

Participation Requests - April 2018 to March 2019

Participation requests are a new way for people to have their say about what improvements they would like to see made to public services they use. They are part of a piece of Scottish Government legislation called the Community Empowerment Act.

Participation requests are not intended to replace good quality existing community engagement or participation processes, nor to be an extension of complaints procedures. They are a framework for initiating dialogue where communities find it difficult to be recognised or heard. By making a participation request, a community body (or group of people in a community) can ask to start a discussion with organisations in charge of public services, such as hospitals, schools and transport, about how to improve these services.

April 2018 to March 2019

From April 2018 to March 2019 action taken in Aberdeenshire to promote and support the use of participation requests included:

- Reviewing guidance on the Council website and promoting summary guidance in bulletins and newsletters and at events as appropriate.
- Providing a local contact for enquiries
- Offering support to develop participation requests through established networks
- Supporting community empowerment events, briefing, and CPD training for Elected Members

For the period April 2018 to March 2019 Aberdeenshire Council received one participation request. One request was accepted and zero requests were refused. The decision notice can be found on the Council [website](#). A summary of the request is displayed in figure 1

Making a Request

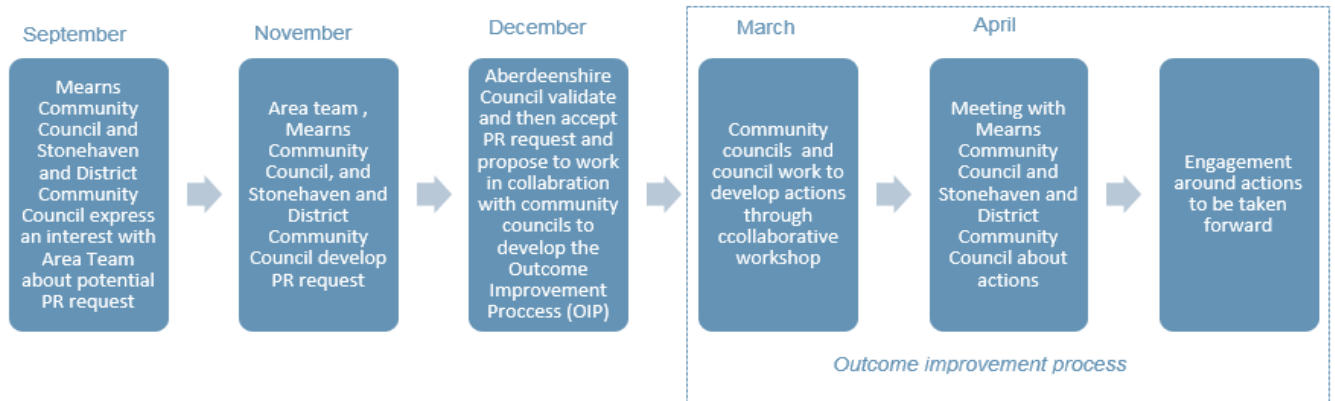
The council has developed a process to enable community groups to develop and submit a Participation Request. A form for community groups to use is available on the council's website. Community groups are encouraged to discuss their requests informally with the local Area Manager prior to formally submitting a request.

When groups are thinking about a request they should consider:

1. What are the objectives and what do they want to improve in their community?
2. Do they have support for the ideas within the community?
3. Has there been an opportunity to do anything about the outcome before?
4. What barriers have previously existed to stop them being involved in improving the outcome?
5. Do they require support to participate in an improvement process?

From mountain to sea

Figure 1: PR process



What to expect

When a request is granted, the community group will be invited to take part in an 'outcome improvement process'. This is a process between the council and, the community group and other relevant people or organisations. What it will look like, and how long it will take, will depend on the nature of the request. It is likely to involve meetings and written documents. Those involved will have the chance to share and listen to different ideas and perspectives on the issue.

An outcome improvement process should lead to an improvement in an outcome. This may or may not be based on the ideas of the community body, and the final decision on what to do is still made by the Council. The community body will be supported to take part and also get to see how any decision is reached.

The aim of the Outcome Improvement Process displayed at Figure 1 is to work in partnership with interested community council representatives to design and implement improvements that aims to support Community Empowerment and improve and encourage equitable participation in decision making around Participatory Budgeting (PB) policy.

As the Outcome Improvement Process is ongoing, no immediate changes have been made to a public service provided by or on behalf of the council. However it is anticipated that the request may result in improvements in how the council promote and facilitate the participation of members of the public in the decisions and activities of the council, including in the allocation of budgets. It is hoped through the process, changes will also include:

- A positive dialogue between the council and participants about community empowerment and PB
- Increased confidence in the council policy development framework
- Improvements in practice around the sharing of information between Community Councils and departments within the Council