

Finance and Resources Committee

10am, Tuesday, 25 April 2023

Participatory Budgeting (PB) Progress Report

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

Members of the Finance and Resources Committee are recommended:

- 1.1 to note the progress made in the development of PB activity during 2022/23, including in the areas highlighted within Cllr Caldwell's motion; and.
- 1.2 to note the proposed activity for 2023/24.

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Participatory Budgeting (PB) Progress Report

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report summarises the progress made in implementing the Council's approach to participatory budgeting and responds to the motion agreed at the Finance and Resources Committee on 10 November 2022.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Finance and Resources Committee at its meeting on 21 October 2021 agreed the Council's PB framework. The Committee also agreed proposed plans to develop the approach in future years to meet incrementally the Scottish Government requirement to allocate 1% of the Council's annual budget using PB. This reflects the flexibility afforded by the Scottish Government post-pandemic both in terms of the timeline for achieving the 1% target and scope in defining the approach and specific focus of PB activity.
- 3.2 To support this development work, one-off funding of £0.100m was approved as part of the 2022/23 revenue budget. Specifically, the funds have been used to support:
- (i) the creation of the Edinburgh Community Climate Fund (ECCF), a grant-based pilot PB initiative for community groups within the city;
 - (ii) development of £eith Chooses, an established PB initiative; and
 - (iii) provision of training, involving officers and community members, to progress the development of the Neighbourhood Investment Programme (NIP) using mainstreaming PB-based approaches.
- 3.3 Subsequently to these decisions, an adjusted motion was agreed by the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee on 29 September 2022 which in addition to noting key aspects of current work, required the following action to be taken:
- (1) To request that the Council reaffirm the importance of meeting the 1% of Council Budget on Participatory Budgeting target.
 - (2) To recommend that a plan be submitted within two cycles to the Finance and Resource Committee on:

- a) How it planned to support on a realistic and sustainable basis the existing PB scheme £eith Chooses (and others like it, if developed) for community grants; and
- b) How it planned to develop new model(s) of PB for more communities and appropriate for new areas of direct democratic involvement, such as green/environmental schemes, health care priorities and improvement of public spaces.
- (3) To note the work of the Ripple in Craigentiny and Duddingston Ward piloting a PB scheme there.
- (4) To therefore add that local charities should be included and consulted on the process of expanding PB where appropriate.

3.4 In accordance with respective Committee remits, this recommendation was referred on to and agreed by the Finance and Resources Committee on 10 November 2022. Activity in relation to these matters is provided in the following sections of the report.

4. Main report

Activity 2022/23

4.1 Key areas of work progressed and delivered during 2022/23 are set out below.

4.2 **Edinburgh Community Climate Fund (ECCF)** – A pilot initiative ran from January to March 2023. PB development funding of £0.070m (from the £0.100m budget) was used, together with an initial contribution from the net-zero budget of £0.030m. The latter was subsequently uplifted by a further £0.040m from the net-zero budget due to high levels of demand, giving an overall fund of £0.140m to support community initiatives to tackle climate change. The fund aimed to:

- (a) create opportunities for community leadership and learning on climate change;
- (b) reduce greenhouse gas emissions within communities and contribute to the net-zero agenda for Edinburgh;
- (c) generate sustainable projects for the benefit of local people to build resilience or adapt to climate change within communities; and
- (d) build relationships between neighbourhoods of different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds to work together on just, equitable and accessible climate and resilience activities contributing to the city's net-zero agenda, also ensuring that activities work towards reducing or removing barriers for disabled people in the transition to net-zero.

- 4.3 The pilot was managed by a Steering Group comprising relevant Council officers and third sector representatives, including the member of staff with responsibility for the Ripple Project PB initiative.
- 4.4 Edinburgh residents cast over 10,000 votes to choose their favourite initiatives from the 56 eligible community project ideas, with 8 securing funding. An evaluation of the pilot is underway to inform subsequent PB-related initiatives and following the recent approval of the motion by Councillor Mumford on the ECCF, a detailed report will be presented to the Policy and Sustainability Committee in due course.
- 4.5 **CONSUL Pilot** - A key objective of the ECCF pilot process was to test and use the CONSUL platform branded as [Your Voice](#) for use in Edinburgh. CONSUL is an online platform for public participation in decision-making, launched initially by Madrid City Council and subsequently adopted by several governments worldwide, including the Scottish Government. CONSUL was used in a limited way in the pilot to collect project ideas and to facilitate the online vote. As it is essential to ensure that any digital platform is accessible and user-friendly for all community members and that there is a straightforward and equitable process to support participation, the ECCF evaluation will look to assess the functionality and limitations of the platform so that learning can be used to improve future PB processes.
- 4.6 **Neighbourhood Investment Programme (NIP)** – In the last 12 years, over 800 locally nominated Neighbourhood Environment Projects (NEPs) have been delivered throughout the city on housing account land. Investment has helped improve unloved open space and thoroughfares, tired fencing and prepared land for community growing. Following extensive engagement with colleagues and partners over the last 12 months, the Housing Operations Service has agreed a number of new project processes including a commitment to participatory budgeting mainstreaming to ensure better opportunities for engagement, particularly from Council tenants, and better overall outcomes for communities. Currently Housing Teams are forming improvement groups citywide, bringing together a range of colleagues and stakeholders to bring improvement ideas to life, through to design, delivery and future planning for new projects. This work is being supported through the delivery of facilitated and tailored workshops by the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC).
- 4.7 **Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) in schools** – Use of PB-based approaches in PEF is increasingly being promoted nationally, with possible opportunities to extend this to other areas of attainment-related spending as part of a longer-term programme of development within schools. Several information sessions were facilitated in 2022 for senior school leaders to raise awareness of PB approaches. Building on previous PB work, Tynecastle High School is looking to use PB to allocate PEF funding in the 2023/24 academic session. Work will be undertaken to support a steering group to design the PB process for the school to generate ideas in line with PEF criteria before asking pupils to decide on preferred projects.
- 4.8 **Gypsy Traveller Community** – Through a process of deliberative dialogue, residents actively shaped the agreed design and layout of the North Cairntow site,

including landscaping, boundary treatments and chalet interior furnishings. The redesign realigned pitches to reduce unused space, increased pitch size and provided for a new Warden's Office and community space. Construction was completed in September 2022.

Other community activity

- 4.9 **£eith Chooses** – Another successful initiative has been run this year with a funding pot of £54,102 made available from a combination of Community Grants Funding and contributions from the Port of Leith Housing Association (Harbour Homes) and Trams to Newhaven. A total of 20 applications were submitted for the public vote, with 5,840 votes cast and 12 projects funded. Resource funding of £0.006m was provided from £0.100m PB one-off development fund to support the activity, together with substantial officer time.
- 4.10 **Ripple Project** – “LCR Stands Up” is The Ripple Project's application of Participatory Budgeting. During a two-year process (2021-2023), a steering group consisting of 7 local residents accepted 32 project ideas aiming to address issues identified in Locality Improvement Plans and in separate community-based research for public voting. This has resulted in £37,000 being distributed amongst 22 different successful projects voted for by 400 local community members, generating around 1,200 individual votes.
- 4.11 These community-led projects were supported through a combination of contributions from the Scottish Government Investing in Communities Fund, Development Trusts Association Scotland, National Lottery Awards for All and Port of Leith Housing Association.

Future Plans

- 4.12 A range of specific activity will be progressed during 2023/24 including (i) the Neighbourhood Investment Programme, with an indicative value of £2m per annum, (ii) Pupil Equity Funding, with further work with schools following the Tynecastle pilot and (iii) work with Parks and Greenspaces. Complementary to this, new areas of opportunity will be explored across services, for example Libraries, 20-Minute Neighbourhoods and Net-Zero activity.
- 4.13 Further work will also be progressed to extend the use of CONSUL, subject to the outcome of the ECCF pilot. This will include its use for PB activity and to identify opportunities for its further application as a tool to support broader community engagement activity and deliberative dialogue with communities.
- 4.14 The current PB framework identifies three strands of activity; grants, mainstreaming and commissioning. Whilst progress continues for the first two areas, opportunities within commissioning are at an earlier stage.
- 4.15 Further consideration will be given to extending the work directly in communities using the community grants fund and to explore linking in with other community driven activity. Included within this is consideration of the sustainability of £eith Chooses, with this to be taken forward by the new Council Empowerment Team. In

addition, and as part of this, work will be undertaken to explore with neighbourhood networks the potential for using community grants funding to run PB initiatives in other localities in the city.

1% Scottish Government Target

- 4.16 Updates on progress towards allocating 1% of the Council's budget through PB will be included in the Council's Annual Performance Report. While the exact figure for 2022/23 has not yet been confirmed, this is anticipated to show an increase on 2021/22's equivalent figure of 0.32%, consistent with the Council's target of year-on-year improvement.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Work with services will continue to develop the programme noted above and to identify new potential opportunities for PB.
- 5.2 There is scope within this to re-establish a network of PB champions. This was originally set up to provide a sounding board to inform the Council's approach to PB and comprised community members and officers from the public and third sector. Through this group opportunities to work in partnership with communities and other public bodies could be explored.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The proposed approach to PB focuses first and foremost on how, rather than where, available funding is spent and, as such, is not about identifying a separate and/or additional resource.
- 6.2 There is, however, a resource cost associated with the development and running of PB initiatives that needs to be recognised. Given current budget constraints, support for PB will need to be prioritised (and other activities correspondingly assigned lower priority) to facilitate the development and expansion of the programme in the medium to long-term and considered as part of costed project plans.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 PB offers the potential to achieve better outcomes for individuals and communities by involving and engaging local people in having a direct say in how public money is spent in their community. Resources are allocated through a process of community participation in the decision-making process, in order to meet identified local need.

8. Background reading/external reference

- 8.1 [Motion by Councillor Caldwell – Importance of Participatory Budgeting – referral from the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee](#), Finance and Resources Committee, 10 November 2022
- 8.2 [Participatory Budgeting: Progress Update](#), Finance and Resources Committee, 7 October 2021

9. Appendices

None.