 the Council agreed that community council elections should take place every four years to disentangle it from the local government elections. This was to recognise the difficulty in the Council trying to deliver both these elections in the same year. Given this decision and the benefit of minimising the disruption of a wholesale boundary review by it taking place alongside elections it is not envisaged that any review of boundaries would take place until 2023. However, in the meantime officers will work with the EACC on the detail of any boundary changes.

#### Community Empowerment within the Council Business Plan

- 4.31 Many of the improvement actions identified in this paper progress commitments made in the Council Business Plan. Community empowerment will be considered on an ongoing basis as part of the wider plans to deliver on the Council Business Plan. In addition, following service resumption and the embedding of the agreed improvement actions in this report, officers will bring back a report looking at further improvements that can be made. The Council will also take account of ongoing

work by the Scottish Government on the Local Governance Review and of the Accounts Commission who intend to look at community empowerment over the coming year.

- 4.32 In the meantime the report on consultation and engagement commits the Council to developing a model of community engagement which strengthens the role of communities in decision-making processes; prioritises these skills within staff core training and as part of the work of the Community Empowerment Team.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 The Edinburgh Partnership Working Group will resume in April to develop a delivery plan and bring forward a progress report and implementation plan to the Edinburgh Partnership in June
- 5.2 The Council intends to lead on the actions at paragraphs 4.9.1, 4.14.1 and 4.16.1 at a minimum and will report on progress to the committee as part of the Council Business Plan delivery monitoring.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 There are no immediate financial implications from this report.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 Edinburgh Partnership members were consulted, officers also attended the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils.
- 7.2 The development of the community empowerment team will entail a formal consultation with staff.
- 7.3 Further engagement is planned with LCPPs

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 [Best Value Assurance Audit](#) – City of Edinburgh Council, 10 December 2020
- 8.2 [Council Business Plan and Budget 2021/26](#) – Finance and Resources Committee, 2 Feb 2021
- 8.3 [Best Value Assurance Audit Response](#) - Policy and Sustainability Committee, 23 February 2021

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 none