

Participation Requests Reporting Template 2023/24 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 2023 to 31 March 2024. 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 each year, whether using this template or not.

Please provide information in the sections below and email the completed template by 30 June 2024 to community.empowerment@gov.scot .

Section One – Public Service Authority Information

Organisation: West Lothian Council

Completed by: Susan Gordon

Role: Community Planning Development Officer

Email: susan.gordon@westlothian.gov.uk Telephone: 07827983978

Date of completion: 5th June 2024

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 2023/24

Please complete following overview table:

Total new applications received in 2023/24	Total applications received prior to 1 April 2022 which were still to be determined at 31 March 2024	Number of accepted applications in 2023/24	Number of applications agreed in 2023/24	Number of applications refused in 2023/24
0	0	0	1	0
<p>Where you were unable to accept a participation request, was an alternative process put in place to discuss the group's issue and work with them or support offered to help them consider how to address their identified need? Please provide details:</p> <p>N/A</p>				

2.1 Please provide details of Participation Requests received using the legislation and outwith the legislation in the reporting year which resulted in changes to public services provided by or on behalf of your public service authority and tell us about those changes. Please also include details of requests received prior to 2023/24, which resulted in changes to the way of working being implemented in 2023/24.

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.
Eliburn Community Council (ECC)	Y	ECC wished to improve pedestrian safety at the local Primary School.	Increased communication and engagement between WLC and ECC.	ECC better informed about decisions made in relation to Road Safety measures and Accident Investigation & Prevention Programme. Increased dialogue and engagement between ECC and WLC	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)**
- **how the community participation body was involved in designing the outcome improvement process**
- **how the community participation body participated in the outcome improvement process including taking part in decisions and delivering actions**
- **details of any wider benefits, such as improved community engagement and ongoing participation.**

As reported in last year's Annual Report, a Participation Request was received from Eliburn Community Council on 1st March 2023. Please note at the time of the submission of last year's report, the Participation Request process in relation to Eliburn Community Council was still ongoing; The decision notice was submitted to the Community Council on 22 April 2023, the final Outcome Improvement Process sent on 12th June and the final letter closing the Request sent on 30th August 2023. The Final OIP is detailed below.

1. West Lothian Council will facilitate discussions between designated representatives of ECC and Operational Services to provide;
 - A detailed explanation of the Accident Investigation and Prevention Programme in West Lothian; the criteria that is used and how this is implemented and applied locally to prioritise sites.
 - A detailed explanation of the independent Road Safety Audit process which is based on national standards. Operational Services will undertake to process map the Road Safety Audit process and through engagement with colleagues will explore the suitability of the existing Council engagement processes.
2. Facilitate discussions on the role of the Community Council in the process of safeguarding children and their parents/guardians and how they can work in partnership with the community to improve road safety and encourage behaviour change through implementing appropriate activities

Section Three – Partnership Working & Promotion of Participation Requests

3.1a 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?

West Lothian CPP have updated their Engaging Communities Toolkit and a final version has been designed. This is part of a wider approach to community involvement and participation being taken forward as part of the Community Wealth Building agenda. Work is being undertaken to look at how the toolkit is taken out to staff, groups and communities.

Resources have been developed by SCDC which we use to help inform our practices and support groups in the process.

3.1b Please tell us about any challenges you have had in accessing support.

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 remains a clear process 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 Officer), who support community organisations from initial discussion on potential requests, to developing application forms and through the decision-making and outcome improvement processes.

The approach we have taken in West Lothian is that groups are encouraged to engage with officers prior to submitting a formal request in order to identify if there are any existing mechanisms in place they can participate in linked to the issue/proposal that they are seeking to address in the participation request. With regards to the Participation Requests we have received, dialogue with the groups has been successful and helped to inform the process.

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 2023/24

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. We are particularly interested in any ways you have targeted those with protected characteristics to raise awareness of the PR process or support request submissions.

The council has recently refreshed the Engaging Communities Toolkit to ensure that these are accessible and user-friendly. We will provide information in alternative formats to those who require it. The CPP Officer works closely with the Councils Equality and Diversity Officer who was involved in refreshing the Toolkit and more general engagement participation work.

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).

Again, 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 process has resulted in more communication between organisations and services within the Council which is positive.

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.

More widely, 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, 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.

An in-house review of the Participation Request process was undertaken in March 2024 to ensure the process is still fit for purpose and identify any actions or recommendations to strengthen it. This involved getting feedback from organisations who have been involved in Participation Requests to date. A number of recommendations have been identified relating to support and guidance, and promotion and branding which will be taken forward.

The Community Planning Officer also attended the Participation Request proposals conference which links in with the recommendations in the review.

The Council continues to ensure that we work in partnership with communities and that their voices help to shape policy and services in West Lothian. As mentioned previously, we are looking at wider participation and engagement approaches through the Community Wealth Building agenda and a group has been established to take this forward. This is focusing on bringing together the different strands of participation such as Participation Requests, Participatory Budgeting etc.

Regeneration Plans are currently being refreshed in conjunction with West Lothians Local Outcome Improvement Plan, and place-based engagement activity has been carried out in local regeneration areas. Local regeneration steering groups provide an opportunity for local individuals and organisations to be involved. 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.

The community engagement toolkit has been reviewed and will be used as a local resource to raise awareness of and improve engagement practice.

West Lothian Councils Community Choices process is also being developed.

West Lothian Citizens Panel has been refreshed and work is being undertaken to develop a programme of 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?

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. As indicated above, a review has been undertaken to ensure the process is fit for purpose and to identify ways to improve it.

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

More promotion of participation requests at a national level may help to raise awareness of the approach within the community. Promoting other participation and involvement opportunities is also important as well as that early engagement. Linking in to work that is being taken forward at a national level is useful.

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

Any other information:

Completed by: [Susan Gordon](#)

Role: Community Planning Development Officer

Email: susan.gordon@westlothian.gov.uk Telephone: 07827983978

Date of completion: 5th June 2024

Please email the completed template by 30 June 2024 to community.empowerment@gov.scot

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

Community Empowerment Team, Scottish Government