

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE
PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
SUBMISSION FROM THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

Strand 1- Partnerships and outcomes

“To examine the ongoing development of community planning partnerships and the community planning process and assess how these could be built upon to support outcome-based approaches to service planning and delivery in local areas.”

Q. How could councils better integrate their partners into the process? How could the degree of commitment to the process amongst other community planning partners be improved? How can any legislative or administrative barriers that make partnership working be overcome?

A. The current legislative framework requires local authorities to initiate, facilitate and maintain the community planning process, whilst other specified public bodies are placed under a statutory duty only to participate. This unevenness needs to be addressed through the establishment of clear legal and financial duties, which apply equally to responsible partners.

Whilst this joint duty of community planning would apply to those public bodies delivering local services, a further issue to be pursued is the positioning of the voluntary sector. In Edinburgh, as elsewhere, the voluntary sector is a key community planning partner and major provider of services in the city. This role is formalised through the COMPACT (Strategic) Partnership and EVOC (Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council) which is a member of the Edinburgh Partnership Board. The potential inclusion of the voluntary sector in any future duty to participate is a key matter for consultation nationally.

Q. How can local authorities and their partners move further towards real, integrated working?

A. The community planning framework needs to be further strengthened in order to ensure progress towards integration and joint service delivery. CPP accountability is currently very much overshadowed by individual partner bodies' accountabilities within their existing legislative frameworks. Formalisation of partnership responsibilities should support progress for integrated working.

By focusing SOAs on the more deep rooted and intractable issues in communities, partners will have to find ways of breaking down institutional barriers and changing the ways in which services are delivered in order to achieve any degree of success.

The development of new integrated partnership approaches, based on a clear evidencing of needs and priorities, is underway in Edinburgh. A specific example is the 'Total Craigroyston' initiative in the north of the city to improve outcomes for children and young people, based on a whole systems approach to the complex needs of the target group. It is anticipated that the findings from this pilot work will inform further service transformation measures across the city.

Q. What steps would facilitate the sharing of budgets in pursuit of shared outcomes?

- A. Shared and equal accountability for the successful delivery of agreed outcomes would create an absolute imperative for the sharing of budgets and other resources to achieve the necessary results. Measures to assist in this process include the streamlining of partners' budgetary cycles and financial planning systems.

More fundamentally, community planning partnerships need to be re-cast as formally constituted and legal entities with powers to manage pooled resources in the pursuit of shared objectives. As well as leveraging in mainstream budgets, formal partnerships would also be in a position to manage directly specific funding streams such as European grant, the Change Fund and ESOL funding. At present, budget holding responsibility and authority for expenditure sits mainly within the Council.

Q. How can the partners further improve on the progress that has been made and overcome the remaining challenges on engaging communities and voluntary sector organisations in the process?

- A. The Edinburgh Partnership has been highly progressive in its approach to engaging with communities and the voluntary sector. This includes a devolved model of local neighbourhood community planning, and full engagement with communities of place and interest at the city wide strategic level of the Partnership. The interface with the voluntary sector has been greatly enhanced through the operation of the COMPACT Partnership which has been ground breaking in a Scottish context. Further progress will be made with the roll out of specific partnership initiatives to work with communities in tackling poverty and inequality.

Recently, the Partnership has welcomed the pre-consultation approach from the Scottish Government on the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill. This sets out measures to engage those communities most affected by current social and economic challenges through action to build capacity. The role of Community Planning Partnerships as champions of both empowerment and engagement needs to be taken into the current joint Scottish Government/COSLA review. The largely untapped and potential role of business and the private sector in community planning should also be considered.

Q. How can the community planning arrangements be adapted and developed to promote outcomes-based and preventative approaches?

- A. Preventative approaches must be underpinned by an increasingly sophisticated analysis of the root causes of underlying issues in communities, and the relationship between service inputs and eventual outcomes. This capacity to better “understand” local conditions is a key challenge for community planning partnerships. Edinburgh is developing its knowledge base in this respect through a range of measures including the development of its “Understanding Edinburgh” website, and the enhancement of business intelligence functions.

Ultimately, prevention is better than cure (and should reduce the call on public resources) but there needs to be a clear recognition of the time scale involved in achieving outcomes from preventative approaches. This means that SOAs must incorporate long term objectives and outcomes (over the next 10 years or so) as well as intermediate outcomes, indicators and targets.

Q. How is the work of delivery on SOA outcomes managed, co-ordinated and driven through the various community planning structures and agreements? How could Single Outcome Agreements be improved to deliver on community planning targets?

- A. High level outcomes and a strategic vision for the city have been developed by the Edinburgh Partnership, based on a detailed analysis of need and identification of those issues which can only be addressed through a joined up partnership approach. Much of this understanding and knowledge is contributed by themed Strategic Partnerships (and other partnership groupings) which are held to account for the delivery of specific outcomes through formal Partnership Agreements. Local Neighbourhood Partnerships also play a key role in the identification of common themes that impact across the city and shape SOA priorities.

The detailed oversight and monitoring of the SOA is undertaken by a SOA Development Sub Group of the EP Executive, comprising agency and strategic partner representatives. A rigorous framework for measuring performance has been developed, utilising indicators that properly reflect progress towards outcomes. This capacity to monitor performance is reflected in regular six monthly reports on the SOA, and in the submission of Annual Progress Reports.

There is a strong case for concentrating on fewer outcomes and targets so that CPPs can focus on the most important issues to be addressed during the plan period. The Edinburgh SOA has already been significantly adjusted to focus on a shorter and sharper set of priorities so that partner resources can be concentrated on the delivery of key community planning targets.

Q. What is the purpose of a Single Outcome Agreement in assisting the delivery of improved outcomes?

A. The SOA reflects the Partnership's ambition and priorities, and sets out the difference the partners want to make. Establishing tangible targets is important but some need to be underpinned by a thorough awareness of the action and resources that are to be committed to making improvements happen.

Q. How are local Single Outcomes Agreements developed, and how do they relate to national priorities?

- **How could local authorities and other public bodies contribute more to influencing and improving outcomes in their area?**
- **How can arrangements, processes and accountability be improved?**

A. SOA content is developed to a large extent from Strategic Partnership priorities and Joint Plans which are strongly referenced to national strategies and outcomes. The Economic Development Strategic Partnership Joint Plan, for example, is linked explicitly to the Scottish Government's national outcomes 1,2,3 and, in doing so, makes a substantial contribution towards outcome 7. The contribution to Scottish Government National Outcomes is similarly referenced for each of the city's high level outcomes.

In order to improve outcomes in their areas, partner budgets and services need to be more closely aligned to the agreed priorities for the local area. This also requires a clearer understanding of respective partner contributions and the way in which total resources will be targeted to deliver SOA outcomes.

Overall, the SOA process needs to be formalised both legally and 'culturally' with binding agreements struck between CPPs and the Scottish Government. This means a major shift away from the current framework whereby SOAs have been received in somewhat passive and benign way. Also, by repositioning the SOAs as real 'plans for places' the level of public accountability and scrutiny will also increase significantly.

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