

Agenda item 5

For decision and discussion - Participatory Budgeting

Authors: Toby Eliot and Jackie Wheeler, Responsible Finance Officer

Summary

FTC wants local people to have the opportunity and be encouraged to help make decisions that impact their town, and the desired outcome is to engage a broad cross section of the community including people not otherwise reached. PB is included in the Town Council's Strategy and work programme.

Cllrs Toby Eliot, Sheila Gore, and the RFO have developed a way forward with support from other Cllrs and staff.

Three parts and three different approaches comprising the PB project are proposed. At this stage the project details about how PB will operate is still to be decided. This report is proposing that Cllrs agree to there being three separate PB processes and to commit £65k of next year's budget to deliver these. An early funding decision is required because the lead in time to this project is six months. Please note that we are not proposing to increase the budget, we are just committing some aspects of the budget to a PB approach, in which the town can engage and make choices between ways of achieving outcomes.

At the time of writing we know that we will need to allocate existing staff time to manage and promote the PB project. Additional contract staff could also be recruited. In addition, we will need a budget to promote the project and for events/room hire/refreshments etc. Further details will be tabled at the next committee meeting.

Please note these are indicative costings and will be subject to the setting of the 2017/18 budget which will be approved by Council in due course.

1. Open Spaces

It is proposed to allocate £15k to run a PB project at Tower View and Packsaddle play areas. People will be asked to choose whether to invest this amount in play equipment or organised play/sport development workers or a combination of both. Events will be organised onsite where votes will be cast on the day plus voting slips circulated in the local areas.

2. Events

It is proposed to allocate £30k. This part of the PB project will entail community groups, local enterprises and others to pitch their proposals to the community who will then vote on their preferred events. This will be done at a Council organised event, probably to be held in February/March.

3. Single big community decision

It is proposed to allocate the £20k, which is the current cost necessary to keep the toilets in Victoria Park open. A range of options will be considered. These will include closing the toilets and saving the money, to using the money to fund the building of a Pavilion and cafe (which would include toilets). These options will be set out for people to vote for.

Recommendations

1. Approve the decision to implement participatory budgeting as detailed in this report
2. Commit £65k of next year's budget on three parts of the project as outlined
3. Note that further details of the project will tabled at the next Council Matters meeting