



# **Civil society engagement on open government – review and where to next?**

Thursday 6, April 2017

## **Agenda and meeting notes**

The aim of this meeting is to provide an opportunity to focus on the wider civil society engagement around open government in Scotland to date and to seek an aligned view for where/how/what we do next in developing the civil society network and engagement on current and future open government action plans.



## Meeting agenda

Date: Thursday, 6 April 2017

Time: 14:00 – 15:30

Venue: Raeburn Room, Mansfield Traquair, 15 Mansfield Pl, Edinburgh EH3 6BB

1	14:00	<b>Welcome and introduction</b>  <i>Ruchir Shah</i>
2	14:10	<b>Session one: The Civil Society Network</b>  <p>This session will review the efforts made so far in developing the Network and will seek to reach a consensus on next steps, such as guiding principles and structure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we get to a more sustainable, well-connected, legitimate civil society network that will lead to further engagement?</li> <li>• How do we reach a network that can effectively scrutinise the actions of government in delivering the current action plan and future plans?</li> </ul>
3	14:35	<b>Session two: National action plans</b>  <p>This session will review the efforts made so far to engage with Scotland's OG National Action Plan and will seek to reach next steps for the remaining period and any future plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are our thoughts on the pioneer national action plan? What are our priorities for engaging with this plan in the months ahead?</li> <li>• How do we balance this with other work to progress open government within Scotland's civil society?</li> </ul>
4	15:05	<b>Session three: Building the movement</b>  <p>This session will review and agree next steps on work being undertaken to grow interest and involvement from civil society and citizens in the open government movement in Scotland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will the 'Open Government Pioneer's Project' position civil society and citizens to better engage with future open government action plans?</li> <li>• What other ways are we growing interest and involvement from civil society and citizens in the open government agenda?</li> </ul>



## Meeting Notes

Notes of meeting held on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017

**Present** Shaben Begum, Paul Bradley, Joanna Clark, Fiona Garven, Lorraine Gillies, Doreen Grove, Emma Harvey, Anne Kidd, Leah Lockhart, Mike McLean, Kaela Scott, Ruchir Shah, Alex Stobart, Andy Williamson

**Notes (these notes were available for review and editing up to Friday 5<sup>th</sup> May)**

### Introductions

- The meeting opened with a brief introduction from Ruchir Shah, noting the time set aside would be used as an opportunity to focus on the wider civil society engagement around open government in Scotland to date, and to seek an aligned view for where/how/what we do next in developing the network and engagement on current and future actions plans.

### Overview of OGP / Scotland's Pioneer status

- Andy Williamson gave an overview of the Open Government Partnership, including the rationale for why the Partnership was formed. The group was informed about the three pillars that underpin OGP – openness, transparency, accountability – and it was emphasised that OGP can only work if there is a real partnership between government and civil society. A relationship with no power imbalance would require trust from both sides to ensure government and people can work better together.
- Doreen Grove informed the group of Scotland's unique status as a pioneer for Open Government, having been selected by the Open Government Partnership as one of 15 Pioneer governments. Scotland's first Open Government National Action Plan, published in December 2016, sets out the commitments the Scottish Government has pledged to deliver as Pioneers of open government.
- The plan was by no means perfect, but the Scottish Government can learn from this. The need for real partnership was reiterated, but we are on a journey to significantly change the ways of working. Andy explained that civil society must use common sense when crowdsourcing ideas to ensure we are not wasting the time of government – editorial control of some sorts.
- Doreen explained that an Independent Monitor had been appointed to oversee the evaluation of the Scottish Government's progress towards implementing and monitoring the commitments.

### Session One: The Civil Society Network

- This session reviewed the efforts made so far in developing the Network and sought to reach a consensus on next steps, such as guiding principles and structure.
- Scope and purpose of this network cannot only focus on contributing to, monitoring and delivering national OG action plans and needs broader focus. It should focus



on 1) open government as a movement and a vision (movement building) and 2) the action plans as part of a bigger structural partnership with government (capacity building).

- Mike noted the importance of remembering that not all government is national and that the role of local government was hugely important. Doreen informed the group that a meeting between Scottish Government and COSLA was upcoming to discuss how OGP – which sits at the national level – could trickle down to the local level.
- Andy explained that OGP is not just about national governments, and the pioneer tier was an example of how OGP has changed direction on this. People matter too – it's not all about processes and data and that's where OG has got it wrong in the past.
- Mapping of expertise and connections within Scotland's Open Government Forum would be a good place to begin to understand what Scotland's Open Government Network currently looks like and how that knowledge and those connections could broaden reach.
- Network would need a point of contact to the public. Not a steering group but facilitators (act as brokerage and attend meetings). This can work in the short term but could easily be adapted to involve other groups.
- UK Network is good practice for OGP. Steering group responsible for direction. Has worked well for three years with theme leads sitting on the steering group responsible for meeting/engaging with government counterparts. For example, Andy is responsible for Public Accountability (Parliament).
- Scotland's Network could take a similar approach, with thematic facilitators paired with government counterparts (currently one for each commitment). However, there needs to be consistency with who is attending meetings with civil service and ministers on behalf of the network.
- Ideally we do not want a network that is too loose that's unstructured, but equally we do not want a rigid steering group. A preferred option would be facilitators and communicators who play a role on behalf of the network.
- Important for any facilitators to have a two-way role in reaching out to government but also reporting back to the network it's engaging on behalf of.
- There was also a point raised over how it's decided who attends the Scottish Government's Pioneer Steering Group?

## Session Two: National Action Plans

- An overview of the historical context behind Scotland's first national action plan was provided. The plan consists of five actions that Scotland is already doing, but the first plan is about keeping us in the movement and allowing us to learn to move ahead.
- Commitment on participatory budgeting shows fragility of action plan. There's been no real deep analysis of where we are with PB. There are limits to what Scottish Government can do with facilitating move towards 1% - local authorities/public bodies have a big role to play. Audit Scotland interested in impact of 1% (not 1%)



per local authority, but 1% of total local authority budgets - changed in final action plan).

- Audit Scotland will be looking at impact of PB – late to party but are meeting on this. Will Open Government Action Plan change how Audit Scotland looks at things?
- Network could learn from East Renfrewshire Centre for Collaborative Impact, which takes a design approach by bringing people together with an interest in people that want to give their support. Process is about ensuring everyone has an opportunity to take part. Phrasing the discussion along the lines of 'What would make your life a bit easier?', rather than 'would you want to get involved in participatory budgeting?'

### Session Three: Building the movement

- A brief mention of upcoming opportunities to engage through various channels was provided however, there was not enough time to cover the following two points on agenda
  - *How will the 'Open Government Pioneer's Project' position civil society and citizens to better engage with future open government action plans?*
  - *What other ways are we growing interest and involvement from civil society and citizens in the open government agenda?*
- The group was reminded of the need to act in an open and transparent way, including the process of formalising Scotland's Open Government Network. There should be a commitment to publish as much as we can, including the big lottery funding that is difficult to find. The suggested structure for Scotland's Open Government Network needs to be circulated to an open audience to ensure the process aligns with OGP principles.
- Offers were made from various people around the table to help take forward engagement, and a plan would be circulated by SCVO in due course.