



**Edinburgh
Community
Representatives'
Network**

Deputation—16th October 2008 to City of Edinburgh Council

Introduction

Edinburgh Community Representatives' Network wishes to comment on the Services for Communities' Fairer Scotland Fund Progress Report which was presented to the Policy and Strategy Committee on 30th September

Purpose of Report

"To advise the Committee of the response from Scottish Government to the final proposal for the investment of the Fairer Scotland Fund and provide an update on the related decisions made by the Edinburgh Partnership."

Scottish Government Response to the Fund Proposal

The Scottish Government's response to the Final Proposal presented by the Edinburgh Partnership and signed off by the City of Edinburgh Council with regard to the Edinburgh Index, which is used to allocate the Fairer Scotland Fund, is that it *'provides an objective and transparent method of allocating the Fund to work alongside main-stream resources to tackle deprivation.'*

Edinburgh Community Representatives' Network has real doubts about the Edinburgh Index being used as a tool for assessing funding needs that have to be considered if there is a real commitment to tackling deprivation within the city of Edinburgh.

Areas that received funding on the basis of the Scottish Index of Multi-Deprivation (SIMD) less than a year ago are now facing significant cuts, almost 40% in one area. The Edinburgh Index does not take account of Housing or Access to Services that were included within the SIMD. Why they have been left out of the calculation for social need has not been explained. The index allocates the same amount to each person identified as in social need across the city and ignores the social aspect of deprivation. This method negatively impacts on communities who live in known areas of deprivation. This is a short-sighted approach as it assumes that poorer people living in affluent areas of the city experience the same hardships as those who live in areas of deprivation. Surely all would agree that this is not so. The implications need to be assessed!

The City of Edinburgh Council officials and the Edinburgh Partnership have driven the whole process, without the common courtesy of meaningful community engagement and this clearly demonstrates a complete lack of commitment.

Strategic Partnerships / Neighbourhood Partnerships

Unfortunately it is disadvantaged communities that are suffering, which is ironic considering the underlying principle behind the so-called 'New' fund, which is to tackle deprivation. The Edinburgh Partnership is an unelected, unincorporated body that makes decisions on allocating Edinburgh's share of the Fairer Scotland Fund. The total allocation to Neighbourhood Partnerships from the Fairer Scotland Fund for year 2008-09 will be £5,790,000.00 from an original £7.645million as the City of Edinburgh Council has decided to top-slice the Fund (£1,855,000.00) and centrally hold that funding under three citywide strategy groupings informed by the three priorities.

CRF funding for the period of 2007/2008 totalled £6,760,000 and there was almost £2million more at a neighbourhood level. The heavy top slicing for strategic partnerships will mean citywide projects will gain to the detriment of local projects.

Research shows the opposite works.

Again, there has not been an explanation for the heavy top slicing by such a high percentage from the budget.

Why are budgets being cut in poorer areas when there is enough in the budget to avoid cutting budgets to projects?

Why not give local Neighbourhood Partnerships the funding, as there is an obvious duplication of funding use city-wide and at local level as set by the criteria?

The report clearly states that the Strategic Partnerships' programmes of activity will *focus on the same disadvantaged individuals, groups and areas as the Neighbourhood Partnerships*.

Does this mean that those previously CRF funded projects that meet the narrower criteria but because of the use of the Edinburgh Index have reduced funding can now have it topped up from the city wide Strategic Partnerships? Local communities have demonstrated they have the experience and expertise to develop and manage projects that reflect the needs of their communities.

Why has there has been no consultation with local communities about priority and outcome setting by limiting the funding criteria to three priorities?

What about the Scottish Government's own Standards of Community Engagement?

The SCVO briefing paper highlights Edinburgh as being particularly weak on consultation and engagement. If you do not have meaningful community engagement you cannot have community empowerment, which is a joint commitment shared by the Scottish Government and COSLA.

Some communities are losing faith in some of their politicians as events clearly show that city officers are running Edinburgh. The narrow criteria, which has been set arbitrarily, disregards much of the valuable services that are being provided within communities that will have to close their doors as they do not meet the funding criteria.

Local expectations and aspirations are not being met through the process to allocate funds at a neighbourhood level.

In light of the timescales, City of Edinburgh Council politicians should recommend a further extension to transitional funding until such time as the implications of the allocation have been fully assessed in terms of the negative impact.

The final assessment was meant to be conducted by the end of September and this has not occurred which merely highlights the fact that the officials and Edinburgh Partnership intend to continue, irrespective of any implications.

There has been no effort to liaise with projects that do not meet the criteria to support or to realign or merge with other projects or to access alternative sources of funding, which was meant to occur.

Why this has not happened again remains unanswered.

Scottish Government Officials are obviously happy to sign off the proposals.

Are elected members prepared to ignore the stark facts of what has become, at least in Edinburgh, the 'Unfair Scotland Fund'?

My own personal view, and many members agree with me, of the way that this whole issue has been handled by the City of Edinburgh Council and to a certain extent the Scottish Government is that a wonderful opportunity has been missed to create a new partnership between politicians, communities, who, after all elect them, and officers, where trust could be used to develop a new way of governing.

Where the individual would have as much influence as the many different types of groups which communities form.

George Pitcher

Chair, Edinburgh Community Representatives' Network