

Committee: **PSB Scrutiny Committee**
 Date of meeting: **13th December 2021**
 Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent Participatory Budget programme:
 “Community Voice, Community Choice”**
 Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Dai Davies, Chair of PSB**
 Report Submitted by: **Andrew Parker, Service Manager: Policy &
 Partnerships**
**David Arnold, Blaenau Gwent County Borough
 Council**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|---------------------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| | | 02.12.21 | | | 13.12.21 | | | BG Local Well-being Partnership |

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update about the results of the Blaenau Gwent “Community Voice, Community Choice” Participatory Budget programme.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Participatory budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which community members decide how to spend part of a public budget. In November 2020, the PSB agreed that a PB steering group formed by PSB partners be set up to consider the PB process and make key decisions around programme coordination, aims and apportionment of the budget, eligibility and maximum bid limits, and to promote of the programme amongst local communities for action in 2021/22.
- 2.2 A Blaenau Gwent PB programme led by PSB partners and community members, coordinated by Mutual Gain, enabled local people and community groups to bid for funding towards local projects that contribute towards the well-being objectives for Blaenau Gwent. This included projects that benefit certain community and neighbourhood environments, connect people to well-being support services in their local community, or support communities to recover from the Covid19 pandemic.
- 2.3 This integrated, partnership approach amongst public service partners, community members and Mutual Gain encouraged local projects from across the well-being spectrum to be considered for funding, resulting in a wide range of community-led projects that contribute towards all of the PSB’s strategic well-being work programmes. There was £250,000 participatory funding available for local organisations and groups to bid for during the PB programme.
- 2.4 The PB steering group, comprising representatives from ABUHB (Chair), BGCBC, NRW, Tai Calon, GAVO and Aneurin Leisure Trust, worked closely with Mutual Gain to invite community members to set up a planning group

during the design, application, voting and monitoring stages. The Community planning group named the Participatory Budget programme “Community Voice, Community Choice”.

- 2.4 Over 70 PB funding applications were received, comprising over £450,000 worth of bids in total for the £250,000 funding available. Due to health and safety concerns around hosting large in-person voting events during the Covid19 pandemic, four Voting Events were held via Zoom during September 2021, all hosted and administered by Mutual Gain.
- 2.5 There were 40 successful applicants across the four Voting Events, including a wide range of projects to enhance well-being and/or support local communities recover from the Covid19 pandemic. Full information about the Community Voice, Community Choice programme are provided in Appendix 1.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

Option 1

That Members of the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee consider and accept the report as provided prior to it being submitted to the Public Services Board.

Option 2

That Members of the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee consider and provide specific comment for consideration by the Public Services Board before approval.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

This report is in-line with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

The Participatory Budgeting funding awarded to the Blaenau Gwent area was initially for the period April 2020 – March 2021, however it was agreed for the funding to be used in 2021/22 due to partner organisations having to respond to the Covid19 pandemic since March 2020. The funding awarded for the period up to 31 March 2022 was for £265,000.

The PB steering group recommended to the PSB that the services of a contractor who specialises in delivering virtual PB programmes could be employed to oversee delivery of the Blaenau Gwent PB programmes. The contractor would provide the following services:

- Train a PB steering group of up to 25-30 people, which would include members of the public and community groups, as well as PSB partners.
- 4 x two hour Supported Delivery sessions for the steering group, where the members make a series of decisions that shape the local PB process e.g. criteria for successful projects to move onto the voting stage,

maximum individual project bid amounts, minimum bidding and voting age, number of bids allowed per individual/ organisation etc.

- The development of a social media footprint and webpage with local branding to be decided by the steering group.
- A series of online support surgeries throughout the bidding process to engage with communities and help prospective applicants prepare their bid.
- Support for the steering group with the paper sift process to ensure all bids that go forward to the voting event meet the PB criteria.
- Delivering four PB voting events, including managing attendance via Eventbrite, Charing and collecting votes, as well as providing all technical support on the day.

This service would be paid for using a combination of contributions from PSB partners and part of the Early Years & Transformation PB funding from ABUHB, ensuring that at least £250,000 remained available for local community groups, organisations and individuals to bid for.

The funding is held, administered and monitored by the council as the designated administrator for the Blaenau Gwent PSB.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Successful projects have been advised that the funding relates to the 2021/22 financial year, and will be asked during December – January to highlight how the money will be spent by April 2022.

5.3 ***Legal***

The programme is being developed in line with the 5 Ways of Working and other requirements stated in Well-being of Future Generations Act.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

Mutual Gain provided training for 15-20 members of the PB planning group in order to help develop and deliver the PB programme effectively, as outlined above and in Appendix 1.

6. ***Supporting Evidence***

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The criteria for applications to receive funding was based around Covid19 recovery planning and working towards the objectives in the Blaenau Gwent We Want Well-being Plan.

Full information about the Community Voice, Community Choice programme are provided in Appendix 1.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Members of the public were invited to attend the virtual Voting Events to make their own decisions about which local well-being projects are funded to meet the needs of their community.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
PSB partners and Blaenau Gwent residents were involved in setting priorities for the funding and the public decided which projects should receive funding by being invited to attend virtual Voting Events in September 2021, where they were given the opportunity to read project summaries and see a video from each applicant outlining what they're project will achieve and how much funding they're applying for.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
The PB funding is now being used to improve community well-being through local projects run by local people, as outlined in Appendix 1. Organisations are encouraged to shape their projects to develop the skills, knowledge and social network of people in the community; improve the neighbourhood environment so it contributes to the well-being of the people that live there; and join up services that connect people to well-being support or resources in their community.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***
The PB programme will provide local people and community groups to deliver projects that join up services and connect people to well-being support or resources that they either weren't aware of or weren't previously available. Local well-being projects that involve active filling any gaps in existing provision were encouraged.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
Robust partnership networks through the Local Well-being Partnership, the PB steering group and the wider well-being landscape. The PB programme involved collaboration between PSB partners, community groups, residents, Third Sector and other external organisations.

Steering Group partners are now working together to signpost any unsuccessful applicants towards relevant alternative funding streams that could support their projects.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***
The aim of the PB programme is to improve community well-being through funding local activity via the successful projects outlined in Appendix 1. Many of the projects now being delivered align with the well-being objectives that the Local Well-being Partnership are working towards through the continuation of the PSB's well-being programme, supporting age-friendly communities, the Integrated Well-being Network, sustainable food initiatives and natural environment programmes in particular.

6.8 ***EqIA***
Community Voice, Community Choice applicants were screened by the community planning group.

7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***
The council's Partnership and Engagement Teams are overseeing the financial monitoring arrangements on behalf of the Local Well-being Partnership and the

PB steering group, as the council is the designated administrator for the local delivery group of the Gwent PSB.

APPENDICES & BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- [APPENDIX 1: Participatory Budgeting Programme Mutual Gain Final Report October 2021](#)