

Participation Requests Reporting Template 2020/21 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. This template has been created to gather participation request data for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. 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 2021, whether using this template or not.

Please provide information in the four sections below and email the completed template by 30 June 2021 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

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Telephone: 01506 281086

Date of completion: 28/05/2021

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 for 2020/21

Please complete following overview table:

Total new applications received in 2020/21	Total applications received prior to 1 April 2020 which were still to be determined at 1 April 2020	Number of accepted applications in 2020/21	Number of applications agreed in 2020/21	Number of applications refused in 2020/21
0	0	0	0	0

2.1 Please provide details of Participation Requests received using the legislation and outwith the legislation in 2020/21 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	What difference did those changes make for the users of the service? Did they improve service user experiences or outcomes?	Details of any participation requests considered outwith the formal process e.g. agreements reached that resulted in changes to services.
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 (whether or not it resulted from a formal participation request) and how the community participation body was involved in it, or details of any wider benefits, such as improved community engagement and ongoing participation.

No new requests were received in 2020/21 but one outcome improvement process was completed, for a request submitted by Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council and approved in January 2019. A final report has been published. The request was in relation to a development site and the community council wanted to contribute to the project briefing process to ensure the views of the community were taken into account. At the stage the request was submitted, the council had declared that the site was surplus to requirements but had not yet decided on how to progress. No decision was to be taken until committee had accepted the principle of development. The request was therefore dealt with in relation to involvement in the process leading up to decision by elected members as to how the council should proceed in relation to the draft proposals.

Due to the stage at which the participation request was submitted, the request could have limited impact on the decision-making process on how the site would be redeveloped. However, as a result of the participation request, some changes were made to the wording of the development brief to reflect the community council's views. Officers also undertook to bring the community council's representation on the draft guidance to the attention of the Development & Transport Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel (PDSP) together with the officer response to it. The community council was also afforded a further opportunity to comment on the process and were invited to attend the PDSP and Council Executive meetings where the guidance was to be considered and ultimately approved. This participation request is considered closed as the outcome improvement process was fully implemented by 2020, however there is continued engagement with the community council and plans are in place to ensure ongoing community involvement as the proposed development is exposed to the market. This continued involvement has been agreed with the community council out-with the participation request process.

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?

The council worked with the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) between January and March 2020 to promote participation requests to marginalised and disadvantaged groups and to help shape the new SCDC accessible resources being developed. Efforts were made to reach out to local people and groups representing those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage and those with protected characteristics, with support from the local Third Sector Interface. Representatives attended from the West Lothian Community Race Forum, community councils, local organisations and groups and individuals involved in the regeneration steering groups (which cover the 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, it was suggested by participants that the way the information is presented should be tweaked to ensure that it is more accessible and user-friendly.

Following the workshops, the council engaged with SCDC to take forward the learning and have begun to refresh the Toolkit and wider support and materials, to ensure these are more accessible and tailored for more marginalised groups; however there has been a delay to this work due to COVID-19.

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 (whether or not they resulted from a formal participation request).

There is a clear process in place for making a participation request to the council, with all information and support materials contained on a dedicated page on the council's website (including the application form and detailed guidance notes, Frequently Asked Questions, Toolkit). Materials have also been shared widely with local community organisations. There is a designated point of contact for participation requests (the council's Community Planning Development Officers), who support community organisations from initial discussion on potential requests, to developing application forms and through the decision-making and outcome improvement processes. Early engagement with officers is encouraged.

Since the council's participation request process was first implemented in 2017, there have been a number of community sessions delivered to raise awareness of participation requests as well as other parts of the Community Empowerment Act, many delivered in partnership with the local Third Sector Interface (Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian). There were no new community sessions held in 2020/21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however a virtual training session on participation requests was delivered to elected members in December 2020.

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 is using 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 existing easy-read materials will also be reviewed and refreshed if required. Although there has been a delay in carrying out this review due to COVID-19, work is ongoing and 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 take materials out to protected characteristic groups and other '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 (and also outwith formal participation requests).

Any outcome improvement process developed as a result of a participation request will be developed in consultation with the community group submitting the request.

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 and community councils, community equality forums, MSYPs, Citizens Panel, tenant participation mechanisms, the Anti-Poverty Strategy's Experts by Experience Panel.

3.5 Please provide details about any work undertaken to consider wider reviews of participation practice, and any such methods used to engage with communities.

Although there have been challenges with engaging communities throughout 2020/21 as a result of COVID-19, a number of participation activities have been carried out (e.g. community listening events, health & wellbeing/anti-poverty survey, climate change survey for young people).

Through a number of these activities, views were gathered on how the council engages with communities. The council also continues to meet with the Joint Forum of Community Councils in West Lothian and discussion topics include the council's participation and engagement activity.

Section Four – Additional Information

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

For example, we are interested in your reflections about what has gone well and what has gone less well in relation to Participation Requests over the past year?

There were no new requests made to the council in the past year and so there are no new reflections on the process itself. Having early engagement around potential requests continues to work well. The example highlighted in Section 2.2 is a good example of a positive outcome being met out-with the formal participation request process through early discussion with the community group.

Is there any aspect of the process that you intend to adapt or change in the year ahead?

The council is committed to undertaking regular reviews of the participation request process to reflect on learning from requests received, in order to ensure the process remains fit for purpose. The council's process was first approved in March 2017 and reviewed in October 2018 after the first request had been received, informed by feedback from the community groups involved. There is to be another review of the process and any relevant changes will be made following this.

Have you identified any needs for guidance or support that would support the process?

See Section 3 – a number of actions are underway to improve local guidance. More promotion of participation requests at a national level may help to raise awareness of the approach within the community.

If you have developed any case study material or published new information about Participation Requests please share links to those with us here.

Final Report for the Vennel Participation Request:

https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/48197/Participation-Request-Final-Report-The-Vennel/pdf/Participation_Request_Final_Report_-_The_Vennel.pdf?m=637507991854770000

Any other information:

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Date of completion: 28/05/2021

Subject to the pressures of responding to the Covid-19 emergency situation and recovery – if possible please email the completed template by 30 June 2021 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