

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION REQUEST FORM

1 Details of Community Participation Body

Name of Community Body: Milngavie Community Council (MCC)

Contact Name: Caroline Diaz (Secretary)

Contact address:

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Website (if available): www.milngavie.org

Please ensure that you include a copy of your written constitution or governance documentation if available: please see link on home page of website

2 Name of the public service authority to which the request is being made:

East Dunbartonshire Council

3 Name of any other public service authority which the community participation body requests should participate in the outcome improvement process:

East Dunbartonshire Leisure and Culture (EDLC)

4 The outcome that community participation body want to improve:

The provision of community facilities in Milngavie by East Dunbartonshire Council. Currently these facilities are provided at two separate sites. The Council now proposes to spend around £4,000,000 on a project to accommodate all except the gym facilities, together with EDC Customer Services, at the Town Hall site in a single **Milngavie Community Hub**.

MCC appreciates and supports the proposal for a Customer Services Hub in Milngavie, given that it will be of added value to many members of the community. We wish to work in collaboration with relevant officers in EDC to scope the relative merits of the Town Hall site and the Community Education Centre site as the location for this.

We also welcome the proposals to upgrade the Town Hall and Lillie Art Gallery, but there are serious concerns as to whether the Town Hall site could also adequately accommodate, in addition to the Customer Services, the facilities currently provided at the Library & C E Centre building. Moreover, the Hub Team has indicated that this building would then become surplus to requirements, and there is no funding for future capital or revenue spend on it. These facilities are greatly valued by the community, not least due to the wonderful pond-side location in the heart of the town by the West Highland Way.

5 The reasons why the community participation body should participate in an outcome improvement process:

MCC should participate in an outcome improvement process because it is the statutory body established by law to ascertain and express the views of the Milngavie community to the local authority. MCC is well able to do this as it has connections throughout the community, including the 4 schools, 7 churches and most of the 90+ community groups.

Milngavie has a population of around 13,000, but it should be noted that the facilities at both Town Hall and Library & CE Centre site are used by communities from a much wider area. The Hub proposals will affect Bearsden (population 28,000) and the surrounding villages, and MCC has links with their community councils. We can also, through the User Action Group, connect with the West of Scotland-wide groups who also use the facilities.

Information gathered to date from users of both the Town Hall and the CE Centre indicates that, besides the benefits, the current proposals will have negative impacts for many people, including vulnerable groups (e.g. older and less mobile people, children, single parents), and for the environment.

The current proposals also miss a number of opportunities for the future of both sites that would benefit the existing users **and** people who do not currently use either facility. These opportunities could also have spin-offs for the area's economy.

Specific concerns:

- Reduction in facilities for community activities, particularly for older people facing social isolation and loneliness, leading to reduced independence and poorer quality of life. Milngavie may well have the highest proportion of elderly people in E.D.
- Loss of quality Out of School Care with extensive outdoor play opportunities, leading to negative impacts on children's health and wellbeing and on working families
- Difficulties of access and parking at the Town Hall site, particularly affecting children, and less mobile people
- Increased traffic in central Milngavie, including vehicles searching for parking places near Town Hall, affecting road safety, congestion and air quality
- Further impacts on the already reduced amenity of residents at Buchanan Street and the surrounding area
- Reduced use of off road paths for active travel between homes and community facilities, affecting health and well being.
- Community facilities are currently located near the more deprived areas, but relocation of gym and badminton facilities to Douglas Academy or the Allander will discriminate against non-drivers.

Depending on how the land currently occupied by the Library & CE Centre building and its surroundings is developed in future, the following outcomes are also likely:

- Loss of the pond, with its diverse flora and fauna, located on the well-used path network in central Milngavie. Its banks form a social space from which the wildlife may be observed, with benefits for health and wellbeing¹
- Loss of educational opportunities at the pond, e.g. biodiversity projects, and for interpretation of Milngavie's heritage as an industrial town dependent on the Allander Water, highlighting Milngavie's distinct identity and sense of place

¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-44097-3>

- Loss of opportunity for a Welcome Centre within the Library & CE Centre site, which could build on Milngavie's century-old reputation as a destination for walkers, thus supporting the economy. Walks range from very easy short walks to long distance walks, including the now famous West Highland Way.

Information gathered to date supports a more collaborative approach to developing options that will achieve positive outcomes for the community. In line with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act participation request guidance², MCC seeks support to work collaboratively with the Council to develop alternatives to the current proposals. We wish to consider options which will **make best use of the available financial resources and also harness the energy of community groups to improve outcomes for the people of East Dunbartonshire**. This will almost certainly require a two site solution.

6 Knowledge, expertise and experience the community participation body has in relation to the outcome:

MCC has extensive knowledge, expertise and experience in relation to this outcome:

- MCC's 15 members live in different parts of Milngavie and between them have first-hand knowledge of the town, its people, strengths and problems. Individual members have knowledge of transport, environment, education, sport, disability, health and social care. Their ages range from young people to those who have lived in the town for decades.
- For more than 3 months, MCC and individual members have been at the receiving end of views on the Hub proposals, all broadly on the lines of the likely outcomes described at 5 above, and wishing for something better.
- MCC has formed a Hub Subgroup, co-opting members with relevant expertise, including:
 - **Users Action Group** (representing over 1,500 members of over 30 organisations that currently use the Town Hall and/or the CE Centre). The User Action Group was formed on 3rd September 2019 and has held subsequent activity to gather views of members by completion of mapping templates and one-to-one discussions. All members support the request to be involved in the development of alternatives. (There are further groups still to be contacted).
 - **Milngavie Community Development Trust** – MCDT consulted its members and the collated response from the 20% who responded was published on 31st July³. In particular, the MCDT response requested that *“all households be contacted in a full and informed community consultation”*. This is particularly in relation to the significant upgrading of the Town Hall itself, the possible removal of the Library & CE Centre building and the retention of the adjacent pond.
 - **Time-Out Club** – representing 72 families who use the Milngavie CE Centre facility. Staff and parents worked collaboratively to assess the outcomes of the proposal and comments were approved by the Board. In addition, TOC initiated an awareness raising event in relation to the Hub consultation in Milngavie precinct on Saturday 21st September where volunteers had conversations with over 100 people. Not one person was in favour of the options in their current form.

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/community-empowerment-participation-request-guidance/>

³ <https://info652106.wixsite.com/mcdt/milngavie-hub>

- MCC consulted the **Milngavie Heritage Centre**, who submitted to EDC a list of their space requirements for permanent display, storage and research facilities. They believe this cannot be provided within the proposed options, so consider that the Town Hall site should be explored to see whether more imaginative options are possible. If not, then 2-site alternatives must be considered. They support initiatives to draw attention to the historic nature of the paper mill site, including the mill pond.

7 How the outcome will be improved because of the involvement of the community participation body:

The Scottish Government’s guidance on Participation Requests lists, at section 3.57, six matters that should be considered by the Council in reaching its decision on a request. These are whether agreeing to the request would be likely to promote or improve:

1. Economic development
2. Regeneration - better place to live and work, improvements in transport, + access to facilities
3. Public health
4. Social well being - community spirit
5. Environmental well being
6. Reduction of inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage

Moreover, EDC’s Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP), 2017 - 2027⁴, lists six themes where it wants to see improvements by 2017. Its overall vision is “**Working together to achieve the best with the people of East Dunbartonshire.**”

Local Outcome 1	East Dunbartonshire has a sustainable and resilient economy with busy town and village centres, a growing business base, and is an attractive place in which to visit and invest.
Local Outcome 2	Our people are equipped with knowledge and skills for learning, life and work.
Local Outcome 3	Our children and young people are safe, healthy and ready to learn.
Local Outcome 4	East Dunbartonshire is a safe place in which to live, work and visit.
Local Outcome 5	Our people experience good physical and mental health and wellbeing with access to a quality built and natural environment in which to lead healthier and more active lifestyles.
Local Outcome 6	Our older population and more vulnerable citizens are supported to maintain their independence and enjoy a high quality of life, and they, their families and carers benefit from effective care and support services

MCC believes that by working **with** the community to consider alternatives, and by taking forward an option requiring the retention of both Town Hall and Library & CE Centre sites, EDC could potentially improve outcomes in relation to ALL the matters listed in the Community Empowerment Act and ALL the themes of the LOIP. The selection of such an option would be a great incentive for community groups to work on projects that would contribute to this, and the long term benefits could be very significant indeed. Community groups may be able to access external funding for projects.

It should be noted that work done by different community groups, such as supporting

⁴ <https://www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/council/about-council/performance-and-governance>

vulnerable people, or planting flowers by MiB, takes the pressure off various Council services. Groups could also form useful preparatory work towards a Local Place Plan.

The two sites contribute to life in Milngavie in different ways, complementing each other to make the town a good place to live in and to visit. The table below outlines improvements that could be achieved by taking forwards a 2-site option as opposed to EDC's recent proposals. It also highlights community groups already involved in improving these outcomes – an added bonus - and further groups would no doubt come on board.

These improvements would also be in line with EDC's Open Space, Green Network, Active Travel, Local Transport and Milngavie Town Centre Strategies, the Dunbartonshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan, and the Scottish Government's *Creating Places* policy.

Likely improvements in Outcome as a result of EDC working with MCC and the community to develop an alternative 2-site option	Relevant ED LOIP Outcomes	Relevant C E Act Outcome	Community group(s) contributing
Increased capacity for voluntary/ community led groups for older people and carers to access appropriate space to provide meaningful activities and social connections. This provides significant "social benefit" preventing costly demand on statutory services (especially health and social care) dealing with people who are socially isolated or have mental health issues.	Local Outcome 6	2, 3, 4, 6	U3A and many other groups Carer's Link
The CE Centre and surrounds become a focal point for outdoor learning, and develop as a centre for excellence in outdoor play.	Local Outcome 3	4, 5, 6	Time Out Club, MCC, MCDT
Increased numbers of people experience improved mental health and wellbeing by accessing the natural environment (pond and woodland glade) at the CE Centre and, for those that are able, levels of walking and cycling are increased.	Local Outcome 5	3, 4, 5, 6	MCDT, MCC. BID
Existing facilities are maximised to make provision for local people, for day trippers who come for evening entertainment or to walk locally and for the considerable number of tourists visiting Milngavie every year to walk the West Highland Way.	Local Outcome 1	1,2, 4	MCC, BID and other groups
Groups such as the Allander Open Awards Centre have adequate storage and facilities to continue their work with young people who do not access DofE scheme through school.	Local Outcome 2.	4, 6	Allander Open Awards & other groups
Reduced traffic in the centre of Milngavie, especially around the Town Hall, increases community safety. Increased usage of the CEC at evenings and weekends also achieves this.	Local Outcome 4	2, 5	
Biodiversity improvements at pond and woodland, with educational projects linking with Mugdock Rangers, supports wildlife and promotes learning. Spending time observing encourages social interaction.	Local Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5, 6	MCDT, MiB

Developing a Heritage Centre for Milngavie and surrounding area at the Town Hall site, and preserving and interpreting industrial heritage features around the CE Centre site, supports learning and gives the town its own distinct identity. This leads to a stronger community spirit and makes Milngavie a more interesting place to visit.	Local Outcomes 1, 2, 3	1, 4, 6	MHC, MCC
Projects to improve and make more attractive the start of the West Highland Way and the path network around the centre of Milngavie promote active travel. Improved surfaces also allow disabled people to leave cars behind.	Local Outcomes 1, 4, 5, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	MCDT, MiB, Scouts Ramblers
Not building a massive, oversized extension at Town Hall would allow development of an attractive eastern 'gateway' to town centre, with room for planting. Reduced traffic allows construction of safe pedestrian and cycle links.	Local Outcomes 1, 4, 5,	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	MCC, MiB
Maintaining size of existing library provides educational and other opportunities, e.g. to re-open the Bearsden & Milngavie Local History section, and other special categories lost at Bearsden, such as audiobooks.	Local Outcomes 2, 3	2, 6	MCC, MHC

BID: Business Improvement District, MiB: Milngavie in Bloom (award winning group), MHC: Milngavie Heritage Centre group, U3A: University of the Third Age

8 What type of community participation body are you?

- a) A community controlled body
- b) A community council **Yes**
- c) A body designated by the Scottish Ministers as a community participation body
- d) A group without a written constitution

9 Additional Information:

MCC has already responded to the consultation on the Milngavie Community Hub options.⁵ We are part of the Milngavie Umbrella Group, and would wish to work with the EDC officers, the Umbrella Group to and others to explore alternative options to those currently proposed.

Although some work has already been undertaken to gain the views of those directly affected, there have been a number of challenges which mean that further engagement is necessary:

- The Hub consultation question (Option 1 or 2), timescales and timing has not allowed full debate about all the possibilities.

⁵ <http://milngavie.org/mcc-hub-subgroup-submission.pdf>

- There is an identified gap in relation to those who are potential users of the facilities but are not yet engaged. These are referred to in the Community Empowerment Guidance as “**easy to ignore**” (often referred to in the past as “hard to reach”). Particular effort needs to be made to engage more marginalised and disadvantaged communities, who may be less likely to know about what is happening and take advantage of such opportunities.
- Our evidence suggests that many **older people** were unaware of the Hub consultation as they do not use social media and many were unable to respond as they do not use email. These people have been left out of the process to date and will need different methods and support to engage.
- MCC wish to carry out further targeted work to engage with people who live in the **more deprived areas** of Milngavie (see appendix 1), many of whom are also older people, some living in sheltered housing.

Therefore, a range of methods are proposed (in line with the National Standards for Community Engagement):

- Initial community-led engagement using the Place Standard Tool to explore the assets and areas for improvement for both the CEC and the Town Hall site. This will involve utilising the web-based function and interactive workshops with recognised equality groups at each site.
- Paper based survey to be developed to target older people, those not already using either facility and people in Milngavie’s more deprived areas
- Public meetings and focus groups to be arranged where discussion is encouraged and people’s needs are taken into consideration to allow them to participate.

Appendix 1

