

Highland Community Planning Partnership
Community Planning Board – 19 December 2017

Agenda Item	7.
Report No	CPB 19/17

Participatory Budgeting - Update

Report by Community and Democratic Engagement Manager

Recommendation:

The Board are asked to consider the update on the development of participatory budgeting and the opportunities for enhanced partnership approaches.

1 Participatory Budgeting in Highland

- 1.1 Participatory budgeting (PB) sits within the ***context of the Community Empowerment Act and is a key element of how we respond to the requirements placed on us by the Act.*** It is recognised as a way for local people to have a direct say in how public funds are used to address local needs. It is a method which when used alongside other models of community engagement and empowerment forms a wider strategic approach to advancing participatory democracy in local decision making and strengthening local representative democracy.

Highland PB is designed and led at a local level. It creates a partnership of local activists supported by public agencies to initiate and organise PB. The entire process including the *scope, scale and method of decision-making* are created and agreed by the partnership at a local level.

This approach to community engagement and participation leads to the delivery of better, more responsive services and better outcomes for communities. The PB activity in Highland is a key mechanism to empower communities in Highland. By further developing PB in Highland the benefits will include-

- Increased local democratic participation
- increased confidence and skills among local people
- higher numbers of people volunteering in their communities
- satisfaction with quality of life in a local neighbourhood
- stronger community networks
- better awareness of services available across all sectors
- Increased awareness of areas of deprivation driving the delivery of more services in them which are more effectively targeted.

2 Progress So Far

- 2.1 Our PB programme so far has taken place *in 8 of the community partnership areas*, this has included a mix of face to face events/processes and digital approaches. *In total 16 processes have taken place.*

In 16/17 the PB programme also trialled the Place Standard tool in two areas and introduced senior managers from Highland Councils Community Services to the process with communities in 3 events. These elements are with a view to linking the intelligence gathered at events to community partnership activity and to inform how we apply the process to mainstream activity.

A table illustrating PB processes since 2015 is attached as appendix 1

The proposed programme for 17/18:

- makes further progress on completing the geography of PB in Highland
- utilises the Place Standard tool
- engages citizens with local community planning arrangements
- launches a digital tool (participate-funded by the Scottish Government and supported by Demsoc) in one established area
- works with senior managers and partners to scope out applying the process to mainstream activity

3 Impact of PB

3.1 The PB events have generally been well attended. Attendance has been from across the age and interest spectrum in communities. Groups bidding have included youth, sports, cultural, heritage and disability groups. The feedback from communities has been positive in terms of our willingness to hand over decision-making, the knowledge and awareness they have gained and participating has demonstrably increased confidence levels in community members who might not have spoken in front of their community before.

In 2 instances too few bids were made by the community to require the holding of a decision event. This was resolved by asking the partnership group to decide on grant allocation. Although disappointing the processes still gave us a valuable insight as to public agencies connectedness within those communities.

In terms of illustrating impact, PB at a small grant giving level offers limited opportunity to capture long term impact however the following examples give a flavour of the type of impact, the intelligence that can be gained from PB and the uses we can put PB to-

- At one event 3 separate sports groups made bids that talked about the need for improved changing facilities for their club. There is a clear opportunity here for clubs to collaborate thereby increasing their chances of delivering improved facilities, there being less cost to the public purse, there being increased opportunities to share capacity e.g. around volunteering and for the public sector to play an enabling role.
- At one event cultural/heritage projects scored highly although they might not have been considered as important by local Member/officials one being from a very small village with very few attendees at the event and another being remote from any particular community.
- At a number of events Police Scotland used the gathering to promote their Your View Counts survey. They had the opportunity to reach a greater number of and a broader range of people with no additional capacity or

spend required to carry out this engagement. It was a good illustration of aligning engagement activity.

4 Next Steps

4.1 The PB activity in Highland has three main aims-

Outcome 1: to empower individuals and communities by involving them in the design and delivery of the services they use

Outcome 2: increase inclusion and diversity in local community planning by supporting sections of the community to participate in the PB process, particularly in areas of deprivation, to open up new channels of communication between the public sector and 'hard-to-reach' community members

Outcome 3: to facilitate a change in organisational behaviour around service design and delivery

5 Mainstreaming?

5.1 Up to this point PB has been applied to the distribution of discretionary grant aid, focused primarily on Council resources or additional funding provided by the Scottish Government. It has delivered strong results in terms of engaging communities, however in order to see the real benefits of greater public participation we require to move it toward the arena of mainstream services.

There is a requirement under ***The Community Empowerment Act (Part 10) for Local Authorities to engage the public in decision making including that around resources.***

In addition the Scottish Government has recently agreed with COSLA a target for local authorities to subject 1% of their budget to the a public decision making process.

Applying the process to mainstream activity is challenging. It raises challenges around –

- Altering our priorities to reflect a public decision
- Stopping current activity to follow this through
- Inflexibility of budgets
- Ensuring the community “voice” is varied and not just the loudest one
- Balancing the need for universal versus targeted service delivery

There are opportunities though-

- to “spend less, achieve more” through a better understanding of issues, what causes them and what might solve them
- to take a partnership approach to activity
- to enable other sectors better able to deliver

Some broad areas that could be subject to the process are-

- transport commissioning
- amenity activity e.g. grounds maintenance
- community and leisure facility scheduling

Highland has agreed to host a regional cluster of Councils to look at PB. This and other national fora will inform our approach to mainstreaming the process.

6 A Partnership Approach

6.1 The approach so far has focussed on Council discretionary budgets. However, partners have contributed in terms of supporting events, notably Police Scotland utilised some events to engage with the public for their “Your View Counts” survey.

A partnership approach could include-

- aligning planned engagement activity to PB events
- providing staff organisational support
- providing venue or other in kind support
- identifying budgets that could go in a PB pot focused on Locality planning activity
- identifying activity suitable for a PB approach

6.2 The Board are asked to consider how The CPP might develop its activity in this area.

Participatory Budgeting in Highland to date

Area	Area and amount distributed through PB			
	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2109
North, West and Central Sutherland		Sutherland £15K		
East Sutherland and Edderton				
Thurso and Northwest Caithness	Caithness £25k	Caithness £30k (May) & £30K (November)	Digital £15K	
Wick and East Caithness				
Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh				
Cromarty Firth				
Tain and Easter Ross				
Dingwall and Seaforth		Dingwall £24k		
Black Isle				
Eilean a Cheo		Skye £15k		
Aird and Loch Ness		Aird and Loch Ness £20k		
Inverness West		Inverness West £11K	£11k	
Inverness Central				
Inverness Millburn				
Inverness Ness-side		Hilton £7k		
Culloden and Ardersier				
Nairn and Cawdor	Nairnshire £25k	Nairnshire £13.5k		
Inverness South				
Badenoch and Strathspey		B&S £32K		
Fort William and Ardnamurchan	Lochaber £10k - Digital	Lochaber £30k - Digital		
Caol and Mallaig				