

Purpose

1. This report provides an update on the Participatory Budgeting pilot as part of the national actions of the Antisocial Behaviour Framework that relates to the wider community safety agenda.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Strategic Group are asked to:-
 - i. Note that 14 Councils/Community Planning Partnerships have formally notified COSLA to declare their interest in being part of the Participatory Budgeting – ASB Pilot;
 - ii. Agree that an initial stakeholder information and awareness event should be held to encourage the development of creative uses of Participatory Budgeting;
 - iii. Agree that representatives on the ASB Community Engagement Sub-Group are asked to provide recommendations on the most suitable Participatory Budgeting projects to take forward based on specific selection criteria currently being determined;
 - iv. Note that the Minister for Community Safety and COSLA's Executive Groups would provide political approval to the Participatory Budgeting pilot projects; and
 - v. Note that COSLA and the Scottish Government would establish an appropriate evaluation system for the pilot projects.

Background on Participatory Budgeting

3. Participatory budgeting began in Brazil, where it has successfully empowered people in deprived communities since the late 1980s. Its tools and principles are now used in many places across the world. Over 300 municipalities or local authorities have used participatory budgeting, in countries such as Canada, Venezuela, Spain, France and Chile, as well as more recently in England.
4. Participatory budgeting is relatively new and is continually evolving. There is no fixed definition because innovative participatory budgeting projects constantly challenge existing explanations. A short definition is: Local communities decide how to allocate a small part of a public budget. If citizens or local communities directly make decisions on the allocation of any public money (not only small local authority budgets), this is participatory budgeting.
5. Participatory budgeting directly involves local people in making decisions on the spending and priorities for a defined public budget. Participatory budgeting processes can be defined by geographical area (whether that's a neighbourhood e.g. a couple of streets or a multi-member ward area) or on a specific theme basis e.g. antisocial behaviour within communities. This means engaging residents and community groups representative of all parts of the community to propose, discuss and vote on spending priorities. This approach also gives local people a role in the scrutiny and monitoring of the process and results to inform subsequent participatory budgeting decisions on an annual or repeatable basis. In addition, as part of the approach a wide range of techniques such as neighbourhood action planning, community surveys, participant appraisal prioritisation sessions etc can be used to facilitate discussions to determine local decisions for participatory budgeting.

Forms of Participatory Budgeting

6. Participatory budgeting projects in other countries have allocated spending on services including antisocial behaviour and crime, the environment, road improvements, activities for children and young people, health and fitness activities, community centres and improving assets such as football facilities. They have also been specific to certain neighbourhoods or areas, or local authority wide and themed e.g. children and young people.
7. As participatory budgeting is quite new, innovative forms are being developed all the time and new budgets, themes, partners and areas are demonstrating its adaptability.

Participatory budgeting can be flexible as it can be used to set the priorities for an entire budget for projects. They can be used in community planning as a first phase to help identify a community's priorities. Funding can then be allocated before the community votes for schemes it wants to implement within these priorities. Further information about participatory budgeting can be found at <http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/> which is the website of the Participatory Budgeting Unit. The Participatory Budgeting Unit is a project of the charity Church Action on Poverty based in Manchester. They support public sector and community groups in developing Participatory Budgeting processes in local areas within the UK.

8. The most important aspect of Participatory Budgeting is that the process is actually more important than the funding. This is because good Participatory Budgeting projects are about communities and about bringing them together to agree common goals and ambitions. In this case to address local antisocial behaviour issues.

Early Experience of Participatory Budgeting from England

9. As mentioned participatory budgeting is relatively new in the UK and a pilot exercise and is currently being undertaken in England. That said, a form of participatory budgeting has been used as a tool for supporting elected members as Community Champions in York City Council to useful effect. The participatory budgeting processes in York City Council have been an integral part of Ward Committee budgets, Estate Improvement Grant Processes and Neighbourhood Action Planning.
10. Further, some months ago in England and Wales the Policing Green Paper included a commitment to work with a number of police forces and local authorities to pilot Community Safety participatory budgets to inform a wider roll out in 2009. It is viewed that participatory budgeting within community safety policing partnerships could build effectively on the engagement already established. In addition, it could help improve community relations, tailor local services to community priorities and increase the accountability of local community planning agencies.

Benefits and Advantages of Participatory Budgeting

11. Participatory budgeting has been found to be most effective when conducted in an inclusive way helping bring about real change in the relationship between citizens, communities, local council officials and elected members. In the process of engaging with citizens in this way, it can create a number of benefits and advantages:-
 - It can bring diverse people together and support community cohesion;
 - It can help to raise local people's understanding of the complexities of public budget setting and deciding between competing priorities;
 - It can lead to real improvements in the way local people and elected members and council officials work together;
 - It can facilitate a local conversation about what a local neighbourhood or local ward want to become a reality;
 - It can develop both representative and participatory models of representation to work alongside each other;
 - It can promote empowerment of individuals and communities;
 - It can promote active citizenship to create better public services;
 - It can promote community development and capacity-building within communities; and
 - Participatory budgeting pilot activities would support the Scottish Community Empowerment Action Plan that has been developed by the Scottish Government and COSLA.

Participatory Budgeting within a Scottish Context relative to ASB

12. It is proposed that 3-5 Councils/Community Planning Partnerships take part in a participatory budgeting pilot to take forward as part of a specific national action of the Antisocial Behaviour Framework's community engagement element. This national action is set out as follows:-

The Scottish Government and COSLA will establish, by autumn 2009, a participatory budgeting pilot exercise across three Community Planning Partnership areas as part of the community empowerment agenda. Participatory budgeting should enable local community and neighbourhood groups to influence local action by helping to direct how small action funds are spent to develop solutions to local antisocial behaviour problems. This pilot exercise will be supported by COSLA and the Scottish Government through the provision of training, guidance and match-funding.

As such, it will be expected that Councils and Community Planning Partners would identify and allocate a small pot of funding which would be match funded by the Scottish Government up to a certain limit for the proposed participatory budgeting pilot exercise to be undertaken locally specifically in relation to addressing antisocial behaviour issues.

13. As part of this Scottish approach to participatory budgeting it is proposed that elected members will play a key role in an ASB participatory budgeting pilot within the selected Councils/Community Planning Partnerships that are selected for match funding. This is because elected members represent their local areas and are often more aware of issues and solutions there, given the high profile nature of ASB incidents and the detrimental impact on local communities. In addition, local elected members also provide contact with the citizens that participatory budgeting is aiming to engage.
14. Participatory budgeting in the pilot exercise will complement and enhance existing democratic structures as local elected members will play a big part in approving and supporting participatory budgeting by chairing or helping to facilitate events, explaining the impact of different options, and through monitoring and scrutiny to their local communities.
15. Members of the Strategic Group may also be aware that COSLA are proposing to run a training session on Community Engagement for elected members later this year which could assist new and existing elected members to take forward the participatory budgeting technique relative to the ASB agenda. As such, this training session would potentially benefit those selected Councils/Community Planning Partnerships that wish to be considered for the pilot exercise.

Progress on the Participatory Budgeting Pilot

16. After the launch of the ASB Framework in April a letter from Cllr Harry McGuigan, COSLA Spokesperson for Community Wellbeing and Safety was issued to all Council Leaders and Chief Executives inviting Councils/Community Planning Partnership (CPPs) to formally indicate their interest in taking part in the Participatory Budgeting Pilot. The response to the letter has been generally positive with fourteen Councils/CPPs formally indicating their interest to take part.
17. Since the response to Cllr McGuigan's letter COSLA has discussed the pilot with the Participatory Budgeting Unit and some of the relevant Antisocial Behaviour /Community Safety officer networks. As such, it is proposed that a three stage process is adopted to select the Councils/CPPs to run the Participatory Budgeting pilots. This would consist of the following stages:-
- i. An initial half day information and awareness session on using Participatory Budgeting in June;

- ii. A second half day presentation and selection process in July to allow all interested Councils/CPPs to present their proposals and for representatives from the Antisocial Behaviour Community Engagement Sub-Group to determine and recommend which pilot area projects should be funded.
 - iii. COSLA's Executive Groups and the Community Safety Minister to consider and politically approve the recommended pilot projects for Participatory Budgeting in August/September.
18. The first half day information and awareness session on Participatory Budgeting event held in June would be for all the interested Councils/CPPs to attend. This event would allow them to have the opportunity to hear from organisations such as the Participatory Budgeting Unit, Consultation Institute and other expert speakers on how the approach can be creatively used to address ASB/Community Safety issues. In addition, it would allow an opportunity to share existing examples of best practice from other countries and allow officers from Councils/CPPs the opportunity to ask the Participatory Budgeting Unit and other presenters any relevant questions.
 19. Following the Participatory Budgeting half day event Councils/CPPs would then be asked to outline their proposed pilots within 2-3 weeks and then be asked to present them at the second half day event outlined above. This would be attended by all the potential pilot Councils/CPPs along with representatives from ASB Community Engagement Sub-Group to determine the best project pilots based on specific criteria to be defined over the forthcoming weeks. These criteria would take into account issues such as whether the proposed Participatory Budgeting project adheres to the 'National Standards for Community Engagement'. Members of the Strategic Group are asked for any suggestions for these proposed criteria.
 20. At this second half day event the ASB Community Engagement Sub-Group would select and recommend 3-5 pilot projects to COSLA and the Scottish Government. This would be undertaken by selecting their most preferred pilots in line with the agreed selection criteria. These recommendations would be based upon which pilot projects would be deemed as having the most value to all ASB/Community Safety practitioners and the ASB policy agenda in terms of learning opportunities. Moreover, it would be based on how the proposed Participatory Budgeting projects can be used most effectively to address local ASB problems creatively.
 21. The Scottish Government and COSLA's Community Wellbeing and Safety Executive Group and Community Safety Executive Group would consider and approve the specific pilots based on the recommendations by August/September 2009. In addition, COSLA and the Scottish Government would establish an agreed timeline for an evaluation of the Participatory Budgeting projects to ensure any learning and good practice from them is disseminated to other councils/CPPs.

Conclusion

22. Members of the Strategic Group are asked for any other comments on this paper.

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