

Leith Chooses Meeting Notes, 13 May 2026

Present: Abigail, Bruce, Don, Donna, Lisa, Rachel, Sally, Susan, Jack

Apologies: Jason

1 Pop-up banners

Agreed to order with graphic in Naomi's email

2 Planning

Action: SG to set up dedicated timeline and action plan review

3 Boost vote

3.1 Round 1

- Jack – the boost vote (BV) was originally set up to support minority ethnic groups, but this term may be too broad. Also, how do we quantify this? We should be enablers, not gatekeepers. We need to get clear purpose and definition today, to maintain consistency.
- Abby – the BV works, but we might choose different target each year. Or if someone wins funding one year (whether or not they had BV), they would not be eligible the following year.
- Jason (via Abby) – likes the idea of the BV, commends its originators. Possible idea – halve the weight of the boost vote, but Jason needs to review statistics first before pushing this.
- Lisa – the BV is part of her idea of what LC is. It tackles the issue of PB being popularity-contest based. So Lisa has no problem with the concept, but maybe we need a better 'shorthand' way to explain it to voters on the day.
- Rachel – there is lack of clarity of who BV is for, who delivers it. There are several ethnic majority charities in Leith, compared with other areas having few or none. We need to consider the impact of the BV on the whole LC process. As an analogy, mandatory %ages of affordable housing have stopped housing developments altogether. The issue is with popular organisations. Rachel really likes the BV concept, but there are problems (e.g. schools not recording racial bullying, Ukrainians getting more support than Syrians [this doesn't mean Ukrainians aren't suffering]) so it's a drop in the ocean.
- Don – scrap it altogether, then reconsider who can apply, e.g. no national organisations in LC at all (e.g. Oxfam)
- Donna – there haven't been applications by national organisations/charities. I like the idea of *equity rather than equality* to get a more level playing field, but could be based on disadvantage (e.g. social isolation) rather than colour, religion, etc. Schools in LC area should have right to apply.
- Bruce – basically happy with status quo, but let's take any opportunity to make improvements. Can we make it less complex?
 - Action: Bruce to circulate any 'what if there hadn't been a boost vote' calculations he can find
- Sally – the BV is a pioneering attempt to redress some inequalities, so let's not scrap it. We worked for a long time to refine the BV eligibility criteria – they are clear, but maybe could be made clearer, could change %ages. We have never talked about anything but ethnic minorities, e.g. we didn't use 'BAME'. This includes language groups. NB Ukrainians are no longer in the same situation, so this is no longer an issue for LC. Agree that national orgs should be excluded. (Weighting the BV vote could work because we do the counting – it won't make it more complex for voters). We need to publicise the 'equity v equality' idea better.

3.2 Round 2 and general discussion

- Jack – need to consult with previous recent boost applicants – they know pros and cons.
- Abby – do not use term 'BME' because this is labelling/racist. We should learn from the Ukrainian situation of previous years – Leith reacted well – but this situation has changed? Confusion over 'ethnic minority' has been in our discussions, not in our practice. There has been no issue with the latter.
- Lisa – I liked the BV history and that we chose not 'BAME'. But it needs to be Leith-centric, e.g. recent arrival of Afghan people. But I do wonder about some applicants' projects – they struggle to fund projects that help with engagement etc but this may be too much micro-management. I hear no negativity about the BV – no waves of racism or unfair prioritisation from BV. Is Leith's priority about ethnicity or pure poverty? (Folk wish there was more money.) LC can't magically sort every issue – we need to choose a topic/characteristic which we can help with. We should be proud of our support for ethnic minorities.
- (Sally reiterates current definition, and why we are talking about this topic now.)
- Donna – not sure that recent BV applicants would have much to contribute to our deliberation.
- Rachel – explains 'white privilege'. Racism sure happens, despite lack of comments noted above. Not many funds that will support ethnic minorities, so the BV has value. Agree it should just be Leith-based charities. (Sally: this hasn't been a major issue over the years – we have ensured projects are Leith-centric. But ethnic minorities aren't all in Leith, so aren't necessarily Leith-centric, i.e. project must be Leith-centric.)
 - Action: Bruce and Rachel to meet up offline, so Bruce is better informed about 'white privilege'.
- Don – has this discussion brought us anywhere? There are lacks of equality in this community – should/can we look for lessons from elsewhere? BV is worth having – the discussion is about how we define this. If it isn't broke, don't fix it.
- Donna – if it works as-is, why fix it? But tweaks would be OK. Have we lost sight of the poverty aspect of LC?
 - Sally – LC can't fix poverty on its own. We should celebrate what we have done, and how we have tweaked the targeting, e.g. food during COVID era. People suffering poverty can't group together to apply – we have a problem with hard-to-reach groups due to our £45k and the small number of resources in the group.
 - Lisa – cf example of previous non-voters voting in IndyRef, and relatively high turn-out rates. This took a huge amount of work.
- Bruce – it's basically working, don't change for the sake of change but do tweak if it can be made better.
 - Sally notes eligible but non-applying groups have been given BV. So we need better publicity.

- Sally – need to make small steps to improve things. Problem may be with project proposals rather than eligibility criteria. We may have over-supported an applicant which then took advantage of this.

There was discussion of the drawbacks with the current BV.

4 Decisions

- unanimous agreement in the room to in principle keep the BV for at least two years (need to ask Jack)

5 Actions

- Action: Rachel, Abby, Jason to review criteria (and remember CEC guidance in this discussion)
- Donna to ideate on better publicity

6 TVL

- Sally has started writing a deputation, following Bruce and Sally attending M Edwards' round-table. Attendees raised point about ring-fencing almost automatically meaning big orgs will win. Hence Sally will include point that only local organisations (or orgs in firm partnerships with local orgs) in the deputation. Will also note that 'benefitting tourism' will not win favour in communities, so need to mitigate with 'good' PB, i.e. whole first year should be extended deliberation period.
- Sally: there are also risks to LC, especially if times slip.
- Rachel – cf regeneration fund – this also had a long extended period. The Leith network is also meeting with CEC TVL officials.
 - Rachel to supply details of this regeneration fund to Sally to help with writing the deputation.
- Bruce – see email exchange between M Birch of NTBCC and Cllr Graham in appendix
- Donna – CEC needs to look at what benefits tourism (e.g. providing support to homeless makes for a nicer experience for tourists)
- Agreed Sally to deliver this deputation

7 Appendix

7.1 [M Birch to Cllr Graham \(2026 04 12, 13:45\)](#)

Dear Margaret,

We had a brief discussion at the NTBCC meeting this evening about the item on the agenda for the Culture and Communities Committee this Thursday about the Participatory Budgeting element of the EVL funding.

We are not in a position to make a written deputation to the committee but wanted you to be aware that we have concerns about the speed with which this process is being implemented. This may adversely impact the credibility of the scheme before it even starts.

Given that we are already well into the 2026/27 financial year and there is much work required to publicise the scheme and encourage suggestions for worthwhile projects across Edinburgh, let alone decide on which will be funded, we suggest that that it may be better to delay implementation until 2027/28 or at least reduce the portion of the funding available in 2026/27. This would allow more time for stakeholder engagement and hopefully a smoother implementation.

Regards

Mike

7.2 [Cllr Graham's reply \(2026 04 13, 09:01\)](#)

Morning Mike

Thanks for your email. I tried unsuccessfully to get on line for Monday night's meeting.

I take on board what you are saying with regard to the time frame and we are all very aware of the tight deadlines. Driving this is a desire to see an instant impact in communities. When putting forward plans for the other elements of the TVL officers were very careful to look at projects that were already in the pipeline for the 1st three year funding stream. This is the approach we are hoping is taken by communities. There are projects that have been discussed in most areas but shelved due to lack of funding. It is hoped that these could be reignited by this process.

Happy to meet and talk it over.

Kind Regards

Cllr Graham