

Report from Participatory Budgeting Workshop

Hosted by Jez Hall (PB Partners UK)

DATE: Tuesday 8th August 2017

Venue: Down County Museum, English St, Downpatrick

"Participatory Budgeting (PB) enables local people to decide on the issues that matter to them. Helping them to understand public spending, put forward their own ideas and vote on them."

PB Partners UK

Or...

'Local people deciding on how to allocate part of a public budget'

*Or... 'If it feels like **we** have decided ---- it's PB.*

'If it feels like someone else has decided, it isn't.'

Brazilian resident involved in PB



Background

As part of exploring good practice and methods of citizen engagement in Community Planning, staff from Newry, Mourne and Down Council, PSNI, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust / Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), and the Community Development and Health Network (CDHN) took advantage of the availability in Northern Ireland during early August 2017 of Jez Hall, a leading expert on Participatory Budgeting (see Jez's biography at Appendix I below), to organise a joint introductory session for interested staff.

Held in Down County Museum, Downpatrick the event attracted 36 people from the above organisations as well as associated voluntary and community organisations, and included representation from the Department of Justice (DoJ).



Content

Participatory Budgeting (PB) began in 1980s Brazil against a background of military dictatorship and public corruption, as a means to revive democratic processes. It has spread to over 3000 cities worldwide, recognised as good practice by the World Bank, UNESCO, OECD, DFID and others. There are over 200 examples of UK pilot schemes, with many PB experiences developed on Scotland to date associated with the Community Empowerment Act, and local Community Choices agenda allocating 1% of certain public budgets to be allocated via PB.

Note that PB is not generally used to allocate large elements of public budgets. With a focus on community engagement PB can create an innovative means of engaging and supporting groups that may normally be excluded from traditional and more bureaucratic means of accessing financial support.

A suggested example: Typical Post-primary School budget of £7m: 1% = £70,000. What would school students bring forward if asked to identify proposals to improve their education and crucially.....collectively decide / vote on the best proposals? So this can be applied to a wide range of public organisations.

Note also that PB allows for oversight of process by the relevant authority. It is far from a 'free for all', and is recognised as a means of supporting representative democracy.

Jez's presentation covered two key approaches to PB:

- PB Grant Making – actively engages communities in deciding which projects are awarded funding
- Mainstream PB – engages communities in allocation of larger budgets across priorities and themes

The two can be connected, by communities making grant award decisions to projects following broader priority allocations. In practice PB Grant making is probably a more practical early step (and this



compressed workshop did not give enough time to demonstrate Mainstream PB processes in detail).

PB Grant Making

- A Grant pot / Community Chest of funding is identified – eg. percentage of a community support budget
- May be for general community funding / may be very specific to an issue of local concern
- Bidders present proposals to residents, including others making proposals, in one place with all interested present. Bidders are free to choose their method of presentation – no complicated application forms as it's the audience / attendees judging.
- All vote (methods may vary) on which proposals to support

Jez provided a video from Wales demonstrating the process. In the example some half of all projects were funded. Of particular note was that the process was supported unanimously across those attending, including those who may not have been successful, with the obvious transparency and level of involvement counting for a great deal.

There are clearly opportunities for agencies to collaboratively contribute to a community fund where there is common interest in 'wicked issues' that need a multi-agency approach and the engagement of particular communities.

A second video from Triangle Housing in Northern Ireland demonstrated their approach to PB with vulnerable tenants, and the range of social and environmental improvements that tenants proposed and developed.

Additional points:

- Should consider a budget as a 3-year 'learning cycle', and PB no different from this – as it's a development process
- Recognised that current 12-month budgets in NI are a constraint



Mainstream PB

Moving to look at Mainstream PB Jez gave examples of UK local authorities allocating substantial sums through PB:

- Tower Hamlets - £5m over 2 years from Mainstream budgets to 'top up' existing mainstream provision, voted on by local residents
- Durham – mobilises 14,000 residents, including debates on mainstream provision
- Glasgow will allocate £21m through PB in 2018

Jez explained in brief the use of a PB Matrix as a methodology for allocating significant elements of mainstream budgets. More information on PB Partners website – see Appendix II below.

Evaluation

22 evaluation forms were completed and returned by session attendees. All returns reported the session as very informative and there was substantial enthusiasm for applying PB in some form locally.



Post-session discussion note:

Present: Mark Peters, PSNI; Joanne Morgan, CDHN; Johnny McBride, David Patterson, Alan Beggs, NMDDC ; Jez Hall, PB Partners
 Apologies: Ralston Perera, Stephanie Thompson, SEHSCT/ CYPSP; Siobhan Fearon, NMDDC/ PCSP

Discussion focused on possible next steps locally. Attending organisations were interested in the possibility of a local PB Grant Making pilot, possible focus on Safety and Good Relations through PCSP budget. Also Young People through CYPSP, with potential links between. Devolution of elements of Council budget for 2018/19 to local DEA structures might also provide a base for one or more PB pilots.

Jez identified experience from Boston, USA of a \$1m pa Youth Programme. Also \$700k Youth programme in Seattle - where young people voted to allocate \$300k to tackling homelessness, not on specific "young people's issues". Message of being prepared to find out about priorities that those in authority did not expect!

Jez also identified an upcoming PB Conference in Scotland, likely to be in Edinburgh during November 2017, exact date to be finalised. Full information will be shared on the PB Scotland website closer the time: <https://pbscotland.scot/event-reports/>,

And there are examples of PB in Fife, Ayrshire and elsewhere that could be useful; for example, the Democratic society have recently produced a case study of the Fife Council £280,000 Oor-Bit PB programme, that used an innovative digital portal:

<http://www.demsoc.org/digital-pb-case-studies/>

Additionally, the 3 Ayrshire councils (North, South and East) have been collaborating and sharing learning from their many PB experiences, and this clustering of expertise has been helpful in pushing forward their PB work, especially in North Ayrshire, which had a really successful youth engagement programme that saw around 25% of all young people in North Ayrshire participating in spending £60,000 through the use of the YoungScot online portal and targeted session within schools.



Community Development
& Health Network

<https://pbscotland.scot/blog/2017/4/3/young-people-take-budget-lead-digital-pb-in-north-ayrshire>. There have been other innovative projects in Ayrshire focussing, for example on Mental Health (<https://pbnetwork.org.uk/50000-available-to-tackle-poor-mental-health-in-north-ayrshire/>) or localities working, as shown in this film of PB across Ayrshire: <https://pbscotland.scot/blog/2017/5/29/watch-participatory-budgeting-in-ayrshire?rq=ayrshire>. Full reports of these and many other PB experiences are on the PB Scotland website: <https://pbscotland.scot>

Local advocates are Triangle Housing, and the Building Change Trust (contact: Paul Braithwaite) have established a PB Working Group.

PB Partners, through its host social enterprise Shared Future CIC are engaged in some additional work on Citizen Juries, of which there is some experience in Derry/ Strabane council area. Their inquiries focus mainly on issues of health and wellbeing, such as reducing alcohol harm, improving primary care (<https://sharedfuturecic.org.uk/central-blackpool-health-wellbeing-inquiry>) or improving mental health services (<https://sharedfuturecic.org.uk/west-midlands-mental-health-commission-citizens-jury/>). They are also supporting the NHS in Scotland on the design of an upcoming citizen inquiry into 'realistic medicine' <https://www.ourvoice.scot/citizens-jury>. PB Partners believe the deep deliberation possible through a citizen jury could provide the robust transformation ideas needed to improve public services, with Participatory Budgeting then being used as a democratic mechanism for getting wide participation from the general public, who would be deciding how to spend resources on those recommendations. This being an alternative to the traditional PB small grant making approach described above.

Actions:

Draw up report of session and meeting	DP / JH
Contact BCT (Paul Braithwaite)	DP
Take back to agency / partners as appropriate	All
Liaise re future options / arrangements	All



Appendix I:

Jez Hall, PB Partners, Making People Count.



Jez Hall has worked on promoting Participatory Budgeting (PB) in the UK since August 2000, and regarding as one of the leading experts on PB in the UK. As well as developing some of the first models of PB in the UK, he helped establish the England based PB Unit in 2006. He contributed to the PB Unit's toolkits and masterclasses and delivers training to community members, front line staff, chief executives and senior politicians. Since 2012 he's been very involved in the newly formed UK PB Network and coordinates PB Partners, both legacy bodies of the PB Unit. He has a special interest on developing the use of PB with young people, and leading on capacity building local authorities in Scotland under their £2m Community Choices programme. But he brings a wide set of other interests and experience and through them met many inspiring people involved in citizen-led empowerment programmes.

Jez has spoken at national and international conferences on PB, written many reports and contributed to published academic papers on the subject. He sits on the advisory board for the Participatory Budgeting Project, based in New York, who are leading the work on PB in the USA and Canada. Previously employed by Lancaster University Management School as a social enterprise business analyst, between 2005 and 2007 Jez was a non-executive director of Central Manchester Primary Care Trust with oversight of community engagement and children services. He also spent 10 years working for a community architecture charity advising community groups on capital project development, community organising and community led regeneration. In 2009 Jez established Shared Future CIC, a not for profit company specialising in supporting new and existing social enterprises. SFCIC undertakes consultancy services focussed on delivering meaningful community empowerment.



Appendix II:

Supporting information from Jez Hall

In terms of other links you might want to use/share:

There are 4 key resources on this page: the intro to PB (a bit out of date but useful overview), the grant making guide, the mainstreaming guide and the evaluation guide: <https://pbnetwork.org.uk/resources/>

Then, more out of date, but still relevant... the values principles and standards for PB: <https://pbnetwork.org.uk/values-principles-and-standards-for-participatory-budgeting/>

Specific to policing/community safety, here is a link to some of the work we did with Greater Manchester Police a few years ago, based on tackling organised crime:

<https://pbnetwork.org.uk/greater-manchester-police-adopt-pb-to-build-strong-community-leadership/>

And this is a great case study and video of a police led PB event:

<https://www.mutualgain.org/success-unity-community-participatory-budgeting-event/>

And some useful information on the South Dublin PB experiment earlier this year... £250k, so quite big...

<http://www.southdublin.ie/haveyoursay/>

