

Participatory Budgeting (PB)
For
Environmental Improvements (Housing)
in East Ayrshire

Frequently Asked Questions



East Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear

Participatory Budgeting (PB) in East Ayrshire

Frequently Asked Questions

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a fairly new concept within East Ayrshire, but early in 2016 Vibrant Communities secured funding from the Scottish Government and the East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership to pilot the PB format in 2 communities that have Community Led Action Plans.

The FAQ's has been put together to help you gain a little more insight on PB and the questions that came up in the pilots, but also looks at specific questions relating to the Environmental improvement initiative. It does not cover everything in detail but will hopefully give you a little more understanding of PB.

What is Participatory Budgeting?

The official definition of PB is:-

“PB directly involves local people in making decisions on the spending priorities for a defined public budget. This means engaging residents and community groups, representative of all parts of the community, to discuss spending priorities, make spending proposals and vote on them.”

Put simply, PB empowers local people to play a key role in deciding how public money is spent on projects and services in their communities. PB can be used to support community and voluntary groups to provide projects that are important to the local community or it can be used to involve residents to shape what and how mainstream services are delivered in their areas. At present, in East Ayrshire PB is being used to support to community and voluntary groups delivering local projects in line with the priorities contained in the CLAP and East Ayrshire Health and Social care partnership priorities.

For Participatory Budgeting to work, there has to be a degree of competition, allowing local people to choose which project they want to support, it is not a system of making grants, decided by a small number of people.

Where does PB come from?

PB as a term has been around for 30+ years. It originated in Brazil in the 1980s but has spread rapidly 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 government transparency; in Berlin which has adopted methods that include PB online; and it's now spreading in the UK.

For more information on PB around the world you might like to look at the following links

www.scdc.org.uk

www.pbnetwork.org.uk

How does PB operate?

The key to PB is the participation of local people deciding funding is allocated to projects and services.

To enable this, public events are organised and the local community are invited along to have their say.

There are a number of different types of community event used for PB, such as

- Groups making a short presentation to audience, with audience deciding which projects to support.
- Market place, where groups have displays of project and people read the displays and decide which projects to support.
- Online decision, where project information is made available and people vote on their own computer/tablet. (at this time, the systems required to allow this are not in place within East Ayrshire)

In all of these options, the community is invited to make the decisions.

The Environmental Improvement PB process will be accessing a part of the money the council allocates each year for environmental improvements, normally work is identified and decided upon by the Registered Tenants Organisation and Housing Services, but in these PB events, the decision making process is widened to include all local tenants.

What is the Environmental Improvement Budget?

Every year, East Ayrshire Council allocates a budget for each neighbourhood area across the authority to be used for environmental improvements which are for the benefit of council tenants and communities

How much is available for projects

A budget of £15,000 has been allocated for this process.

How will this be taken forward?

PB works best when it is led by local people, so a PB steering group will be set up to lead on this process. This group will consist of local tenants and residents and council officers to support the process.

There are a few things within PB that are set, these include

- the criteria proposals must meet
- projects must be chosen through a PB event – which means the community decide

but the steering group will make a number of local decisions including

- type of event,
- date/location
- advertising

After the closing date, the steering group will meet to assess the proposals and check whether or not they meet the criteria. Those who meet the set criteria will be put forward for costing before the decision event.

So what can be proposed?

Any proposals must be for land owned/managed via the Housing Revenue Account, in housing estates that will benefit the environment and/or improve security.

This would include such things as

- fencing
- landscaping and improvements of common areas
- parking area improvements
- other environmental projects subject to the council's approval.

Who can submit a proposal?

Anyone living in the area identified.

How do we make a proposal?

Proposals can be submitted online, through smart survey or on paper form.

How will I know if my proposal has been successful?

You will be contacted after the steering group meeting and informed whether or not your proposal will be going to the decision event.

Do I have to present my proposal at the decision event?

No, we are proposing that the projects will be displayed at the event for people to view and decide which ones they want to support.

What happens if a proposal is unsuccessful?

If a proposal is unsuccessful at the first stage it means that it does not fit the criteria for the Environmental Improvement Budget and cannot be undertaken under this budget.

Proposals that do not fit the criteria but could be undertaken under another budget will be passed on to the appropriate people.

Proposals that are unsuccessful at the decision day will be kept on record to be considered in future budgets.

How will I be kept informed?

If you have made a proposal, you will be contacted direct. Other information regarding the decision event will be widely publicised within the community, through social media, relevant websites and posters.

Will I be consulted if a proposal is successful and affects my property?

Yes, affected tenants will be lettered giving the option to decline the work proposed.

How can local people lead this when we don't know much about it?

The strength of PB is the empowerment of local communities to make decisions about services/projects in your own area. As much of the decision making as possible will be undertaken by the local steering group and local tenants and residents at the public event.

How can I get involved?

You can get involved in 2 ways,

- submit a proposal
- come along to the decision event and vote for the proposals you want to see taken forward.

Who can vote?

East Ayrshire Council tenants and family living with them aged 8 or over can vote.

How do we vote?

There will be a decision event, which will be advertised widely, to which all tenants in the area will be invited to attend. At this event, all of the proposals that meet the criteria will be displayed. Attendees will be asked to vote for the projects they want to be undertaken.

If you are unable to leave your house to vote, we can come to you with a voting paper. If you require this service please contact Kevin Hamilton on 01563 553591 to arrange, otherwise you must attend the event to vote.

When will successful proposals be carried out?

Successful proposals will be carried out during the financial year 2019/20

For further information about proposals please contact Kevin Hamilton on 01563 554878 or Margaret MacBain on 01563 578121.