

The Highland Council

Nairnshire Committee – 27 January 2016

Agenda Item	9.
Report No	N/06/16

Participatory Budgeting

Report by Head of Policy and Reform

Summary

This report updates Members on the plans to carry out a participatory budgeting event for Nairnshire. It sets participatory budgeting in the context of The Community Empowerment Act particularly the requirements to develop local democratic structures and involve communities in decision-making around resources. It asks Members to confirm that £20k of the Ward Discretionary Budget is allocated to the Nairnshire Participatory Budgeting event and £5k of Scottish Government funding is added to this.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Community Empowerment Act 2015 puts in place a range of provisions to support communities to make change happen by having more power and influence over what matters to them. It requires public sector partners to support the development of local action assisting them to participate in decision-making (including that regarding resources). It is likely that the guidance produced to support the Act will highlight participatory budgeting as a key way to engage communities in decision-making

2. Participatory Budgeting

- 2.1 Participatory budgeting (PB) involves communities in allocating public funding. The PB process initially runs a public event where communities vote on which projects/services to support. However in bringing a broad spectrum of the community together it:-
- creates networks
 - improves knowledge and awareness of community activity
 - promotes a discussion about issues and priorities
 - builds capacity
 - improves engagement with excluded groups
 - supports wider democratic participation
 - shifts agencies and communities focus and provision to meet need
 - prepares communities and agencies for discussions regarding more substantial mainstream budgets

- 2.2 Members across Highland have been considering participatory budgeting for

their areas. Successful events have now taken place in Lochaber and Caithness. Evaluation and feedback from these has been extremely positive. The events have engaged large numbers, reached new groups, funded new and different projects, and created a spirit of community cohesion and new working relationships across and between communities and agencies.

2.3 Members have previously discussed and agreed in principle to establish a participatory budgeting process for Nairnshire. Officers have held discussions with relevant agencies and have formed an organising group. The group is supported by expert advice from PB Partners, a Social Enterprise. This group presently comprises the following:-

- Ward Manager
- High Life Highland Youth Development
- High Life Highland Active Schools
- Nairn Book and Arts
- Nairn Access Forum
- Nairn Community and Arts Centre
- Local Member

This group has designed the process and agreed a date for the first event. This will be held at Nairn Community and Arts Centre on the 12th of March 2016.

3. Funding

3.1 Members have indicated that they wished to support community decision-making for £20k of the Ward Discretionary Budget via this process. Reflecting the importance of driving forward PB across Highland and embedding it in our practice, with a view toward it being applied to some mainstream budgets, the Scottish Government has allocated additional funding to support its development across Highland. It is proposed that £5k of this funding is added to the Nairn event budget.

4. Implications

4.1 Resource: The Ward Discretionary Budget will be utilised for this event.

Legal: This will assist us in meeting the requirements of the Community Empowerment Act

Equalities: The organising group is considering how best to ensure that people with protected characteristics are included in the process.

Climate Change, Gaelic and Rural implications: none are identified.

Risk: The organising group is considering the risks involved to PB and is making arrangements for the event to be successful.

5. Recommendation

5.1 Members previously agreed to test participatory budgeting in Nairn using £20k of the ward discretionary budget. Members are asked to agree that the further £5k available to support the event from Scottish Government funding is used.

5.2 Members are asked to note the progress being made with the organising group and that the event to involve local people is scheduled for 12th March 2016.

Designation: Head of Policy and Reform

Date: 15/01/16

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Background Papers: