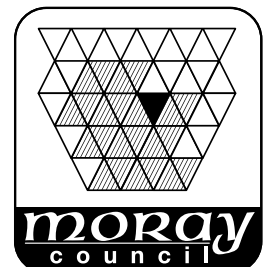




**What is it ?
and why does it matter**



About Participatory Budgeting (PB)

In 2017, COSLA and Scottish Government agreed that at least 1% of local authority budgets will be subject to participatory budgeting by the end of 2021.

Across Scotland this agreement is referred to as the 1% mainstream PB agreement.

The agreement was revised in 2021 to recognise the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on local priorities.

The agreement outlines a shared expectation that councils will use PB to go beyond the current arrangements for community consultation and engagement. Mainstream PB is not expected to replace small grants PB; instead it should be used to build upon and develop new opportunities for communities to directly decide on the allocation of public funds and participate in the design of public services.

Participatory budgeting is a form of local decision making. It invites communities to have direct say in how public money is spent. **Participatory budgeting (PB)** is the internationally recognised terms for community involvement in allocating public funds. In Scotland PB has also been known as Community Choices, however locally councils may develop their own branding to describe PB activity e.g. “Our Communities, Our Choices”.

The benefits of PB

There are several benefits to local democracy associated with running mainstream participatory budgeting. It can help improve the democratic process by widening participation and re-invigorating the role of local authorities, local councillors, and civil society. It can improve the way public money is spent or invested by increasing the knowledge available to the local authority when undertaking service planning.

Mainstream PB can take many shapes and forms and cover a range of approaches, priority areas and purposes, therefore flexibility of approach should reflect local priorities. Key principles of mainstream PB should: engage local communities in deciding how public money is spent; be inclusive to eliminate participation gaps via open and inclusive processes; employ decision making methods which are focused on dialogue and deliberation to deliver shared and individual outcomes and ensure that outcomes are meaningful for people and local communities in meeting their needs.

- Rothes Playpark Project – Moray Council Open Spaces and CSU worked in partnership with the community who rose to the challenge with their own fundraising and commitment to deliver an even better facility.



Mainstream PB and why it matters

Mainstream PB enables the direct participation of citizens in local budget decisions, resource allocation and service design. This moves beyond allocating individual budgets, also known as small grants PB, or identifying separate budgets for community engagement and consultation, towards mainstreaming PB within decisions on the allocation of existing resources across all council services.

Further information on key features of PB can be found in the PB Charter for Scotland.



<https://pbscotland.scot/s/PB-Charter-online-version.pdf>

PB was an important recommendation of the local government-led Commission for Strengthening Local Democracy in 2014:

“Democratic power should be delivered from communities up, not drip down from above. Democratic innovations such as ... **participatory budgeting** ... should ... become the standard by which [participation in decision making] is delivered in Scotland.”

Mainstream PB can be used alongside other models of community engagement to advance equalities, enhance democratic renewal and progress public sector reform.

- It supports a key principle of public service reform; that people should have equal opportunity to participate and have their voice heard in local decisions. Mainstream PB provides a vehicle to meet the strategic aims of public sector reform through engaging communities in the design of local services.
- It complements aspirations outlined in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 to enable communities to take forward their ambitions.

- It embeds the Public Sector Equality Duty within local decision making by designing services in response to individual and shared needs. Participation of communities within local decisions is also a key principle of a human rights-based approach and can assist councils in their work on the Fairer Scotland Duty.



<https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-duty-guidance-public-bodies/>

- It delivers on outcomes in Scotland’s National Performance Framework that “we live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe” and “we tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally”.



<https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

- It enhances the participation and engagement of local communities and devolves power to people and communities over decisions that affect their lives. Increased participation with communities is a key recommendation from the Local Government Blueprint to strengthen local democracy.



https://www.cosla.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/19551/LG-Blueprint.pdf

- The Scottish Government has outlined an ambitious programme of activity to see PB developed across the broader public and voluntary sectors through the Future of Participatory Budgeting in Scotland Framework. The framework outlines priority areas for development over the next five years to ensure PB is part of Scotland’s core democratic and community decision making infrastructure.



<https://www.gov.scot/publications/future-of-participatory-budgeting-in-scotland-framework/>

Principles of mainstream PB

Including deliberation within PB can help communities effectively identify priorities and reach a consensus on them. A guide to including deliberation within PB is available from the Democratic Society. As a guide, deliberation within PB ensures that:



<https://www.demsoc.org/uploads/store/mediaupload/560/file/Guide%20to%20Deliberation-%20Participatory%20Budgeting.pdf>

- The information people need to make informed choices is available and accessible at all points in the PB process
- People involved report increased knowledge about the issues affecting groups and individuals in their own communities and other communities
- Methods are used which allow people to express their views and which encourage discussion.
- Ideas, priorities and the choices made about how money is spent are reached through public discussions and informed by wide ranging views.

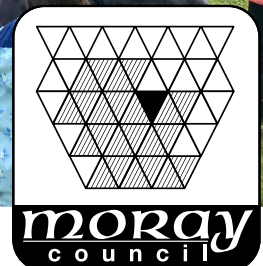
- Rothes Playpark grand opening event

Done well, PB benefits local communities by generating a shared understanding of local needs and helps elected members fulfil their roles in supporting local communities to thrive.

- PB goes beyond consultation, giving local people a direct role in shaping local services.
- PB increases transparency around local decision making, raising awareness of opportunities and considerations in delivering services.
- PB is an opportunity to hear a diverse range of community voices.
- PB helps people start conversations about the local issues that matter to them.
- Through taking part, communities develop the confidence and skills to engage with local issues.
- PB strengthens communities and helps people develop local connections.
- Through working on local priorities, PB can instil a sense of ownership within communities.
- PB strengthens links across communities and prioritises the role of people within local planning.
- Community relationships developed through PB can help overcome social isolation and loneliness.



Participatory
Budgeting Moray



223912