



**Dumfries and Galloway Council  
Participatory Budgeting Framework  
as at 26 February 2019**

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## 1. Introduction

Our Council's Plan includes a Priority 'Be an inclusive Council' and a specific commitment to Participatory Budgeting (community choices).

This builds on work already developed around community empowerment including our Council's Equality Outcomes, Community Asset Transfer, Community Participation and Engagement and Volunteering; and work on Participation Requests and Tackling Poverty projects.

Our Council supports the Values and Principles set out by the National Participatory Budgeting (PB) Unit:

**Accessibility** – Barriers to participation are identified and removed to allow full and effective participation through good access to PB processes.

**Mainstream involvement** - Over time PB processes should move towards residents being involved in decisions over annual mainstream budgets (as opposed to only small grants processes). Over time community capacity building takes place to enable good decisions to be made by residents on annual mainstream budgets.

**Support for representative democracy** - Councillors hold a unique position as community advocates and champions. PB should be seen as supporting representative democracy. PB can increase citizens' trust of Councillors and boost the role of Ward Councillors.

**Direct involvement** - PB should involve direct as well as representative engagement wherever possible. Direct involvement helps build capacity, understanding and trust.

**Local ownership** - Residents should be involved in setting budget priorities and identifying projects for public spend in their area wherever possible.

**Shared responsibility** - PB builds common purpose and a commitment from all stakeholders. Clarity and transparency are key when setting local aims, priorities and outcomes.

**Empowerment** - PB events are centrally concerned with empowering local citizens in decisions over local services and shaping their local area through allocating part of a public budget.

**Deliberation** - PB processes should take citizens beyond personal choice and involve real deliberation around budget decisions, wide ranging debate and thoughtful consideration.

**Transparency** - PB processes are designed to give citizens full and clear knowledge of public budgets in their area, even those over which they do not have a direct say.

## 2. Definitions:

**“PB directly involves local people in making decisions on the spending priorities for a defined public budget. This means engaging residents, communities and representatives from all parts of the community discussing spending priorities, make spending proposals and vote on them.”**  
**(Participatory Budgeting in the UK – A toolkit; the PB Unit)**

Put simply, PB empowers local people to play a key role in deciding how public money is spent on projects and services for their community – place or interest.

At the heart of PB is the desire to deliver meaningful empowerment to communities and residents.

- PB directly involves local people directly in making decisions on the spending and priorities for a defined public budget
- PB is a process of democratic deliberation and decision making, and a type of participatory democracy, in which ordinary people decide how to allocate part of a public budget. Local people vote on the spend.
- PB is recognised as a way for local people to have direct say in how, and where, public funds can be used to address inequality.
- PB is about delivering interventions which are informed and influenced by communities where outcomes need to be improved.
- PB is community driven, designed and influenced interventions based on community priorities built on real evidence of need and inequality.

### **3. Wider Context**

PB originated in Brazil in the 1980s but has spread around the world. Examples include social housing budgets in Toronto, Canada; schools budgets in Poitou-Charentes, France; in Ghana and India to reduce corruption and increase governmental transparency; in Berlin which has adopted methods that include PB online; and its now spreading in the UK.

The Scottish Government supports PB as a tool for community empowerment which sits alongside the objectives of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and as an important resource to build on the wider development of participatory democracy in Scotland. PB is seen as a method of increasing democratic participation in the spending of public money, particularly in areas where deprivation exists and barriers to participation are evident. PB enables the opportunity for residents to become part of the decision-making process and thereby gain a greater understanding of the process of budget development and allocation in a local authority context.

PB can bring together residents and community planning partners in order to understand priorities and develop interventions which look to address inequalities at a local level.

By removing barriers to participation, inclusiveness and equity are promoted and enhanced, which in turn develops an enhanced level of trust between residents and local Elected Members and officials.

#### **4. Benefits**

By involving local people in deciding what public services they need and want in their local area, services can be more responsive and targeted to local need. Residents are often best placed to know what their area needs.

This can bring greater efficiencies and develop a sense of shared responsibility between the service providers/commissioners and the residents, for the are in a time of financial restraint and tough budget choices.

PB can also be used to prioritise budgets and target resources more effectively at key services. Involving the community in prioritising resources not only gives them greater understanding of the financial situation but enables them to be part of the solution.

National feedback indicates that through the process local people become more engaged in local issues and gain a better understanding of the competing pressures faced by Members and the wider Council.

## **5. Budgets suitable for PB:**

Almost all budgets have potential for PB.

Desktop analysis, discussion with the Strategic Leadership Team and Directorate Management Teams and consideration of the Council's Activity Based Budgeting Book suggests that the following revenue budgets would be suitable for PB:

- Grounds maintenance / Local Services budgets
- Area Committee discretionary budgets
- Community Resilience / Community Safety monies
- Tackling Poverty Funds
- Civic Hospitality budgets
- Major Events and festivals
- Arts

Capital budgets linked to regeneration have the potential for larger scale PB activity.

## **6. Key design factors**

There are a number of factors which can contribute to the success of a PB exercise.

### **Community Engagement**

- Skills and resources are needed to engage local community organisations in a local community setting.
- Skills and time are needed to target these groups, particularly those who are 'seldom heard'.
- Skills and time are needed to build community capacity to participate and enable the participation to be effective.

### **Leadership**

- Having strong leadership from Elected Members, Council Officers and Community Representatives is essential to motivate others and overcome barriers to engagement and participation.

### **Planning**

- Time allocated to briefing local residents and community groups on the process is important.
- Finding a process that works for the local situation and is easily understood is essential.
- This planning can be carried out either by Council Officers or external consultants. Planning should also involve representation from the Community.

### **Learning**

- Learning from others who have carried out similar processes can be helpful.
- Opportunities should be created during the process to reflect on events.
- Employing the lessons learned from doing PB is vital and builds capacity, trust and confidence.

### **Communications**

- Communication of the PB idea is important. It is helpful if it is branded in a different way to other Council communications.
- A range of methods should be used to communicate the idea to the widest possible audience. Digital technologies can be used to support and augment PB processes and communications.
- There needs to be clear instructions and information given to residents about the process, especially concerning the method of scoring priorities and projects to be used.
- There needs to be clear communication about the amount of money available to be allocated. Also, constraints attached to the allocation of money such as geographical coverage and themes.

## **Support**

- Many PB initiatives find the support from the PB Partners, PB Scotland and cross Authority liaison very helpful.
- Having a commitment to community development and PB across Council Directorates provides a supportive network to progress PB.

## **Resources**

- Setting up a project team / steering group within the local authority, perhaps representatives from the Elected Members, voluntary organisations, Independent and Third Sector advisors and residents is necessary to mobilise resources and support as well as drive the process forward.
- It is important to identify early on support that may be available from other organisations and partners.

## **Money**

- Knowing how much money is available and the nature of that money is crucial from the earliest of stages in a PB process.

## **Meeting Structure, Access & Inclusivity**

- All meetings with residents need to be well structured, engaging and as accessible as possible.
- Consideration needs to be given to the time and venue of meetings to maximise attendance.
- There should always be opportunities for people to ask questions and answers made available
- Support should be provided for participants with specific needs such as child care, hearing loop, signing, large print information materials.

## **Additional Information**

- There needs to be a balance between enough information and information over-load.
- Advice and support should be provided for those project holders who are unsuccessful in securing funding through the PB process.

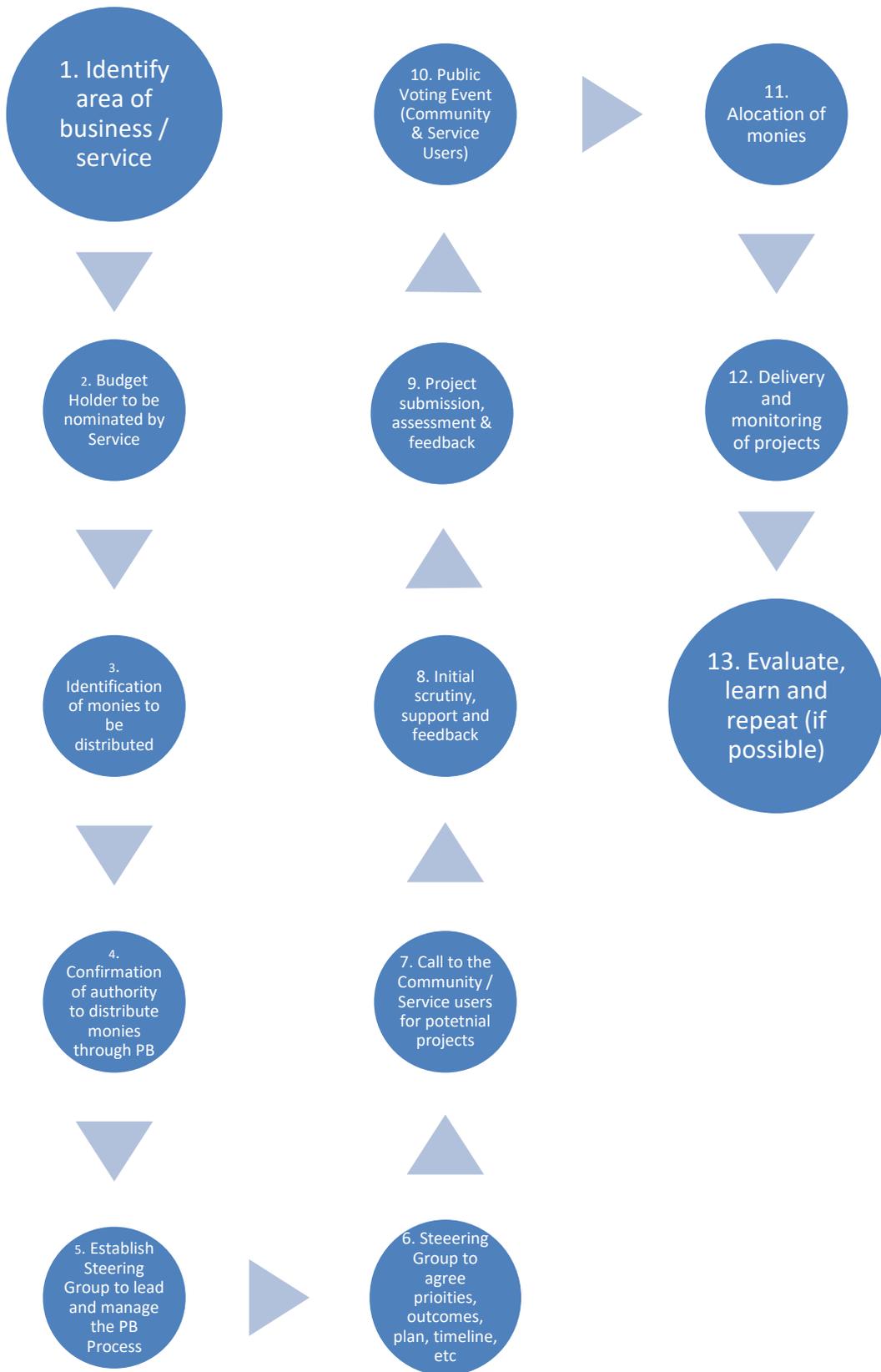
## **Additional Support**

- In small grants schemes participants may need support in getting costings for project proposals.
- They also need support on planning the delivery of their project/s.

## **Adaptability**

- All PB processes must be designed to fit the local circumstances.
- Care must be taken to fit the available technology to the needs of the process rather than the other way round.

**7. How to do PB in DGC:**



1. Directorate or Committee identifies an area of business where user outcomes could be improved through the application of a PB process.
2. A Budget Holder is nominated from the relevant Service and a PB mandate form is completed, which identifies what, why, who and how. The funds to be distributed by PB are identified. The mandate is submitted to the Council's PB Manager for initial scrutiny and agreement that actual PB is being proposed and that the process will contribute to delivering empowerment and our Council's 1% commitment.
3. Authorisation from the relevant Service or Area Committee, to allocate funding for conducting the PB exercise; identification of the Budget to be allocated through the PB process, and the parameters of the project are agreed.
4. A Steering Group is formed comprising the Service Budget Holder, Elected Member representation (appointed by Service or Area Committee) and representation from the community (of place or of interest) and Third Sector.
5. The PB Manager will support the Steering Group. This will include Data Protection requirements, capacity building, training and mentoring of Group members. A detailed Communications Plan, Risk Register and Impact Assessment on the methodology will be devised by the PB Manager for each individual PB exercise.
6. The Steering Group discuss and agrees what outcomes are to be improved, the criteria for projects to meet, the process plan with agreed and achievable timelines and milestones, application process, voting criteria etc.
7. The Steering Group put a call out to groups in the community for potential projects which would seek to improve the outcomes agreed at stage 6.
8. The Steering Group provides the opportunity to feedback on applications/developing projects.
9. Projects are submitted by the agreed deadline. Initial assessment of the projects against the agreed criteria is undertaken by the Steering Group. It is the PB Manager who communicates with the applicants at this stage.
10. Public/community voting takes place to identify which projects get funded. Voting formats detailed in Section 8 below Techniques and Approaches.
11. Votes are counted and verified and announced. There is no appeal mechanism. The PB Manager advises the Service Budget Holder of the results.
12. The Service Budget Holder is responsible for contacting the successful and unsuccessful applicants, all the necessary contractual documentation, determining the performance targets and monitoring arrangements; securing Lead Officers to support the successful projects where appropriate; monitoring the progress of the successful projects, including phased release of funds on successful performance; liaising with the Steering Group as part of the monitoring arrangement; and reporting to the relevant Service or Area Committee on the outcomes of the project(s).

13. Monitoring is undertaken by the Service Budget Holder, and must be reported back to the Steering Group.
14. Evaluation of the process is undertaken based on an agreed framework by the PB Manager.
15. The Evaluation Report is submitted to the Communities Committee by the PB Manager.

## **8. Techniques and Approaches:**

Face to face - The most commonly use approach to organising and hosting PB processes and events is face to face. The in-person approach can be adopted during the engagement stage where priorities are identified and agreed, during the project development stage where groups seeking funding can be supported directly with form filling and project development, and finally at the voting stage. At the community PB level, having people actually casting a vote generates a real sense of ownership and cements the individuals' participation in the process.

The face to face approach also allows for real and meaningful dialogue and deliberation between the Council and the communities involved. This approach also promotes the use of community events, where the community comes together at a location to share their ideas, knowledge and support.

Digital – The use of digital technology can break down and remove barriers to participation, particularly within communities that are seldom heard and/or hard to reach. The use of digital technology can also open up participatory budgeting to a wider audience which is not restricted by geography, transport and physical access.

Equality of Opportunity – by delivering participatory democracy through participatory budgeting, fairer and more equal opportunities to engage with democratic processes are created. This in turn generates the ability for more people to have their voice heard and their influence felt.

## **9. Resources**

### **Elected Members**

Briefing provided to Political Groups by Community Planning and Engagement – September 2017

### **Council Officers**

There are 18 Officers from across our Council who were trained in PB by the PB Partners in January 2017. They can assist with undertaking and supporting PB exercises. Awareness raising has also been provided by the PB Partners and delivered to representatives from NHS D&G and Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway.

### **Equipment**

DGC secured £20,000 from the Scottish Government's Community Choices Fund to purchase the following support, technical equipment and digital support to enable DGC to support communities in developing PB processes moving forward:

- Digital Voting system
- Digital Engagement Platform (one year website license)
- Expert PB Information and awareness raising seminars and events for local communities.
- Logistical, venue and equipment support costs (stationary, ballot boxes, volunteer expenses & room hire etc)

## **10. Benchmarking and national activity:**

As PB is very much emerging across Scotland as a concept for distributing public funds, and the fact that each different Scottish local authority is at a different stage of development, there is very little evidence available for direct benchmarking. However, as part of the Scottish Government's Community Choices Programme, Dumfries and Galloway Council has been invited to contribute to the Cluster Learning scheme, which will see ourselves, Inverclyde and the three Ayrshires share experiences and knowledge around PB.

Reviews of recent PB activity can be found at the following links:

What Works Scotland – [Scaling Up PB](#)

PB Scotland – [PB Scotland Advisory Group Update June 2017](#)

PB Scotland – [PB In Ayrshire](#)

Scottish Borders Council – [Localities Bid Fund](#)

A national resource for PB is being developed through the support of the Scottish Government and the Scottish Community Development Centre. 20 lead Officers and Practitioners from across Scotland are being trained to become the next generation of PB Champions with the role of promoting PB activity amongst communities and local authorities; as well as helping shape the national debate on how to scale up PB from grant making community level to mainstream service shaping level. Dumfries and Galloway Council's representation on this forum is Colin Freeman.

## 11. Contacts

### **Community Planning & Engagement Unit**

Liz Manson – Community Planning and Engagement Manager

Jamie Ferguson – Community Development and Empowerment Manager

Colin Freeman – Community Empowerment Manager (Participatory Budgeting)

### **Directorate contacts**

Children Young People and Lifelong Learning – Angela Paterson, Head of Resources and Support

Communities – Serena Dunlop, Directorate Business Manager

Corporate Services – Eddie Whitefield, Directorate Business Manager

Economy, Environment and Infrastructure – Stewart Cameron, Directorate Business Manager

**Dumfries and Galloway Council – Participatory Budgeting Mandate Form & Required Information**

Directorate:	
Service:	
Lead Officer:	
Date of Submission:	
Name of PB Process:	
Total Budget to be distributed:	
Confirmation of authorisation to spend – insert link to relevant Committee decision:	
Overview of PB process:	
List resources available to deliver a PB process (include community and volunteer support):	
Detail the inequalities to be addressed and outcomes to be improved through PB (list community involved – geographic or of interest):	
Any other supporting information (including any risks and mitigating measures):	

Once complete, please return this form to Colin Freeman, Community Empowerment Manager – PB: - [Colin.Freeman@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:Colin.Freeman@dumgal.gov.uk)