

Leith Chooses meeting 7 August 2024

Present: Abby, Bruce (minutes), Don, Jack, Naomi, Sally, Susan, Tremaine, Andrew Field (AF)

Apologies: Jade, Douglas

Actions are green-highlighted

1 Preamble

- AF: some motions about community grants are coming to CEC culture and communities committee (C&C)

2 Evaluation report – conversation with Andrew Field

- Steering group: we wish to formally submit our evaluation report to AF/community grants, and publish it.
 - Action: AF to respond in writing
- Steering group: the evaluation covers
 - The 'Community conversation' and other innovations.
 - That the 2023-24 LeithChooses instance had the same number of applicants as previous years.
 - Numbers of voters over the years and why they differ. For example, online voting gets lots more votes than in-person
 - However it's clear that in-person is very important
 - In-person voters use boost-vote more, possibly indicating a higher level of engagement.
 - The potential effects of omitting boost-voting, online voting, filtering out non-Leith voters.
 - This makes it very clear that the boost-voting works.
 - How LeithChooses has evaluated each instance:
 - While evaluation events have not been well attended, attendees have given valuable feedback.
 - Post-voting feedback surveys haven't been helpful.
 - Hence LeithChooses used the PB charter to self-evaluate.
 - NB LeithChooses couldn't really respond to the 'part of our democracy' questions: this isn't part of LeithChooses' remit but sits with 'higher' organisations.
- Hence LeithChooses has distilled
 - actions for self-improvement
 - requests for support from CEC to help improve LeithChooses' process. Such factors include:
 - Asking for recognition that LeithChooses is volunteer run,
 - Despite various actions, there are still hard-to-reach groups. What does CEC do to reach them, can we make use of these CEC 'resources'?
 - Help with measuring LC's impact

2.1 Q&A about the above

- Steering group: how does CEC respond to the 1% of discretionary budget.
 - AF responses
 - a motion to C&C touches on this.
 - CEC/C&C needs to look at how this would happen, and enter into dialogue with LeithChooses about spreading PB (if his report is approved by C&C)
 - If this report is approved, AF will work with LeithChooses on evaluation of the good that LeithChooses enables.
 - LeithChooses' self-evaluation will be taken into the overall evaluation of CEC's community grants system. (NB all other areas of Edinburgh award community grants via panels.).
 - However, LeithChooses is basically 'pushing at an open door', but we all need to be aware of what would work 'politically'

- There will almost certainly be no change to the community grants budget, so there is work to be done around supplementing this budget, e.g. some parts of developers' contributions flowing into PB budgets.
- Steering group: Leith's population has significantly increased.
 - AF response: community grant allocations will be reviewed based on the most recent census.
- Steering group: how is the overall community grant budget established?
 - AF: the overall budget has been unchanged since 2017. Hence the desire to augment it with money from other sources. However, the community grants system needs to be transparent.
- Steering group: PB has operating costs.
 - Action: Tremaine to finalise LeithChooses' operating costs budget
 - Action: Bruce to forward a 2010 paper on such costs. (The paper is here: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a74e08040f0b65c0e845331/19932231.pdf>.)
- Steering group: we believe that PB/LeithChooses helps community grants/CEC provide social support (i.e. that its costs can be justified in terms of benefits)
 - AF: I will argue this to CEC.
 - Steering group: the ultimate point is 'who benefits?' – the organisations that receive LeithChooses funding reach further [than CEC alone could].
- Steering group: CEC community grants rules might need to bar frequent winners, e.g. schools 'hoovering' grants because they can urge pupils and parents to vote for school-centric projects.
 - AF: my paper for C&C calls for review of this – I want a dialogue with LeithChooses about this. I am not in favour of CEC 'core' activities (e.g. schools) being funded from community grants.
- Steering group: [as above], we all need to keep in mind who [ultimately] benefits!
 - AF agrees, but what about schools stuffing bags with letters telling pupils how to vote etc.
- Steering group: It's important that to keep in mind that organisations who may not appear at first glance to be appropriate to receive funding actually bring in a number of people who may not have otherwise crossed paths with LeithChooses.

2.2 Other LeithChooses evaluations

- Action: Bruce to send to AF his 'over the years' analysis of applicants that did and did not win funds from LeithChooses. (This was emailed to AF during the meeting.)
 - Action: as and when time permits, steering group to add some qualitative analysis. (A brief discussion showed that there is a lot of work needed to understand what sorts of analysis might usefully be done.)
- Action: all steering group members who can to watch tomorrow's C&C meeting.

2.3 The 1% commitment, wrapping up

- AF: we still do not know the actual amount that '1% of discretionary budget to be allocated via PB' means. (In part this is because councils' non-discretionary duties change quite frequently.) However, CEC is still committed to this.
- Steering group: we are very grateful to AF for attending today. It is clear that AF is in favour of PB in general and LeithChooses in particular.

3 2024-25 LeithChooses instance

- Action: Jack to finalise posters
- Action: Jack and Sally to sort issues with LeithChooses' Facebook page
- Action: Bruce to add Naomi to the LeithChooses google group (mailing list)