REPORT TO: COMMUNITY PLANNING BOARD – 31 OCTOBER 2013

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY PLANNING BUDGET - CITIZENS’ PANEL

BY: CORPORATE POLICY UNIT MANAGER

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 The Community Planning Board is asked to consider the future management of the Citizens’ Panel.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Community Planning Board is asked to:

- approve the continued use of the Citizens’ Panel by the Community Planning Partnership
- approve the use of an external consultant to manage the Citizens’ Panel
- approve a minimum two year contract, with the option to extend for a third year
- agree to carry forward the current underspend on the community planning budget beyond the current financial year
- agree individual partner contributions to the community planning budget to meet the anticipated costs of the contract for the management of the Citizens’ Panel in addition to fund any ‘other costs’
- approve that the Community Engagement Group has responsibility for the Citizens’ Panel in relation to operational activity and monitoring, providing updates to the Community Planning Board on request

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 At its meeting on 22 August 2013, the Community Planning Board agreed to note the Convener’s oral update on the Citizens’ Panel which stated that the Community Engagement Group had recently agreed to support the continued use of the Citizens’ Panel for up to one year and also recognised that groups such as Community Councils and Associations do not have the capacity to undertake the role. The Chair expressed his support of the underlying aims of the panel (para 6 of the draft minute refers).

3.2 The Board is asked to approve the continued use of the Citizens’ Panel as a means of community engagement.
3.3 In order for the Community Planning Partnership to continue to use the Citizens’ Panel it will be necessary to secure the services of an external consultant to manage the panel and facilitate all consultations using the panel. Without this there would be staffing implications in terms of the requirement for in-house staff time and expertise to manage the panel and facilitate consultations.

3.4 The Board is asked to approve the use of an external consultant to manage the Citizens’ Panel.

3.5 To ensure best value from the new contract in terms of the staffing resources required to secure a new contract through the formal tendering process, continuity of service provider, and to provide a timeframe that will allow flexibility within the consultation programme, the Board is asked to approve a contract period of two years, with the opportunity to extend for a third year.

3.6 **Budget**

3.6.1 The cost of managing the panel per year is dependent upon the number of consultations carried out. To date there has been an average of four a year, with an average cost per survey of £5000 - although this may vary depending upon specific requirements.

3.6.2 A further cost will be incurred during the first year of the contract period for the refreshment of the panel membership. It is good practice to carry out a refresh every two to three years: this was last done in October 2010.

3.6.3 Based upon average usage and costs under the previous contract, together with the additional cost for panel refreshment, the anticipated cost for use of the panel for a three year contract period is £72,400 which is broken down per year as follows (see Appendix 1 for further detail):-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>£26,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>£22,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>£22,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£72,400</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6.5 At present the community planning budget is £69,388 in credit. The Board is asked to approve that this sum is carried forward beyond the current financial year in order to finance the management of the Citizens’ Panel.

3.6.6 If this is approved, a further £3,012 is required from partners to meet the anticipated cost of the three year contract. However, the Board is also asked to take into consideration the need for a ‘contingency fund’ to cover any ‘other costs’ such as catering costs (see Appendix 2 for further detail).

3.6.7 The Board is asked to agree partner contributions to the community planning budget to meet the anticipated costs of the management of the Citizens’ Panel in addition to funding any ‘other costs’.

3.7 **Future arrangements**

3.7.1 If the Board approves the recommendations in this report it is anticipated that a contract will be in place for the start of the next financial year. The
Council will seek approval for entering the procurement process from its Policy and Resources Committee in early December.

3.7.2 Once the new contract is in place it is recommended that the Community Engagement Group has responsibility for the Panel in relation to operational activity and monitoring, providing updates to the Community Planning Board on request.

4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Single Outcome Agreement/ Service Improvement Plan**
   This initiative will contribute to National Outcome 11 ‘we have strong resilient communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others’ and National Outcome 15; ‘our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people’s needs’. The Citizens’ Panel provides the mechanism to consult with a representative sample of the Moray population.

(b) **Policy and Legal**
   Section 15(1) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 requires local authorities, as facilitators, to consult and co-operate with community bodies and with other public sector bodies as appropriate in the community planning process. The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations, which came into force on 27 May 2012, requires local authorities to consider equality impacts of all its decisions based on evidence and, where appropriate, on consultation.

(c) **Financial implications**
   The management of the Citizens’ Panel is paid for from the Community Planning Partnership budget. Financial information is included in Appendices 1 and 2.

In terms of procurement, the Scottish Government has developed a Marketing Services Framework that public bodies can sign up to in order to access a range of services one of which, Public Relations, includes stakeholder engagement and liaison. The council’s procurement team is currently researching the viability of this as an option – it may be possible to secure the services of an external consultant through this framework for the future management of the Citizens’ Panel. Otherwise, as the anticipated value of the contract is above £50,000 the council’s full procurement procedure will be followed to secure a new contract.

(d) **Risk Implications**
   Community Engagement is an important aspect of Best Value and without the Panel, which provides an impartial, pre-selected control group, there is a risk of gathering only targeted views which are not representative of the population. The council may receive adverse comments from external agencies, auditors and Scottish Government.
5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The Citizens’ Panel provides a sounding board for the Community Planning Board to test public opinion. The Community Engagement Group has agreed that the Panel is a valuable resource and should be maintained. As Community Councils and Local Area Forums do not have the capacity to manage the Panel the Community Planning Board is asked to approve the continued use of the Panel, the use of an external consultant via a (minimum) two year contract to manage it, and the funding required to secure these services. The Board is also asked to approve that the operation of the Citizens’ Panel comes under the remit of the Community Engagement Group.

Author of Report: Amanda Walker, Project Officer
Background Papers: HB 1287181