

Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 13 December 2022

Community Empowerment Update

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Routine All
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Culture and Communities Committee is asked to note:
 - 1.1.1 This update on the organisational review of Lifelong Learning and the wider context which has influenced the development and refinement of proposals for the Council's future staffing structure across the services of Wider Achievement, Libraries, Sport and Wellbeing and Community Empowerment;
 - 1.1.2 The prioritisation of support for community centres and community planning (through Neighbourhood Networks and Local Community Planning Partnerships (LCPPs));
 - 1.1.3 The intention to support improved partnership working between the public sector, the voluntary sector and the community sector.

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Community Empowerment Update

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an update on the Lifelong Learning organisational review and sets out a proposed approach to supporting community centres and local community planning.

3. Background

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

- 3.1 The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 places a number of duties in respect of both Community Planning and Community Empowerment on local authorities, including:
- 3.1.1 Putting in place appropriate governance arrangements to support effective and efficient community planning, providing clarity on the role of community bodies in decision making;
 - 3.1.2 Community Planning (including preparing, maintaining and delivering Locality and Local Outcomes Improvement Plans);
 - 3.1.3 Participation Requests; and
 - 3.1.4 Community Asset Transfer.

Best Value Audit 2020

- 3.2 In [2020](#) a Best Value Audit of the City of Edinburgh Council found that, while there were examples of the Council working well with partners, the Community Planning Partnership had made slow progress and that, while the Council consulted extensively with residents and stakeholders and there were examples of innovative and participative community engagement, community empowerment was not yet embedded in the Council's culture.
- 3.3 One of the key actions for the Council arising from the Best Value Audit was the conclusion that further consideration should be given to genuine local community empowerment.
- 3.4 At the time of the Best Value audit, the Council acknowledged that there was not sufficient capacity and resources allocated to the new governance arrangements to

successfully support community empowerment across the city and committed to strengthening the resourcing and capacity to support Neighbourhood Networks and Local Community Planning Partnerships (LCPPs).

- 3.5 In response, the Council committed to considering its approach to empowering communities and the relationship with community councils and partners in the city, under the auspices of the Edinburgh Partnership.

Community Planning in Edinburgh

- 3.6 The Edinburgh Partnership is Edinburgh's community planning partnership, "bringing together public agencies, third and private sector partners with local communities to improve the city, its services and the lives of the people who live and work here".
- 3.7 The Edinburgh Partnership has six community bodies which support the city's approach to community planning:
- 3.7.1 The Edinburgh Children's Partnership;
 - 3.7.2 Community Safety Partnership;
 - 3.7.3 Edinburgh Community Learning and Development Partnership;
 - 3.7.4 Locality Community Planning Partnerships (there are four LCPPs in Edinburgh);
 - 3.7.5 Neighbourhood Networks (there are 13 networks across Edinburgh); and
 - 3.7.6 Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) Delivery Group.
- 3.8 Whilst direct community participation in these partnerships varies, with some being officer/partner groups, all are required to deliver plans that are directly influenced and informed by community needs and priorities. Neighbourhood Networks, which comprise community, voluntary sector and elected members, are the principal vehicle within the governance arrangement for ensuring this requirement is met.

Matrix Approach to Management and Delivery of Lifelong Learning

- 3.9 For a number of years, the Council has managed Lifelong Learning through a matrix approach, with strategic policy development being managed centrally in Education and Children's Services and service delivery being managed in Locality teams. Feedback from colleagues and partners is that this approach has led to a lack of clear leadership, responsibility and accountability.

Community Centres

- 3.10 The matrix approach has also meant that support for community centres and management committees has been variable, with some resources stretched, and a range of on-going operational and strategic issues which need to be addressed.
- 3.11 In [2019](#), the Council agreed to carry out a consultation with management committees on draft standard lease terms.

- 3.12 An assessment of Council owned Community Centre buildings in 2020 identified improvements are required to the fabric of many of these buildings, with an estimated capital cost of £13.6m (which is currently unfunded).
- 3.13 The Council also has a duty to ensure that the fire and health and safety arrangements within community centres is always maintained. At present, the responsibility for this is held by five Lifelong Learning Service Managers (LLSMs), alongside a number of other duties. The LLSMs are not based in the Community Centres on a daily basis but are expected to fulfil the Duty Holder responsibilities for these buildings, as defined in the Council's Health and Safety policy.

Communities and Families and Place Organisational Review

- 3.14 In March 2020, following a long period of staff engagement, an organisational review of the (then) Communities and Families and Place directorates focused on removing the complexities of the matrix approach to Lifelong Learning service delivery, creating a dedicated community empowerment team and bringing together the city's libraries services under a single Senior Manager.
- 3.15 The proposals focused on:
- 3.15.1 Enhancing the approach to community empowerment and engagement;
 - 3.15.2 Embedding local services alongside city-wide services to ensure consistency of approach and removing the matrix structure; and
 - 3.15.3 Developing delivery arrangements to strengthen the Council's focus on addressing the poverty related attainment gap.
- 3.16 However, shortly after the staff consultation launched, the Council agreed with the Trade Unions that all organisational reviews would be paused following the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Feedback from Community Councils and Impact of COVID-19

- 3.17 However, there is ongoing feedback from community councils and other partners that engaging with the Council can be challenging and that they are keen to work with the Council to improve partnership working.
- 3.18 During the pandemic, there was also feedback from community councils, third sector partners and community centre management committees that bureaucracy in the Council can at times hamper their ability to operate, that contacting the Council can be difficult and that they have strong local networks and the ability to respond in a more agile way to meet local needs.

4. Main report

Edinburgh Partnership Community Empowerment Plan

- 4.1 In response to the Best Value Audit report, the Edinburgh Partnership agreed to create a Community Empowerment Strategy, with agreed priorities and a costed delivery plan.

- 4.2 The development of the plan has been delayed as a result of the pandemic but work is now progressing development of the strategy and engagement plan.
- 4.3 Currently in the information gathering and action planning phase, the Partnership are identifying opportunities, actions, best practice and resources on which to build the Strategy.
- 4.4 The principles of the plan focus on:
 - 4.4.1 Leadership;
 - 4.4.2 Outcomes;
 - 4.4.3 Community ownership;
 - 4.4.4 Effective relationships;
 - 4.4.5 Transparent decision making; and
 - 4.4.6 Improved communications.

Lifelong Learning Organisational Review

- 4.5 In June 2022, an organisational review of the services which form part of the Council's Lifelong Learning service, including those which were managed in Localities, commenced.
- 4.6 The review built on the staff engagement which was carried out in 2018 and 2019 and sought to learn lessons from previous organisational reviews of these services.
- 4.7 The review proposals were developed on a cost neutral basis, prioritising equity across the city and primarily focused on creating three new service areas:
 - 4.7.1 Community Empowerment;
 - 4.7.2 Libraries, Sport and Wellbeing (in libraries, this is primarily focused on creating a management team to support and deliver services across the city); and
 - 4.7.3 Wider Achievement.

Contextual Change

- 4.8 The consultation with staff concluded at the end of July 2022. Up to that time, the review had been taken forward on a 'cost neutral' basis. However given the budget planning process underway, and the financial position of the Council, a closer examination took place as to whether some savings contributions from the review were possible (in common with all Council organisational reviews).
- 4.9 Officers in Education and Children's Services have started to develop the Team around the Learning Community model. This has the potential to be a key part of the Council's anti-poverty work moving forward to improve outcomes for those in greatest need, whilst at the same time removing duplication between agencies. A report on this will be presented to the Education, Children and Families Committee in January 2023 and briefings for members will be offered in advance of committee.

- 4.10 The feedback from staff and these contextual changes were considered alongside the operational service delivery structural proposals, and it was clear that a revision to the proposed structures and a refocusing of priorities would be required

Revised Proposals for Community Empowerment

- 4.11 Recognising the feedback received from community centres and voluntary sector organisations during the pandemic alongside the feedback from the review consultation, it is proposed that the Council prioritises support for Community Centre Management Committees, and development of a new strategy for Community Centres alongside supporting statutory community planning activities (including Neighbourhood Networks and LCPPs).
- 4.12 This approach recognises the importance of community centres in local areas and the need to ensure that the centres are operating safely and effectively and can adapt in an agile way to change. As part of this approach, the consultation on draft standard lease terms (referenced in paragraph 3.11) will be progressed.
- 4.13 To support the Council's work with community centres, funding of £290,000 has also for the next three years from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 4.14 In addition, this approach recognises the importance of building on the existing partnership approach between the Council and community organisations and the third sector. It also ensures that the Community Grants Fund continues to be supported, working closely with Neighbourhood Networks, and prioritises a consistent approach to community empowerment and engagement.
- 4.15 This approach means that there may be some changes in the way in which these services are delivered in the future, and this may mean that some community centres which have had lifelong learning officers on site on a full-time basis may see some changes to ensure that the support received is equitable across the city.
- 4.16 To ensure this work is fully joined up at officer level, it is proposed that a Council wide Community Empowerment Board be established, with the key outcomes of the Board reported to Committee on a regular basis.
- 4.17 This approach recognises that many Council services already support community empowerment, but that the approach to doing so is at times inconsistent.
- 4.18 The Board, chaired by the Executive Director of Place, will bring together strategic and operational teams, to provide strategic leadership, direction and oversight to ensure that the Council is meeting its obligations in respect of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (as set out in paragraph 3.1).

Role of the Voluntary Sector

- 4.19 As noted above, it is also recognised that there are a number of public agencies, private and third sector partners who all play a role in ensuring that local communities and the city overall continue to improve.
- 4.20 The role of the voluntary sector has become increasingly important through the Coronavirus pandemic, and it is important to recognise their impact and reach in

helping to support local people more effectively than other partners (including the Council) have been able to do.

- 4.21 These approaches are leading to emerging new models of community empowerment and service delivery. Voluntary organisations are keen to build on these approaches and to address the on-going frustration of many individuals and umbrella bodies who feel that there are improvements to be made but they are unable to do so without the recognition and support of the Council.
- 4.22 As part of the revised proposals, it is proposed to make modest financial support available for qualifying voluntary sector networks to enable them to respond positively to models emerging post pandemic.
- 4.23 For example, in North Edinburgh, the R2 Response and Recovery Group was initially established from the North Edinburgh COVID-19 Foodshare group and is providing a dedicated phone line for local people in need of assistance with food provision and other support. It is proposed to build on this approach, working collaboratively (rather than in competition), taking a strategic approach both now and in the future, and developing policy and system change.

Conclusion

- 4.24 This revised approach recognises that there are a number of organisations working in local communities to support service delivery and community engagement/empowerment and that these organisations have significant potential to improve local outcomes.
- 4.25 In addition, by prioritising support for community centres and development of a new Community Centre Strategy, the Council is recognising the importance of community centres to local areas.
- 4.26 The creation of a Community Empowerment Board will provide strategic oversight of all of the Council's community empowerment activities and will provide opportunities for peer support and shared learning.
- 4.27 The proposals also continue to deliver the principles of Lifelong Learning and Wider Achievement, through sustained support for Youth Work, Adult Education, Sport and Physical Activity, Parent and Carer Support and Family Wellbeing. This approach will also enable potential integration with the emerging Team around the Learning Community if local pilots prove successful.
- 4.28 As noted above, the proposals for libraries bring the service under a single Head of Service and management team. The next phase will prioritise engagement with staff working in libraries on the future shape of the service, while recognising the financial challenges for the service.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The organisational review for Lifelong Learning will move into the implementation phase in early 2023, with a period of matching and assignment to the new structure to be completed. Alongside this, officers are developing plans for communicating with partners and stakeholders on what the changes will mean in practice.

- 5.2 In addition:
- 5.2.1 The new Community Empowerment Board will meet for the first time on 9 January 2023, with a schedule of quarterly meetings to be established;
 - 5.2.2 A report on the Team around the Learning Community will be presented to Education, Children and Families Committee in January 2023, with further briefings and updates to follow at the appropriate times; and
 - 5.2.3 Engagement with staff on the future service plans and structures for the Libraries service will commence in early 2023, building on the feedback received so far.
- 5.3 Officers will continue to work with voluntary organisations, LCPPs, Neighbourhood Networks and the Edinburgh Partnership to support improved partnership working.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The proposals outlined in this report will secure a modest saving in the overall staff cost to the Council.
- 6.2 Over time, it is anticipated that further savings may be achievable through improved management of both responsive repairs for community buildings and facilities management.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The proposals set out in this report primarily focus on how Council staff, working in the areas of Lifelong Learning, are managed.
- 7.2 However, as noted in the report, these services work closely with others within the Council and also with other public agencies, the private sector and voluntary organisations.
- 7.3 The proposals recognise that, post pandemic, there are emerging models in local communities which can improve support to local people and recognises that the Council is not always best placed to provide the support required.
- 7.4 It also recognises that community councils, Community Centre Management Committees and other partners would like to see the Council work more effectively with them in the future. The proposals in the report will not address all of the outstanding issues, but they do provide a basis on which to build and work more effectively together in the future.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Edinburgh Partnership](#).

9. Appendices

9.1 None.