



Inverclyde Alliance

## AGENDA ITEM NO:12

**Report To:** Inverclyde Alliance Board **Date:** 6 December 2021

**Report By:** Corporate Director, Education, Communities and Organisational Development, Inverclyde Council **Report No:**

**Contact Officer:** Tony McEwan, Head of Culture, Communities and Educational Resources **Contact No:** 01475 715450

**Subject:** Update on Participatory Budgeting in Inverclyde

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### 1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Inverclyde Alliance with an update on the progress made with the implementation of participatory budgeting (PB) in 2020/21 and proposed activity over the next six months.

### 2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 PB is a way of encouraging communities to discuss and deliberate priorities to assist the Council in prioritising its work in localities and across Inverclyde. Inverclyde's PB model was approved by Policy and Resources Committee on 4 February 2020 and focuses on the prioritisation of budgets / services across localities or across Inverclyde, rather than just the provision of grants, although the model remains compatible with a grant-providing process.

2.2 The main PB activity carried out by the Council under the revised model in 2020/21 was a series of community listening events and an online survey to inform the projects funded through the Council's Anti-Poverty Fund. This resulted in a total of £1,080,000 being informed by PB in 2020/21.

2.3 To progress the implementation of Inverclyde's PB model in 2021/22, a pilot PB exercise will be carried out on aspects of the roads asset management plan (RAMP). Members of the public will be given a combined list of 9 carriageways and 18 footpaths chosen as a result of technical assessment by the Roads team, from across Inverclyde and asked to prioritise them from 1-6. The results of the PB exercise will inform the prioritisation of carriageways and footpaths repair and resurfacing work that are included in other essential works from the RAMP in 2022/23.

2.4 Following the PB activity on aspects of the RAMP, it is proposed to begin participatory budgeting activity in relation to the £120k recovery funding for communities as part of the planned festival in May 2021.

2.5 Alongside these PB activities, a number of actions will continue to be progressed by the service to help embed PB in the long term. These include:

- consultation on the frequency of participatory budgeting activity through the year;
- the implementation of CONSUL, a free online platform used to carry out PB;
- the identification of services that will be subject to PB in 2022/23 in spring 2022;
- continued awareness-raising and development sessions with Elected Members, Council services, 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations and communities;

- the development of bespoke branding for PB; and
- the development of a PB charter.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 It is recommended that the Inverclyde Alliance:

- a. notes the content of this report;
- b. notes the forthcoming participatory budgeting activity on aspects of the road asset management plan (RAMP) planned for Nov/Dec 2021, subject to final agreement by the Environment and Regeneration Committee of Inverclyde Council; and
- c. notes the actions being progressed to ensure at least 1% of the Council's budget will be available for allocation through PB from April 2022.

**Ruth Binks**

**Corporate Director: Education, Communities and Organisational Development**

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 places responsibility on local authorities to establish a framework to enable local people to influence how defined budgets are used to address local priorities. The Act provides a range of powers to strengthen the ability of communities to make decisions on issues that matter to them and PB is one of the main ways in which this will be achieved.
- 4.2 In 2017, COSLA agreed to the Community Choices 1% Framework Agreement whereby at least 1% of local government budgets will be subject to PB by the end of 2021. This agreement and timeline have since been revised to recognise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon local government, people, and communities. Whilst the target to allocate at least 1% via PB remains, there is a degree of flexibility available to Councils as to when they can practicably meet it.
- 4.3 Like many Councils across Scotland, Inverclyde's initial approach in 2018/19 to PB was a grants based 'aggregative' model. Inverclyde Council provided a total of £350k (£50k per ward) in which community groups or projects could bid for funding through the PB process.
- 4.4 An evaluation was carried out of this grants based model and the findings were used to develop a model for the long term implementation of PB in Inverclyde. The revised model focuses on the prioritisation of budgets/services across the six localities or across Inverclyde rather than the provision of grants, although the model is also compatible with a grant-providing process. Appendix 1 provides a schematic of the stages involved in Inverclyde's PB model. The first pathway can be used where areas of spend can be prioritised on a locality basis. While the second pathway is for areas of spend that can only be considered on an Inverclyde-wide basis. The model was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee on 4 February 2020.
- 4.5 This report provides details of the progress that was made during 2020/21 with the implementation of Inverclyde's PB model as outlined at paragraph 4.4 and the next steps proposed over the next six months.

## **5.0 PROGRESS IN 2020/21**

- 5.1 On 1 April 2021 a dedicated PB Officer was employed to support the PB process in Inverclyde in line with both local and national guidance. The PB officer is responsible for implementation, participation and communication in relation to the local PB process and has been critical in supporting the development of the communication and engagement groups across Inverclyde. The role engages with and increases communities' knowledge and understanding of their role in local decision making through the PB process.
- 5.2 During 20/21 the key PB activity carried out by the Council included six digital-based community listening events in each of Inverclyde's localities and an online survey. The purpose of the events and the survey was to obtain the views of local communities on changes that could be made to mitigate poverty, deprivation and inequalities. The key findings from the engagement informed the development of initiatives that were taken forward through the Council's Anti-Poverty Fund: a two year fund of £2,160,000. This meant that a total of £1,080,000 was influenced by PB during 2020/21. The purpose of the Council's Anti-Poverty Fund was to identify projects that could be taken forward on an Inverclyde wide basis. Therefore the steps taken to carry out the community listening events and the online survey followed pathway 2 as detailed in Appendix 1 of this report – prioritising budgets on an Inverclyde-wide basis.
- 5.3 Regular communication takes place with the six communication and engagement Groups which are now developing well. Each group is now meeting on a monthly basis which enables ongoing dialogue which is a key element to the success of PB. In addition to the communication and engagement groups, we have established a Facebook Group for

each locality. This allows people who don't want to attend meetings to be involved and have their say, and was developed in response to communities advising us how they prefer to be kept up-to-date. The membership of the Facebook groups greatly increased during the pandemic. For example, Inverkip and Wemyss Bay now has 289 members. The other way in which we communicate with the localities is through a newsletter which provides an update on what is happening in each locality and provides examples of what action has been taken to address the issues raised by the community.

- 5.4 Given the disruption caused by the current Covid-19 pandemic the service has not been able to realise its ambitions for PB. Nevertheless, work has taken place between Heads of Service to identify service delivery that could be informed PB and this work will continue to develop and improve. This year, as a result of partnership working between the service and Roads, aspects of the Roads Asset Management Plan (RAMP) have been identified as being suitable to be informed by a PB process. Plans for the use of PB for this purpose have already been noted by the Environment & Regeneration Committee on 5 March 2020 with a further report being considered by committee in January 2022. Therefore, the Council's PB approach for 2021/22 will be piloted on this service area; subject to final agreement by Environment and Regeneration Committee.

## 6.0 PROPOSED ACTIVITY 2021/22

- 6.1 It is proposed that during the remainder of 2021/22, PB will be focused on informing work around a small area of the RAMP and consideration of dispersing £120,000 of recovery funding across localities as part of the Council's outdoor festival in 2022.
- 6.2 A key aspect of Inverclyde's approach to PB is to allow communities the opportunity to deliberate on the options for service delivery while being able to get professional input from services on how choices can be made. Following this aspect of the process, there will be an opportunity for individuals to indicate through a survey which aspects of our services should be delivered. A report on the results from all PB activity carried out in each window would then be communicated to communities to demonstrate how choices have been made.
- 6.3 A PB pilot exercise on aspects of the RAMP is currently being planned for, with the main PB activity taking place in November / December 2021. Members of the public will be given a combined list of 9 carriageways and 18 footpaths from across Inverclyde. As the list is formed by a technical assessment by the Roads service, the list is not evenly distributed across localities. The public will be asked how they would allocate the £150,000 set aside from the total RAMP budget by prioritising the list of roads and footpaths from 1-6. The total cost of the work being consulted on by locality is detailed in the table below:

Locality	Number of carriageways and footpaths	Total estimated cost
Greenock East and Central	8	£295,000
Greenock South and South West	2	£37,000
Greenock West and Gourock	9	£211,000
Inverkip and Wemyss Bay	2	£66,000
Kilmacolm and Quarriers Village	3	£75,000
Port Glasgow	5	£136,500

- 6.4 The communication and engagement group in each locality will discuss and deliberate the full list of carriageways and footpaths at their meetings in November and December 2021. The deliberation will be followed up with an online survey that will be circulated Inverclyde wide via the Council's web site, social media, stakeholders and groups of interest. The third sector will play a key role in distributing the survey and encouraging people to complete it. The results will be used to inform which additional carriageways and/or footpaths will be recommended to the Environment and Regeneration Committee for inclusion in the overall RAMP when it is updated for 2022/23.

- 6.5 The additional carriageways and footpaths for repair that will be considered by PB are a result of a technical assessment by the Roads service and are in addition to the planned works already agreed through the RAMP. As the list is not evenly spread within each locality due to it being a technical assessment by the Roads service, the PB process for aspects of the RAMP will be 'Inverclyde wide'.
- 6.6 The key steps involved in carrying out the PB exercise on aspects of the roads asset management plan are outlined in Appendix 2. All communication and engagement groups will have met at least once prior to the survey being issued at the end of November 2021 and an Elected Member briefing took place on 8 November 2021. The service is currently liaising with one communication and engagement group to ensure the information we are providing strikes the right balance between being accessible and detailed enough for informed debate to take place.
- 6.7 With any PB process there will always be concerns around 'fairness' and the ability to reduce the instances of one group, or in this case an area, being prioritised over another depending on how much support a particular project has or how densely populated a locality is. By introducing the opportunity to deliberate on priorities it is hoped that PB participants are able to feel that they are participating in a process and that they have been meaningfully involved in setting priorities. In time, this process of deliberation and debate will have the opportunity to reduce the number of priorities which get put forward for wider voting.

## **7.0 Next steps**

- 7.1 Services will continue to work together to plan for appropriate participatory budgeting opportunities for the remainder of this financial year and there is already scope to look at awarding grants through PB to support Inverclyde's outdoor festival in May 2022. A further report will be considered by the Corporate Management Team early in 2022 to agree further service areas in 2022/23 in order that the Council is able to meet its 1% minimum target. This is the approach that has been taken by other local authorities such as South Lanarkshire Council who is one of the few Councils who have successfully exceeded the 1% of their total budget through PB. The most common services that have been put through PB by other local authorities include: grounds maintenance, street cleaning, roads, green space, health and social care services, % of schools' PEF budgets, transport and service commissioning. It is proposed that Inverclyde will also consider these services in the future.
- 7.2 Participatory Budgeting will be supported in the longer term through the use of CONSUL, a free online platform used to carry out PB used by other local authorities across Scotland and work has already begun in Inverclyde to use this system. In the meantime, the service is using Smart Survey.
- 7.3 Participatory Budgeting and engagement with communities remains a challenging process for all involved. However it is recognised that it is a process that develops and improves over time and one that begins to be informed by the stakeholders who take part. As such, the service is acutely aware that learning from each stage is a vital part of the development of PB in Inverclyde as we continue to strive to involve our communities more in decisions that matter to them.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Legal: none at present  
Finance: none at present  
Human Resources: none at present  
Equality and Diversity: none at present  
Repopulation: none at present

## **9.0 CONSULTATIONS**

9.1 n/a

**10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**  
n/a

# Appendix 1

Inverclyde Council participatory budget pathways

Appendix 2

## Pathway 1 – developing ideas and projects from locality plans



## Pathway 2 – prioritising budgets on an Inverclyde-wide basis



Participatory Budgeting Nov / Dec 2021

By the end of November an elected member briefing will have taken place and all 6 communication and Engagement groups will host a meeting in which PB will be on the agenda

- Each group will discuss the PB options and process subject to E&R approval
- What PB options are missing for their area
- How they will encourage wider engagement with the survey



An open and virtual public meeting will be held on the 17th of November 2021 to launch the pilot PB approach, at the meeting:

- PB options will be discussed
- A preview of the survey will be provided
- A rep from the roads department will be present



PB voting window Nov / Dec 2021

- Drop-in sessions will be available across all 6 localities for digital support, these will be promoted on the website
- CLD staff and wider partnership network to promote the survey across their groups ensuring that minority and hard to reach groups have access to have their say!
- Social media campaign by corporate communications promoting the survey.



By end of December the survey results and feedback from Communication and engagement groups and the open meeting will be collated and sent to the roads service in order for the community engagement feedback to inform aspects of RAMP ahead of April 2022.



January / February 2022, Feedback to the communities via Corporate communications and the communication and engagement groups on RAMP activity and proposed next steps