

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC DATA LABEL: PROTECT



VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

COMMUNITY CHOICES PILOTS

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform the Panel on progress of the Community Choices pilots

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the PDSP notes the content of the report.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; making best use of our resources; working in partnership
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	None
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	Community Choices processes are resource intensive and considerations is being given as to how processes are resourced.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	Voluntary Organisations PDSP
VIII	Other consultations	

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

Community Choices is the name given to participatory budgeting (PB) in Scotland. PB is a democratic process which empowers communities to have more say on how resources in their area are used. It is based on the view that communities are often best placed to be involved in or make decisions around their own needs.

£75,000 is being allocated through a Community Choices process to fund two streams of targeted activity: One which aligns to health and wellbeing outcomes identified through the regeneration planning process, and another which aligns to positively impacting on individuals, groups and/or communities with protected characteristics or experiencing socio-economic inequalities. The £75,000 budget has been split between the two streams of activity.

To progress with the planning of the pilots, a joint working group with representatives from West Lothian Council and the Third Sector Strategy Group met to look at options for the pilots. It was agreed that in order to test out different approaches, activity would focus on the following:

- The health and wellbeing stream will be aligned to the regeneration planning process and focus on two regenerations areas: Blackburn and Craigshill. Slightly different methods will be used in each area to test out different approaches.
- The equalities stream will be carried out on a West Lothian wide basis and will pilot a 'digital only' approach. This may involve the use of the new open space platform CONSUL that is being pursued nationally as a tool for digital PB.

D.2 Community Choices Pilots – Health and Wellbeing

Activities relating to the two health and wellbeing pilots are currently underway and progress is detailed below.

Blackburn

Blackburn Community Choices is currently underway, with a community voting event planned for Friday 27th March 2020. This has been planned through the Poverty, Health and Wellbeing group in Blackburn (a sub group of the Regeneration Steering Group).

The scope of this approach is based on priority areas identified through the development of the regeneration plan in Blackburn, 'Blackburn's Future'. It is important that any community choices process is based on the needs of a particular community therefore using the regeneration planning process as a basis has ensured that the money will be spent on projects that align to those needs.

Applications to Blackburn Community Choices must demonstrate they meet at least one of the following priority areas:

- Mental Health & Wellbeing: Improving mental health and wellbeing and building resilience in individuals and communities
- Children Living in Poverty: Tackling inequalities with a specific focus on children and their families who are living in poverty
- Healthy Living: Increasing physical activity and exercise, by reducing barriers that impact on physical activity levels, promotion and support for healthy life choices around food and reducing barriers to making health life choices.

The closing date for applications is Friday 13th March. Applications will be verified

and organisations will be invited to participate in a marketplace as part of the community voting event where they will showcase their project to members of the public who attend the event. Members of the public will then vote for the 3 projects they feel best meet the needs of the community. Participants must be residents of Blackburn and aged 12 and over.

Craigshill

- D.3** Craigshill Community Choices is being developed through the Transform Craigshill Health and Wellbeing Group (a sub group of the Regeneration Group in Craigshill). The criteria for applications for this approach will, like Blackburn, be based on the key areas identified through the regeneration planning process. This is likely to focus on reducing isolation, increasing access to good quality affordable food, improving mental health and wellbeing – particularly amongst young people, building community spirit and provision of out of work hour's services to improve health and wellbeing. The application process is still being developed but the proposal is to split the funding into two tiers (for smaller and larger projects) and for groups to include a 2 minute video as part of their application – support will be provided for this. The purpose of the video is to enable the projects to be showcased out in the community (to individuals and groups who are unable to attend the PB events) so they can make an informed vote.

Like Blackburn, it is planned to hold a marketplace event where bidding projects can showcase their projects. In addition, it is proposed that an element of outreach work is carried out in the week following the event to enable people who can't attend the event to be able to vote. This will be carried out digitally through officers going out into the community. Therefore voting will be carried out through the events (paper-based) and digitally through the outreach work using the videos of the projects.

These two approaches are using different processes in order to test out how different ways of carrying out participatory budgeting processes work. They will be evaluated and the learning applied to future PB work in West Lothian.

Equalities

An equalities pilot is also being planned which will be carried out on a West Lothian wide basis. The aim of this stream of activity will be to promote equalities, inviting projects that help empower local communities to promote inclusion and have a positive impact on equalities.

This will pilot a 'digital only' voting approach using the online platform CONSUL which is being rolled out by COSLA and the Scottish Government. West Lothian Council are currently developing their version of the CONSUL site. This will be tested out internally prior to developing it for use by the general public. A group of officers have been trained in its use.

E. CONCLUSION

Two of the Community Choices Pilots are now underway. The digital platform CONSUL is currently being developed for testing and will thereafter be used for the Equalities Pilot.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Appendices/Attachments: None

Contact Person: Susan Gordon, Community Planning Development Officer, 01506 283090
susan.gordon@westlothian.gov.uk

Craig McCorriston

Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration

Date of meeting: 19 March 2020