

Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 5 December 2024

Community Councils Workstreams Update

Executive/routine
Wards

ALL

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the updates for the workstreams that have commenced and will progress throughout 2025.
- 1.2 To note that a Business Bulletin update will be provided to the Culture and Communities Committee in May 2025.

Dr Deborah Smart

Executive Director of Corporate Services

Contact: Gavin King, Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience

Legal and Assurance Division, Corporate Services Directorate

E-mail: gavin.king@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 4329

Report

Community Councils Workstreams Update

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Council agreed that a report updating on the progress of the workstreams identified during the statutory consultation of the Community Council Scheme and Boundary Review would be presented to the Culture and Communities Committee on 5 December 2024.
- 2.2 The status and next steps of the workstreams are detailed in Appendix 1.

3. Background

- 3.1 Community Councils were first established in Scotland following the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. Under the Act each local authority is required to produce a Scheme which provides a framework for their creation and operation.
- 3.2 The current Scheme was approved by the City of Edinburgh Council in September 2019. The new scheme was approved in September 2024 and will come into effect on 28 March 2025 (following the election process).
- 3.3 Council agreed on 27 June 2024 that Council officers would progress the concerns raised that were not within the scope of the statutory consultation of the Scheme of Community Councils.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The themes that were identified as the basis of the workstreams were:
 - 4.1.1 The promotion of community councils.
 - 4.1.2 Support for community councils with regard to communications (social media/website development), role of community councils, understanding associated governance documents, community engagement, diversity equality and inclusion and dealing with conflict.
 - 4.1.3 Support (financial, training and IT) for hybrid meetings.

- 4.1.4 Community engagement, including support to promote equality of opportunity, diversity, and inclusion for community councils and the communities they represent.
- 4.1.5 Reasonable financial support to enable accessibility and attendance at community council meetings.
- 4.2 Appendix 1 notes the initial progress Council officers have achieved through working with internal and external stakeholders to deliver the requirements for the workstreams.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Council officers will progress all the workstream requirements in 2024 - 2025.
- 5.2 Council officers will deliver briefings to the Council's political groups on the progress of the workstreams in 2025.
- 5.3 A Business Bulletin update will be provided to the Culture and Communities Committee in May 2025.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 On 27 June 2024 Groups agreed to consider allocating money to community councils to purchase hybrid meeting equipment in the 25/26 budget. Current estimates are approximately £1,312 per community council or approximately £61,664 for all 47 community councils.
- 6.2 It is intended that a demonstration event will be delivered by Council officers to enable interested community councils to confirm they wish to obtain the equipment.
- 6.3 It is intended that how to use the equipment will be delivered in-house and the staff time is envisioned to be no more than 1 day (as the session will be recorded).
- 6.4 The total budget for the promotion and 2025 election budget for community councils is £5,000, which is contained within existing budgets. This would be to produce materials and use social media tools.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 Two Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs) were carried out during the Statutory Review and identified implications for groups including: older people and people in their middle years; young people and children. The interim and final IIAs can [be accessed online](#).
- 7.2 The actions set out in the additional workstreams are designed to mitigate the adverse effects identified in the IIAs and improve the equality and diversity awareness and representation within community councils.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 There are no climate or nature emergency implications as a direct result of this report.
- 8.2 However, support is being considered to facilitate community council meetings to be held hybrid. Previously attendance at meetings could incur travel emissions.
- 8.3 All correspondence has been electronic unless otherwise requested.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 The citizens of Edinburgh contributed to the Statutory Review process that identified the workstreams that are being completed. The delivery of the workstreams seeks to improve the effectiveness of community councils. This will have a positive benefit for the citizens that they are representing.
- 9.2 Increasing the awareness of community councils and working with external equality and diversity organisations seeks to mitigate the risk that new or existing community council may not gain sufficient interest to establish/maintain an active community council.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [Collaborative Working with Community Councils - Culture and Communities Committee 1 February 2022](#)
- 10.2 [Update Regarding Community Council Scheme and Boundary Review 2023 and Community Council Elections 2024](#)
- 10.3 [Review of Scheme for Community Councils and their Boundaries – Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services – 28 September 2023](#)
- 10.4 [Review of Scheme for Community Councils and their Boundaries – Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services – 27 June 2024](#)
- 10.5 [Review of Scheme for Community Councils and their Boundaries – Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services – 26 September 2024](#)
- 10.6 [Decisions taken under Urgency Provisions - Review of Scheme for Community Councils and their Boundaries Report by the Executive Director Corporate Services – 7 November 2024](#)
- 10.7 [Scheme for Community Councils](#)
- 10.8 [Community Council Maps](#)
- 10.9 [Community Council Guidance Notes](#)
- 10.10 [Community Council scheme and boundary review \(pre-statutory consultation\) - City of Edinburgh Council - Citizen Space](#)

10.11 [Act of Council No 26 of 21 March 2024; Motion by Councillor Graham](#)

11. Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1 – Details of Community Councils' Workstreams Status

Appendix 1

Details of Community Councils' Workstreams Status

Item	Workstream Requirement	Next Steps
1	<p>Training sessions from Council Officers in communications will be offered to Community Councillors including using social media and the promotion of community councils.</p>	<p>Two sets of Learning Sessions will be delivered to community councils. This will be to assist community councils with promoting their work in their communities. This will be prior to the Elections in 2025.</p> <p>The second set of training will be for new Community Councillors. It will be delivered as part of the induction sessions.</p>
2	<p>Where opportunities are identified for community councils to provide their feedback relating to the legislative framework they operate within Scottish Local Authorities; Council Officers will ensure this is shared with community councils e.g. Democracy Matters.</p>	<p>The Governance Team will continue to share notifications of consultations and information to our community councils through the email distribution lists that we hold for them.</p> <p>Council Officers notified community councils of the Scottish Government's Democracy Matters 2 consultation. Community councils across Edinburgh contributed to this consultation.</p> <p>The Governance Team will ensure that these distribution lists are reviewed on a six-monthly basis, in addition to completing all requests for changes received from Community Councils</p>
3	<p>Learning session from Council officers in Governance will be offered to community councils relating to the scope of the Scheme and the legislative parameters within which it operates.</p>	<p>The content of these Learning Sessions will be agreed and delivered in 2025.</p>

Appendix 1

Item	Workstream Requirement	Next Steps
4	<p>Training sessions from Council officers in Planning are being offered to community councils annually which will seek to outline how Community Councils can make representations regarding planning matters as statutory consultees. It should be noted that an initial refresher and scoping session was held on 30 May 2024.</p>	<p>A learning session on planning will take place as part of the induction of Community Councillors in April 2025 and take place annually thereafter.</p>
5	<p>A communications strategy is being explored and developed with officers to promote Community Councils in advance of community council elections.</p>	<p>The communications strategy will be delivered to promote community councils in advance of community council elections in 2025.</p>
6	<p>Induction and ongoing training is being developed for Community Councillors in collaboration with Council officers across the Council (e.g. Planning, Digital Services, Governance and Democracy, Communications, Corporate Events AV Specialist, Community Engagement and Planning etc.)</p>	<p>The production of the content and timetable for delivering the learning sessions is being developed.</p> <p>Induction and ongoing learning sessions will then be delivered.</p> <p>Recording of future learning sessions will occur (whenever possible) so they can be made available on the Online Learning Platform.</p>
7	<p>An Online Learning Platform specifically for Community Councillors is being developed in collaboration with Council officers in Learning and Development to enable ongoing learning opportunities for elected and co-opted Community Councillors. Where possible, offered training sessions will be recorded and uploaded to the training platform.</p>	<p>The guidance documentation for community councils is being reviewed and will be updated for the induction of the new Community Councillors.</p> <p>The online learning platform is being developed by Learning and Development officers.</p>

Appendix 1

Item	Workstream Requirement	Next Steps
		A recording of future learning sessions will occur (whenever possible) so they can be made available on the online learning platform.
8	Liaison with the Improvement Service (who support community councils on behalf of local government and COSLA) to highlight training needs identified by community councils during this consultation and to explore the Open University Scotland 'Open Learn' platform as an additional training resource.	<p>Further meetings will be held with the Improvement Service to discuss any additional organisations that they believe could assist in addressing the training issues that were raised and delivering sessions to our community councils.</p> <p>The Improvement Service does not deliver training directly to community councils.</p>
9	Council officers will promote and facilitate an annual recruitment drive in collaboration with Community Councils to promote the work of community councils and encourage and maintain membership.	<p>A promotion strategy for recruiting new members of community councils in February and March 2025 is being developed</p> <p>Council officers have arranged for initial promotion events in 2024 and 2025 at the following venues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drumbrae Library Hub • Balgreen Library • Craigmillar Library • Central Library • Muirhouse Library <p>Further events will be arranged to recruit new members of community councils in February and March 2025.</p>

Appendix 1

Item	Workstream Requirement	Next Steps
		<p>Council officers will be liaising with relevant services to put in place the necessary arrangements to hold an annual recruitment drive to sustain the operation of community councils.</p> <p>This will be to both maintain existing members and encourage diversity through new members.</p>
10	<p>Council officers to engage with community councils to positively celebrate the work and achievements they undertake for their communities culminating in an annual training and recognition event.</p>	<p>The Lord Provost has organised an event for June 2025 to acknowledge and celebrate the work of our community councils following the motion from the September 2024 Special Council Meeting.</p> <p>Council officers will be liaising with the relevant services to put in place the necessary support to hold an annual training & recognition event.</p>
11	<p>Advertise the purpose and the work of community councils to networks and organisations for individuals with protected characteristics. In particular engaging with schools, libraries, community centres and Local Interest Groups to promote awareness.</p> <p>Community councils seek to recruit individuals with protected characteristics and create a welcoming and supportive culture for all individuals participating in meetings.</p>	<p>These meetings have identified methods to achieve this requirement.</p> <p>The communications strategy will be delivered to promote community councils in advance of community council elections in 2025.</p> <p>Further meetings with staff from the Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council and the Equality and Rights Network have taken place. This will identify the best methods to advertise the purpose and work of community councils to networks and organisations for individuals with protected characteristics.</p>

Appendix 1

Item	Workstream Requirement	Next Steps
	<p>Community councils seek to put in place support for members with Protected Characteristics to participate e.g. the location and means of holding meetings, the time of meetings and accessibility to the information being discussed.</p> <p>Additional training to provide the knowledge and skills to increase equality, diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>Assist community councils develop an understanding of how their membership reflects their communities.</p> <p>Provide community councils with the tools to build an inclusive culture where each individual feels valued, included, and able to be themselves when participating and attract and retain a diverse membership through their approach to creating a sense of well-being.</p> <p>Provide community councils with the tools to establish mentoring networks for diverse Community Councillors.</p>	<p>The provision of the necessary tools to community councils to achieve this requirement will take place in 2025.</p>
12	<p>Council officers have met with the Lead Officer – Equalities and the Scottish Women’s Budget Group to gain expert input and will continue to do so through Phase 3 making further recommendations where applicable.</p>	<p>No further action is scheduled for this requirement as the feedback has been included into the existing workstreams.</p>

Appendix 1

Item	Workstream Requirement	Next Steps
13	Council officers are collaborating with the Council’s Corporate Events AV Specialist to identify equipment suitable for Community Councils to host hybrid meetings. Following provision of this information training will be offered to support use. For clarity, a hybrid meeting is defined as a physical meeting place with an option for attendees to join the meeting via an online platform such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom.	If Elected Members agree the additional funding required to provide hybrid equipment to Community Councils, the Governance Team will arrange for the purchase and training for community councils to use the equipment.
14	To promote public awareness and encourage interest in the statutory remit and role of community councils and Community Councillors ahead of the 2025 community council elections.	The delivery of actions in the finalised strategy to promote the awareness of community councils and their Elections will take place in 2024 and 2025.
15	Council officers liaise with the EACC and the Council's Member Equalities Working Group to explore actions and activities which would meaningfully help raise public interest in and awareness of the role of community councils and Community Councillors and encourage increased diversity, citizen participation and demographic representation within Edinburgh's community councils.	<p>Further meetings will be held be held with the new office-bearers of the EACC following their AGM in November 2024.</p> <p>Council officers are preparing a briefing for the Elected Members who form the Member Equalities Working Group setting out options that would increase both awareness, participation and diversity of Community Councils.</p>
16	To request Council Officers to explore the possibility of advertising future calls for Community Councillor nominations through public advertising measures such as lamppost wraparounds, posters and on public transport	The methods of the delivery of the advertising community council and elections will be agreed following a review by Council officers.

Appendix 1

Item	Workstream Requirement	Next Steps
	<p>Develop strategies to improve the Council's communication with Community Councillors, recognising that some Community Councillors have experienced poor communication, including on the crucial issue of their term of office being extended.</p>	<p>The Governance Team will ensure that these distribution lists are reviewed on a six-monthly basis, in addition to completing all requests for changes received from community councils.</p>
	<p>To request Council officers to approach the Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council and use the Council's work on Barriers to Elected Office to develop strategies to encourage greater diversity in candidates standing to become Community Councillors</p>	<p>Further meetings with these organisations will be taking place to arrange opportunities for greater diversity in candidates standing to become Community Councillors.</p> <p>Governance Officers will be using the Council's work on Barriers to Elected Office to provide further guidance and support to Community councils to increase the diversity of their membership.</p>