



Response To Phase 1 - Community Council Scheme and Boundary Review 2023

The New Town & Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) has reviewed the materials produced for by the City Council Phase 1 - Community Council Scheme and Boundary Review 2023. While the City Council is not putting forward concrete proposals on either the Scheme or Boundaries in Phase 1, NTBCC believes that it is important to make some preliminary observations in anticipation of future stages.

NTBCC is of the view that that its existing boundaries provide an effective 'community' in terms of size and make-up upon which to undertake representation and engagement, especially in relation to having a collective view regarding the New Town Conservation Area. There are also common transport, development, licensing and place-making issues that benefit from being addressed collectively on a 'New Town basis'.

NTBCC has a larger population than many community councils in Edinburgh and covering a city centre area faces a large number of development issues with which it has had to deal and which it appears it will have to in the future. That said, NTBCC has been able to engage with all parts of its area. The only exception is involvement of residents from Powderhall and the area east of Annandale Street up to Pilrig. This more recently has proved difficult to sustain. NTBCC is looking to address this, and has nonetheless continued to participate in this part of the City regarding planning matters.

However, we are fully aware that consideration of boundary issues needs to be taken in the context of the needs of Community Councils in general, particularly regarding what constitutes an optimum population size for a Community Council.

Therefore, at the public meeting on 13 November, NTBCC looked at alternative bases for determining boundaries. It was recognised that there is a certain logic in restricting our boundary to the City Centre Ward, although not being so aligned has not proved an impediment to the operation of NTBCC. Indeed, it has conferred benefits with participation of a wider group of City Councillors and has helpfully allowed issues that cross the boundaries to be dealt with more effectively.

We also looked at 'natural neighbourhoods' (as described and mapped in 2004 and updated in 2014), as a potential principle for determining boundaries. We noted that NTBCC has six 'natural neighbourhoods': New Town; Calton Hill; Gayfield/Broughton; Bellevue/Broughton; Canonmills; and Broughton Road/Powderhall. The vast majority of these six natural communities lie within the NTBCC boundaries. The southern, eastern and western boundaries are well-defined by both the present NTBCC boundary and the 'natural neighbourhoods' but there are matters requiring further consideration regarding our irregular Northern boundary in respect of Canonmills and Powderhall.

As mentioned, the current boundary configuration has not caused NTBCC any significant problems in its operations, but we recognise that the potential issues that arise with adjacent boundaries will need to be addressed. We intend to work with our four neighbouring Community Councils on such matters, but Phase 2 should allow for such discussions to be formalised. This should be undertaken using available data about the different neighbourhoods, in particular current and forecast population data.

At this stage we would wish to make some general comments on the Scheme for Community Councils. Firstly, any changes need to be focused upon changes that will ensure that all Community Councils are able to fulfil their general purpose of ascertaining, coordinating and expressing to the City Council, other public bodies and private agencies the views of the communities that they represent. In other words, more needs to be done to improve the interaction between the City Council and Community Councils. Secondly, more consideration needs to be given to enhancing the capacity of Community Councils to obtain the views of the communities they represent, including information-sharing by the City Council. Thirdly, the City Council has to do more to enhance the legitimacy of Community Councils in the eyes of local communities. This could include

positive promotion of Community Councils by the City Council to the citizens of Edinburgh, drawing a clearer distinction in its consultation arrangements between the statutory role of Community Councils and those of pressure groups, and providing greater clarity about the Council's expectations of how it determines whether Community Councils truly are fulfilling their responsibilities as representative bodies. Also more consideration should be given to matching the resources available to Community Council to the range of responsibilities that they are required to meet.

Finally, we would wish to note that we believe the current four year frequency to be correct, (and indeed the extended period since our last election had been detrimental to our ability to attract new Community Councillors) and further that there is no need to modify the current rules that allow a limited number of Community Councillors to be co-opted, although we see no reason to limit as at present the number of nominated members because it can work against wide community engagement.

Peter Williamson

Chair, New Town and Broughton Community Council

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