

Issue E - Participatory budgeting and Community Kitty's

1. Participatory budgeting (PB) aims to give people a say in prioritising individual services or projects through community led debates, neighbourhood votes and public meetings. This is all set within an annual cycle of participation, planning and implementation. i.e. putting mainstream budget into a 'community kitty' on which local people make decisions on how it should be spent. The ethos is to enable local people to reach an informed view about local priorities, to trigger action and direct resources to specific areas of local need. It is believed that this process is owned and shaped by the participants, grows over time, develops a deep and critical citizen participation, re-invents local leadership and fundamentally can lead to mainstream resourcing, allocation and distribution.
2. PB has not been widely used in the UK. However, it is one of the key proposals set out in the DCLG / LGA Community Empowerment Action Plan. It is anticipated that PB will take a higher profile with the forthcoming statutory duty on local councils to involve citizens from 2009. It also relates to the LSP requirements to involve residents in the Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA.
3. CYC has a strong and long history of involvement of the public in decision making and allocating some mainstream revenue and capital budgets through the ward committee process. This has recently been recognised by the Local Government Information Unit (LGiU) who are working with the NMU to evaluate and assess the York model with the potential view of providing this information to other LA's and national policy makers.
4. The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) feel that to date councils who have tried PB have focused on funding linked to regeneration or initiative funding, rather than mainstreaming public funds. They have also said that councils have used this to give participatory grants. To some extent both of these issue could be true of the York Model.
5. CYC are now well placed to utilise the extensive experience of public involvement in this area to look at new ways to devolve power and control to community organisations, in addition to the excellent foundation of the ward committee Local Improvement Scheme process. One additional way could be through the allocation of revenue budget through the ward committee process to a selected panel of residents. These would need to be demographically representative of their ward committee area. Residents and community groups could bid for funding and the panel make recommendations for approval to the elected ward councillors thus ensuring and reinforcing the elected members role as champion in the community. The benefits of such an application have been seen in some of the pilot 'community kitty' authorities such as Bradford and Keighley, Newcastle, Salford and

Sunderland. They found that investing a small part of the public budget in what people can do for themselves was a powerful tool in delivering tangible benefits and making people feel involved.

6. Following on from the 10 pilot 'community kitty' schemes, DCLG are due to announce further PB schemes in November 2007. In early 2008 they propose to consult on a strategy with an aim of it being offered everywhere by 2012.
7. In summary, Members are asked to note the content of this section of the report, in particular the joint work with the LGiU to gain some national recognition of the PB process in York. Members are also requested to indicate whether they would wish for a pilot approach of a 'community Kitty' to be introduced in the city, utilising a residents panel (as detailed in paragraph 5 above).

Indicative Financial Impacts

Ward Committee Local Improvement Schemes are currently funded via base revenue and capital budget. The PB process can continue in budget and would therefore be cost neutral.

Should members wish to implement the Community kitty's this could be funded as a top slice of the current ward committee budget allocation or from an additional non recurring allocation.