

# Participatory Budgeting Network

## Policy Briefs



*Participatory budgeting involves local people in making decisions on the spending and priorities of public budgets.*

## Democratising Policing in the UK

Public budgets are under huge pressure and Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are seeking effective ways to involve citizens in improving public safety.

This briefing paper explores why PCCs and Police and Crime panels could benefit from using Participatory Budgeting (PB) to involve communities in tackling crime and antisocial behaviour as part of their local commissioning.



Techniques like PB makes it possible to open up decision making. Putting communities in the driving seat whenever you are designing new services. Supporting co-production, innovation and co-operation. Rebuilding trust in our democratic system.

## Safer Neighbourhoods through Public Participation

Every year the Police and their partners spend millions of pounds commissioning services on behalf of local residents. Yet the way we go about the commissioning often leaves those who are supposed to benefit out of the process. We believe that the vital knowledge and perspective that residents bring to policing their communities is being ignored. Limiting innovation and creative thinking. We need new approaches.

**The 2011 Stevens' report**, a comprehensive review of Policing. recommended that Police forces use PB. Lord Stevens believes that it provides a robust, transparent and proven approach to public engagement. Baroness Newlove, in her report *Our Vision for Safe and Active Communities* also recognised its value in creating safer, healthier communities. Fire and Rescue services in Devon, Cornwall and elsewhere have successfully used PB as part of initiatives to improve community safety. Police commissioners are beginning to explore its use too.

There are already many positive experiences where policing and PB has worked in harmony. It has been shown that PB, where used as a mechanism for supporting community led interventions, or to provide new intelligence for the remodelling of services, is effective, increases community cohesion and increases confidence in public bodies.

***'From what I've seen today we'll be doing much more of this'***

*Mick Giannasi, Chief Constable, Heddlu Gwent speaking at the 2010 Your Voice Your Choice programme*

*To watch the video of Your Voice Your Choice in Blaenau Gwent see: <http://www.pbnetwork.org.uk> .*

# An Innovative Democratic Process for Empowering Communities

## Participatory budgeting (PB)

allows the citizens of a locality (or within a specific community of interest) to share in the allocation of public funding. Each community is different and PB can work in different ways in different situations to suit local circumstances. We believe there are a few basic principles to follow that help keep citizens in the driving seat.

- ◆ PB aims to increase public knowledge about how our taxes are being spent. Information must be simple to understand, easy to get hold of and that means written in plain English.
- ◆ PB is about local politicians and public employees being more accountable. That means discussions about the public budget should take place in the communities they affect, not behind closed doors.
- ◆ Its about direct democracy in action. Ensuring local people have a fair opportunity to have their say and make a real contribution requires their involvement before decisions are made by senior officers and elected politicians.
- ◆ It's much more than consultation. Everyone should have a chance to be heard. Given both the time they need and the respect they deserve to participate ... they can have a voice.

## Cheshire Police Commissioner is trialling PB in 2014

John Dwyer, Police & Crime Commissioner for Cheshire is set to invest £30,000 in The Grange area of Runcorn in a one off pilot project where it will be the people of the Grange who will decide where the money will be spent.

In a press release released on the 11th April 2014 John Dwyer said:

*"I am asking community groups & residents from all parts of the community to come up with ideas for projects to make the area better.*

*I am really excited about this project as it is the people of the Grange who will vote on the projects and decide where the money gets spent".*

*Logo designed by the young people of the Grangeway Youth Club for Cheshire PCC Our Community, Our Opportunity PB initiative*



***"Delivering services closer to communities and letting local people make the decisions that affect them is not rocket science."***

*Extract from Our Vision for Safe and Active Communities. A Home Office report, by Baroness Newlove.*

## Policy Implications:

The challenge in traditional budget consultation for is having to explain why one community, service or programme has lower priority than another. Yet hard choices will have to be made if we are going to improve public services on limited budgets.

**Participatory Budgeting can help you engage with residents to make difficult decisions together, harness local knowledge, and involve people meaningfully.**

PB responds perfectly to the increasing emphasis on localism and citizen led public services. Offering a way for leading authorities to show they trust residents and exist to serve them. While at the same time building resilient cohesive communities better able to influence services, monitor outcomes and contribute towards delivering them.

# Get started on PB

Participatory budgeting has been used by police forces across the country to spend money on community led Crime and Community Safety initiatives:

- ◆ The Home office funded a pilot programme in 2009. PB was successfully tested in over 14 areas.
- ◆ Follow-up work including a more focussed approach to reducing Domestic Violence
- ◆ Scotland also used PB for five Community Safety pilots that ran from 2010 .
- ◆ In late 2013 the North Wales PCC used an online form of PB to reach into isolated rural communities affected by Anti social behaviour.

## From Small Grants to Big Budgets

PB is commonly used to fund community initiatives through direct public voting. In local forums, projects are proposed, debated and agreed, and the best ideas put forward for public vote. In one experience over 840 residents participated in the public voting. But it can go much further than this.

## In 2013 Lord Stevens' review of policing said:

"We recommend that police forces consider establishing 'participatory budgeting units' in order to ensure greater involvement of local communities in allocating local policing resources." That means PB moving into the mainstream.

## There is no 'one size fits all' approach.

Many different models can be developed, each adapted to the needs of specific communities. The aims and local conditions will dictate the best approach to take.

In a very practical way PB has been used to:

- ◆ Build respect between residents and the police.
- ◆ Empower people to take action in their community.
- ◆ Improved the quality of life for people in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

In a telling response of one young couple involved in the PB police programme in North Lincolnshire:

*"I like that anti-social behaviour one – that might have helped us 'coz we've just been evicted for ASB."*



Greater Manchester Police were awarded funds from the Home Office to implement two pilots in the Greater Manchester area.

They chose Tameside and Stockport divisions as their pilot areas. Tameside police decided to use their funds in the St. Peters ward. St. Peters is both an area of high deprivation and very multicultural with a large Asian community

Tameside made £35,000 available for allocation by PB, and this came from mixed sources including the Home Office, Greater Manchester Police and Tameside division.

For the actual running of the event, Tameside division contributed an additional £5,000 and Tameside Council £2,000.

Nearly 200 people turned out to vote, including many young people

- ◆ 94% of participants felt that the process was clear, easy to understand and transparent.
- ◆ 97% said that they thought the process would help improve community safety.
- ◆ 63% felt that they were able to have a real say in decisions in their area through the event,
- ◆ 78% felt that the event brought different parts of the community together.

## Key benefits

- ◆ PB improves the effectiveness of community engagement.
- ◆ It's a transparent and fair way to allocate resources
- ◆ Leads to increased social cohesion and trust within diverse communities.
- ◆ Links neighbourhood budgets and area wide budgets in one citizen led process.
- ◆ Reduces the costs and burdens of engaging with residents.

# About the PB Network



The PB Network is the independent body advocating for fresh learning and innovations in Participatory Budgeting (PB). We advocate that public sector bodies and community groups develop participatory budgeting processes in their local areas.

We were established in 2012 and are guided by an unpaid steering group. The PB Network builds on the success of the previous work promoting PB across the UK by the PB Unit, Oxfam UK Poverty Programme, Church Action on Poverty and hundreds of PB practitioners. Well over £25m has already been allocated using PB in the UK alone.

Find us online at [www.pbnetwork.org.uk](http://www.pbnetwork.org.uk)

## ***Need help designing your engagement process?***

*Currently working with the PB Network, The Consultation Institute and the Centre for the Study of Democracy, PB Partners provides consultancy services to public bodies and to community groups.*



## ***Why use PB Partners***

***We are a social enterprise that can provide in-depth planning of PB processes and ongoing support at all stages of your project.***

- ◆ *Introductory workshops for key stakeholders.*
- ◆ *Advice to improve representation and the involvement of 'hard to reach' groups.*
- ◆ *Specialised training for elected members, resident leaders and front line staff.*



*We recognize that PB is not a 'one size fits all' approach and involving residents is something that needs to be handled sensitively. We will develop a bespoke package with you that is appropriate for your budget, your capacity and your community.*

## **How to contact PB Partners**

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