

# Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 5 October 2017

## Central Edinburgh Transformation – Scoping Report

<b>Item number</b>	7.5
<b>Report number</b>	
<b>Executive/routine</b>	Executive
<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Council Commitments</b>	C16, 18, 19, 27

### Executive Summary

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This report sets out an approach to the future development of central Edinburgh and its public realm which recognises the ambitions set out in the 2050 Edinburgh City Vision, its status as a capital city and as a place that benefits all of Edinburgh's citizens.

## Central Edinburgh Transformation – Scoping Report

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee:
  - 1.1.1 Approves the outline scope of the proposed Central Edinburgh Transformation project, subject to further development to be taken forward through the leadership of the Central Edinburgh Development Working Group.

### 2. Background

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- 2.1 This report responds to the Motion by Councillor Macinnes approved by the City of Edinburgh Council on 29 June 2017 by which the Council agreed to prepare:
  - 2.1.1 A medium-term action plan, to be implemented before the end of this Council term, to improve the public realm in the city centre with the aim of improving conditions for, and prioritising access for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users; and for a scoping report on this work to be brought to Transport & Environment Committee within two cycles.

### 3. Main report

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#### Challenges and Opportunities

- 3.1 This report sets out an approach to the future development of central Edinburgh, which in addition to improving its public realm, takes important steps towards achieving the ambitions set out in the 2050 Edinburgh City Vision, reflects Edinburgh's status as a capital city and its value to all of Edinburgh's citizens.
- 3.2 Central Edinburgh is defined by its medieval Old Town and Georgian New Town and the distinctive urban communities which lie within and around its World Heritage Site. This inner city population of over 30,000 households is a particular characteristic of Edinburgh and supports the vibrancy of its streets, local services and cultural life, which together make the city an attractive place to spend time in.
- 3.3 The wider city also relies on central Edinburgh for its working and social life, as a place of recreation, retail and natural amenity, to move around the city's neighbourhoods, whilst its most iconic skylines and spaces inspire a strong sense of identity and belonging.

- 3.4 Edinburgh is also an international and festival city attracting just over 4 million visitors per year and is the heart of a growing city region which accounts for 24% of the Scottish population. By 2040, Edinburgh's population is expected to rise from approximately 500,000 to reach close to 600,000.
- 3.5 Over that last 20 years, central Edinburgh has evolved to provide better conditions for sustainable transport and civic life:
  - 3.5.1 The implementation of public realm works at the Royal Mile, Grassmarket, Mound precinct, St Andrew Square and Rose Street;
  - 3.5.2 Upgrades to the city's bus and rail stations, including public realm at key arrival points e.g. Waverley Bridge;
  - 3.5.3 The closure of Princes St to private cars and introduction of the tram – improving connections between the city centre and Edinburgh Airport;
  - 3.5.4 The establishment of a network of cycle routes and adoption of a 20 mph Network; and
  - 3.5.5 Through redevelopment, with Edinburgh St James representing one of the biggest mixed-use regeneration projects underway in the UK.
- 3.6 Despite this progress, the city needs to take action now to ensure that as Edinburgh accommodates more people, jobs and activity, the quality of life and health of its residents, success of its economy and character of its built and natural environment is enhanced and not put at risk.
  - 3.6.1 As a compact, walkable city, Edinburgh's public realm does not always provide the best pedestrian experience. Congested historic streets, narrow footways, increased footfall, street clutter, the variable quality of materials and long-wait times at crossings, frustrate safe and convenient movement;
  - 3.6.2 Edinburgh has an active and growing cycling culture with more people benefitting from this healthy, accessible and pollution-free way to get around. However, cyclists must negotiate conflicts with cars, public transport, pedestrians and the rolling topography of the city;
  - 3.6.3 Edinburgh's publicly owned public transport system is the envy of many other cities, yet its high patronage results in several thousand bus movements per day on Princes St and crowded bus stops across the city.
  - 3.6.4 Congestion can be exacerbated at certain times of day due to delivery vehicles or during the summer festival period when the city's population doubles, putting pressure on central infrastructure;
  - 3.6.5 Air quality in central Edinburgh and its gateway approaches fail to meet Scottish Government standards. Traffic generated nitrogen dioxide concentrations must be tackled for the health of residents and visitors; and
  - 3.6.6 Across the city, central Edinburgh also experiences higher than average crime rates and incidents of anti-social behaviour.

## **Establishing a Shared Vision**

- 3.7 How the city centre responds to these challenges and opportunities must be considered at a city-wide level in order that solutions for central Edinburgh do not displace problems but enhance the prospects for surrounding communities.
- 3.8 The scope of the project will involve rethinking transport priorities across the city in order to unlock the potential of streets and to provide a public realm that better meet the needs of residents, pedestrians, cyclists and to provide a more integrated public transport network.
- 3.9 Edinburgh can learn from other leading cities that have balanced city growth with an improved quality of life and urban environment and develop solutions that reflect its own circumstances and the needs of its citizens.
- 3.10 The re-organisation of Council services around placemaking and localities provides the means to deliver a holistic transformation of central Edinburgh, to achieve wider benefits from planned maintenance and to align works with private and third sector delivery.
- 3.11 Leadership will be crucial to realising the potential of central Edinburgh over the short, medium and longer-term and this paper sets out an approach to ensure that elected members play a key role in shaping the direction of the transformation agenda.
- 3.12 The first step will be to consolidate what is already known about people's views on central Edinburgh and to match this with technical data which diagnoses the city's current performance and predicted future needs.
- 3.13 A working vision for central Edinburgh will be established to ensure strategies, projects, and actions impacting on the city centre align with the same overall objectives and outcomes.
- 3.14 Shorter term outputs will include the publication of a shared vision, supported by exhibitions, improved priorities for pedestrians and cyclists, better maintenance and pilot projects during appropriate times of the year.

## **Interdependencies**

- 3.15 The following projects provide an example of areas of transformation already underway relevant to paragraph 3.12:
  - 3.15.1 George Street public realm proposals, including the city centre west-east cycle link;
  - 3.15.2 Wayfinding – new totem and mobile information to support walking around the city;
  - 3.15.3 The new Ross Pavilion and improvements to access to Princes Street Gardens West from Princes Street; and
  - 3.15.4 Duties to reduce carbon emissions, improve climate change resilience and to further biodiversity.

- 3.16 The proposed project timeline will also allow engagement activities to be linked to plans and strategies relevant to central Edinburgh, including:
- 3.16.1 The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site Management Plan 2017-2022;
  - 3.16.2 Delivery of the South East and North East Edinburgh Locality Improvement Plans;
  - 3.16.3 Responding to the Scottish Government's consultation on Low Emission Zones and preparing the evidence to establish one in Edinburgh;
  - 3.16.4 The Local Transport and Edinburgh Economy Strategies; and
  - 3.16.5 Review of the City Centre Retail Core Supplementary Guidance.
- 3.17 The review of transport priorities within Edinburgh will also be determined by the business case for the extension of the tram network to Newhaven, currently under consideration.

### **Process and Timeline**

- 3.18 The transformation process will be split into a series of steps, set out in Appendix 1.

## **4. Measures of success**

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- 4.1 Initial measures of success will include:
- 4.1.1 successful stakeholder engagement;
  - 4.1.2 publication of a central Edinburgh transformation programme; and
  - 4.1.3 added value to current projects and initiatives.

## **5. Financial impact**

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- 5.1 Whilst there are no further financial implications for the Council arising from this report, there may be a requirement for resources to be allocated to support engagement activities, further technical studies and proposals. The cost implications of any of these projects will be reported through the relevant Committees as they progress.

## **6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact**

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- 6.1 The plan will be shaped by the contribution of elected members and cross-party governance and leadership will be facilitated through the cross-party Central Edinburgh Development Working Group.
- 6.2 The Working Group will be supported by senior management reflecting integrated service delivery from Place Management and Development, Culture, Locality Services, Strategy and Insight, and Communications.

## 7. Equalities impact

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- 7.1 There is no relationship between the matters described in this scoping report and the public sector general equality duty. An Equalities Impact Assessment will form an integral part of developing a city centre vision. The proposed activity will aim to improve the quality of the public realm in the city centre for anyone with a mobility impairment and the Edinburgh Access panel will be fully engaged in the work programme.

## 8. Sustainability impact

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- 8.1 There are no direct impacts raised by this scoping report in relation to the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties. It is anticipated that the likely effects of the city centre vision on the environment will be assessed through a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

## 9. Consultation and engagement

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- 9.1 An engagement strategy will be prepared in line with the Edinburgh Consultation Framework, involving comprehensive stakeholder mapping and joining up engagement activities with the development of plans and strategies listed under paragraph 3.15-16. An important consideration will be to listen to the views of young people and to investigate barriers to access to central Edinburgh. Use will be made of the Place Standard to structure conversations about how central Edinburgh is experienced as a place and to monitor outcomes.
- 9.2 Dialogue will need to engage residents, businesses, partners and agencies through both mixed and thematic discussion. In particular, dialogue with transport providers will be necessary to achieve the outcome of a more integrated transport network.

## 10. Background reading/external references

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- 10.1 [Full Meeting Papers – Part 1](#), The City of Edinburgh Council, 29 June 2017.
- 10.2 Gehl Architects. (2010). [Edinburgh Revisited – Public Space Public Life](#)

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**11. Appendices**

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Appendix 1 - Process and Timeline

## Appendix 1

### Timeline and Process

Stage	Indicative Timeline	Description
Initiation	Oct – Dec 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidate findings of existing engagement, background and technical studies.</li> <li>• Gap analysis of central Edinburgh performance and analysis by neighbourhood.</li> <li>• Benchmarking with other cities</li> <li>• Member/Officer and key stakeholder workshops.</li> <li>• Establish a working vision to inform short- and longer-term delivery</li> </ul>
Central Edinburgh Engagement	Jan – March 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue the conversation with Edinburgh's communities with a focus on how central Edinburgh can achieve the emerging 2050 goals.</li> <li>• Set out how other cities have addressed challenges</li> <li>• Seek opinions on potential way forward.</li> </ul>
Review Feedback and Options Appraisal	May – June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of engagement and any necessary technical studies.</li> <li>• Generate options that are a best fit with city vision.</li> <li>• Member/Officer and key stakeholder workshops.</li> </ul>
Consult on Proposed Actions	August – September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of media, public events and expo in public spaces to seek feedback on potential longer-term options.</li> <li>• Potential for short-term trial projects during festival period.</li> </ul>
Finalisation and Publication	Dec 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate feedback and cost-benefit of options.</li> <li>• Finalise short, medium and long-term priorities for delivery.</li> </ul>