

Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Thursday 11 August 2023

Response to motion by Councillor O'Neill - Edinburgh's Monuments and Commemoration

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Note the options presented to develop a Public Art Strategy (to encompass public art, monuments and commemorations) for the city;
 - 1.1.2 Agree to proceed with the development of this strategy in-house;
 - 1.1.3 Note that, if recommendation 1.1.2 is agreed, it is expected that the policy will be presented to Policy and Sustainability Committee in August 2024 for approval, before being referred to Culture and Communities Committee for information;
 - 1.1.4 Note that an audit of existing public art, monuments and commemorations will be produced as part of the development of the strategy; and
 - 1.1.5 Refer this report to Planning Committee for information.

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Report

Response to motion by Councillor O'Neill - Edinburgh's Monuments and Commemoration

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report responds to the motion by Councillor O'Neill, which was approved by the Council on 16 March 2023, on Edinburgh's Monuments and Commemorations.

3. Background

- 3.1 On [16 March 2023](#), the Council approved the following motion by Councillor O'Neill on Edinburgh's Monuments and Commemorations:
- 3.1.1 Notes that there are over 130 structures of public art or monuments across the city of Edinburgh.
 - 3.1.2 Regrets that of those structures, 79 represent or commemorate men with just 8 representing women, less than the total number of structures dedicated to animals (15).
 - 3.1.3 Recognises the cultural significance of statues and what values and ideas they commemorate.
 - 3.1.4 Notes the motion by Councillor Cameron agreed at full council on 22 August 2019 and the subsequent report to Planning Committee, which agreed that, "when a street is named after a person, a woman's name is given priority.", further notes that this policy does not currently apply to public art or monuments.
 - 3.1.5 Notes the work of the Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review, and in particular recommendation 2 that that structures "...associated with slavery and colonialism are retained and re-presented in accordance with a new, dedicated interpretation strategy which explains the nature and consequences of that involvement, , and recommendation 7, that "a significant public artwork be commissioned acknowledging Edinburgh's links with slavery and colonialism", and that this "initiates the development of a city-wide strategy for public art that fairly represents the diversity of the city...".
 - 3.1.6 Notes that this is a live discussion, and that it is therefore in the best interests of the public that the council position on this is clear and unambiguous.

- 3.1.7 Agrees that new statues, monuments, buildings and street names should reflect the diverse history of Edinburgh and the Council wishes to see better representation in our placemaking.
- 3.1.8 Also agrees that this representation goes further than statues, for example in Leith's Pride Bridge which is the only cultural landmark to LGBT+ people in Edinburgh.
- 3.1.9 Therefore, requests a report within 2 cycles to Culture & Communities committee, and thereafter be referred to Planning Committee which sets out:
 - 3.1.9.1 The current process for how new statues, monuments and commemorative structures are decided upon in the city, and what role the Council plays in this;
 - 3.1.9.2 Options for establishing a new policy and process for new statue / monument / commemorative structure proposals, to ensure that these contribute to the objectives set out in 3.1.5, including further options for improving representation amongst commemorative structures erected in the city.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Monuments, commemorations and public art is a significant part of Edinburgh's built heritage. They contribute to (and define) the sense of place, add visual interest to public spaces and can enhance the image of the city. Edinburgh has a significant collection of public art - statues, monuments and sculptures - created, carved and cast by artists, architects and sculptors. Most statues were erected by public subscription to commemorate individuals and events, and ultimately gifted to the Council at their inauguration. There are many beyond the highly visible statues - war memorials, sundials, fountains, boundary markers, ancient stones and modern artistic structures.
- 4.2 The Council does not have a single, dedicated policy on the subjects listed above. Responsibilities sit across service areas for various aspects in the decision-making process. Planning considers the issues (e.g. public art works which have fixed foundations, or are fixed to buildings) requiring planning permission and/or listed building consent and possible building warrant requirements. The Museums and Galleries service provide advice, when requested, on materials, specialist suppliers and ongoing conservation and maintenance.
- 4.3 Overview of the of the city's monuments sits with the Museums and Galleries service, within the role of the Curatorial and Conservations Manager (their primary duties are ongoing exhibition and conservation programmes). The officer is often consulted on new proposals, but the overall decision-making lies with Planning based on statutory criteria. The cost for ongoing maintenance is met by the Council from the budget for Facilities Management.

- 4.4 It is proposed to create a Public Art Strategy for the city which should include not only statues, monuments, and permanent structures but also things like street furniture, temporary or time-based installations, and art / installations inside the Council's public buildings. There are other examples of cities with public art strategies in place, characterised by pro-active commission processes and dedicated staff resources. Other cities also have a specialist advisory board / forum / group who consider new proposals, provide guidance from a range of perspectives, and oversee the public art programme in line with wider council strategies and development plans.
- 4.5 A new Public Art Strategy for the city would allow the Council to be more involved not just in who or what is commemorated, but also which artists are chosen and where works are sited. It would also enable the Council to work much more closely with communities so that proposals / options are made democratically, locally, and with inclusion at the heart of the process. For instance, it could work with the recommendations made in the Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review.
- 4.6 There are two options available to progress the development of a Public Art Strategy and associated policy:
 - 4.6.1 The first is to develop the policy and subsequent strategy in-house. An officer working group could be established with representation from Culture and Wellbeing, Asset Management, Facilities Management, Parks and Openspaces, and Planning. Desk-based research looking at models from other cities will be required, along with an audit of existing monuments, public consultation, benchmarking on investment and subsidy for public art and monuments, the scope of Planning and Cultural criteria, and options on funding of strategic and operational delivery; or
 - 4.6.2 The second is to commission an external body to develop to undertake the above policy and strategy, appointing based on experience and skill set working in this field. A brief would be agreed and procurement exercise carried out to appoint the most suitable company and this would require a budget. Making reasonable estimates on 20 days of work, the cost is expected to be in the region of £20-25,000, with the Council responsible for undertaking public engagement actions.
- 4.7 The first option is considered the most affordable. Acknowledging the time required to develop the Strategy and associated policy alongside other work, engagement and consultation exercises, it is expected that the draft strategy will be presented to Policy and Sustainability Committee in August 2024.
- 4.8 To support the development of the strategy, an updated audit of existing public, monuments, commemorations under the Council's ownership will be produced with an asset cost survey indicating current investment needs.
- 4.9 It is proposed to incorporate the actions from Councillor McFarlane's motion on International Overdose Awareness Day on establishing a policy and process for formal memorials or places of remembrance into the new policy.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 If Committee agree the approach set out in this report:
 - 5.1.1 An officer working group will be established to drive the engagement, strategy and policy development. Membership will consist of representatives from Culture and Wellbeing, Parks and Openspaces, Planning, Public Safety, and Asset Management;
 - 5.1.2 Desk based research will begin to collect details of public art policies from other cities;
 - 5.1.3 Officers will progress design of a consultation programme and an audit of existing public art, monuments and commemorations. The audit is expected to be completed by December 2023;
 - 5.1.4 Regular updates and briefings will be provided to the Culture and Wellbeing Spokespersons Briefing, along with wider Elected Member briefings as required; and
 - 5.1.5 A draft strategy, with associated policy, is expected to be presented to Policy and Strategy Committee for approval in August 2024. This will include details of how the Council intends to improve representation. The decision of Policy and Sustainability will be referred to Culture and Communities Committee for information.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The budget will be contained within the Place budget, acknowledging the additional officer time to the project.
- 6.2 It is expected that implementing a policy and strategy for developing and managing public art, monuments and commemorations will require additional financial resources for management, commissioning and maintenance.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 This will impact all wards and communities and consultation will be commissioned in line with the Council's [Consultation Policy](#).

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 None.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None.