

LeithChooses steering group terms of reference

Draft 5, 2026_07_08 by Bruce Ryan and Jack Caldwell

NB footnotes are purely explanatory and do not form part of the terms of reference.

1 Introduction

1. This is a 'living' document. That is, the LeithChooses steering group (SG) may amend it at any time, but will follow the rules below about quorum and significant changes to its processes.
2. The steering group will publish the current version of this document on the LeithChooses website.

2 Aim and objectives

1. The aim of the SG is to promote participatory budgeting (PB) in and around Leith.
2. Therefore the SG's primary objective is to run the annual PB instance mentioned in 'Area and Funding sources' point 1 below, and enable participation in that vote.
3. The SG also may take on other objectives but only if they are consistent with the aim and the primary objective.

3 Area and funding sources¹

1. In recent years the aim and primary objective have been achieved by running an annual PB instance within the 'LeithChooses area'. This area is currently defined by Edinburgh Council's Community Grants Fund (CGF) and is currently the 'Leith Neighbourhood Network' (LNN) area. However, the SG may choose to define the LeithChooses area differently if it ceases to disburse funds from the CGF.
2. In recent years, the annual PB instance has disbursed the LNN area's tranche of CGF money. However, the SG may choose to disburse money from additional or alternative sources, for example private companies who operate within the LNN area. It is at the discretion of the SG as to how funds from these sources are managed and distributed, subject to the sources' rules.
3. If money from both Edinburgh Council/CGF and from other sources is being distributed in the same PB instance by the SG, the SG will ensure that all funding sources' rules are followed.

4 Membership and governance

1. Membership of the SG² is open to anyone who is willing³ to undertake the practical work to achieve the aim and objective(s), apart from Edinburgh Council officers directly involved with the CGF. Relevant Edinburgh Council officers, however, will be invited to each SG meeting, unless otherwise decided by the SG.
2. The minimum number of members is 5. If the membership falls to 4 or fewer, the remaining members will inform all current funding sources of this circumstance, complete any commitments the sources insist on, then dissolve the SG. Any assets that do not have to be returned to funding sources will be donated to one or more Leith-based charities.
3. The maximum number of members is 15.

¹ This enables the SG to work around the forthcoming changes to the CGF.

² Currently Abigail Cunningham, Bruce Ryan, Don Giles, Donna Hall, Jack Caldwell, Jason Ran, Lisa Clark, Rachel Hutton, Sally Millar, Susan Rae. NB not 'councillor XXX' because Jack and Susan's memberships are contingent on their commitment to the aim and objective(s), not them being councillors

³ One measure of contribution could be attendance at SG meetings. Both in-person and online attendance would count.

4. The SG will have a chair and vice-chair, who are responsible for
 - a. setting meeting agendas
 - b. chairing regular meetings
 - c. advising SG members of the significance of any decision if this is unclear
 - d. being the public spokespersons of the SG
 - e. resolving/mediating disputes within the SG.
5. The vice-chair will undertake the chair's role if the chair is unavailable.
6. The chair and vice chair are to be elected at the AGM, which will be held after the publication of results.
7. The SG should be as reflective as possible of the Leith community, and will comprise community representatives with direct connections to the LeithChooses area:
 - a. Community Councillors of Leith Links, Leith Harbour and Newhaven, Leith Central, and New Town and Broughton.
 - b. Edinburgh Councillors representing wards 12 (Leith Walk), 13 (Leith), 4 (Forth)
 - c. Residents who live in the LNN area
 - d. Representatives of businesses and/or charities that operate in the LNN area.
 - e. Members of the SG as of July 2026
8. If a current member wishes to leave the SG permanently, they will inform the chair and vice-chair. They will then ensure that the public register of members mentioned below is updated.
9. To aid transparency, the SG will maintain a public register of members on the LeithChooses website. The SG will publish mini-biographies and photos of the current members.
10. The SG will implement the its funding sources' rules. If it wishes to withdraw from a funding arrangement, it will first complete any outstanding obligations to that funder.

5 Other roles

1. The SG may choose that other members take on other roles, such as a minutes secretary, whose duties would be
 - a. to take minutes of regular meetings.
 - b. to ensure that minutes are sent to all Steering Group members
 - c. to publish minutes on the website.

6 Decision-making

1. Decisions can only be taken when a quorum of 5 has been reached.
 - a. To facilitate this, members may vote by email or other digital means, as well as in face-to-face, online-only or hybrid meetings, or make another member their proxy.
 - b. Any member voting by proxy will first email to the chair and vice-chair, and to the CEC officers, the name of the person who is to be their proxy, and how long that proxy lasts.⁴
 - c. The chair and vice-chair will keep a record of ongoing proxies.
 - d. Votes in meetings via online (online only or hybrid) will be treated as if the member was in the room, so long as their vote can be heard or read in online 'chat' or similar.
2. To reduce the amount of emailing etc, the SG may create subgroups to discuss 'significant' matters and provide recommendations to the whole SG. Then, as noted above, the whole SG will be involved in deciding whether to adopt recommendations.
3. Once a decision has been made on a 'significant' topic⁵, the SG will not revisit that decision for two years, unless 'force majeure' circumstances apply⁶. (The SG may make minor amendments to implementation of such decisions at any time.)

⁴ For example, 'I appoint XYZ as my proxy for the next meeting', 'I appoint ABC as my proxy until further notice'.

⁵ For example, 'the boost vote will remain substantially as-is'

⁶ For example, if CEC decides that boost votes are banned.

4. Meetings can take place without being fully quorate, subject to point 1 of this section.

7 Code of conduct and declarations of interest

1. The SG will maintain a code of conduct consistent with the Nolan principles of public life⁷ (but adapted to the SG's role and circumstances), and publish the current version of this code on the LeithChooses website.
 - a. Each member will sign the code of conduct annually to maintain their membership.⁸
 - b. The code of conduct will be part of any new member's induction.
2. There may be situations where a 'significant' decision may affect an organisation or location that an SG member is a member of or has links to. Examples may include being a board member of an organisation that is requesting funding, having a child at a school whose parent/carer council is requesting funding, or living in a property that will be materially affected by a project application (within reason). It is up to each SG member to declare an interest and remove themselves from any relevant significant decision, consistent with the Nolan principles.
3. If a member does not declare an interest or otherwise acts grossly outwith the code of conduct, the member may be suspended or removed from the SG. In such cases, the chair and/or vice-chair may suspend the member while the matter is being investigated. However, they will obtain consensus from the SG as in 'Decision-making' point 1 for both suspension for more than 48 hours and for removal of the member.

8 Role of Edinburgh Council

1. As the legally responsible authority of the Community Grant Fund, Edinburgh Council is responsible for ensuring its CGF policies remain upheld throughout the LeithChooses process when LeithChooses is disbursing CGF funds.
2. Consistent with 'Area and funding sources' points 2 and 3 above, Edinburgh Council and the CGF have no role in deciding how money from other sources is managed and distributed.

⁷ From <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2>, these principles are

1. **Selflessness**
Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
2. **Integrity**
Holders of public office will avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They will declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
3. **Objectivity**
Holders of public office will act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
4. **Accountability**
Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and will submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
5. **Openness**
Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
6. **Honesty**
Holders of public office should be truthful.
7. **Leadership**
Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

⁸ It is suggested that this takes place soon after the awards event for existing members, probably at the AGM.

9 Data protection and social media obligations

1. These obligations are detailed in the [‘Privacy and social media’ document](#). The SG will publish the current version of this document on the LeithChooses website.
2. The steering group will publish final versions of notes of all meetings on its website.

10 Definitions

Term	Definition
Community Grants Fund	Edinburgh Council’s funding pot for community projects across the city
Participatory Budgeting	The process of individuals directly voting on how to allocate public funds in their area
Significant decision	A decision which will impact an applicant’s or a group of applicants’ eligibility to apply for LC funding.
Partnership	A link between two parties. Each partnership will have a ‘lead partner’.