

Agenda Item	13
Report No	CIA/24/18

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: City of Inverness Area Committee

Date: 31st of May 2018

Report Title: **Participatory Budgeting Toward Mainstreaming**

Report By: Acting Head of Policy

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report updates Members on progress with participatory budgeting (PB) in the City of Inverness area. It sets out the Council's approach to PB - why we are doing it and what it delivers for us and communities. It highlights that the next stage of developing PB is to explore how the approach can be applied to mainstream activity and the engagement of the public in decision making around those resources. It suggests some areas of service activity that might benefit from engaging communities with a PB approach to further develop and take forward participatory democracy within Highland.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note and comment on the PB events held in the area in 2018
- ii. Consider and comment on how PB might be applied to mainstream service areas

3. Participatory Budgeting in Highland

- 3.1 Participatory budgeting (PB) 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, can form a wider strategic approach to advancing participatory democracy in local decision making and strengthening local representative democracy.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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
 - support people volunteering in their communities
 - satisfaction with quality of life in a local neighbourhood
 - stronger community networks
 - better understanding and awareness of services available across all sectors
 - Increased awareness of areas of need, driving the delivery of more effectively targeted services.
 - Increased awareness of the financial challenges Councils and partners

4. City of Inverness Participatory Budgeting

- 4.1 Since March 2017 two participatory budgeting processes have been conducted in the City of Inverness area-
- Aird and Loch Ness (“Your Ward, Your Cash, Your Choice”) – Saturday 10 March 2018
 - Merkinch Community Council Area (“Building a Stronger Merkinch”) – Saturday 24 March 2018

The successful projects are listed in appendix 1.

- 4.2 Each of these events was co-ordinated by Council staff but the partnership groups formed to design and deliver them drew staff and volunteers from a range of agencies and organisations in the community. This contribution was invaluable in taking forward the process.

4.3 At these events evaluation forms were attached to the ballot papers. In total there were 143 surveys completed at PB events in the City of Inverness area.

Event	Attendance	Voters	Completed surveys
Aird and Loch Ness	200	184	95
Merkinch Community Council Area	65	56	48
Total:	265	240	143

4.4 In the table below, the percentage of people who stated “YES” to the statements on surveys are detailed:

	STATEMENT	AIRD AND LN	MERKINCH
1	The day was well organised	81	92
2	The event was in a good location	86	100
3	I liked the presentations	92	94
4	I think everything was done fairly	79	85
5	I feel this was good for my area	82	94
6	I would do this again	84	94
7	I think this was a good way to distribute money	81	75
8	I have made new connections in my local area	39	58
9	I have found out about new projects in my local area	85	96

Across the City of Inverness area, this means that:

- 86.5% thought the events were well organised
- 93% thought the events were in good locations
- 93% liked the presentations
- 82% thought everything was done fairly
- 88% felt PB was good for their area
- 78% felt PB was a good way to distribute money
- 48.5% made new connections in their local area
- 90.5% found out about new projects in their local area

4.5 Members will see that the PB events were very successful in terms of being well organised, making people more aware of what other groups are doing etc. Where concerns were expressed this tended to be around-

- The balance between rural villages and larger population centres across Aird and Loch Ness.
- The large number of applications meant events took longer than expected meaning members of the public had to commit time to the process.
- The element of competing against other worthy projects made some groups feel uncomfortable.
- The age participants should be able to vote at caused debate.
- The cost of running PB events was queried.

5. Mainstreaming

5.1 Up to this point PB has been applied to the distribution of discretionary grant aid. 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.

5.2 There is a requirement under The Community Empowerment Act (Part 10) 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 .

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

- Altering our priorities to reflect a public decision
- Changing activity to reflect new priorities
- Inflexibility of budgets
- Ensuring the community “voice” is varied and not just the loudest one
- Balancing the need for universal versus targeted service delivery
- Balancing urban versus rural needs

5.4 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 or that can contribute to delivery

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

- transport commissioning
- community service activity e.g. amenity and environmental works or activity around housing
- community asset planning

6. A Partnership Approach

6.1 The approach so far has focussed on Council discretionary budgets. However, community planning 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

- identifying activity suitable for a PB approach

7. Implications

7.1 Resource

PB is about the way resources are allocated. There are no direct resource implications but use of PB can result in spin off benefits being gained from the process.

7.2 Legal

As noted in paragraph 5.1 there is a legal requirement to engage the public in decision making including that around resources and 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

7.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)

The essential element of PB is community involvement and the local events had positive spin offs. The events have also provided areas for learning and a further roll out of PB will reflect this. The PB process has, and will continue to consider, how best to ensure that people with protected characteristics are supported to be involved.

7.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever, Risk, Gaelic

None identified

Date: 17/05/18

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Appendix 1: City of Inverness Successfully Funded PB Applicants

City of Inverness Successfully Funded PB Applicants

AREA	GROUP	PROJECT	FUNDING
Aird and Loch Ness	Glenurquhart Highschool S6 supported by the Parent Council	Say No To Plastic Bottles	£1,500
Aird and Loch Ness	Beauly in Bloom	Replacement of Planters	£350
Aird and Loch Ness	Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council	Foyers Public Toilets Running Costs	£1,500
Aird and Loch Ness	Kiltarlity Hall Association	Refurbishing 20 year old Kitchen in Community Hall	£1,500
Aird and Loch Ness	Glenurquhart Childcare Centre	Improvements to Outdoor Learning	£1,500
Aird and Loch Ness	Glenurquhart Highschool Rugby Team	Rugby Posts	£1,500
Aird and Loch Ness	Great Glen Active Schools	Free Extra Curricular Activities within the Whole Area	£1,500
Aird and Loch Ness	Beauly Primary School Garden Club	Upgrade and Regenerate the School Garden	£1,130
Aird and Loch Ness	Glenurquhart Bowling Club	Improving Accessibility to Bowling	£600
Aird and Loch Ness	Balnain Primary School	Top to Tot Reading	£1,500
Aird and Loch Ness	Strathglass Community Council	Defibrillators for Strathglass	£1,280
Aird and Loch Ness	Strathglass Shinty Club	Second Team Development	£1,480
Aird and Loch Ness total funding:			£15,340

AREA	GROUP	PROJECT	FUNDING
Merkinch CC Area	Merkinch Football Academy	Stronger Together	£2,500
Merkinch CC Area	Kings Inverness Church	Bike Shed Coffee House	£2,500
Merkinch CC Area	South Kessock Residents Association	Community Activities	£1,373
Merkinch CC Area	LGBT Youth Scotland	LGBT Youth Scotland – Trips and Development Officer	£500
Merkinch CC Area	For the Right Reasons	Community Environmental Project	£2,500
Merkinch CC Area	Merkinch Activity Group	Merkinch Activity Group	£500
Merkinch CC Area	The Clay Studio	Building Skills and Confidence through Creative Arts	£500
Merkinch CC Area	Inverness Sea Cadets	Improvements to our PortaCabins	£2,500
Merkinch CC Area	Trinity Church	Youth Street Art – “Wild Art”	£500
Merkinch CC Area	Highland Stags	Training and Fitness Programme	£500
Merkinch CC Area	Merkinch Primary School Parent Council	Outdoor Play Equipment	£1,558
Merkinch CC Area	Merkinch Community Council	Old Ticket Office Clean-Up	£2,069
Merkinch CC Area	Karate Alba	Merkinch Karate Club	£2,500
Merkinch CC Area total funding:			£20,000

City of Inverness Area total funding:	<u>£35,340</u>
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