

Report of the West North West Leeds Area Manager

Inner West Area Committee

Date: 9th April 2009

Subject: Participatory Budgeting on the Broadleas Estate – 12 Month Review

Electoral Wards Affected:

Armley

Bramley & Stanningley

☐

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

☐

Community Cohesion

☐

Narrowing the Gap

☐

Council
Function

☐

Delegated Executive
Function available for
Call In

X

Delegated Executive Function
not available for Call In Details
set out in the report

☐

Executive Summary

This report gives an overview of the progress, successes and challenges that arose from the Participatory Budgeting (PB) pilot on the Broadleas Estate. The objectives for this pilot were:

- To build the capacity and confidence of local residents in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the city to take action to improve their neighbourhood
- To contribute to mixed communities objectives
- To test the PB approach in different contexts
- To build on existing neighbourhood working
- To raise awareness about public service budgeting

The lessons learnt from this pilot can be used to influence future Participatory Budgeting schemes.

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to brief Members on the background, progress, achievements and challenges throughout the process and make recommendations for any future projects of this type.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 Participatory budgeting is an umbrella term which covers a variety of mechanisms that delegate power or influence over local budgets, investment priorities and economic spending to residents.
- 2.2 Participatory budgeting involves residents directly in making decisions about budget issues, either on a small scale at the service or neighbourhood level or on a more strategic level at a city or national level. In practice, the power delegated to residents in the decision processes varies, from providing decision-makers with information about resident preferences to processes that place parts of the budget under direct resident control. (Ref. 1)
- 2.3 Within Leeds the objectives of the pilot were:
- To build the capacity and confidence of local residents in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the city to take action to improve their neighbourhood
 - To contribute to mixed communities objectives
 - To test the PB approach in different contexts
 - To build on existing neighbourhood working
 - To raise awareness about public service budgeting
- 2.4 It was proposed that the Area Managers for West and South select, in consultation with relevant elected Members, one neighbourhood in each area in which to carry out the PB pilot. The neighbourhood must include super output areas within the 10% most deprived category. Members also suggested that there would be benefit in having two contrasting pilots with one focusing more on capacity building in an area with little existing community infrastructure and another including residents from disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged backgrounds to test the possibility of achieving a 'mixed community' approach to PB. This led to the Broadleas estate being chosen in West Leeds and the village of Drighlington in South Leeds.
- 2.5 Funding for the scheme on the Broadleas came from the Inner West Area Committee (£5,000) and also funding from the Narrowing the Gap group budget (£11,000).

2.4 PB on the Broadleas

Background information

The Broadleas estate was chosen for this pilot due to its current ranking in the Indices of Multiple deprivation but also because of its low levels of community engagement. It was hoped that this process could encourage the local residents to get involved in making a difference to their surroundings.

2.5 PB process in the Broadleas Estate

The initial door-to-door contact led to twelve bids coming forward for consideration, some were not applicable and were passed onto the relevant departments. All of the rest were invited on the voting day to present their ideas and vote on the others.

2.6 Partner Input

The methodology behind the input was to use the Broadleas Improvement Group to act as the conduit for partner engagement. As the meeting was every six weeks this allowed for feedback and action to move the projects forward. The nature of all of the projects

that came forward were in line with the BIG Action Plan and were addressing the needs previously identified through the analysis of the local statistics.

2.7 Community Input

Throughout the process the local community were given the opportunity to learn more about the way a project needs to be delivered through group sessions with partner agencies. This gave the local people the chance to ask questions and make sure that the bids they presented had the best chance in being funded. This led on directly to the decision day where the community was given the opportunity to vote on the projects on which ones would be the most effective in the community.

2.8 This process led to four projects being funded:

2.9 Blue Bell wood

Bordering a large part of the estate is a piece of natural woodland that has been fly-tipped on and was in a state of disrepair. The proposal that came forward from some concerned residents, with the support of the Friends of Bramley Fall Woods, was to cover the costs of some skips and other clearance materials to make improvements to the area. This scheme has been supported and led by BTCV, who engaged with a range of people, some brought along by BTCV from their 'Wednesday Group' who are adults with learning difficulties, and some from the community of the Broadleas. The events formed part of 'The Big Tidy up' which is led by Keep Britain Tidy and ENCAMS. One event was held in October half term and two more are planned for the Easter Break. Additional match funding was brought in through BTCV to allow more people to be involved. Support was also given by Connaught's and the local Neighbourhood Wardens. Works on the area have included clearance of fly-tipping and a general tidy of the area to make it a more welcoming.

2.10 Young Persons Steering group – Youth Inclusion Project (YIP) garden improvements

The Youth Steering Group, made up of young people from the Broadleas estate, for the YIP centre came forward with an application to make improvements on the rear of the centre site to allow it to be used more effectively by both the young people and the wider community. The rear of the building did have a chess board, but this was the only real activity the young people could play with. The new plans include the installation of an Owl shaped BBQ, a spider shaped table & chairs and a bespoke handrail designed by the young people. The monies provided by the PB scheme were used as match funding to a Youth Capital grant and Groundwork Leeds' Project Support Funding to deliver a £30,000 improvement. Works are commencing onsite and will be completed by the end of March 2009. The initiation and support work for of this project was carried out by Groundwork Leeds' Community Coordinator.

2.11 Creation of a kids area - land between Broadlea Road and Terrace.

A group of residents came forward with a proposal to improve the land at the rear of their properties to create a space to stop the children playing in the street. The initial ideas were to create a children's park, but after further discussion with the group around the costs associated with this idea it was scaled down. The site has been fly-tipped on for a number of years and before any real improvements could take place the site would have to be fully excavated. The future development of the site can only be considered after this initial clearance is done. Match funding was found to cover the costs of the clearance from the Inner West Area Panel (West North West Homes Leeds). It is hoped that once the site is cleared further funding can be sourced to deliver a site that is useful

to all. The future plans would be led by Groundwork Leeds and WNWHL with the full involvement of the local community.

2.12 Broadlea Hill Roundabout

For some time there have been issues around cars and motorbikes cutting across the roundabout, leaving the area looking un-maintained and the residents feel it is an eyesore. The Broadlea TARA came forward with a project that would make improvements to the roundabout on Broadlea Hill by restricting access for both cars and motorcycles. The roundabout is one of the first things you see of the estate so therefore can give a bad impression of the estate if it is covered in tyre tracks and generally looking untidy. Fencing of the area would improve the aesthetics of the area creating a more welcoming entrance to the estate, whilst also improving the overall road safety at the junctions and deterring cars and motorbikes cutting across.

3.0 Overall achievements

The initial proposals for the project were to ultimately drive forward the community to be more engaged and conscious of their surroundings. This pilot project has funded four schemes that would not have been funded in such a short timescales without this pilot. The match funding that has been brought in also would not have been available without this partnership approach. The support given to specific members of the community have allowed them to attend and contribute to tenants and residents meetings and given them the confidence to voice their feelings on their community. The initial success criterion is set in line with the Narrowing the Gap Group's objectives and each has been achieved in some part throughout this pilot.

3.1 *To build the capacity and confidence of local residents in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the city to take action to improve their neighbourhood*

The Broadleas was chosen as a reflective 'deprived' estate due to its current IMD status and ongoing issues. The delivery of the projects identified by the local residents has resulted in the engagement with both existing members of the group and new members who have joined the residents group as a result of the pilot work. The nature of the projects will have a direct impact on the local community due to their scope and location. The real test for the pilot will be in the future when all of the schemes are imbedded, as hopefully the residents involved will still have the interest and drive to be involved in the residents group. The BIG group will work to support the residents as one of its action on the action plan and this will hopefully highlight support required in the future.

3.2 *To contribute to mixed communities objectives*

The Broadleas estate has low levels of BME communities, the members they have are of mixed background with individual families having specific needs. That said the numbers of people from BME groups are increasing and if a scheme was delivered in the future on the Broadleas a different approach maybe required. The door-to-door approach did allow everyone on the estate to discuss the scheme but in the future this may have to be modified to have a greater impact.

3.3 *To test the PB approach in different contexts*

Working closely with the officers in South Leeds Area Management Team, the comparison of the two different schemes will hopefully facilitate a more effective strategy for future schemes. Each approach has had its challenges and successes but on the whole they have both been successful. On the whole the main lesson to be learnt is around choosing the most effective estate in order to make the most impact. The two areas tested in the pilot scheme were at either ends of the deprivation scale and showed

that a level of engagement is required to have an effective number of people attending the event.

3.4 To build on existing neighbourhood working

The Broadleas Improvement Group (BIG) has been running for the last 3 years coordinating work between the Police, WNWHL, YIP and various other partners. This pilot has run in parallel to this with support given from the other agencies. Hopefully this additional close working on these projects has built stronger relationships with partners to facilitate greater joint working practices.

3.5 To raise awareness about public service budgeting

The nature of the projects that have come forward have highlighted the issues that are important locally. This scheme also gave the opportunity to discuss each of the projects in detail with residents; this allowed them to ask questions about budgeting and how funds are allocated and the associated processes. This aspect of the pilot could potentially be enhanced in future schemes to raise the issues associated with the current economic climate.

4.0 Process

The process that West Leeds chose was to allow the community to deliver the projects themselves rather than to open the bidding to agencies to fund their choice of work. Even though each group that received funding was supported by a partner agency, it was the partner agencies that delivered most of the delivery of the projects with support from the Inner West Area Management Team. This obviously has resource and capacity implications which have had to be taken into account in the programming of the projects. On the whole the projects have been delivered to the specifications requested and will hopefully have the impact that was initially anticipated. This said if another scheme was to be developed there would be a number of lessons that should be learnt from the experience. These are:

- 1) The community chosen to be involved in the scheme needs to have some level of engagement with agencies to maximise the turn out for potential projects but also to make sure that projects are delivered to the correct specification.
- 2) Partner agencies should take more of a lead in the delivery of the projects, this maybe through taking on the actual delivery of the projects

Areas being considered where community engagement is an issue should consider building in an element of community development outside of the scheme. The method tried in South Leeds focused more on the 'service' being delivered rather than the community leading on the scheme. In many ways this was timelier as the timescales of delivery were shorter and outputs achieved quicker.

That said the real benefit for the process should be around the improvements to the community engagement on the estate. At the time of the process the local PCSO was also working hard to make a significant improvement to the TARA numbers. The combination of the two different approaches has led to a larger number of residents attending meetings and subsequently a range of new activities have been delivered and more are planned.

5.0 2009-10 proposals

When considering PB at Area Committee for 2009-10 this review should be considered before a specific estate or ward is chosen for the next scheme. Without careful consideration an estate could be chosen that will not maximise on the full benefits.

Another important aspect is a local venue that can host the preliminary events but also the decision day. This will hopefully facilitate a higher number of attendees from the community and therefore a more balanced view of the estates needs. The nature of these events and the number of people lend themselves to the use of a community centre or village hall.

Partner involvement is key to the successful delivery of these projects. For this reason areas should be chosen that can be worked on by the majority of partner agencies.

Considerations for new estates:

- Is there an existing community group?
- Is there a venue in the locality that would be available to host the events?
- Is the identified estate a high priority for partner agencies to work in?
- Confirm that an appropriate level of funding is available to spend specifically on the estate chosen.

6.0 Implications For Council Policy and Governance

Participatory Budgeting model would address some of the issues targeted as part of the Narrowing the Gap agenda. And the community engagement activities associated with the work are a part of the new delegated functions of the Area Committees.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The successes of the pilot scheme are in some ways difficult to assess at this time as the projects that have been funded are capital improvements and even though they will be onsite and working in the short term, their benefits may not be seen for another 6 months. On the whole there are positives to come out of the process which can be taken into account when setting up of future schemes of a similar nature. The lessons learnt are mostly around the choice of an appropriate estate, assuming this is looked at in detail it is felt that future schemes can make a difference to local people.

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 The Inner West Area Committee Members are invited to:

- note the contents of the report and comment on any aspect of the matters raised.

References

1. www.peopleandparticipation.net

Background Papers

None