

Participation Requests Reporting Template 2019/20 for Public Service Authorities

Section 32 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public service authorities to produce an annual report on Participation Request activity and publish this no later than 30 June each year. Following feedback from stakeholders and in response to one of the recommendations of the Participation Request Evaluation Report published on 8 April 2020, this template has been created to gather participation request data for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. Information provided will help inform policy and practice at local and national level as the data will be collated and shared by the Scottish Government's Community Empowerment Team. However, it is for each public service authority to make their own annual report publicly available by 30 June 2020, whether using this template or not.

Please provide information in the four sections below and email the completed template by 30 June 2020 to community.empowerment@gov.scot.

Section One – Public Service Authority Information

Organisation: West Lothian Council

Address: Civic Centre, Livingston, EH54 6FF

Completed by: Joanna Anderson

Role: Community Planning Development Officer

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Telephone: 01506 281086

Date of completion: 5/6/2020

Are you the Participation Request Lead Contact for the organisation: Yes

If not please provide the name, job title and email address for the lead contact for any queries:

Section 2: Participation Request Data in 2019/20

Please complete following overview table:

Total Applications Received in 2019/20	Number of validated applications in 2019/20	Number of applications agreed in 2019/20	Number of applications refused in 2019/20	Number received in 2019/20 and yet to be determined	Number received prior to 2019/20 and yet to be determined
0	0	0	0	0	0

2.1 Please provide details of Participation Requests received in 2019/20 which resulted in changes to public services provided by or on behalf of your public service authority and tell us about those changes:

Name of Community Participation Body	Was the Participation Request successful? (Y/N)	Previous way of working	Way of working following changes
N/A			

2.2 Please use this space to provide any further comments relating to the above data, such as describing the **outcome improvement process** and how the community participation body was involved in it, or details of any wider benefits, such as improved community engagement and ongoing participation.

N/A

Section Three – Partnership Working & Promotion of Participation Requests

3.1 Please provide details of any engagement with support organisations such as local Third Sector Interfaces and public sector Community Learning and Development staff or national organisations such as the Scottish Community Development Centre.

For example has any new practices to support Participation Requests been developed from working with other bodies, or any learning gained?

Since the council's participation request process was first implemented in 2017, a number of community sessions have been delivered to raise awareness of participation requests as well as other parts of the Community Empowerment Act. Some of these were delivered in partnership with the local Third Sector Interface, Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian.

In 2019/20, the council received support from the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) to promote participation requests to marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Three sessions were held to provide support to groups interested in making a request and to help shape the new SCDC accessible resources being developed. The third session was delivered virtually via Zoom due to COVID-19. Efforts were made to reach out to local people and groups representing those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and those with protected characteristics. Representatives attended from the West Lothian Community Race Forum, community councils and groups and individuals involved in the regeneration steering groups (these are the Community Planning Partnership's locality planning groups which are based around those areas in the bottom 20% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation). These sessions also provided an opportunity to get further feedback on the council's Participation Request Toolkit. The feedback was largely positive; however the way the information is presented will be tweaked to ensure that it is more accessible and user-friendly. Wider materials and support will also be reviewed to ensure these are tailored for more marginalised groups.

3.2 Please provide details of action taken to promote the use of Participation Requests or support Community Participation Bodies in making a Participation Request.

For example this could include: Support before making a request, such as to determine whether a participation request is the most appropriate route; - Support to make the request such as assist groups to complete forms, or identify appropriate outcomes; and/or Support to take part effectively in outcome improvement processes.

West Lothian Council has promoted and supported the use of participation requests through various channels.

- The council's Community Planning Development Officers have been identified as the designated point of contact for participation requests. This helps ensure community groups know who to contact to find out more about how to make a request, to discuss potential requests or consider alternative mechanisms to participate.
- A clear process for making a participation request to the council has been developed. All information on the process can be found on a dedicated page on the council's website. The application form is available on the website and also includes detailed guidance notes. Community groups can also find other useful information on the website, including [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs) on the Community Empowerment Act relevant to West Lothian, an [easyread version](#) of the FAQs and links to Scottish Government and Scottish Community Development Centre's guidance.

- The Participation Request [‘Toolkit’](#) has been developed to provide information on participation requests and to guide community groups through the council’s process. This is available on the website and has been shared widely.
- All materials and information on the website include an offer of support to community groups, who are encouraged to engage with the council’s Community Planning Development Officers as early as possible around potential requests. This early discussion has already resulted applications previously considered invalid being developed into valid requests. This early discussion also allows community groups to be signposted to existing mechanisms for involvement and engagement that may be more appropriate.
- A staff briefing is being prepared to ensure council staff are aware of the process should they be involved in making a decision on a particular request. Presentations have also been delivered to elected members on participation requests (as part of a wider session on community participation). It is intended that this will be repeated in 2020/21.

3.3 Please let us know what actions you have been taking to ensure that your processes are inclusive.

For example, this could include accessible information and other support, which enable wider use of participation requests by all population groups including those with protected characteristics.

As outlined above, the council will use the feedback from the SCDC sessions to review and refresh the Toolkit and other materials to ensure that these are accessible and user-friendly. The exiting easy-read materials will also be reviewed and refreshed if required.

Once the Toolkit and other materials have been reviewed, these will be widely shared with local community groups and through the council’s social media as an opportunity to further promote the process. Efforts will be made to go out to ‘hard to reach’ groups again (including equality forums and regeneration steering groups). The Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian, wider community planning partners and local community networks will also be asked to help with this promotion through their own communication channels.

3.4 Please outline any plans you have to continue involving local people and local groups in outcome improvement processes as a result of your Participation Request policies.

The council’s process encourages community groups to engage in early discussion with council officers on potential requests. This will help to ensure that any applications submitted are appropriate, robust and well thought out and allows discussion on what an outcome improvement process may look like.

The council also continues to engage with and involve communities through other participation mechanisms, for example via the local regeneration steering groups, the Joint Forum of Community Councils in West Lothian, community equality forums, MSYPs, Citizens Panel surveys, tenant participation mechanisms, the Anti-Poverty Strategy’s Experts by Experience Panel.

Section Four – Additional Information

4.1 Please use this space to provide any further feedback not covered in the above sections.

Although no new requests were submitted in 2019/20 there are two ongoing requests, submitted in 2018/19. The outcome improvement process for each request is underway and a report will be published upon completion. A summary of each request and an update on the outcome improvement process is included below. Full detail on these requests can be found on the Participation Request page of the council's website.

Bathgate Community Council (BCC): Increased awareness within the Bathgate community of the council's roads policies and where the community can influence and improve existing policies through local involvement.

Update: BCC visited the Roads depot to meet staff and find out more about the service. Meetings were also held with officers to improve understanding of Roads processes and specific points and actions were raised in relation to the Bathgate area. A follow-up meeting to review progress and effectiveness of changes is to be held to conclude the process.

Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council (LLBCC): Request for representation on the Vennel project team and to contribute to the project briefing process to ensure the views of the community are taken into account (*note: there is no Vennel Project Team but the request was agreed in relation to the process leading up to a decision being taken by committee on the Vennel redevelopment*)

Update: A meeting has been held with LLBCC and council officers to consider LLBCC's response to the council's consultation on draft proposals for the Vennel. A final proposal has not yet been taken to PDSP and committee. Once committee has decided how to proceed, officers will discuss with the CC if and how ongoing involvement can be achieved.

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Date of completion: 5/6/2020

Subject to the pressures of responding to the Covid-19 emergency situation and recovery – if possible please email the completed template by 30 June 2020 to community.empowerment@gov.scot

If you have any queries please contact Malcolm Cowie, Participation Request Policy Manager at Malcolm.cowie@gov.scot

Thank you!

Community Empowerment Team, Scottish Government