

Leith decides PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PILOT PROJECT: EVALUATION

Leith Neighbourhood Partnership

3 May 2011

1 Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is as follows:

- To evaluate the Participatory Budgeting Pilot carried out using Community Grants Funding for the 2010/11 financial year.
- To advise the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership Board of the outcomes of the Pilot Project to inform a decision on the future use of the approach in Leith Neighbourhood Partnership area.

2 Main report

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 On 27 February 2010 the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership agreed to allocate part of the 2010/11 Community Grants Funding using a participatory budgeting approach, setting a maximum award limit of £1,000 with a view to attracting applications from new and smaller community groups. A Steering Group, including strong community representation, was set up in May 2010 to drive the project forward. The project was branded as *Leith decides* and publicised to attract participation by applicants and members of the community. A total of £16,602 in Community Grants funding was allocated by the Leith Community at an event on Saturday, 27 November 2010. The successful projects are due for completion by the end of May 2011 when end-of-project reports will be submitted.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The objectives of the evaluation were to gauge the community's willingness to participate in the allocation of funds and to appraise the processes used. Both quantitative and qualitative data was gathered to provide a balanced impression of the community's views.

- 2.2.2 The Steering Group retained records of decisions made and gathered information through the planning process. This included information on applications submitted and their final outcome. On the day of the event, returned scoring sheets and an excel spreadsheet provided information on the scoring process and grant awards. Cognisance was taken of the National Standards for Community Engagement (appendix 1) and the 9 Participatory Budgeting Values (appendix 2).
- 2.2.3 Information was gathered from participants when they registered for scoring sheets. Postcodes and a note of people who live and/or work in the Leith area were requested to verify entitlement to vote as well as previous involvement in Council events. Participants were also asked to complete a simple evaluation form on the day, giving information on age group and ethnicity as well as more qualitative information on participation in the event.
- 2.2.4 Separate focus groups were held for applicants, community participants and the Steering Group. These sought views on the development and continuance of a participatory budgeting approach in Leith, as well as detailed information on their experience of the process.

2.3 Planning

- 2.3.1 One of the most important values in Participatory Budgeting is ownership and accessibility. Residents should be involved in setting budget priorities and identifying projects. To do this, there must be clear access to Participating Budgeting processes. The Steering Group included six community representatives from three Community Councils, taking full part in the decision-making with two elected members from the Board and a voluntary organisations representative. Support for the Group was provided by the Partnership Development Officer (PDO), a Community Learning and Development Worker and a Services for Communities (SfC) Customer Adviser. The Group attended training provided by the Participatory Budgeting Unit on 31 May 2010 and held meetings on a 6 weekly basis thereafter.
- 2.3.2 Findings from the focus group session showed that the Steering Group felt they had clear roles and understood what was expected of them. They accepted from the start that this was a pilot project, new to Edinburgh, and that lessons would be learned. They felt that it was a good process, from which they had learned a great deal, but that it was very time consuming, particularly for the size of budget available. The Group stated that they feel confident in planning any future events, having already been through the process.

2.4 Applications

- 2.4.1 A major component of any PB project is that the financial value of applications must be greater than the funding available to give a choice of how the money is spent. In promoting the opportunity to potential applicants the Steering Group used their existing networks as well as libraries and Leith Community Education Centre. The Group aimed to reach smaller community groups, particularly those that had not previously made an application for a community grant. A total

of 30 applications were submitted, of which 16 had not made a previous application. One of the 30 did not meet the criteria and 4 withdrew their application before the event, leaving 25 applicants to present their projects at the November event.

- 2.4.2 At the focus group applicants stated that the application form was accessible and easy to use, with open general questions allowing them to fully describe their projects. However, they would have liked more detail of the PB process to be provided with the application pack.
- 2.4.3 Applicants felt that support was available from the Neighbourhood Partnership where required. Where further information was sought from the PDO, applicants were happy with the response and support provided. However applicants would have liked more support from community groups. They advised that there was a general discussion with members of the community about Leith decides, but no support received. The Steering Group felt that applicants did not take up the support from the Community Learning and Development Service although contact details and information were provided.
- 2.4.4 There was concern about the amount of time needed to prepare for the presentation at the event, particularly for the small amount of funding requested. Applicants would also have liked more information about the event, such as crèche facilities, timing etc. However, applicants were happy with the application process on the whole,

2.5 Advertising

- 2.5.1 Several advertising methods were used over the three months prior to the event, including:
- Two interviews on Leith FM
 - Edinburgh Evening News advertisement and articles
 - Community newsletter articles
 - Promotion on Greener Leith and Neighbourhood Partnership websites.
 - Setting up of a Facebook page.
 - Displays in both McDonald Road and Leith libraries.
 - Distribution of flyers and posters.
 - Use of the Get-On bus.
 - Promotion using e-mail networks.
- 2.5.2 Of the 320 people who registered at the event, 57% said that they had found out through an applicant and 29% through other word-of-mouth. All of the focus group participants agreed that word-of-mouth was the most effective method of reaching and involving people. It was recognised that many of the attendees at the event had an affiliation to an applicant.
- 2.5.3 There is evidence that the Facebook page was also successful with 3% of attendees stating that they had found out this way. Before the event, over 220 people visited the page for information and 91 people continue to get information from the site.

2.6 Event Format

- 2.6.1 The decision-making event was held on the afternoon of Saturday, 27 November 2010 in the Leith Academy Sports Hall. Each of the 25 applicants made a 3 minute presentation with these being split into themes to break up the long event.
- 2.6.2 The date of the event was moved from October to November to secure Leith Academy as it was the only venue in the area which could accommodate the expected numbers. Although attendance was much higher than other Neighbourhood Partnership public events, the bad weather and Hibernian Football Club playing at home may have had an impact.
- 2.6.3 The Group agreed that the pre-event meeting organised for the staff and community member helping on the day needed to be improved. There was low attendance at the pre-event meeting and this, together with the impact of the bad weather on attendance by helpers at the event, meant jobs had to be allocated and briefings made on the day. Evidence suggests this contributed to applicants feeling they were not given enough direction and information when they arrived to present their projects. However, the Community Focus Group stated that they found the event accessible and staff very helpful.
- 2.6.4 22% of those completing evaluation forms said that the best thing about the day was the presentations, with 20% saying that they learned a lot about Leith. However, 4% disliked the use of powerpoint presentations and 4% felt there was too much noise for this format. These views were reiterated in the Community focus group. Other issues identified included:
- The changeover times disrupted proceedings.
 - The screen was too small to see.
 - Not all presenters kept to just a few slides.
 - Attendees did not listen to all the presentations.
 - Children running around were a distraction.
 - There were difficulties with sharing one microphone.
- 2.6.5 Both the Applicants and Community focus groups felt that the day was too long, a view shared by 10% of attendees completing evaluation forms. Both the Applicants and Community focus groups said that they would prefer a stalls/exhibition type of format providing the opportunity to speak with applicants and ask questions.

2.7 Scoring System

- 2.7.1 The Steering Group considered three voting methods suggested by the Participatory Budgeting Unit. The Preference Vote was considered to be the most understandable while helping to manage the risk of block voting. "Voting" was open to anyone who lived or worked in the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership area. 320 people registered on the day. 76% lived in the area and 32% worked in the area. Attendees were asked to score every project out of 5 to enable a fair consideration of all projects and minimise the risk of vote

stacking. This was done by using paper scoring sheets, one for each theme. Completed forms were passed to scorers. Those with the largest scores were awarded a community grant. The table below gives information on returned scoring sheets by theme.

Theme in running order	Sheets returned	Counted	Void
Community	268	254	14
Environment	298	282	16
Children and Young People	293	281	12
Employment Skills	275	266	9

2.7.2 12% of those completing evaluation forms said that they would change the voting/scoring system. All focus groups recognised that there was some confusion over the voting, particularly in terms of the information provided and the process for using sections/themes. Applicants felt the process was unfair, inaccurate and were unsure how the results were reached. Both Applicants and Community focus groups stated that more transparent information was required on the number of votes cast and for whom. The Steering Group's perception was that the community were unused to the process and being given this level of decision making but they were heartened by the positive atmosphere at the event.

2.7.3 Applicants felt that those making presentations at the beginning of the event had an advantage as attention faded due to the length of the day. However, information on the running order and awards made indicates that consideration was given to all projects regardless of where they appeared in the programme.

Theme in running order	Presented	Awarded Grant
Community	6	4
Environment	8	7
Children and Young People	8	6
Employment Skills	3	3
TOTAL	25	20

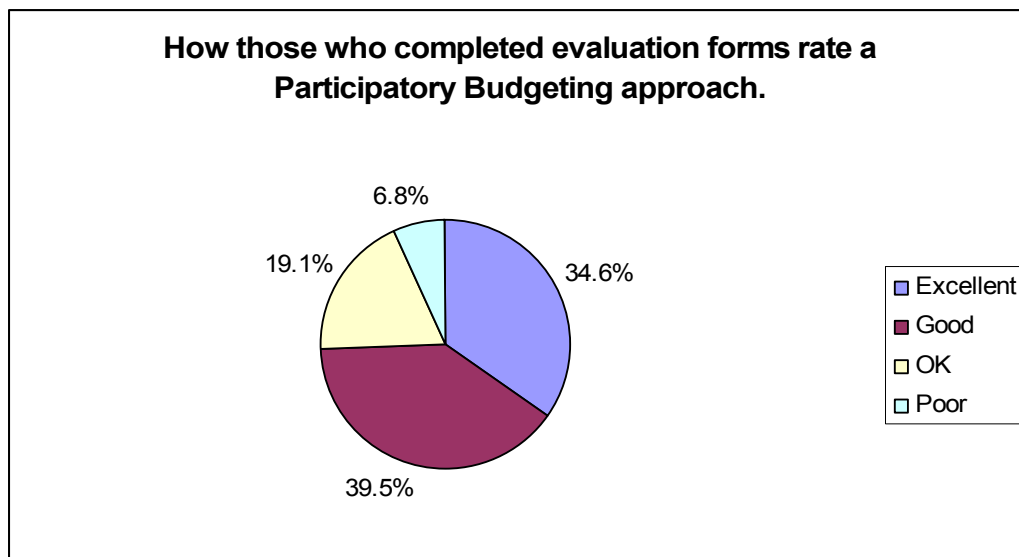
2.7.4 Applicants stated that the end of the event was very flat due the time period between the end of the presentations and the announcement of the results. The Steering Group also commented on the time taken to count votes.

2.8 Community Engagement

2.8.1 The Steering Group set a target of 200 people taking part in the decision making event. This was greatly exceeded with 320 people registering to vote.

Of these, 75% said that they had not attended a Council meeting or event in the previous 6 months.

- 2.8.2 Attendance was spread across all the postcodes covering the area. However, 40% were from the EH6 8 area where the event was held. The Community focus group stated that whilst it was a “great venue” it was not too easy for people to just walk in off the street.
- 2.8.3 24% of those completing evaluation forms said that they enjoyed taking part in the event and the community spirit. Younger people (25 yrs or under) were most likely to comment on their personal participation, while those 26 years or older commented more on the community participation and spirit. 4% commented that one of the best things was the participation of children, with 1% stating that the children’s participation is something they would change. The Community focus group said that they liked having the children there, but felt that it was a long day for them.
- 2.8.4 74% evaluation respondents said that the PB approach was an excellent or good way of allocating public funds.



- 2.8.5 12% identified that one of the best things was making the decision. The Community focus group felt that this was a “great exercise” and thought that numbers of participants would increase should the approach be repeated.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The PB process is resource intensive, both in monetary terms and staff time. For the purposes of the pilot the financial cost was shared from the Central SfC Learning and Development Budget, Local Community Planning and Neighbourhood Team budgets. The main costs are shown in the table below. Other costs met by the SfC Neighbourhood team and not quantified below include copying, phone calls, postage and general stationery items.

Item	£
Training Course	£308.00
Venue hire	£400.00
catering	£161.36
crèche	£161.52
flyers and posters	£307.00
Misc. - pens and calculators	£50.60
Focus Groups	£164.26
Steering group meeting costs	£148.00
TOTAL	£1,700.74

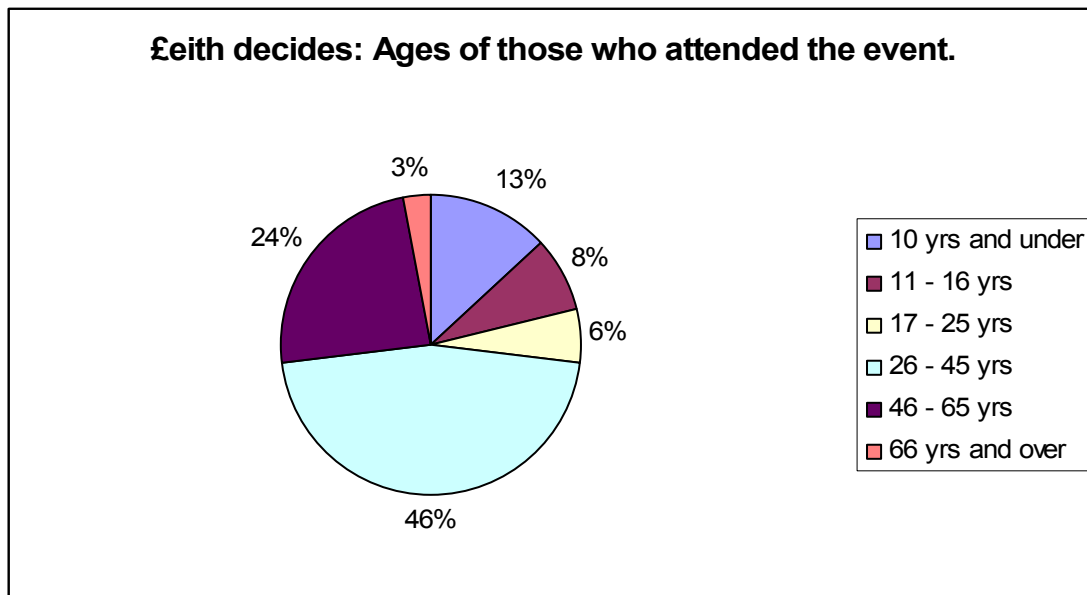
- 3.2 The potential greatest cost of the process which cannot be quantified is staff time. The PB pilot required two months of full-time work by the Leith PDO just before the event and about 1 day a week prior to this. Follow-up work, including the evaluation, has taken about 3 full weeks spread over a four month period. This can be roughly quantified at over £9,800 of staff salary and on-costs. In addition to this, several members of staff, elected members and community representatives, gave approx 4 hours of their time to assist at the event, as well as work done over the 6 month planning period by the CLD Worker, SfC Customer Adviser and Steering Group members.

4. Environmental Impact

- 4.1 8 of the 25 applications presented at the event were projects aiming to enhance the environment. This included the creation of playgrounds and gardens as well as a community orchard. 7 of these were successful. None of the remaining projects have an adverse impact on the environment.

5. Equalities Impact

- 5.1 There was no evidence of any adverse equalities implications. A very wide age range of people participated in the event. About 76% of evaluation respondents were of working age (17 yrs to 65 yrs) compared with a community profile figure of 74% (16 yrs to 64 yrs). According to the community profile 13% of residents are 15 year olds and younger, yet 21% of respondents identified themselves in this age group. 13% of the community are 65 years or older, however, only 3% of respondents were in this age group though attendance by this group may have been impacted by the adverse weather on the day.



- 5.2 91% of evaluation respondents stated they were white (British, European and other), slightly less than the current area profile of 95%. 4% were from other ethnic groups including Indian, Pakistani, Afro-Caribbean and mixed ethnicity, which is near the 5% community profile figure. 5% did not state their ethnic group.
- 5.3 Applications for projects were varied. 19 of the 25 projects presenting on the day involved young people or families, with one of those specifically for BME young people and one for young people with a disability. 15 of the projects were successful in being fully funded and one was partially funded. One project for older people was unsuccessful.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 “Word-of-mouth”, including Facebook as an electronic form and using community networks, has proven to be the most effective method of reaching and involving people.
- 6.2 The pilot was very time and cost intensive for the amount of funding allocated.
- 6.3 The date, timing and format of the event are important factors in enabling the involvement of all participants. Applicants were generally satisfied with the application process and support provided. The paper voting / scoring system was time consuming and caused some confusion.
- 6.4 The Leith Community responded positively to the decision making opportunity, with people of all ages and backgrounds taking part. The Steering Group valued taking part in the process. Community members support the concept and the community spirit it engenders.
- 6.5 It is important to note that continuance of a PB approach in Leith would require development and review to ensure that a sound process with sufficient resources is employed.

7. Action

7.1 Note the contents of the report.

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Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. National Standards for Community Engagement.2. Values of Participatory Budgeting.3. Notes for discussion.
Contact/tel/Email	<p>Loraine Duckworth, Partnership Development Officer. Phone 0131 529 or e-mail loraine.duckworth@edinburgh.gov.uk.</p> <p>Ian Buchanan, Leith Manager. Phone 0131 529 6182 or e-mail ian.buchanan@edinburgh.gov.uk.</p>
Wards affected	Leith and Leith Walk wards
Single Outcome Agreement	<p>Supports National Outcome 11: 'We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.'</p> <p>Supports Local Outcomes: 'Quality of Life within Neighbourhoods is improved.' 'Communities feel able to influence decisions that affect their neighbourhood.'</p>
Background Papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participatory Budgeting in the UK: Toolkit, PB Unit• £eith decides application forms and records.• Attendee and evaluation records from £eith decides event, 27 November 2010• Outcomes from £eith decides focus groups, February 2011.• Leith and Leith Walk Council Ward Community Profiles.

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Involvement Standard:

We will identify and involve the people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement.

The Support Standard:

We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement.

The Planning Standard:

We will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken.

The Methods Standard:

We will agree and use the methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.

The Working Together Standard:

We will agree and use the clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently.

The Sharing Information Standard:

We will ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants.

The Working with Others Standard:

We will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement.

The Improvement Standard:

We will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants.

The Feedback Standard:

We will feedback the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Standard:

We will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and meets the national standards for community engagement.

PARTICIPATORY VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

1. Local Ownership:
Residents should be involved in setting budget priorities and identifying projects for public spend in their area wherever possible.
2. Direct Involvement:
PB should involve direct as well as representative engagement wherever possible.
3. 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 citizen's trust of councillors and boost the role of ward councillors.
4. Mainstream Involvement:
Over time PB processes should move towards residents being involved in decisions over mainstream budgets (as opposed to only small grants processes).
5. Accessibility:
Participants must have good and clear access to PB processes.
6. 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.
7. Deliberation:
PB processes should take citizens beyond personal choice and involve real deliberation around budget decisions.
8. 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.
9. Shared Responsibility:
PB should build common purpose and a commitment from all stakeholders.

Notes for Discussion

- Although there are over 100 projects in England and Wales, PB is relatively new in Scotland. The Scottish Government and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) commissioned five pilots across Scotland in 2010 with a community safety theme. Two of those pilots used the PB process to allocate community grants and the others for the commissioning of initiatives and council interventions. All five are considering plans for progressing PB.
- In the 2011-14 Local Community Plan consultation survey over 67% of respondents said they were concerned or very concerned about having an influence on local decisions. However, the Services for Communities Annual Neighbourhood Survey for 2008 showed that only 33% of residents in the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership area felt able to influence decisions. In 2009 the question was changed to ask if the respondent felt able to have a say in local services. The Leith figure was 20% compared with the citywide figure of 43%. Further citywide research was carried out into this question in 2010. As a result of the research it was recommended that awareness was raised of how residents can influence local decisions and how decisions are made, together with wider opportunities for people to influence what happens in their area through Neighbourhood Partnerships.
- Focus Groups identified key areas for improvement as follows:
 - More people to share the workload, with clear roles and responsibilities.
 - A project manager to co-ordinate the project.
 - Community Representatives should not necessarily be Community Councillors but must be able to commit to the process from start to finish.
 - Exploring the use of technology to speed up the decision making process and cut down on the number of meetings, pairing people up to avoid excluding those who do not use computers.
 - Larger amount of funding for allocation would make the process more cost effective.
 - Potential for Leith decides to become a brand.
 - The further use of social networking sites.
 - Hold the event earlier in the year.
 - A marketplace format would enable members of the community and applicants to speak with each other and provide more networking opportunities.
- The Focus Groups were concerned that the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership Board retained some decision-making power to ensure equality of opportunity. PB values state that the process should support representative democracy, developing both representative and participatory models to work alongside each other. This compliments the Transparency value which requires open and clear processes with communities involved in the scrutiny.
- The possibility of process costs being lowered could be explored. For example, if a venue could be provided free of charge, using in-house printers for simple posters.