



Kirsty-Louise Campbell
Senior Manager, Strategy and Insight
City of Edinburgh Council

25 July 2017

Dear Ms Campbell,

Thank you for email in relation to the updated Outcome Improvement Process (Participation Request 14934 - Sale of the Pitz) following the meeting held at Council offices on 12 July.

We suggested the community-wide online survey be part of the process at the initial meeting in May, and reaffirmed that in our communication on 6 July. We believe it is a vital part of the Outcome Improvement Process for the following reasons:-

1. To raise awareness of the Pitz sale amongst the community as a whole.
2. To encourage engagement with the proposals and encourage debate on the issue
3. To gather responses from members of the community who wish to express a view

You will be aware that no prior consultation has taken place regarding the Pitz Sale and, to date, there has been a dearth of clear communication around the reason for the sale. Running a community-wide consultation is a key part of the process as it allows us to inform the community about what is happening, why it is happening and allow them to feed back their views on the process and the proposed outcomes.

Based on our experience over the last four years of running more than 30 public consultations, we would see the process being conducted using a variety of online and offline means. For major issues such as this one, we'd typically distribute an information leaflet to 5,000 homes, publish information on our website, alert members of the community via our email mailing list, social media channels and links to community representatives and other local organisations. We'd anticipate reaching more than 10,000 people using these methods. We'd suggest that the majority of respondents would engage via online means, but we'd advocate providing a paper version as well.

Conducting the eight focus groups using the robust methodology proposed and taking the main threads of those focus groups into the community-wide survey, along with the associated public



information and opportunities for all to engage, is the best way of gathering a useful snapshot of community views on the proposals.

Regarding the community council's participation in a focus group, we feel this would not be appropriate. As a community council we're a statutory body with a legally defined role and purpose, and that role is fundamentally an impartial one - to ascertain and reflect the views of the community. We're duty-bound to set aside our own views, so the views of any one member or group of members of the community council could not be taken as the views of the community.

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The community council has no objection to the participation of PAS in the outcome improvement process, as it would with any local interest group. However, we do feel it is important to underline that distinct roles and responsibilities of the community council and how those contrast with the roles of local interest groups like PAS. As mentioned above, the community council is an elected body, established by statute and tasked with representing the community in an impartial way. It conducts all its business in public and is governed by the Scheme for Community Councils published by CoEC, along with the relevant standing orders, constitution and code of conduct.

In contrast, PAS are a special interest group, are in no way an impartial body or one seeking to represent the views of the community as a whole. With the community council's involvement, the community-wide consultation and the opportunity to participate in the focus groups, local interest group members like those in PAS have a more than adequate opportunity to voice their opinions. For a PAS representative to then take part in the evaluation process gives undue weight to the views of that group and would not be representative of the community.

Focus Groups

We would make the following points regarding the proposed focus groups:-

- The background material to the focus groups should mention that a proportion of the receipt for the sale of the land will go to fund the Meadowbank project and that a portion will also go to the Powerleague company.
- There should be an opportunity during the focus groups for participants to explore the idea of 'community benefit' regarding the proposed sale and development of the site. In particular it would be helpful to understand whether participants feel that part-funding



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Meadowbank is sufficient community benefit or not and whether they would like to see community benefit in some other form.

- We have no objection to a representative from Planning taking part in the Focus Groups but it is important to underline that the discussion must not be limited to planning matters and participants should be free to bring their own input to the discussion.
- As community representatives we feel it is important that community council members have the opportunity to observe the focus groups. An anonymised transcript is not going to convey the tone of the conversation, the strength of feeling or many other important aspects of the focus group. We see no practical or ethical issues in relation to this valuable part of the participation request.
- Local interest group members need not receive the £30 incentive - coffee and biscuits should be sufficient.

Reporting

The report produced and passed to the bidders should include an analysis of data from the Focus Groups, the community-wide survey and the raw comments (anonymised). The report should also be published by the council and notice circulated by the community council and others.

Timeline

In terms of timing, if community council members are able to observe the focus groups, the key threads can then be fed directly into the community-wide survey rather than having to wait for the report (Mid-Sept). That would allow the community-wide survey to run from early Sept and be concluded and reported on prior to the second closing date being announced (End Sept).

As befits a participatory process, the community council is ready to assist in all aspects of the outcome improvement process. We are perhaps best placed to play a fuller role in the community-wide survey, but would be able to assist in other respects, notwithstanding our relatively modest time and resource.

Yours sincerely,
Geoff Lynn
Portobello Community Council