

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Public Protection
DATE	16 May 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Participatory Budgeting
REPORT NUMBER	CUS/23/134
DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Jacqui McKenzie
REPORT AUTHOR	Paul Tytler
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1, 1.4.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This is a report on the impact of Participatory Budgeting in Aberdeen.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee :-

- 2.1 Notes the progress on implementing Participatory Budgeting.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Participatory Budgeting (PB) is an innovative process which enables residents to have direct decision making powers (rather than a more traditional consultation mechanism) over the allocation of resources in their communities. It is a powerful means of community engagement, often bringing large numbers of new people into community engagement processes, as well as improving levels of understanding of budgetary processes, and demonstrating increased levels of trust between residents, elected members and officers.
- 3.2 In Aberdeen, several PB processes have been carried out since 2015 by Community Learning and Development, the Fairer Aberdeen Board, Localities and Housing, under the branding UDecide. Most have been specific sums of money allocated for PB and have operated through a grant making process for voluntary and community groups, with residents voting either online or at a public event. Some mainstream housing budgets for environmental improvements have been allocated through engagement with tenants. In addition, Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations (ACVO) ran a PB process last year.
- 3.3 In 2017, COSLA and the Scottish Government agreed a framework with an aspirational aim that 1% of local authority budgets should be subject to PB. The position for the last four years is in the table below. It should be noted that the Hardship Funding in 20/21 and 21/22 was additional funding in respect of Covid and that the expenditure for 2022/23 is unaudited at this time:

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Finance (ex C/Tax)	361,233,000	361,233,000	371,766,000	409,782,000
1%	3,612,230	3,612,230	3,717,660	4,097,820
Exp subject to PB				
Environmental Improvements	533,926.97	361,000	819,000	722,652.74
Fairer Aberdeen	1,532,146.12	1,607,000	1,525,000	1,519,368.40
Hardship Funding	-	286,000	305,000	-
Total	2,066,073.19	2,254,000	2,649,000	2,242,021.40

3.4 The annual City Voice survey includes a question ‘Do you feel able to participate in decisions and change things for the better?’ which for the last three surveys has related to people’s neighbourhoods (prior to that the question related to the City Centre). The results over the last three years have been fairly static in response, the detail can be seen [here](#). The question is used as an indicator for the Community Empowerment Group (CEG) Stretch Outcome 16, so the data is available on the CEG website [Community Empowerment Group - Community Planning Aberdeen](#).

3.5 Examples of recent PB exercises include the following:

Climate and Natural Environment Policy Service

3.5.1 The Climate and Natural Environment Policy Service worked in partnership with the Fairer Aberdeen Team and Fairer Aberdeen board to make positive environmental changes in Aberdeen by providing a £25k community environmental fund through U-Decide Participatory Budgeting to aid communities in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss. Criteria for environmental projects was developed to benefit or improve the physical environment in a way that will improve people's lives, benefit wildlife or improve the natural environment.

3.5.2 11 Environmental Projects were funded in 2021/22 with a total value £33k (£8k was allocated from Fairer Aberdeen Funding for relevant projects) with innovative ideas to improve the natural environment and encourage young people to engage with outdoor spaces. These included community gardens, food growing, coastal learning activities, outdoor cooking facilities, event shelters, litter clean ups and native tree planting along the banks of the Rivers Dee and Don.

- 3.5.3 The projects supported by participatory budgeting will contribute towards achieving the People and Place stretch outcomes in Community Planning Aberdeen's Local Outcome Improvement Plan whilst also supporting the aims of the [Aberdeen Adapts Climate Adaptation Framework](#).

Fairer Aberdeen Participatory Budgeting (PB) 2021-2022

- 3.5.4 During 2021-22 the Fairer Aberdeen Board allocated £75,000 to undertake a PB small grants process. A steering group of Board members, including ACVO, the Health and Social Care Partnership, and community representatives, developed and ran the PB. The steering group decided to focus on young people, with a recognition of the impact Covid 19 restrictions had had on young people. They also decided to focus the funding on the priority areas of Cummings Park, Heathryfold, Mastrick, Middlefield, Northfield, Seaton, Tillydrone, Woodside, Torry, Kincorth, Ashgrove, Stockethill and George Street. The group asked for projects that would involve young people aged 12-18 years old, promote better health and wellbeing for young people, and support young people to build skills and relationships. Groups could apply for up to £3000.
- 3.5.5 As the steering group was working on developing the PB, they were approached by colleagues in the Council's Climate and Natural Environment Policy Service who had £25k of funding available for community use. They felt that PB could be a good way to enable the community to use this money to make environmental improvements and deliver projects that benefit people, wildlife and the environment. A member of the team joined the Fairer Aberdeen PB steering group and the criteria for applicants was widened to include tackling climate change and improving the natural environment.
- 3.5.6 Due to ongoing Covid-19 pandemic the steering group decided not to hold a public event to decide on funding but to have some online process for this. In the event, there were fewer applications received than expected, totalling just over £25,000. This may have been due to restrictions preventing activities taking place and venues being closed. There was also a variety of funding available at the time, much of it additional due to the pandemic. The group was aware that funding was also being distributed by ACVO's Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, and Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership's Health Improvement Fund. The Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund supported projects for adults only and the Health Improvement Fund was oversubscribed. As a result the steering group worked in partnership with ACVO and AHSCP to allocate funding to organisations that had applied to those funds but fitted better with the FA PB criteria. 26 projects received funding and the process highlighted the benefits of partnership working to support organisations seeking funding. This has led to the development of a LOIP Outcome Improvement Project looking at community funding and how to increase the number of community led organisations feeling supported by partners to access funding for community led initiatives.

3.5.7 The process of involving another team within the Council provided an opportunity to share learning and experience that the Fairer Aberdeen Board has built up over a number of years of delivering small grant PB events and taking a deliberative PB approach to allocating the Fairer Aberdeen Fund as a whole.

Press Release for more information:

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/news/community-projects-across-city-awarded-funding>

Aberdeen Council for Voluntary Organisations

3.5.8 In 2022, Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations (ACVO), with support from North East Scotland Climate Action Network (NESCOAN), managed and delivered the PB distribution of £333,333 from the Scottish Government's Just Transition Capital Fund to support Scotland's North East economy in its just transition to net zero.

3.5.9 There were 22 bids from projects to the fund, totalling £665K against the available budget of £333k. The online voting process was widely promoted, with 4541 votes cast (a small number were discounted for not complying with the procedure). Thirteen projects were supported – 12 with a full allocation of their funding bid, and the last with a partial allocation of the remaining funds. All were offered access to further funding advice. Full details about the projects with a breakdown of votes can be found [here](#).

Next steps 2023/24

3.6 Key areas for development during 2023/24 are:

- A [PB toolkit](#) has been developed to support services with the implementation of PB across the Council and work will be undertaken to develop the use of PB across services;
- The Fairer Aberdeen Board will undertake another PB exercise;
- PB will be developed to support the actions arising from Community Walkabouts;
- We will identify in 2023/24 particular areas of spend for which decision making can be made in the relevant communities for the 2024/25 budget

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Risk of not meeting the 1% target	Further work across Council services to implement PB promoting the new toolkit.	L	Yes
Compliance	Risk of not meeting the 1% target	Further work across Council services to implement PB promoting the new toolkit.	L	Yes
Operational	No significant risks		L	Yes
Financial	No significant risk		L	Yes
Reputational	No significant risks		L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No significant risks		L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2022-2023</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<u>Participatory budgeting</u> supports the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim to devolve at least 1% of the council's annual budget to communities, allowing them to decide their spending priorities through participative budgeting.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with communities to review the management of council-managed open spaces to create more sustainable and safer green areas and open spaces and develop a Community Environmental Improvement Fund, for communities to access, to implement their own small-scale local environmental improvements.
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	n/a
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	n/a
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The development of Participatory budgeting will support: Stretch outcome 16: 100% increase in the proportion of citizens who feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026
Regional and City Strategies	n/a

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Full impact assessment not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	not required
Other	n/a

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Paul Tytler
Title	Locality Inclusion Manager
Email Address	ptytler@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel	01224 067879

