

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Anti-Poverty and Inequality
<b>DATE</b>	8 March 2023
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Citizens' Assemblies Update
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CUS/23/063
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Andy MacDonald
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Derek McGowan
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Paul Tytler
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.2

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report updates Committee on the plans to facilitate Citizens' Assemblies on Poverty and Inequality.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee :-

- 2.1 Notes progress on plans to facilitate Citizens' Assemblies on Poverty and Inequality;
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer – Early Intervention & Community Empowerment in consultation with the Chief Officer - Finance and Chief Officer - Customer Experience to develop a cost profile, explore potential funding mechanisms and report to the Finance and Resources Committee if funding is required;
- 2.3 Agrees for further detail to be developed on how local Community Empowerment Groups could be facilitated to support a citizen assembly model at locality level; and
- 2.4 Agrees that the report currently planned for the May Committee meeting on a final model for Citizens' Assemblies be submitted for the Committee on 30 August 23 to allow a final proposal to be brought to the Committee.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 On 11 January 2023, in respect of the Citizens' Assemblies paper (CUS/23/012), the Committee resolved to instruct the Chief Officer Early - Intervention and Community Empowerment, to further develop plans for a Citizens' Assembly including potential topics for the Assembly to consider which may include looking at gender inequality, and report back to the Committee on 10 May 2023.

- 3.2 Discussions have taken place with the procurement team to establish whether a framework agreement is in place with suitable organisations that could be invited to bid for the work to develop, plan and deliver support for a Citizen Assembly.
- 3.3 Such a framework agreement is not in place, so a full tendering process will be required to be implemented. Procurement regulations mean that there are limitations to the discussions that can be held with potential bidding organisations to help quantify the requirement for support. This is to avoid the risk of any unfair advantage being given through the tendering process by the disclosure of intentions and information to any one particular organisation.
- 3.4 Consideration has been given to potential joint working with Aberdeenshire Council, but their work to date has been on establishing support for a Citizen's Panel, rather than an assembly, so no further discussions have been pursued.
- 3.5 Work continues to quantify an indicative cost for an assembly, with costs ranging widely for assemblies that have taken place to date.
- 3.6 Information on planning Citizens' Assemblies has been sought from both University of Aberdeen and Glasgow Caledonian University, with respective expertise on deliberative democracy and approaches.
- 3.7 In broad terms, this has confirmed the complexity, cost and risks on effectiveness highlighted in the [Citizen Assembly](#) report (CUS/23/012) to Committee on 11 January 2023. Developing the resolution to be addressed by the assembly is key, as well as ensuring that it is within the scope of the Council to act on the recommendations which emerge.
- 3.8 One issue highlighted is often that the remit of an assembly is too broad, with some delivering in excess of 100 recommendations. Consideration is being given to how the potential resolution for a Citizen Assembly on Gender Inequality can be more focussed. One recommendation is that existing engagement mechanisms such as Priority Neighbourhood Partnerships, Locality Empowerment Groups etc are engaged in the process of developing the resolution for the Assembly. Representatives from these groups would be part of the assembly steering group and would be supported to hold 'public hearings' in their communities to widen the input to the assembly.
- 3.9 The challenges in securing commitment to participate from a representative sample of the community has been highlighted. A [Citizen Assembly on Gender Equality](#) took place in Ireland in 2020/21 and due to Covid, took place partly in a hybrid format. This was felt by some participants to be a more effective way of managing the commitment of participation, although the evaluation of the assembly showed that the majority of participants would have preferred in person sessions.
- 3.10 One consideration is the role of experts in the assembly in supporting participants to develop their knowledge and understanding of the issues in the resolution, and to then develop potential solutions. Discussions with the

universities has highlighted the importance of such experts to include women's groups, those with experience of inequality and lived experience, rather than a focus solely on academic expertise for example.

- 3.11 Potential alternative models have been suggested through discussions, including [Citizen Juries](#). A jury has similar principles in terms of participation, but is a smaller group of 12-24 people and the process takes place over 2-7 days. A further approach is also being explored, called [Legislative Theatre](#) – this provides a creative approach to people affected by an issue acting out the scenarios with the audience, including decision makers, then working to develop solutions, so the way forward to address the question can be resolved in one event. This has been used in Manchester in relation to homelessness.
- 3.12 These alternatives will still involve a cost in planning and delivery but may be more effective for participants and more cost effective in delivery and further work is ongoing to compare these options.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report

#### 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report

#### 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	Not fulfilling the commitment to undertake Citizens' assemblies	Approval of the paper and agreement to progress with the Assembly	L	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	No risks identified	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Operational</b>	Resources to undertake the assembly	Staffing and other resources to undertake a Citizens'	M	Yes

		Assembly will be identified during detailed planning		
<b>Financial</b>	Funding to cover the cost of the Assembly process	Subject to approval	M	Yes
<b>Reputational</b>	Not responding to or implementing the outcomes from the assembly, risking disappointment and disillusionment among participants	Effective planning will ensure that there is a clear timescale for the Citizens' Assembly report and the resolution will be within Council powers. Participants will be advised that the Assembly is advisory	L	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No environmental risks identified	n/a	n/a	n/a

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2022-2023</u></b>	
<b>Impact of Report</b>	
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>  <b><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></b>	There are no proposals in this report.
<b><u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u></b>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	There are no proposals in this report.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	There are no proposals in this report.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	There are no proposals in this report.
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	There are no proposals in this report.

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	Full impact assessment not required at this stage
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required at this stage
<b>Other</b>	n/a

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 CUS/23/012 Citizens' Assemblies report to Committee 11 January 2023

## 11. APPENDICES

11.1 n/a

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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