

North West Locality Committee

6.30pm, Tuesday 11 September 2018

Community Councils Engagement

Item number	8.6
Report number	
Executive/routine	executive
Wards	1, 3, 4, 5, 6
Council Commitments	

Executive Summary

This report updates Committee on the joint meeting between members and representatives from community councils across North West locality which took place on 31 July 2018 to discuss how community councils could best engage with the North West Locality Committee, following Committee's consideration of Councillor Campbell's motion at its meeting on [25 April 2018](#).

Community Councils Engagement

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That Committee note the positive discussions with community councils at the round table meeting on 31 July 2018
- 1.2 That Committee agree which option(s) to pursue to best ensure community council engagement

2. Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on [25 April 2018](#) Committee agreed to the following motion by Councillor Campbell:-
 - 2.1.1 “Committee instructs Officers to inviting a representative from each Community Council in the NW for an informal, round table, meeting so members of the North West Localities Committee and Community Council representatives can meet each other, and discuss what kind of forum might be established to ensure a good working relationship between Community Councils and Councillors in the North West Locality. Officers are asked to arrange this meeting as soon as practical, within 3 months, out of step with the North West Locality Committee meeting cycle, of an evening and in the Locality.”
- 2.2 Practical considerations lead to the meeting being held on Tuesday 31 July in Waverley Court.
- 2.3 The round table meeting was attended by 13 elected members and 13 community councillors representing 10 of the 14 community councils wholly or significantly located in North West locality, and 1 representative from Davidsons Mains & Silverknowes Association covering the area which currently has no active community council.

3. Main report

- 3.1 In order to inform discussion at the round table meeting, a background paper and some questions (Appendix 1) were prepared in advance. After an introduction the meeting broke into 4 table discussion groups, allowing all participants the opportunity to express their views.

3.2 Appendix 2 draws together the views expressed at the tables, collating answers to the questions where this has been possible. The following table summarises the main points:-

Issue	Views	Comment
relationship of CCs to LC	<p>financial decision making rests with councillors, but can be done transparently and collegiately, with CCs feeding in local knowledge;</p> <p>relationship will evolve over time, as LC powers and responsibilities become more established</p>	<p>neighbourhood partnerships are seen as a forum where CCs have direct input in decision making, particularly on NEPs and CGF – the LC needs to demonstrate how they can have influence over its decisions</p>
role of LCs	<p>consensus that LC can help deliver better Council services;</p> <p>more localised priority setting and scrutiny of performance seen as positive – opportunity to hold Council services to account;</p> <p>opportunity for councillors to work together with CCs on strategic issues;</p> <p>deputations allow community opportunity to present more local views to decision makers/councillors who can make recommendations to other committees;</p> <p>some support for LC role in allocating NW grant funding;</p> <p>community engagement, planning matters and participatory budgeting seen as less important</p>	<p>could use this to shape future direction of LC business</p>

future round table meetings	<p>unanimously welcomed, but further discussion needed about structure, issues covered, representation;</p> <p>3 of 4 tables saw round table meetings as additional to other locality meetings (neighbourhood partnerships or equivalent), with 1 as replacing them</p>	<p>resource implications of supporting an increased number of local fora need addressed;</p> <p>reported importance of round table meetings not backed up by views on what councillors' or Council officers' priorities should be</p>
priority for councillor attendance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CC meetings 2. NP/local community planning meetings 3. round table meetings 	current practice
priority for Council officer support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CC meetings 2= NP/local community planning/local sub groups 3. round table meetings <p>officers attending need to be empowered to make decisions and be accountable for them;</p> <p>clear communication and understanding of decision making structures required</p>	<p>resource implications;</p> <p>community planning structures dependent on outcome of Edinburgh Partnership review;</p> <p>better comms required on existing and proposed Council operational and strategic structures</p>
CCs most influential by	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. talking to councillors <p>CCs generally aware of best avenue in any given situation;</p>	
CC self-assessment	<p>CCs represent/collaborate with/engage with a wide range of community organisations a fair amount or a little;</p> <p>young people in particular not well represented – need to engage with schools</p>	resource requirement to support CCs' acknowledged development needs

General comments	would like to discuss with wider CC membership; giving CCs more responsibility and status would encourage wider membership	more formal response from CCs awaited; any scope to increase CC role in North West context and/or city-wide?
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3.3 Committee may wish to consider some or all of the following options:-

- 3.3.1 Agree a representative from each community council to sit as advisers/non-voting members on the locality committee, to contribute community views to all discussions *subject to ratification from Committee Services*;
- 3.3.2 As above, but in relation to community planning/partnership matters only;
- 3.3.3 Depending on the outcome of the Edinburgh Partnership review, adopt neighbourhood partnerships or local community planning partnerships as sub groups of the Committee;
- 3.3.4 Strive to ensure Committee business and meetings are conducted in an open, collegiate, non-party political manner;
- 3.3.5 Focus future Committee business on localised priority setting and scrutiny of Council services, along with themed strategic issues identified as priorities by community councils;
- 3.3.6 Plan further round table events in 6 and 12 months time to review Committee's ongoing relationship with community councils;
- 3.3.7 Continue to prioritise member attendance at community council meetings;
- 3.3.8 Argue for an increase in locality Lifelong Learning service resource, in order to provide Council officer support to engage and develop community councils, both in terms of their relationship with Committee and in their wider representative role;
- 3.3.9 Promote a review of community council boundaries within North West to ensure all areas are represented by a community council; and
- 3.3.10 Promote a city-wide review of community councils' powers and responsibilities.

3.4 The briefing note and questions have been circulated to all community councils with a request that they formally consider them at a meeting and feedback their views. This was specifically requested by some attendees at the round table event, and gives the opportunity for community councils to present a more considered view in addition to the more personal views expressed by attendees on the night.

3.5 The round table meeting was well-attended, participants engaged enthusiastically in the discussion, and informal feedback has been that it felt like a positive start to an improved relationship between community councils and the Locality Committee.

Regular review and sense checking will be important to ensure the process continues in this vein.

- 3.6 The terms of Councillor Campbell's motion were restricted to community councils, and it is important to note that they are only one among many bodies active within and representing communities. Committee may therefore wish at some point to consider widening the reach of future round table discussions to include other community organisations.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 Citizens feel more able to have a say on local issues and services, as measured by the Edinburgh Peoples Survey.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 Potential requirement for additional, currently unfunded, staffing resource, depending on which options Committee decides to pursue.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 No formal impacts as such, but failing to capitalise on the willingness of community councils to engage with the Council's democratic structures would represent a lost opportunity.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 Supporting community councils to become more representative of their community, and promoting their engagement with Council committee and operational structures will benefit whole communities, including those with protected characteristics.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 No specific implications.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Community councils within North West have to some extent have felt disenfranchised from recent Council initiatives such as Transformation and the Localities agenda. The advent of the Locality Committee has increased opportunity for more local democratic engagement, as demonstrated by the excellent attendance at the round table event, demonstrates Committee's ongoing commitment to community council engagement.

9.2 Ongoing consultation and engagement is implicit in all of the options presented in this report.

10. Background reading/external references

10.1 None

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1 Briefing note and questions

Appendix 2 Note of comments made at round table meeting

North West Locality Committee and North West Community Council Round Table, Tuesday 31 July 2018

Localities Committees are Committees of Council and have to follow Council standing orders. They have power to take decisions as delegated by Council. This could include decisions previously taken by Council, or by another Committee of Council. They could also have a significant role in setting priorities and scrutinizing performance of specific Council Services responsibility for which has been devolved to Locality Committees, namely community safety, lifelong learning and libraries, traffic management, roads and parking, parks and greenspace, street cleaning and open space maintenance, public realm projects.

Current legislation would not allow the North West Locality Committee to make any financial decisions if its membership included anyone that was not a Member of Council. Locality Structure to deliver services was set up by previous Council, and was proposed as a more efficient way for the Council to operate. Some areas were devolved in the new Locality Structure, some were centralised, and some did not change, and don't quite fit in. Currently the direction of travel in reviewing Locality services is to centralise management of operational services (but have these delivered locally), with locally managed services where local knowledge and community input has added value eg local capital programmes such as Neighbourhood Environment Programme.

As well as responsibility for Council services, Locality Committees have a role to play in Community Planning. The Scottish Government established the requirement for Locality areas to be created in the Community Empowerment Act 2015.

In particular, the Edinburgh Partnership is reviewing Community Planning in Edinburgh (as advised by Elaine Lennon's email of 19 July), looking at local and strategic community planning arrangements and the Edinburgh Partnership board itself. The proposal for local community planning currently out for consultation (closing date 9 September) is that each locality would have a Locality Community Planning Partnership, and that the existing Neighbourhood Partnerships would no longer have a community planning role.

Localities or Locality means a subtlety different thing in each of the above points. Using the same word in each case may have led to some confusion with the meaning, as the subtle differences between each case are lost.

This round table is a chance for us to discuss this, and then to see if we can find ways of the North West Locality Committee and Community Councils in the North West working more closely together, to achieve more than we could otherwise.

If we do find a good way of working, other Localities or the Edinburgh Partnership could copy or learn from what we have done. Once the Edinburgh Partnership has completed its review, and agreed on a suitable structure for Community Planning purposes, we should not be in conflict with that.

The Locality Committees brings no new resources at this stage. Our choice is how we use the resources we already have to best effect. These resources are a limited budget, your time & the time of other Community Councillors, and the time of Council Officers & Members. It is worth noting that the administrative boundaries of Council Wards, Council Localities, Community Councils and Neighbourhood Partnership do not always align. In the North West

Locality, there are 18 elected Members representing 5 Wards (Almond, Forth, Inverleith, Corstorphine / Murrayfield, and Drum Brae / Gyle) and 4 Neighbourhood Partnerships (Almond, Forth, Inverleith and Western Edinburgh).

There are 14 active Community Councils completely or significantly within the North West Locality and one inactive Community Council – Silverknowes, which has historically been covered by Davidsons Mains & Silverknowes Association at Almond NP. In addition, Leith Harbour & Newhaven Community Council covers Newhaven which falls within Forth NP, and New Town & Broughton and West End Community Councils cover small patches in Inverleith and Western NPs respectively.

Almond NP

Queensferry & District

Kirkliston

Cramond & Barnton

Ratho & District (Ratho Station, Newbridge)

Muirhouse Salvesen

Davidsons Mains & Silverknowes Association

Forth NP

West Pilton / West Granton

Granton & District

Trinity

Inverleith NP

Stockbridge Inverleith

Craighall / Blackhall

Drylaw / Telford

Western NP

Drum Brae

Corstorphine

Murrayfield

Questions

1. Do you think Localities Committees could help to deliver better Council Services?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Undecided

2. What would you like to see as the top three priorities of the NWLC?

- a. Oversight of council services in NW, including roads and transport (eg TROs, parking)
- b. Working directly with CC
- c. Taking decisions on Planning matters
- d. Allocating and overseeing grant funding in the NW
- e. Engaging community and partners
- f. Developing Participatory Budgeting

3. Would you value a regular round table meeting, such as tonight's, to share views and ideas?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Undecided

4. If yes, would you see such a meeting as additional to Neighbourhood Partnership/Locality Community Planning Partnership or replacing them?

- a. Additional
- b. Replacing
- c. Undecided

5. Please rank where you would most value Councillors attendance?

(1 = highest rank; 4 = lowest rank)

- i. At Community Council meetings
- ii. At Neighbourhood Partnership/Locality Community Planning Partnership meetings
- iii. At North West round table (similar to this evenings meeting)
- iv. I don't value Councillors' attendance

6. Please rank where you would most value Council officers support:

(1 = highest rank; 4 = lowest rank)

- i. Individual Community Councils
- ii. Neighbourhood Partnership/Locality Community Planning Partnership meetings
- iii. North West round table
- iv. Locality sub groups eg community safety forum/StrongerNorth, Youth Engagement Partnership, Granton Waterfront Development Group

7. Community Councils could be most influential by:

- a. Talking to officers individually
 - b. Talking to elected members individually
- c. Everyone talking together at Neighbourhood Partnership/sub-locality level
- d. Everyone talking together at North West Locality level
- e. Taking deputations/having reports considered at North West Locality Committee
- f. I have no idea.

8. My community council represents a wide range of community organisations and voices:

- a. A lot
- b. A fair amount
- c. A little
- d. I don't know

9. What would be the one thing you would recommend the Council changes, to improve the engagement and co-operation with Community Councils?

These questions are intended to stimulate discussion at the round-table meeting on 31 July. We would also appreciate it if you could have follow-up discussions at your next Community Council meeting, and submit a final response from your Community Council to Elaine Lennon.

Council officers will then prepare a report for the North West Locality Committee to consider the best options to ensure meaningful engagement between Community Councils and the Locality Committee.

Thank you for your time in completing the questionnaire

Comments from joint meeting of Locality Committee & Community Councils – 31/7/18

Abbreviations:

CC – Community Council

LC – Locality Committee

LIP – Locality Improvement Plan

NP – Neighbourhood Partnership

General comments

- Desire for CCs to maintain independence yet have some clout – so disappointment that they won't be able to take financial decisions. The ambition is that financial decision making will be transparent, and that cc's will be able to influence them in a way that is open and understood by all
- Will party politics affect the way in which councillors behave/vote at LC, taking them away from what community want? LC attempts to be collegiate and non-party political, and in any case councillors who don't deliver local wishes can get voted out at next election....
- View that LIP needs to be less strategic and offer something more specific for CCs which has interest and relevance for local people – similar to the Local Action Plans
- View that CCs can provide more detailed local knowledge to help LC in decisions/discussions on local issues, as the locality covers a large area
- Recognise that through time, Elected members and potentially Community Councillors will understand the nuances and very local issues across different parts of the locality. LC will then be better placed to understand the local issues and this will assist to then help decision making within the arrangements of the LC - Moving on, where there are potentially more delegated powers/decision making, elected members will be more familiar within the context of the wider locality of how and where to prioritise;
- CCs continue to have a vital role in determining issues relevant to local communities therefore the role of recommender to the LC should not be underestimated especially around Neighbourhood Environment Programme (NEP) and Community Grants Fund (CGF);

Questions discussed:

1. Do you think Localities Committees could help to deliver better Council Services?

Three tables said **YES**, with one table **UNDECIDED**

Comments:

- 'Could' is the important part here
- Lots of routes to be heard and deputations are a good one
- Yes, with clarity on how LIP will meet the needs of all communities in the locality.
- It's Council services like refuse collection and parking/traffic management which mostly affect their residents. If LC can take proactive action, cut through the bureaucracy, clear blockages and make officials take action then it will be a great help (noting the collegiate, non-party political approach at LC).
- Benefit of NP influence on services at a more localised level
- NP is a better forum to discuss issues of importance to CC
- General acceptance that any devolved decision making must be a good thing. The Barnton Junction example provided was highlighted by new CC members as a positive way in which to bring to life a local issue that other parts of the Locality may not be aware of but it can have an impact across the whole locality therefore elected members would be making decisions or recommendations based on how a local issue can affect the wider area.
- Suggested that the timetable of the meetings perhaps isn't quite right and there needs to be a lot more done to promote the meetings and the value to a much wider audience.
- Depends on variety of factors including their implementation.
- North West LC should not just be another meeting for the sake of another meeting /rubber stamping.
- In favour of having ability to feed into decision making process and influence big decisions. Being the committee that makes a recommendation of a report to an executive committee.

2. What would you like to see as the top three priorities of the NWLC? (Difficult to total as some gave votes and other tables only comments)

1st= Working directly with CC

- on strategic issues, rather than overloading LCs)

1st= Oversight (priority setting and scrutinising performance preferred) of Council services, including roads & transport

- desire to break down powerful Council departments eg Roads

3rd Allocating and overseeing grant funding in NW

4th Engaging community and partners

5th Taking decisions on Planning matters

- has huge emotional local impact and interest eg Granton harbour meeting, and Pinkhill development in Corstorphine, but acknowledged that quasi-judicial role of Council makes it difficult
- Some agreement for this, however should this be fully retained at Council level? A more devolved function could lead to harassment or pressure being put upon members of the LC. The issues around Planning are at times incredibly complex and require detailed and lengthy discussion.

6th Developing PB

- if CCs had devolved budgets and spending powers as parish councils in England
- One CC member suggested PB should be high on the LC agenda. Councillors agreed but with the caveat that the budgets currently promoted are not the right budgets. Similarly, a fully developed process and means of engagement must be developed. This in itself could form a key aspect of the agenda item. We must get it right before it becomes anything bigger. We must develop something that can't be hijacked.

Comments:

- Parking enforcement provided as an example of where discussions can begin to take place around devolved powers. Suggested that this could potentially go further where e.g. parking could be devolved to CCs and the income remains in the community.
- A wider discussion took place around the principle of devolving other functions that could benefit communities.

3. Would you value a regular round table meeting, such as tonight's, to share views and ideas?

Unanimous – all tables said **YES**

Comments:

- No more frequently than quarterly
- Only if it covers issues of importance to CCs, possibly on a themed basis, and if officers attending have power to make decisions
- Need to find a way to reach out to groups not represented by CCs.
- Meeting would need to be structured and everyone given equal opportunities to be heard.
- This evening's session was felt to be very worthwhile and should be developed further, perhaps as a means to provide information or support around specific topics.

- Though not just another meeting. Should be a correct balance of time, context, and relevance.

4. If yes, would you see such a meeting as additional to Neighbourhood Partnership/Locality Community Planning Partnership or replacing them?

Three tables said **ADDITIONAL**, with one table **REPLACING**

Comments:

- Additional, because locality wide too big to have meaningful local discussion – need NPs for this.
- There was no discussion around what the other existing arenas were or the resource implications.
- Perhaps sub-groups needed with varied membership – public involvement is important. Some meetings are too council centric.
- Replacing, but only if there's still local budget decision making at NP level
- It's about blending the different meetings
- Some discussion about not needing a traditional face to face meeting – could some things eg grant decisions be done virtually?
- Some CC reps wanted more time to consider the implications of the question, but generally a consensus that they didn't want too many meetings.

5. Please rank where you would most value Councillors attendance?

1st At Community Council meetings

2nd At NP/Locality Community Planning Partnership meetings

3rd At North West round table (similar to this evenings meeting)

Comments:

- Not every councillor had to attend every meeting, as long as they're working collegiately
- Those in attendance indicated that the value was at CC meetings as it provided opportunities for others in attendance to raise other issues or approach elected members with individual issues.
- No specific ranking took place and it was agreed that this could be discussed more with the wider membership of the CC

6. Please rank where you would most value Council officers support:

Only two tables ranked:

1st Individual Community Councils (by invitation / exception)

2nd= Neighbourhood Partnership/Locality Community Planning Partnership meetings

2nd= Locality sub groups eg community safety forum/StrongerNorth, Youth Engagement Partnership, Granton Waterfront Development Group

4th North West round table

Comments:

- Need clarity on where Officers have power to make decisions eg operational, and to have this shared with all
- What is commitment and responsibility of CCs to Officers and vice versa?
- CC meetings tend not to be attended by officers – if they did attend they could avoid flak at other fora by explaining reasons for decisions/actions/inaction
- Officers attending any meetings need to be accountable for their promises
- Need to be pragmatic – depends how important a subject is and also whether councillors will be there too
- Don't need as many officers at NPs as currently attend
- Some new CC members felt they couldn't offer up a specific occasion where they felt officers would help provide most value. They did however feel that it would be good if from time to time officers could attend CC meetings. Elected members indicated that officers are very good at attending but it's really a case of knowing who to invite. This was identified as an issue as the wider communications around roles and functions was then raised by CC members and elected members.
- Suggested that more could be done to ensure locality staff structures / contact details are kept up to date & circulated widely.
- Alongside this, more needs to be done to make decision making structures and processes understandable as there was some confusion from CC members around the different funding streams.
- Overall, communication was identified as one of the biggest issues.
- CCs also asked if elected members could keep them informed or present other known issues within the CC area in order that all are on the same page. Elected members indicated that they would be happy to provide this as it provides a good platform on which to encourage greater levels of participation at CC meetings.
- Would be good to have regular attendance so they aren't just another name or a stranger. They can become a direct channel for resolving issues if raised.

7. Community Councils could be most influential by:

Two tables ranked – with '**TALKING TO ELECTED MEMBERS**' highest

a talking to officers individually

b talking to Councillors individually/collectively

c everyone talking at NP/sub locality level

d everyone talking at NW locality level

e taking deputations/having reports considered at NWLC

Comments:

- Other point noted was that CCs are savvy enough to know the most influential person to approach in any given situation

- CC members felt they would rather discuss with wider CC membership
- Difficult to rank but definitely a mix of all – Community Councils will happily try all/any avenue.
- Question raised is if locality is going to be too big/varied.
- Deputations shown to be very powerful in some circumstances eg Education Committee re-considering decision about schools in SW
- General feeling was that if time was invested at these levels then there would be less need for escalation/"noise" in other for a; but there needs to be feedback loop to report when things are going awry

8. My community council represents (engages with / collaborates with) a wide range of community organisations and voices:

- a. A lot
- **b. A fair amount**
- **c. A little**
- d. I don't know

Comments:

- Some said that they would like to think A or B but in reality, probably C and, from time to time, B.
- CC members felt they would rather discuss with wider CC membership
- Acknowledgement that although CCs can get good numbers at meetings when there's something important or controversial going on, they don't represent large sections of community eg young people.
- Schools need to be brought on board to encourage young people's involvement in communities –as part of curriculum?
- Technology can be better used to involve young people
- Feeling that Council officers can discount CC views because they feel they're not representative – placemaking exercise in Corstorphine helped combat this by widening out participation

9. What would be the one thing you would recommend the Council changes, to improve the engagement and co-operation with Community Councils?

Comments:

- It was felt that some of this had already been discussed but also that it would be good to discuss with wider CC membership
- Giving CCs more accountability and financial responsibility would give them more status, attract more membership and get more credibility – "if you build it they will come"
- "Where to start?!" but one thing mentioned was online consultation process. Often questions seemed geared towards favouring the outcome desirable to the Council.

Present:

1. Cllr Claire Bridgman
2. Cllr Ellie Bird
3. Cllr Frank Ross
4. Cllr George Gordon
5. Cllr Gillian Gloyer
6. Cllr Graham Hutchison
7. Cllr Hal Osler
8. Cllr Iain Whyte
9. Cllr Jim Campbell
10. Cllr Louise Young
11. Cllr Mark Brown
12. Cllr Max Mitchell
13. Cllr Robert Aldridge
14. Fred Marinello (Granton & District CC)
15. Ian Williamson (Cramond / Barnton CC)
16. James Galloway (Drylaw / Telford CC)
17. John Yellowlees (Murrayfield CC)
18. Judy Wightman (Ratho & District CC)
19. Kenny Wright (Drum Brae / Gyle CC)
20. Linda McCourt (Drylaw / Telford CC)
21. Mizan Rahman (Granton & District CC)
22. Rod Alexander (Davidsons Mains / Silverknowes Assoc.)
23. Roy Douglas (Muirhouse / Salvesen CC)
24. Steve Kerr (Corstorphine CC)
25. Tim Parker (Trinity CC)
26. Vicki Nicolson (Drylaw / Telford CC)
27. Willie Black (West Pilton / West Granton CC)
28. Elaine Lennon – CEC Lifelong Learning Dev. Officer
29. Peter Strong – CEC North West Locality Manager
30. Scott Donkin – CEC Lifelong Learning Service Manager