Leith Chooses Meeting Notes, 17 June 2026

Present:

- Steering group: Bruce, Don, Lisa, Naomi, Rachel, Sally
- Others: Deborah Bourne (Wiltshire), Janet Bailey (Bedfordshire), Irene Healiss (Peterborough), Louise Hayday (Chesham, Buckinghamshire)

Apologies: Aine, Jason, Jack, Susan

1 Introductions and welcome

The visitors are all members of the Society of Local Council Clerks, undertaking Community Governance degrees at De Montfort University. They are interested in how local government works away from their home locations: e.g. community councils, community volunteering, participatory budgeting, community assets. The SG and the visitors introduced themselves. The visitors were given a brief explanation of LeithChooses and PB in Edinburgh.

2 Terms of reference (ToR)

Concerns with the current draft included

- The mention of it being a ‘living document’
- Statements that certain things (e.g. publication of steering group members’ mini-biographies and photographs) ‘may’ be done, as opposed to things must/will be done
- In general, will the Terms of Reference be the steering group’s rules?
- Use of the word ‘accessible’, especially what this word means in this context and how materials would be made accessible
  - Bruce explained that he believed the steering group should be as open/transparent as possible, not least because it handles public money, so as much of its documents (e.g. meeting notes) and decisions) as possible should be published.
  - Perhaps steering group members should undertake accessibility training.
- The call for decision-making to be by consensus of all steering group members may be impractical.
- Code of conduct – should this be based on the Nolan principles?
- Why this written ToR was being created, when the steering group has successfully done without it so far.
  - Because Bruce and Jack were commissioned to do so – see notes from evaluation day section 3.
  - To enable the steering group to become constituted, so it can apply for funds to disburse via PB apart from the community grants fund (CGF) money (in the light of the forthcoming changes to the CGF, and the forthcoming TVL PB)
  - So that the steering group’s governance and roles are clear and transparent, and its decisions are justified
  - To inform new members.
- Action: all steering group members to add their comments to the draft by the end of this week.
- Action: Bruce to then amend the draft.

3 Communications plan

According to the draft timeline, there would be communications (press releases, emails to stakeholders and potential applicants) before and each month during the application window (i.e. weeks beginning 27 July, 31 August, 28 September, 26 October, maybe 30 November) and in December and January about voting. (The application window is 10 August to 12 October, with a possible extension to 26 October.)

- There was concern about what would go into the communications, e.g. that the fine details of this year’s boost vote are not yet decided, whether organisations that won funding last year could apply for funding this year, the exact meaning of the rule that projects must be new, concern about ‘festival’ projects.
- Decision: the principle of monthly comms as above was agreed.
- Action: Naomi/Tremaine to work with CEC comms as appropriate.
- Action: Naomi to check with CGF whether the SG can introduce the ‘last year’s winners are not eligible this year’ rule.
- Action: steering group to ensure ‘newness’ rule is clearly explained in any publications.

4 Voting venue(s)

There is some concern that the community centre isn't a suitable venue, partly because of the failure of the lift and the lack of hot water during this year's voting day, partly because it doesn't meet the call for all of LC's area (especially the parts that are in New Town & Broughton CC's area) to be equally included. There was also concern over whether community centre board members who are also steering group members should be involved in such decisions. (There was discussion of who was responsible for the lift and hot water issues, and mitigations of them.)

Duncan Place, Norton Park, Leith Theatre and Ocean Terminal were suggested as possible alternatives – neither of these have lifts.

Other SG members stated that the venue needs to be big enough for the voting day event (and that the suggested alternatives do not meet this need), and within LC's very tight budget (ideally free). Three stated that holding the vote at the community centre is part of LC's identity, i.e. it's what voters expect. It was noted how SG members associated with the community centre/Kirkgate had enabled people to vote without needing to use the lift.

It was suggested that support sessions would be a way of engaging with the outlying parts of LC's area.

Of the SG members present, only 1 voted against the community centre as the voting-day venue.

Discussion of the awards event venue was held over.

5 Topics for next meeting (24 June, 4pm)

- Themes
- Boost vote and voting process