

Committee: **Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **15th April 2021**

Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent Participatory Budget programme**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Nigel Daniels, Leader / Executive Member
Corporate Services**

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)
		01.04.21			15.04.21			PSB SSG PSB

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress achieved towards a Blaenau Gwent 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 the programme amongst local communities for action in 2021/22.

2.2 A Blaenau Gwent PB programme led by PSB partners and community members will enable local people and community groups to bid for funding towards local projects that contribute towards the well-being objectives for Blaenau Gwent. This could include projects that develop skills and improve opportunities for local people, projects that benefit certain community and neighbourhood environments, or projects that connect people to well-being support services in their local community.

2.3 This integrated, partnership approach will ensure that local projects from across the well-being spectrum will be considered for funding, resulting in a wide range of community-led projects that contribute towards all of the PSB strategic work programmes.

2.4 The PB steering group, currently comprising representatives from ABUHB (Chair), BGCBC, NRW, Tai Calon, GAVO and Aneurin Leisure Trust, is

meeting virtually regularly to consider next steps. Community members will be invited to join the group during the design, application/bidding, voting and monitoring stages, once a framework for the Blaenau Gwent PB programme has been finalised.

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. To date, the funding awarded for the period up to 31 March 2022 is for £100,000.

5.1.1 The PB steering group has recommended to the PSB that the services of a consultant who specialises in delivering virtual PB programmes could be employed to oversee delivery of the Blaenau Gwent PB programmes. The consultant 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 two PB voting events, including managing attendance via Eventbrite, Chairing and collecting votes, as well as providing all technical support on the day.

5.1.2 This service would be paid for using a combination of contributions from PSB partners and top-slicing some of the Early Years & Transformation PB funding from ABUHB, ensuring that at least £90,000 remains available for local community groups, organisations and individuals to bid for.

5.1.3 PSB partners will need to provide support for the ongoing monitoring process from their own budgets once the bidding and voting process has been completed and the funding has been awarded for applicants to deliver their projects by the end of March 2022.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

After taking into account admin costs for delivery of the PB programme, organisations will be given the opportunity to bid for a total of at least £90,000 to deliver local well-being projects.

Given the significant impact of the Covid19 pandemic on our communities, there is a risk that BG community groups and local organisations will find it difficult to mobilise themselves for an entirely online and virtual application, voting and delivery process, without the support and expertise of a PB consultant, which could result in an underspend. However, this risk is currently considered low as there is little evidence of underspend in other similar PB programmes across the UK.

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***

If appointed, the PB consultant would provide training for up to 30 members of the PB steering group in order to help develop and deliver the PB programme effectively, as outlined above in the Impact on Budget section.

The PB Steering Group would look to monitor the human resources consequences on the PSB partner organisations through indirect contributions e.g. staff time.

6. ***Supporting Evidence***

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

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

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

Members of the public will make the decisions about which local well-being projects are funded to meet the needs of their community.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The principles of PB mean that local people will be able to make decisions about which projects are funded to meet the well-being needs of their communities. Blaenau Gwent residents and community groups will therefore be involved in setting priorities for the funding and will decide which projects should receive funding by being invited to attend virtual voting events at the end of the bidding process, where they will get the opportunity to see a video from each applicant outlining what their project will achieve and how much funding they're applying for.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The PB funding will be used to improve community well-being through local projects run by local people 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 aware of. Local well-being projects that involve active signposting, social prescribing, and filling any gaps in existing provision will be encouraged.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Robust partnership networks already in place through the PSB, its Strategic Support Group (SSG), the PB steering group and other delivery groups like the PSB's Engagement sub-group and Age-Friendly steering group. The PB programme involves collaboration between all PSB partners, community groups, community members and other external organisations.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The aim of the PB programme is to improve community well-being through funding local activities such as volunteering, access to green spaces, active travel, social prescribing, intergenerational activities etc. These all align with the well-being objectives that the PSB are working towards through their existing strategic programme, supporting the age-friendly communities, Integrated Well-being Network and climate change programmes in particular.

6.8 ***EqIA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

The PB steering group will consider the requirements of EQIA as part of the delivery of the programme.

7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***

The PSB and SSG monitor progress through its strategic work programme performance management arrangements.