

Planning Committee

2.00pm, Wednesday 2 October 2019

Community Engagement in Planning – Update on Progress

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Routine All
---	----------------

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
 - 1.1.1 notes the progress made since the last report to Planning Committee of [14 March 2018](#); and
 - 1.1.2 notes that a further progress report will be brought back to a future Planning Committee meeting.

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: John Inman, Service Manager

E-mail: john.inman@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 469 3721

Community Engagement in Planning – Update on Progress

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Previous reports to Planning Committee in 2017 and 2018 have explained how the service is taking steps to expand community engagement in the planning system.
- 2.2 This report provides a further update on the progress made and highlights successes and lessons learnt.

3. Background

- 3.1 On [14 March 2018](#) the Planning Committee considered a report which detailed how the Planning Service intends to improve engagement in the planning process. Committee requested a progress report be presented to a future Committee on the outcomes of these engagement processes.
- 3.2 As requested specifically by Committee, the types of engagement processes to be delivered were:
 - 3.2.1 proposals to involve more children and young people in planning projects and processes;
 - 3.2.2 to work with the development community to encourage the involvement of children and young people at pre-application stages of major planning applications and to amend the guidance; and
 - 3.2.3 to facilitate community participation in the planning system to engage with the process.
- 3.3 Continued improvement to our engagement processes is underpinned by the contents of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. The Act was passed by the Scottish Parliament in June 2019. It contains a number of proposals which impact on engagement as part of the planning process. These include the changes to the local plan development timescales from five years to ten years, scope for the preparation of 'local place plans' and how resources could be used to improve engagement processes.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The Consultation Hub is the Council's main platform for community engagement. Twelve planning projects have been publicised through the Hub since March 2018 generating 4,738 responses. The Hub provides a standard format for informing Edinburgh's citizens about all projects where there is a time period for consultation responses. Typically, it provides a short statement for each project, with some graphics and a questionnaire. Most consultation projects use a range of mechanisms to 'drive' traffic to the consultation hub. For instance social media may be used (Twitter, Facebook) to raise the projects' profile and to raise awareness of the project through the Planning Blog.
- 4.2 Since March 2018, there have been 38 different topics discussed on the Planning Blog. Those specifically relating to children and young people are:
- 4.2.1 City Plan 2030 – Children and Young People Engagement;
 - 4.2.2 World of Work- Firrhill High School and Planning; and
 - 4.2.3 Engaging children and young people in Planning.
- 4.3 Whilst the Hub and the Planning Blog are well used, their use across the wide range of planning consultations is inconsistent and a more structured approach would be beneficial.
- 4.4 It was also intended that videos should be used more extensively in community engagement. This hasn't been possible due to limited staff resources but should be explored for the next progress report.
- 4.5 The planning portal was upgraded in November 2018. Improvements as a result of the upgrade allowed spellchecking of comments and a new social media integration facility meant people could share comments and applications via e-mail or Twitter.
- 4.6 Since March 2018 the Planning Service has been involved in community engagement for a considerable number of projects. The following paragraphs provide further details for the more significant projects.

City Plan 2030

- 4.7 The Planning Service has been working with community representatives and others to shape the choices to be presented in the main consultation stage in 2019/2020. This engagement has included:
- 4.7.1 community briefings and workshops including eight briefings with community councillors and ward councillors in March and June 2018, and six community workshops in late 2018;
 - 4.7.2 Children and Young People Engagement Programme, including nine Place Standard workshops in secondary schools;
 - 4.7.3 topic stakeholder discussion events focusing on key land issues including office and industry development, housing, visitor accommodation and shopping and leisure;
 - 4.7.4 use of social media to build awareness and interest in the project; and

4.7.5 engagement and consultation on closely –linked projects such as City Centre Transformation.

4.8 The next consultation stage for City Plan 2030 is the Main Issues Report (Choices for City Plan) which will be considered by the Committee in December 2019. Subject to Committee approving the document, the consultation will take place from December 2019 to February 2020. This will comprise drop-in and promotion sessions in 11 different locations.

City Centre Transformation Programme, City Mobility Plan and Low Emission Zone

4.9 Officers undertook combined stakeholder engagement with over 300 stakeholders in Spring 2018 to generate issues and ideas to test through a combined city-wide public engagement event in Autumn 2018 titled ‘Connecting our City, Transforming our Places.’ This became Edinburgh’s largest engagement exercise of 2018 with more than 5,000 people contributing their views either through participation in workshops, drop-in events or by the Councils’ online survey which attracted 4,192 returns.

4.10 In addition to the more mainstream ways of engaging through drop-in events, workshops, focus groups and on-street engagement, the approach included the following more innovative elements:

4.10.1 the project team engaged with young people at the Edinburgh Science Festival at the National Museum where young visitors were able to experiment with Sustrans ‘Streets Ahead’ activity, redesigning some of Edinburgh’s key streets using scale models to create new cycle lanes, seating areas and greenspace.

4.10.2 promotion through print media, social media, bus shelter advertisements, radio adverts, lamp posts wraps, the dedicated Connecting Places project website and vox pop videos.

4.10.3 considerable work was also undertaken to encourage hard to reach groups (eg ethnic minorities, over 65s, under 25s and people with disability and mobility issues) to participate in the consultation as there was limited response from these groups during the first round of consultation in Spring 2018.

4.11 Drawing on this early experience, this innovative approach has been built on to help prepare the draft Proposed Edinburgh City Centre Transformation (ECCT) Strategy. A dedicated young people’s survey was created and received 113 responses from across the city’s primary and secondary schools. Consultation displays and drop-in sessions at the National Museum of Scotland and City Art Centre attracted engagement with over 400 individuals.

4.12 The benefits of joint engagement were apparent with the consultation on Low Emission Zones (LEZs). That consultation attracted over 3,000 people because the idea had already been introduced as part of the Connecting our City, Transforming our Places.

- 4.13 Connecting our City, Transforming our Places was a very successful public engagement programme. Its success has been demonstrated by the number of citizens taking part of all ages. Many of the approaches used will be adapted in future engagement exercises.

Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site

- 4.14 In collaboration with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) the Planning Service has prepared teaching packs to assist young people to better understand the Old and New World Heritage sites.
- 4.15 A project was started in 2018 to coincide with Scotland's Year of Young People which comprised group activities. This was taken to Edinburgh College where it was used to inspire course work for over 100 students studying a range of subjects including dance, fashion, design, music, computing and professional cookery. All the projects helped students understand how they would have undertaken their own subject in a historic city at that time. This project was held in Riddell's Court and was widely attended.
- 4.16 Each year since 2015 an event has been held around 18 April to celebrate World Heritage Day. This has been held in a variety of places including the Storytelling Centre, National Museum of Scotland, the Tron Kirk and the Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow. Each event has attracted between 600 to 2,000 visitors.
- 4.17 The innovative and creative approaches taken to involve young people and children have undoubtedly contributed to the success of the public engagement events undertaken for the World Heritage programme. This should be maintained and the techniques shared around the Planning Service.

Place Briefs

- 4.18 A place brief is a set of high level principles which shape the future development of a site. It is a place-based approach and incorporates the views and aspirations of the local community. Planning Committee has approved three place briefs to date as non-statutory planning guidance. As the content of the place briefs are underpinned by community views it is important that the approach to community engagement seeks to maximise the range of representation across each relevant community.
- 4.19 For each place brief, engagement includes organising drop-in events for community council areas. Events are publicised through the Council's Consultation Hub, social media, school parent mail, planning blog and via the social networks of community councillors and community groups. Community engagement for Powderhall and Redford Barracks included taking the Place Standard Tool into local schools (Broughton Primary and Firrhill Secondary) and helping the schoolchildren to think about how their community can be shaped through the completion of that exercise.
- 4.20 The community engagement approach may include more stages (Powderhall) if the site specific issues require it. At Powderhall there were issues which attracted a high level of interest in their own right, e.g. future use of former bowling greens and the stable block.

- 4.21 Generally, community engagement for the place briefs has been successful. It is appropriate for events to be held in familiar venues to maximise the number of people from the wider community. The place standard questionnaire is comprehensive and can be completed in a group situation or on-line.

Pre-application Guidance

- 4.22 Pre-application guidance was updated following Planning Committee in May 2018. This advises applicants on the level of engagement which they must undertake as part of the PAN process. The wording now includes the recommendation that *'efforts are made to get the views of children and young people at the pre-application consultation stage. This could include liaising with local schools on the proposed development and contacting local youth groups for their views'*.
- 4.23 A good example of how this has worked in practice is the PAN for Castlebrae High School in Craigmillar. This was submitted by the Council in December 2018. The engagement process included more than the standard minimum and addressed the rewording of the guidance. The following engagement methods were used:
- 4.23.1 publicity on Council's consultation hub;
 - 4.23.2 advert in local newspaper signposting two drop-in sessions;
 - 4.23.3 targeted social media to promote consultation;
 - 4.23.5 electronic or paper copy sent to Castlebrae High and feeder primary parents;
and
 - 4.23.6 posters displayed in local venues, eg schools, community centres and libraries.
- 4.24 Feedback from all the consultation channels was collated and grouped into main issues. The main issues were included in the pre-application report which formed the submission of the full planning application.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Community engagement on projects across the planning service since March 2018 has been numerous and has had some notable successes. Aside from the Consultation Hub however, there is a sense that approaches and methods of delivering community engagement are undertaken in isolation and opportunities for a more sharing and learning experience could be improved. Consideration should be given to preparing a planning service central toolbox of community engagement approaches. This should consider the nature of the project and identify the most appropriate method from the central toolbox to be used.
- 5.2 Advances in technology are apparent. Opportunities should be explored to help in the preparation of 3D models and innovative digitisation to help with a greater understanding of planning projects. The further use of videos should be explored for use in community engagement events.

- 5.3 Continued work between the community and the planning service is required to encourage the involvement of children and young people at pre-application stages of major applications. The community engagement undertaken through the Castlebrae PAN can be held up as a minimum requirement for all community engagement sessions on PANs.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There are no financial impacts arising from this report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 This report summarises recent community engagement activity and does not, of itself, require to be the subject of consultation.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Planning Committee](#) 14 March 2018
8.2 [Planning Committee](#) 12 October 2017
8.3 [Planning Committee](#) 17 August 2017.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None.