



REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE 14 JANUARY 2020

SUBJECT: PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the requirement for Participatory Budgeting from 1 April 2020 and to seek approval for a Moray wide Policy Statement and Framework relating to Participatory Budgeting.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (B) (1) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the financial and budgetary policy of the Council

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) approves the Participatory Budgeting Policy Statement and Framework as detailed in APPENDIX 1;**
- (ii) instructs officers to identify service areas for Participatory Budgeting within Moray and report these back to this committee along with plans to run the appropriate Participatory Budgeting exercises for the first budget areas; and**
- (iii) requires that officers report back to Committee the outcome of the participatory budgeting exercises once completed.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 provides a range of powers to strengthen community voices with decision-making that directly impacts them. It makes particular provisions on participation in public decision making and the role that Participatory Budgeting can play in this.

- 3.2 As a consequence of this, on the 29 October 2017, the Scottish Government and COSLA agreed a framework to work together to have at least 1% of Council budgets subject to Participatory Budgeting by the end of the 2020/21 Financial Year.
- 3.3 The 1% has been defined as: “Total estimated expenditure for revenue, as per the local government finance circular, less assumed council tax intake”. This is a minimum target and can be made up of revenue and capital expenditure.
- 3.4 The intention is to move Participatory Budgeting from a community grant-making model, which has been predominant, to Mainstream Participatory Budgeting where the community is more engaged in influencing larger elements of the budget as appropriate.
- 3.5 Participatory Budgeting is a democratic way for people to have a direct say on how public money is spent. The process gives local people the opportunity to identify and discuss what matters to them in their communities and to vote on their priorities.
- 3.6 Local Authorities throughout Scotland are at various stages of implementing their Participatory Budgeting strategy and identifying areas within their service budgets to use for PB exercises.
- 3.7 Examples from other authorities include;
- (i) Stirling Council launched: “Your Stirling: You Decide” where local people were given the opportunity to decide how to spend £700,000 of budget set aside for infrastructure and environment proposals.
 - (ii) Fife Council launched: “Moving to the Mainstream. Let’s Talk about Transporting People” where the community will be involved in designing the £22m passenger transport service
 - (iii) North Ayrshire launched: “Your Environment, You Decide” where £750,000 of the open space grounds maintenance budget was allocated through a participatory budgeting exercise

4. POLICY STATEMENT AND FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 The policy statement detailed in **APPENDIX 1** was initially drafted before being presented via Money for Moray to representatives from the local community (Community Council, Money for Moray, Area Forums and the Federation of Village Halls) for their input and feedback. A subsequent meeting was then arranged between Council Officers and community representatives representing the various community groups, to discuss and agree amendments. These changes were adopted into the final document which then received sign off.

- 4.2 The statement recognises and adopts the 7 key features of the PB Scotland and Scottish Government “Participatory Budgeting Charter for Scotland” contained in **APPENDIX 2**
- 4.3 The aim of Participatory Budgeting (PB) within Moray is to recognise that it can help build relationships between people, communities and public organisations by encouraging participation.
- 4.4 It is anticipated that Moray will achieve the aims of PB outlined in 4.3 above in a number of ways none of which are exclusive. These will include: using the Moray Community Planning Partnership Community Engagement Strategy and National Standards for Community Engagement; proactively involving and engaging local people in making decisions on how money is spent in their community; building on the foundation of various earlier PB projects offered in Moray by groups such as: Money for Moray, Bucks for Buckie, tsiMoray (You Choose) and the Church of Scotland Community Choices.
- 4.5 **APPENDIX 1** lays out the proposed structure for delivering PB with a Steering Group responsible for giving strategic guidance and focus to the process and a Delivery Team, including local community representation, to run the PB exercise. The makeup of the Delivery Team will be fluid and it is expected that it will change to reflect the service that has been identified.
- 4.6 Public / community voting will take place to identify the preferred option for the allocation of budget; votes will be counted, verified and results announced by the Delivery Team. There will be no appeal mechanism and it is the responsibility of the Lead Officer of the Delivery Team to ensure that the service delivers the budget in line with the outcome of the PB exercise.
- 4.7 It is anticipated that voting will be - depending upon geographical area and type/size of PB budget - a mix of digital, town hall meetings and canvassing.
- 4.8 Digital voting will require IT support and the system of choice for most local authorities is the open source platform Consul created by Madrid City Council. The platform is used in 100 cities across 55 countries. COSLA has been actively engaged to develop a pilot that explores the broad range of features of the platform.
- 4.9 The pilot is a partnership with the Scottish Government, the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, the Improvement Service and the Democratic Society. COSLA is hosting the platform for member Councils. The first phase of the pilot began with online voting for West Dunbartonshire Council which ran between 8 and 23 February 2019 with over 4,000 votes being cast.
- 4.10 It is expected that Moray Council will adopt Consul as our own digital / online voting platform. Although Consul is a free to use platform, there is expected to be a cost element and resource impact upon the ICT department for initial setup and running.

5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Council's Corporate Plan recognises the value of increasing the involvement and influence of our communities in service design and elements of our budget. The plan commits to empowering and supporting communities to build capacity by becoming involved, influential and active in service design and delivery. Participatory Budgeting will help to take these commitments forward.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 makes particular provisions on participation in public decision making and the role that Participatory Budgeting can play in this.

(c) Financial implications

There will be cost implications associated with Participatory Budgeting, in particular from communicating and promoting the exercise within the Community; together with potential costs for setting up IT system to run an online PB voting exercise. These will be contained as far as possible to ensure they are affordable and will be identified as part of the Council's financial planning cycle as the budget areas for PB are identified.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. However, early indications are that it may be challenging to identify suitable budget areas amounting to 1% in the timescale required. To address this work will continue to develop PB over the financial year and to plan ahead for future PB opportunities, for example in future planned capital works.

(e) Staffing Implications

It is anticipated that there will be resource implications associated with Participatory Budgeting, with a requirement that Officers of the Community Support Unit, ICT and from participating service areas will be required to set up and / or assist in the running of Participatory Budgeting. It is expected that these will be met from existing resources and no additional staff will be required.

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising directly from this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

The process of Participatory Budgeting creates an opportunity to address socio-economic inequalities at locality level in partnership with local community groups and community planning partners. In order to ensure that PB meets local needs, a number of locality planning projects were started in 2018 leading to local plans by and for the community that directly influence the services we provide.

(h) Consultations

Members of the Corporate and Senior Management Teams, the Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance, the Chief Financial Officer, the Equal Opportunities Officer and Mrs L Rowan, Committee Services Officer have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This report provides details on Participatory Budgeting as it will apply to Scotland and proposes a Policy Statement and Framework for adoption and implementation of mainstream PB in relation to the Moray Council budget.**
- 6.2 The report identifies that Participatory Budgeting will require a voting mechanism which may include the free to use digital platform Consul**

Author of Report: Paul Connor, Principal Accountant
Background Papers:
Ref: