THE EDINBURGH PARTNERSHIP

Towards a Thriving Community and Voluntary Sector
Thriving Local Places - an Edinburgh Approach

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Local community and voluntary organisations have been at the heart of the response to COVID 19 in 2020/21, in the city and across Scotland, being active in their communities and tackling both endemic and novel issues.

1.2 These initiatives demonstrated an ability, beyond that of public services, to respond quickly and flexibly, offering bespoke personalised support, which local communities have themselves identified.

1.3 Building on this rearticulated local community response and actively listening to a wide range of stakeholders, we propose a far-reaching re-shaping of the relationship between Edinburgh Partnership partners and city residents, working with networks of local people, through the **Community Anchors:**

    1.3.1 Place based Community Anchors - both local organisations and networks, acting as trusted community hubs that know and understand communities well. We envisage a careful and thorough process of codesign with Edinburgh's community & voluntary sector, and people in communities, ensuring there is no wrong door, but *multiple doors,* for children and families or older people, different for each person, requiring local collaboration.

    1.3.2 Thematic Community Anchors: city-wide reservoirs of knowledge and services, e.g., on equalities, carers, disabilities & mental health etc.

1.4 **20-minute neighbourhoods:** embodying the principles and aspirations of the Edinburgh Partnership. Bringing together citizens, employers, the community and voluntary sector, and public services they must connect people with what they need, where they live. These need to be *empowering* neighbourhoods, underpinned by the well-being of people and environment friendly, meeting community aspirations to tackle climate change.

1.5 **Community Wealth Building & Anchor Institutions:** At the Edinburgh Partnership, how the constituent anchor institutions relate to developing community anchors is what will unlock community wealth, potential, innovation and opportunity, through channelling resources, employment opportunities and re-directing existing spend into local communities, learning from successful models in the UK and internationally, to create an ***Edinburgh Approach**.*

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Board is recommended to:

   i. Recognise the vital role played by the community and voluntary sector through the COVID 19 pandemic and adopt the principle of developing and building on these models of success;

   ii. Agree further work should be undertaken to support thriving local places through identifying and developing multi-functional community anchors as outlined in this paper, strategically aligned with the recommendations in item 4.1 'Best Value Assurance Audit';

   iii. Jointly work towards establishing the community commissioning and public investment framework and practices to ensure that communities have the appropriate leverage and increased investment to make the required changes and succeed.

3. Main Report

Context

3.1 During the past 12 months, we have witnessed to varying degrees, an organic/ grassroots community response to the COVID 19 Pandemic. Local community and voluntary organisations have been at the heart of the response to tackle these issues and this work has been observed as:

- Locally sensitive
- Bringing new partnerships, networks or collaborations alive
- In many cases long-standing community organisations are leading and are at the heart of the response
- Effective, flexible and efficient
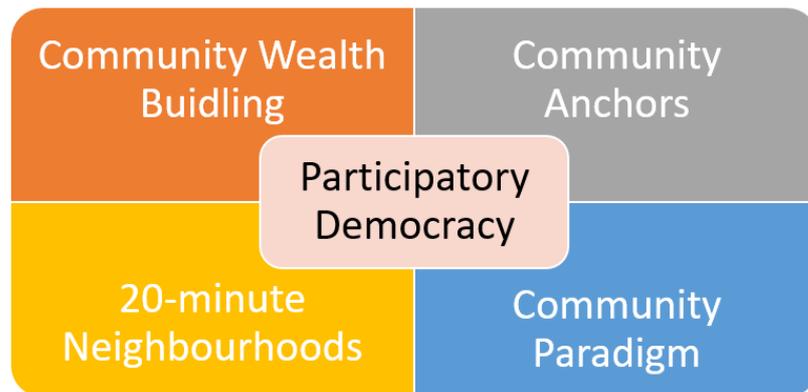- Often authentically co-productive

3.2 The deep-rooted issues themselves that have been addressed by communities during this period have been widespread but hidden in our communities for generations and COVID 19 has brought a renewed focus illustrating that traditional state delivered service models have become less than effective. Furthermore, we anticipate that the effects of the pandemic itself will themselves become endemic. The pattern repeats and we will not return to the previous status quo:

- Food insecurity
- Mental health e.g. anxiety, low mood
- Lack of money
- Social isolation
- Employment
- Digital exclusion

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3.3   A light has been shone on the gross inequalities in society that have always been there and all that has done has rearticulated this given. But it's also rearticulated what an effective response might look like:

Community Wealth Buidling	Community Anchors
20-minute Neighbourhoods	Community Paradigm

Participatory Democracy

3.4   What is clear is that the public sector cannot deliver this agenda on its own but rather should enable citizens and communities to be at the forefront of problem solving and creating solutions. As it can't deliver the necessary change itself, the public sector needs to opens itself up to other agents to meet needs and solve problems, i.e. communities, and the community and voluntary sector.

3.5   Experience tells us that empowered communities create imaginative solutions and have done so over many decades. We know there is no going back to normal with the potential of COVID 19 becoming endemic and the economic shock of the pandemic being felt for many years to come. We need to arrive at different solutions where we embrace new approaches and dynamics to capitalise upon voluntary/public and private investment and build on this potential and aim for the possible.

3.6   This is complementary to the work of the Edinburgh Wellbeing Pact, and the Three Conversations approach of the Edinburgh Health & Social Care Partnership, as well as the City of Edinburgh Council Business Plan. It is under pinned by the Scottish Government Performance Framework and UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Community Paradigm

3.7   Community influence and involvement in community planning must aim towards:

▪ *Devolution of power*

Powers and resources cannot be transferred to communities if they remain centralised in corporate boardrooms. A precondition for the Community Paradigm is a major process of devolution, led by the principle of empowering communities

rather than centred on technocratic economic concerns, complex bespoke deal-making and centrally-imposed conditions.

- *Participatory and deliberative decision making*

  Communities must have influence over the big strategic decisions which affect their services, as well as matters of implementation and delivery. This will require knowing our population better through the adoption of more participatory and deliberative approaches to decision-making, to deepen and strengthen our representative traditions through a new participatory democracy.

- *Collaborative delivery*

  Reformed public service delivery needs to be shaped by the notion of collaboration both between services' officers, teams, staff, and with users. All of these people need to be incentivised to work together across a place rather than within separate organisational silos. The great benefits of asset-based approaches in working with people must be accepted and enabled by public sector policy, not undermined with an approach led by sanction and punishment.

- *Community Commissioning*

  The power to commission services needs to be shared between public service organisations and communities or handed over entirely to communities with expert support from public services. Only then can the necessary transfer of powers and resources to communities occur. Through investment, codesign and by using empowerment principles Community Anchors lead to meet the needs and aspirations of their local communities.

Community Anchors

3.8 We envisage Community Anchors acting as trusted community hubs that know and understand communities well, to be places of community empowerment, social renewal, community building, regeneration, opportunities to volunteer and as well as vehicles to deliver local services and activities jointly and through, delivering an approach on strong community empowerment principles.

3.9 Through a careful and thorough process of codesign with the sector and their communities, Community Anchors will also develop over the next two to three years to become the community commissioning vehicles to delivery empowered decision making at a local level.

3.10 The creation and development of Community Anchors will be delivered by everyone contributing to the shape and form; we must not fall into the trap of dismissing or leaving behind organisations that orbit within a community and around Community Anchors – and it all must relate back to meeting the

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aspirations of local citizens through collaboration and partnership working, not just organisational development principles.

3.11 Similarly, the approach must enable the organic to flourish, and recognise differences and celebrate diversity, reducing the need for competition, and developing a 'no wrong door' approach.

3.12 As well as place-based Community Anchors, city-wide thematic Community Anchors will act as reservoirs of knowledge, expertise and citizen empowerment hubs will be also progressed.

Community Wealth Building

3.13 This emerging Scottish Government agenda, based on measured success in communities internationally, has two key actions/highlights that relate to this paper:

▪ *Anchor Institutions*

Around the Edinburgh Partnership table sit the key Anchor Institutions whose will to deliver the wider Community Wealth Building agenda and the programme outlined in this paper is key.

▪ *Procurement*

There is an opportunity within this agenda to consider how all public partners' procurement design and spend contributes to Edinburgh communities' local economies and how shaping this investment can support the achievement of wider social and environmental outcomes. Progressive procurement, however, can only be achieved when Edinburgh's public services promote new processes through less risk-adverse leadership and legal advice.

20-minute Neighbourhoods

3.14 As outlined by the Climate Commission, Poverty Commission and *EVOC's Mind the Craic,* the aspiration for neighbourhoods within a 20-minute walking distance has potential to connect people with one another and through the Community Anchors citizens will be able to have greater collective impact on local challenges where they live.

3.15 Across Edinburgh there are stark contrasts of self-organised communities and areas where there is low community and voluntary sector capacity, or new communities with no infrastructure investment in community facilities where housing has been built. Naturally, people and organisations forget how to talk to their communities, but any gaps may be due to lack of investment and support, not because communities aren't capable.

3.16 In this context the voluntary sector and communities overlap, with voluntary organisations directly coming from local people taking action and organising

through identify gaps, formulating a response. This natural process across Scotland for over hundreds of years needs reimagining in the context of the programme. This organic process is incredibly important and needs nurturing, and community anchors as hubs are the natural development, supporting the 20-minute neighbourhood concept.

3.17   Linkages and influence with public partners are required with Community Anchors acting as hubs for assertive outreach and delivery across all services – with the public and voluntary and community sectors working together.

Resourcing

3.18   The resources required to deliver on the programme includes medium term, consistent investment in the people needed to drive relationships and build capacity.

- *Community Animation*

   Build on the resources of people in their communities to develop, in collaboration with the local community and voluntary sector, social and environmental innovations aimed at community renewal.

- *Participatory Democracy*

   Working with networks of local people, through the Community Anchors, Community Councils and local democratic structures creatively.

- *Developing an Edinburgh Local Places Approach*

   It is vital to consider how we will connect together Community Anchors, communities and citizens and the agenda described above, to recognise that the work being delivered is part of a broader picture, an 'Edinburgh Approach' through the use of delivery principles of community empowerment. Investment to deliver in local communities must be identified by Edinburgh Partnership partners. The attached APPENDIX illustration shows how developing an Edinburgh version within each 20-minute neighbourhood will coherently and creatively map a programme of work.

3.19   This feeds into a more ambitious programme, and the ten year Poverty Commission time table as a timeframe for wider systemic change, e.g. on housing, but also as some of this work is organic and needs to be authentically community led.

Delivery Principles

3.20   Importantly, the programme of work must recognise that relationships are built primarily through listening and from an organisational perspective the prize is of true fundamental culture change to deliver co-productively and meet local communities' needs through participative democracy:

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- *Coproduction*

  Co-production is an approach to decision-making and service design stemming from the recognition that if community anchors are to be engaged in community renewal and deliver successful services, they must understand the needs of local people and communities and engage them closely in the design and delivery of those services

- *Codesign*

  Co-design is the act of creating *with* stakeholders (community and voluntary organisations and citizens) specifically within the design development process to ensure the results meet local needs.

- *Asset based community development*

  Facilitating people and communities to come together to achieve positive change using their own knowledge, skills and lived experience of the issues they encounter in their own lives.

- *Community empowerment principles*

  Community empowerment is part of a new way of working. It can help public bodies to manage the pressures they are facing by supporting communities and working with community groups to support each other in meeting the needs of communities. Ultimately, community empowerment should reduce inequalities and improve the wellbeing of communities, particularly those suffering from persistent inequality.

References

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APPENDIX