Participation Requests Reporting Template 2022/23 for Public Service Authorities

Section 32 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public service authorities to produce an annual report on Participation Request activity and publish this no later than 30 June each year. This template has been created to gather participation request data for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. Information provided will help inform policy and practice at local and national level as the data will be collated and shared by the Scottish Government's Community Empowerment Team. However, it is for each public service authority to make their own annual report publicly available by 30 June each year, whether using this template or not.

Please provide information in the sections below and email the completed template by 30 June 2023 to community.empowerment@gov.scot .

Section One – Public Service Authority Information

Organisation: Aberdeenshire Council

Completed by: Fiona McCallum Role: Business Strategy Manager

Email: Fiona.mccallum@aberdeenshire.gov.uk Telephone: N/A

Date of completion: 12th June 2023

Are you the Participation Request Lead Contact for the organisation: No

If not please provide the name, job title and email address for the lead contact for any queries: Ricki Lyon, Engagement & Consultation Officer Ricki.lyon@aberdeenshire.gov.uk – starting in post 19th June 2023

Section 2: Participation Request Data for 2022/23

Please complete following overview table:

Total new applications received in 2022/23	Total applications received prior to 1 April 2022 which were still to be determined at 31 March 2023	Number of accepted applications in 2022/23	Number of applications agreed in 2022/23	Number of applications refused in 2022/23
1	0	1	0	0

Where you were unable to accept a participation request, was an alternative process put in place to discuss the group's issue and work with them or support offered to help them consider how to address their identified need? Please provide details: Not applicable.

2.1 Please provide details of Participation Requests received using the legislation and outwith the legislation in the reporting year which resulted in changes to public services provided by or on behalf of your public service authority and tell us about those changes. Please also include details of requests received prior to 2022/23, which resulted in changes to the way of working being implemented in 2022/23.

Name of Community Participation Body	Was the Participation Request successful? (Y/N)	Previous way of working	Way of working following changes	What difference did those changes make for the users of the service? Did they improve service user experiences or outcomes?	Details of any participation requests considered outwith the formal process e.g. agreements reached that resulted in changes to services.
Stonehaven & District Community Council	This request is not yet concluded.				

2.2 Please use this space to provide any further comments relating to the above data, such as:

- **describing the outcome improvement process (whether or not it resulted from a formal participation request)**
- **how the community participation body was involved in designing the outcome improvement process**
- **how the community participation body participated in the outcome improvement process including taking part in decisions and delivering actions**
- **details of any wider benefits, such as improved community engagement and ongoing participation.**

We received one participation request during the reporting year. That process is not yet concluded.

Section Three – Partnership Working & Promotion of Participation Requests

3.1a Please provide details of any engagement with support organisations such as local Third Sector Interfaces and public sector Community Learning and Development staff or national organisations such as the Scottish Community Development Centre.

For example have any new practices to support Participation Requests been developed from working with other bodies, or any learning gained?

Work in Aberdeenshire includes:

Aberdeenshire Council's Engagement & Participation Policy – we have also developed an accompanying Community Engagement & Participation Guide for Council officers which contains links to guidance on Participation requests. The Policy and Guidance will be reviewed during 2023/24.

Promotion of opportunities where communities may be involved in improving outcomes in their local areas through the Council's Area teams.

Aberdeenshire continues to have a process, developed in line with the guidance, that enables community groups to develop and submit a participation request. A pre-application stage allows community groups to discuss requests informally with their local Area team prior to submitting a formal request. Support to complete requests is available through Community Learning and Development, Area teams, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action (our Third Sector Interface) and Rural Partnerships. Groups can also request support to take part in an outcome improvement process.

3.1b Please tell us about any challenges you have had in accessing support.

3.2 Please provide details of action taken to promote the use of Participation Requests or support Community Participation Bodies in making a Participation Request.

For example this could include: Support before making a request, such as to determine whether a participation request is the most appropriate route; Support to make the request such as assist groups to complete forms, or identify appropriate outcomes; and/or Support to take part effectively in outcome improvement processes (whether or not they resulted from a formal participation request).

Action being taken in Aberdeenshire includes:

- Promotion of guidance on the Council website
- Promotion of the opportunity for PRs in community briefings and bulletins;
- Providing a local contact in the relevant Area Team for enquiries;
- Offering support to develop participation requests through established networks or in a more tailored way with specific groups where discussions are undertaken about improvement of outcomes;
- Promotion of the right to participate at events and forums with rural partnerships and community councils;
- Actively encouraging community groups to get involved in their communities which has the potential to result in PRs.
- Plans to continue to promote the duty associated with participation requests internally through appropriate methods i.e. staff newsletters and intranet.

We are currently reviewing our Engagement & Participation working group and have established a strategic group to have oversight and set strategic direction around all aspects of engagement and participation.

3.3 Please let us know what actions you have been taking to ensure that your processes are inclusive.

For example, this could include accessible information and other support, which enable wider use of participation requests by all population groups including those with protected characteristics. We are particularly interested in any ways you have targeted those with protected characteristics to raise awareness of the PR process or support request submissions.

Action taken in Aberdeenshire includes:

- Work undertaken to understand views on experiences of engaging with the Council.
- An integrated impact assessment (IIA) is carried out on all Council policies and strategies including our Engagement & Participation Policy. The IIA will be reviewed when the Policy and guidance are reviewed.
- All PR requests are subject to an integrated impact assessment which considers the impact of the request on, amongst other things, equality and socio-economic circumstances.
- Aberdeenshire's Community Learning & Development team and Area teams can offer support and guidance to groups who express an interest in the participation request process.

3.4 Please outline any plans you have to continue involving local people and local groups in outcome improvement processes as a result of your Participation Request policies (and also outwith formal participation requests).

In Aberdeenshire:

The council is committed to engaging with and involving communities to create opportunities for increased participation in decision making, and in the design and delivery of services within those communities. The council's Engagement and Participation Policy provides more detail on this.

Opportunities for individuals or communities to be involved in improving local outcomes include, but isn't limited to:

- Joining a community council to facilitate a wide range of activities which promote the well-being of local communities
- Joining a tenant or community association
- Joining or starting a community group to deliver services in local communities like maintaining and developing open spaces
- Taking part in a participatory budgeting exercise
- Participating through established youth participation arrangements
- Taking ownership of land or buildings appreciating local communities could make better use of the asset (Community Asset Transfer process)
- Taking part in local meetings such as local ward forums to develop and influence plans or decisions
- Responding to an engagement or consultation exercise to give views, often through the Engage Aberdeenshire platform.
- Volunteering to take a lead on issues such as becoming a local snow warden or developing local resilience plans

- Volunteering generally in the local community
- Making views known through other methods such as social media, formal feedback arrangements, frontline informal engagement or the petitions process.

- Participating with a community council or community group in developing a Community Action Plan for the local community.

3.5 Please provide details about any work undertaken to consider wider reviews of participation practice, and any such methods used to engage with communities.

Following an internal audit around Community Empowerment, a strategic engagement & partipation group has been established which will have oversight of community empower across the Council including setting strategic direction for participation and methods of engagement. Community engagement and participation is fundamental to our Council Plan and we continue to promote active community engagement using a variety of methods and forums.

Section Four – Additional Information

4.1 Please use this space to provide any further feedback not covered in the above sections.

For example, we are interested in your reflections about what has gone well and what has gone less well in relation to Participation Requests over the past year?

N/A

Is there any aspect of the process that you intend to adapt or change in the year ahead?

We are reviewing our Engagement & Participation Policy and guidance this year (2023/24) and continually look to learn from experiences and change and adapt processes to make improvements.

Have you identified any needs for guidance or support that would support the process?

We are currently reviewing our Engagement & Participation policy and guidance. We are also reviewing our CPP community engagement guide.

If you have developed any case study material or published new information about Participation Requests please share links to those with us here.

Any other information:

Section Five – Community Empowerment Act Review

The following questions relate to the Scottish Government review of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. We would value your feedback as a public service authority concerned with part 3 (participation requests) of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. Please note, any comments provided here would be anonymised, and would only be used in the context of the review.

5.1   Has the legislation made it easier or more difficult to work with communities to improve services? Please provide some comments on your experiences as a public service authority engaging with this legislation.

In Aberdeenshire we tend to involve our communities early in our decision making processes and thus see smaller numbers of formal participation requests, with communities able to engage on a less formal basis.

5.2   Where can things be further improved, and what needs to change?

Less emphasis on the number of formal participation requests and more on the improved outcomes as a result of community involvement.

5.3   Are you aware of what support is available to you e.g. Scottish Government advice and resources, SCDC's Participation Request pack, Social Studies PR Toolbox, when engaging with this legislation, and how you can access this? Is there any support you think you would benefit from when engaging with this legislation. Please provide comments where possible.

Yes we are aware of the support that is available should it be required.

5.4   What would you like to see now, to further empower Scotland's communities?

Completed by: Fiona McCallum Role: Business Strategy Manager

Email: Fiona.mccallum@aberdeenshire.gov.uk Tel: N/A

Date of completion: 12 June 2023

Please email the completed template by 30 June 2023 to community.empowerment@gov.scot

If you have any queries please contact Malcolm Cowie, Participation Request Policy Manager at Malcolm.cowie@gov.scot

Community Empowerment Team, Scottish Government