

Planning Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 12 October 2017

Community engagement in planning

Item number	6.1
Report number	
Executive/routine	Routine
Wards	All
Council Commitments	

Executive Summary

On 17 August 2017 the Planning Committee requested that a report be submitted on proposals for expanding community engagement in the planning system. This is to include the involvement of children and young people, hard to reach groups and the use of technology. This report sets out the scope for a review of engagement, current practices, issues and opportunities going forward. A report back to Planning Committee, within two committee cycles, will set out more detailed options for improving engagement in planning.

This report responds, in part, to the request by Committee.

Community engagement in planning

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- 1.1.1 Notes the content of the report in terms of the scope for a review of community engagement in planning;
 - 1.1.2 Agree to commence with scoping out a process to establish a youth planning forum; and
 - 1.1.3 To note the updates and that a further report setting out detailed proposals for engagement would be submitted to a meeting of the Committee within two cycles.

2. Background

- 2.1 Since 2015, there has been an ongoing review of the Scottish planning system. A key aspect of the review has been how the planning system can empower people to decide the future of their places. This Council has commented on the various stages of the review including sharing its experience of aspects of community engagement to date. There will be further opportunity to promote ideas for change as the Scottish Government's detailed proposals emerge.
- 2.2 The recent position statement on the progress of the review was reported to Planning Committee on 17 August 2017. At this Committee, it was requested that this Council, work towards improving engagement in planning and in particular with children and young people and hard to reach groups. The opportunities offered by technological and digital solutions are also to be considered. This report, in part, responds to the request by Planning Committee.

3. Main report

Community engagement in planning

- 3.1 The Scottish Government review of planning from the outset has been clear on the need to improve engagement in the planning process. The [independent review paper](#) (May 2016) refers to 'collaboration rather than conflict – inclusion and empowerment.'

- 3.2 The subsequent [Scottish Government position statement](#) (June 2017) states that *'targeted changes to the existing requirements for engagement to ensure that children and young people are specifically encouraged to get more involved in planning'* will be brought forward. It is within this context that this Council is taking early steps to improve the levels of community engagement. More details on the Scottish Government's proposals are expected at the turn of the year.

Engagement in the Scottish planning system

- 3.3 Two recent studies were commissioned by the Scottish Government to inform the case for greater involvement of young people and children and the wider community in the planning system.
- 3.4 The [Barriers to community engagement: research study](#) (May 2017) noted that there is support for the greater engagement with communities in the planning process. However, the development sector and planning authorities raised concerns about the implications for timescales and resources.
- 3.5 A key issue as to why there is a lack of engagement, was seen in part due to the gap between the rhetoric and having an actual influence on planning decisions. People who have engaged, do not feel they have been listened to and there is a lack of trust in the system.
- 3.6 The [Planning review – Young Scot survey](#) (June 2017) noted that young people would like to be more involved in the planning process but feel that information is not as accessible as it could be and that their views are not taken on board.

Existing practice in Edinburgh

- 3.7 There a variety of ways for people to get involved in planning in Edinburgh. Some of these are required by planning legislation and others are delivered in line with Government advice and good practice. The main channels are summarised below.
- 3.8 Community representation
- 3.8.1 The planning service makes use of number of groups and processes to involve communities in the planning process. This includes community councils, the Edinburgh Civic Forum, the Neighbourhood Partnerships and the Planning Concordat.
- 3.8.2 The planning service provides training to community councillors across the year on the various aspects of the planning process. These sessions are generally well received by the community councils. Detailed online advice is provided for community councils including the steps set out in the Planning Concordat.
- 3.9 Development planning and non-statutory policy preparation
- 3.9.1 There are a number of stages in the preparation of the local development plan where people can get involved. The Development Plan Scheme is published to explain the engagement opportunities and progress with the plan. In the context of the current development plan, the length of time to

prepare the plan and the complexity of issues may have in themselves been barriers to maintaining engagement.

3.9.2 Engagement on other non-statutory policies, processes and conservation area character appraisals tend to take the form of online surveys, drop-in events and presentations to community groups.

3.10 Development management - planning applications

3.10.1 This aspect of the development process is where community interest can be most heightened. The prospect of a significant physical or land use change is most commonly when communities and individuals get involved in the planning process. For major planning applications, a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) can be the first stage of engagement in the application process. With the community engagement undertaken by the developer or their agent, levels of engagement can vary.

3.11 PAS (Planning Aid for Scotland)

3.11.1 The planning service has previously used PAS to undertake workshops with school children on the response to the Scottish Government review of planning. A project is currently progressing with PAS due to deliver further engagement with children and young people on preparation for engagement on the main issues for the next local development plan.

3.12 [Royal Town Planning Institute \(RTPI\) ambassadors](#)

3.12.1 Nine planning staff are registered as ambassadors with the professional institute. To date, one event has been held with school children. The intention is to continue and develop these ambassador roles.

3.13 [Place standard](#)

3.13.1 The planning service has made use of the place standard tool in a number of engagement exercises since its launch in 2015. This has included community events in Queensferry, the South Side and Corstorphine.

3.13.2 A place standard event was held in Corstorphine with young people. With no high school building in the immediate area, McDonalds allowed the use their car park for the event. A session using the place standard in Queensferry was also held specifically for young people.

3.13.3 Earlier this year, Firrhill secondary school experienced a live planning project as part of their work placement - pupils created a concept/design for the new Ross Bandstand in Princes Street Gardens, including a site analysis and the use of the Place Standard to support their assessments.

3.14 [Forth Bridge Story writing competition](#)

3.14.1 The planning service helped organise this writing competition with school pupils as part of the designation of the Forth Bridge as a World Heritage Site and the construction of the new bridge.

3.15 2050 Edinburgh City Vision

3.15.1 The planning service was represented at an event earlier this year with school children to get their views on the proposed Vision. This event provides a good first phase of 2050 Vision exercise to be used as a foundation for the targeted community engagement on planning issues.

3.16 [Edinburgh Quality Indicators](#)

3.16.1 The Council has been running the quality indicators programme for a number of years to help measure the quality of new buildings and spaces. This has involved online surveys, using videos and drop-in sessions at local libraries. It is accepted that there are a number of limitations with this process in that it only provides a baseline level of information, can only focus on a selection of buildings in local areas with it difficult to link the outcomes to changes in policies.

3.17 Digital participation

3.17.1 The planning service already makes use of a number of digital tools to help engage a wide range of people. This includes the planning portal, the Council website, the consultation hub and social media such as Twitter, a planning blog and Instagram.

3.17.2 This Council is represented on the Scottish Government Digital Task Force which has recently been set up to lead and shape broad and transformational aspirations, as well ideas and innovation.

3.17.3 The service is aware of issues with digital exclusion and makes information available in different formats to help address this issue. Communication is a key component in improved engagement – getting this right is critical to the engagement process. Providing information is only the first stage in delivering improved engagement.

Issues to explore

3.18 The opportunities exist to do more to improve engagement and to deliver more meaningful involvement in the planning process. As a growing and changing city, the service recognises the importance and benefits that good community engagement can bring – both in the preparation and understanding of the various planning processes. In reality, limitations on resource and timescales are a constraint on what the service can deliver. The following are areas for further exploration which will inform options going forward.

3.18.1 Define what is meant by community, hard to reach groups, children and young people in the Edinburgh context to help understand the needs of these groups.

3.18.2 Define opportunities for a joined up approach with other Council services to engage children/young people and hard to reach groups.

- 3.18.3 Consider the role of the Place Standard tool and the Council's Consultation Framework in encouraging participation.
 - 3.18.4 Explore the role of the Locality Teams in community engagement and how Locality Improvement Plans can be part of the placemaking process.
 - 3.18.5 Seek views from representatives in diversity and equality groups in the built environment sector.
 - 3.18.6 Set out the key stages of the planning and development processes and explore the potential for a service wide 'community engagement plan'.
 - 3.18.7 Review examples of PANs which have been submitted as a key part of the development process to identify examples of good practice.
 - 3.18.8 Review whether procedural changes within the planning process will be enough to involve more people or is legislative change needed.
 - 3.18.9 Evaluate benefits of engagement within development planning and development management processes and consider measures to achieve better outcomes.
 - 3.18.10 Other areas to explore will be whether the service or other Council services, have the skills, tools and resources required to undertake improved levels of engagement. This will include want technological / digital solutions are available to us.
- 3.19 Next steps
- 3.19.1 The PAS partnership with the planning service will continue to progress with a project delivered this financial year. This will be used to feed in to the next local development plan and provide a learning opportunity on how we engage.
 - 3.19.2 The above issues will be scoped out in full and in consultation with other Council services, we will start the process to establish a 'youth planning forum' – exploring the format, resource and aims and objectives.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 This report sets out the scope for a fuller review of engagement and opportunities going forward. The measure of success will be an improved engagement programme which better informs the decision-making process and results in better outcomes for the City. Exploring measures of success will be included in the subsequent report to committee.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no direct financial impacts as a result of this scoping report. The next report will set out what resources may be required to deliver improved engagement processes.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The report represents a positive action being taken by the Council in relation to overall Council objectives in terms of securing better outcomes for Edinburgh.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 This report sets out a number of issues and opportunities to explore in relation to improving engagement in the planning process. The next step is to develop the opportunities based on delivering better on the ground development which is informed by increased and enhanced participation and engagement.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The impact of this update report in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties has been considered, and the outcome is summarised below:
- 8.1.1 The proposals in this report will have no impact on carbon emissions because the report sets out a scope for the review of engagement in the planning process;
 - 8.1.2 The proposals in this report will have no effect on the city's resilience to climate change impacts because the report sets out the scoping for a review of engagement in the planning system; and
 - 8.1.3 The proposals in this report will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh because they are working towards promoting meeting diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting equality of opportunity and facilitating the delivery of sustainable economic growth.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 The content of this report has been informed by the engagement undertaken by the Scottish Government and Young Scot on the barriers to community engagement in planning. Both reports are informed by surveys and focus groups with community groups, businesses and individuals.

- 9.2 Further engagement and consultation will be undertaken as part of the process to develop the options. The project with PAS to engage young people will help to develop the proposals for engaging young people in the planning process.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 Planning Committee, 17 August 2017, [Scottish Government Review of Planning – update and position statement](#)
- 10.2 The [Planning review – Young Scot survey](#) (June 2017)
- 10.3 [Barriers to community engagement: research study](#) - Scottish Government (May 2017)
- 10.4 [Scottish Government, Review of the Scottish Planning System](#)
- 10.5 [Empowering planning to deliver great places - an independent review of the Scottish planning system](#) (31 May 2016)
- 10.6 [Review of Planning – Scottish Government Response](#) (11 July 2016)
- 10.7 [National Standards for Community Engagement](#)
- 10.8 [Planning Advice Note 3/2010 Community Engagement](#)
- 10.9 [Community Councils and the Planning System](#) The City of Edinburgh Council website
- 10.10 [Edinburgh Local Development Plan Scheme](#) The City of Edinburgh Council website

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11. Appendices

Nil