



INNOVATION LAB

Participatory Budgeting

**Strategic Insight Lab
4th and 5th November 2019**

Background & Executive Summary

Background

Participatory Budgeting (PB) can be described as “Local People deciding how to allocate part of a public budget.” It is a way for citizens to have a direct say in how public funds are used to address local needs.

PB is much more than just deciding how resources are allocated. It provides opportunities to engage in non-traditional ways that reach out to people who don't often have a voice and it can become a celebration of positive action in the community. PB can support active citizenship, helping build more active confident and capable communities that are more likely to take part in community activities, and are better informed about public budgets and decision making.

There is a growing interest in and use of participatory budgeting in Northern Ireland and as such the Department for Communities DfC) commissioned the Innovation Lab to run a 2 day Strategic Insight Lab with the aim of developing Participatory Budgeting. A challenge question that framed the 2 day event was developed by a small group of stakeholders involved in Participatory Budgeting is set out below:

‘How can we develop Participatory Budgeting to help transform and empower people’s lives?’

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a deliberative democratic process in which local people decide how to allocate all or part of a public budget. The concept is relatively new in Northern Ireland. Its progress to date has been primarily led by Community Places and Dr Louise O’Kane (Community Places) through the Participatory Budgeting Works NI project.

The Participatory Budgeting Works Project (PB Works) in Northern Ireland is a collaborative effort to raise awareness and advocate for the use of PB processes across the region. It was funded by the Big Lottery Fund and delivered through Northern Ireland’s Building Change Trust as part of their ‘Creative Space for Civic Thinking’ programme.

PB Works has hosted awareness raising events, training Workshops and established a regional PB network put together a local PB advisory group. It has also provided tailored support and guidance for 7 local PB projects hosted by 3 local government authorities and 4 community based organisations. Whilst the scheme involved a comparatively modest investment over a short time period, it did demonstrate impact on the budgets of participating statutory agencies and voluntary sector organisations.

An evaluation Impact Report for the PB Works project is available on the website (<http://www.participatorybudgetingworks.org/>).

The purpose of the 2 day Strategic Insight Lab was to bring together key stakeholders from across a range of sectors and other jurisdictions, including representatives from the community and voluntary sector, civil servants working in both operational delivery and policy making roles, academics, representatives of local government and statutory partners, to help collectively develop recommendations that will help inform the future strategic direction for Participatory Budgeting in Northern Ireland.

It is intended that the outputs of the Strategic Insight Lab – the high-level recommendations setting the strategic direction in response to the challenge question – will be presented to Ministers in due course for their consideration. Alongside this, DfC is committed to considering how they might implement any recommendations.

The objectives of the Strategic Insight Lab were agreed as follows:

- To identify the key challenges, opportunities and gaps relating to the challenge question.
- To develop recommendations relating to the key themes and questions identified by participants for further consideration by the sponsor Departments.
- To produce a report capturing the detail of the 2 day event that may help inform any further work on this area.

In identifying attendees to the Strategic Insight Lab event, engagement and discussion took place between the Sponsor, key stakeholders and the Innovation Lab to ensure there was an optimal mix, spread and balance of participants representing the Participatory Budgeting landscape from across a range of sectors. It was important to get a cross sector spread of participant representation to enable collaboration and dialogue on this particular challenge. A full list of participants is set out in **Appendix A**.



Executive Summary

The Strategic Insight Lab event took place on 4th and 5th November 2019 and the interest of all the participants in addressing the challenge question was evident throughout the course of the 2 day process, in the collaborative and partnership approach adopted throughout.

By working through the exercises, individuals and stakeholder groups were able to look at and understand the challenge from other perspectives. It is this approach, coupled with the energy, enthusiasm and passion of stakeholders at the event that was instrumental in leading to 31 recommendations.

A list of these recommendations is recorded below as per the questions that were considered by 5 groups. They are not prioritised in any particular order.

Recommendations

The Strategic Insight Lab event took place on 4th and 5th November 2019 and the interest of all the participants in addressing the challenge question was evident throughout the course of the 2 day process, in the collaborative and partnership approach adopted throughout.

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A list of these recommendations is recorded below as per the questions that were considered by 5 groups. They are not prioritised in any particular order.

- Evaluation of current PB programmes / outcomes to support potential growth of resource allocation.
- Find evidence to support – use unconnected funds – e.g. plastic bag levy, dormant accounts / assets recovery.
- Establish a working group to carry out evaluation and drive PB forward if this is the right thing to do.

Recommendations generated from the following questions:

How can we ensure communities and citizens are aware of PB, see it as relevant and have confidence and capacity to participate?

How do you ensure meaningful engagement of the most vulnerable / hard to reach / marginalised groups of individuals in the PB process and ensure the process is fun, playful, different and creative?

- Agree a lead body and resource it (support from expert maybe from outside NI).
- Develop a regional board (suitable also for localised use).
- Adapt and/or adopt existing toolkits – setting a standard.
- Develop a communication strategy – multiple platforms with consistent messaging that is appropriate to cover strategic, local, individual and hard to reach stakeholders.
- Capacity building – provide support, mentoring, buddy system, showcase best practice, share learning/knowledge, identify barriers and address them.
- DfC (or who) will invest £x to make this happen in the next financial year.

Recommendations generated from the following questions:

How can we enable communities / Departments to co-design outcomes and mechanism for measurement and build capacity to deliver transparent, inclusive processes?

How can we develop and grow an appropriate governance framework that proportionally manages risks and maximises the benefits of PB?

- The PB 'topic' (community issue) needs to be co-designed with the community through informed discussion and evidence base.
- Use participants and qualitative techniques to enable co-design.
- Agree high level outcomes and indicators for PB so we can measure success across NI.
- Give consideration to taking forward larger scales PB projects over next 12 months.
- Agree PB quality standards and principles e.g. PB Charter.
- Learn by doing – plan, do, review (continuous).
- Work with the Audit Office to agree guidelines for using PB in NI.
- Recognise that community accountability is built into the PB process and therefore enables a more light touch approach to governance.
- Develop a light touch quality assurance scheme – e.g. a kite mark (like Fairtrade).
- Citizens should be involved at all levels including steering groups.

Recommendations generated from the following questions:

How can we use PB to develop, grow and maintain a culture of collaboration and shared learning?

How can we use PB to secure commitment to use existing resources more flexibly and respond to local needs and sustain it?

- Co – design a policy / governance framework which will take account of the size of the project and will measure the social value of each investment.
- All public sector spend should be viewed through the lens of maximising social value (as identified by communities using methods to include PB) – and a percentage spend allocated by the PB methodology.
- Community Planning Strategic Partnerships to develop the understanding and potential uses / benefits of PB in society.
- Embed PB within PfG and Community Planning with allocated outcomes / KPI's

Recommendations generated from the following questions:

How can we build PB into citizenship education programmes?

How can we facilitate and ensure that citizens engage with and bring their knowledge and experience to the heart of the co-design process?

- Adopt the 7 principles of PB.
- The Executive Office to set the policy priority for participation / PB for Departments to lead on communication and awareness.
- Ensure alignment with PfG priorities and outcomes.
- New policy and legislative framework for citizen participation with shapes community planning.
- A shared commissioning framework that priorities citizen participation and PB.
- Shared ongoing resources and support.
- Opportunities for new monies – e.g. dormant accounts.
- Make it fun, simple

Context

The challenge question that formed the framework for discussion and consideration during the 2 day innovation event was developed and agreed by the Department and key stakeholders as follows:

'How can we develop Participatory Budgeting to help transform and empower people's lives?'

The question was issued in advance to participants as a means of setting the scene and scope.

Attendees included key stakeholders from across key sectors representing the field of Participatory Budgeting. There were 4 main sectors identified and represented for the purposes of the Strategic Insight Lab, recognising that there was cross over between sectors. These are set out below (in no particular order):

- Statutory Partners
- Local Government
- Voluntary and Community Sector
- Government

As part of this cohort the group welcomed several expert speakers including Jez Hall, Director of Shared Future CIC (A Community Interest Company) and Carol Follis, PCSP Manager Fermanagh & Omagh Council.

From the outset participants showed a willingness and eagerness to collaborate together and reach consensus on a pathway for progression for the challenge. Participants had been provided with some background reading in advance of the 2 day Strategic Insight Lab.

The Innovation Lab Process

...connecting, collaborating, listening, failing fast, learning, disrupting, inventing, and enabling.

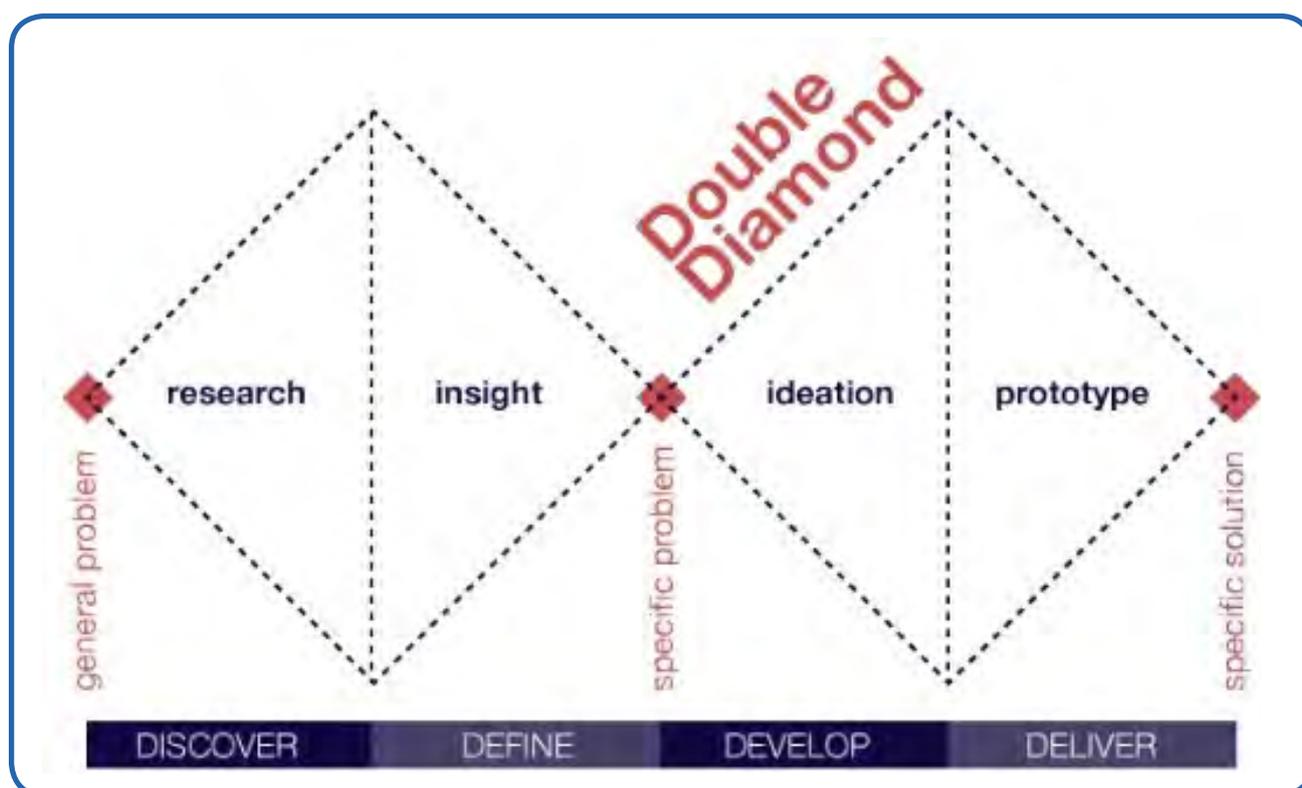
General

The Lab took place over 2 highly intensive, practical and interactive days. The agenda for the 2 day event is at [Appendix B](#).

The exercises were designed to ensure people worked in a collaborative and partnership manner, where relationships between different stakeholder sectors could be explored, harnessed and developed. Exercises took place on an individual basis, in table settings, in stakeholder group settings and in large group format.

The Double Diamond Design Model was used as the framework for the event. It has 4 distinct phases: Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver. While normally used in service design projects, it provided a disciplined, logical process that participants were progressed through together to ensure the event had a productive output. The 2 days focused on the first 3 stages of the double diamond – Discovery, Define and Develop.

Figure 1: The Double Diamond Design Model



The double diamond approach encourages people to diverge and converge their thinking at different parts of the process and the exercises were designed to achieve this approach. Additionally each exercise was carefully planned to build on the previous one to ensure that any learning or understanding was constant and focused, and anchored in outputs from the earlier parts of the process.

Day 1: Stage 1 – Discovery and Define

For the first part of the day participants heard from a series of speakers:

- Louise Warde Hunter - Deputy Secretary Housing, Urban Regeneration and Local Government, Department for Communities
- Jez Hall – Director, Shared Future CIC – A Community Interest Company - Participatory Budgeting from an international perspective
- Carol Follis – PCSP Manager Fermanagh & Omagh Council – Participatory Budgeting in NI

The speaker sessions were designed to provide attendees with an overall context for the event, putting the challenge in context and opening up minds with examples of different perspectives on Participatory Budgeting and the benefits that it can bring to communities. This was to encourage participants to move into a more creative space in terms of addressing the challenge question.

Following several of the speaker sessions the table groups were given time to have a brief discussion on what they had heard, identify any key questions for the speakers and write down any key insights they had identified from the talks and the group conversations. These populated general insights boards and were considered as part of the theming phase of the Strategic Insight Lab.

Some insights identified included:

- How do we define the theme for the PB event?
- Need a definition of a standard model.
- How do you support those whose lose so publically?
- Can you ensure equality?
- How do you determine voting age?
- Where does resistance come from?
- Resourcing – what is the administration / support cost?
- How do we grow citizens and not consumers?
- Doing with, not to.
- Youth vote relevant – especially for proposals that focus on youth.
- Building capacity in communities even to apply.
- Empowerment not just engagement.
- If PB stays small scale does it become counter-productive?
- Managing public expectations.
- Needs a legislative framework.
- Supporting communities to develop capacity.
- Funding available – has to be a scale to allow meaningful improvement.

The late morning and afternoon exercises encouraged participant groups to:

- Understand the Challenge Question from the perspective of the other sector group (empathy mapping). Groups were also asked to identify key priorities of other sector groups and what groups thought were the priorities for the sectors they were emphasising with.
- Focus on looking at the gaps, challenges and opportunities facing Participatory Budgeting within the scope of the challenge question. The process applied allowed all participants to input their individual views in relation to each of these areas.

Following the above exercises the participants were asked to take all the information generated from the day (insights boards, empathy maps on different perspectives and sector priorities and the information populated by the group on the challenges, gaps and opportunities) and asked to identify the key themes emerging from the information based on what had been populated on the sheets.

Participants were split into 4 groups, with each group considering one of the following and identifying the key themes arising from the information on the specific sheets.

- The information on the Gaps sheets.
- The information on the Challenges sheets.
- The information on the Opportunities sheets.
- The information on the General Insights boards

Once the groups had identified the themes from the information they were looking at, one person from each group came forward with their group themes and assisted in developing a master copy from across all the information generated on Day 1.

In total 9 themes were identified to be taken forward for progression. Some sub headings were identified under the broad themes that were to be taken into account in progressing to the next stage. These sub headings were not an exhaustive list of what could be considered under the themes which were viewed in their widest context for the purposes of the next stage – question generation.

The themes are set out below but are not in any particular order of significance:

- Collaboration - (across all sectors to deliver).
- Governance / accountability / risk.
- Political willingness to support PB.
- Community engagement and involvement.
- Delivering and measuring outcomes / impact.
- PB knowledge / capacity / skills.
- Scaling / mainstreaming.
- Resources.
- Leadership and strategy.

Day 2: Stage 2 – Develop (Ideation)

The focus of Day 2 was on the development phase of the Double Diamond where the group continued to build on the great work from the previous day through developing key questions, generating ideas and pulling the rich input together to develop the recommendations.

Day 2 commenced with the participants developing the key questions that they collectively thought needed to be asked in relation to each of the themes developed at the end of Day 1.

A World Café style session was held with each group having a period of time to discuss the themes at each table and write down up to 3 the key strategic questions per theme that the group felt related to the individual themes. This process ensured everyone had the opportunity to input their views, ideas and opinions on the development of a set of strategic questions relating to each theme.

The participants were asked to develop the questions in the form of 'How can we...' the participants moved around each set of themes (5 tables in total). Participants were advised not to duplicate questions they had populated / or observed elsewhere. In total 53 questions were developed.

Following the identification of the questions (taking account of removing any clear duplications and merging relevant questions together where required - 15 questions were taken away), a dot voting process was taken forward with each participant being given a number of dots (4) to place against the questions they individually would like to see taken forward for further exploration. In total there were 38 questions to vote on.

It was not possible to deliberate on each individual question due to time constraints, but in the interests of providing a complete overview of the process a full list of those questions that were voted on is provided in **Appendix C**.

The questions with the most dots beside them were selected. A total of 10 questions were selected as follows but they are not in any specific order:

- 1. How can we build PB into strategy development and mainstream resource allocation?**
- 2. How can we ensure PB outcomes strategically align with Programme for Government (PfG), community planning and make life better and vice versa?**
- 3. How can we ensure communities and citizens are aware of PB, see it as relevant and have confidence and capacity to participate?**
- 4. How do you ensure meaningful engagement of the most vulnerable / hard to reach / marginalised groups of individuals in the PB process and ensure the process is fun, playful, different and creative?**
- 5. How can we enable communities / Departments to co-design outcomes and mechanism for measurement and build capacity to deliver transparent, inclusive processes?**
- 6. How can we develop and grow an appropriate governance framework that proportionally manages risks and maximises the benefits of PB?**
- 7. How can we use PB to develop, grow and maintain a culture of collaboration and shared learning?**
- 8. How can we use PB to secure commitment to use existing resources more flexibly and respond to local needs and sustain it?**
- 9. How can we build PB into citizenship education programmes?**
- 10. How can we facilitate and ensure that citizens engage with and bring their knowledge and experience to the heart of the co-design process?**

Recommendations and Next Steps

Recommendations

In total the participant group developed 31 recommendations for consideration. In the first instance the recommendations will be considered by the sponsor Department, the Department for Communities.

A list of these recommendations is recorded below that emanated from the particular questions that were considered in the lab. They were not prioritised in any particular order.

Recommendations generated from the following questions:

How can we build PB into strategy development and mainstream resource allocation?

How can we ensure PB outcomes strategically align with Programme for Government (PfG), community planning and make life better and vice versa?

- Evaluation of current PB programmes / outcomes to support potential growth of resource allocation.
- Find evidence to support – use unconnected funds – e.g. plastic bag levy, dormant accounts / assets recovery.
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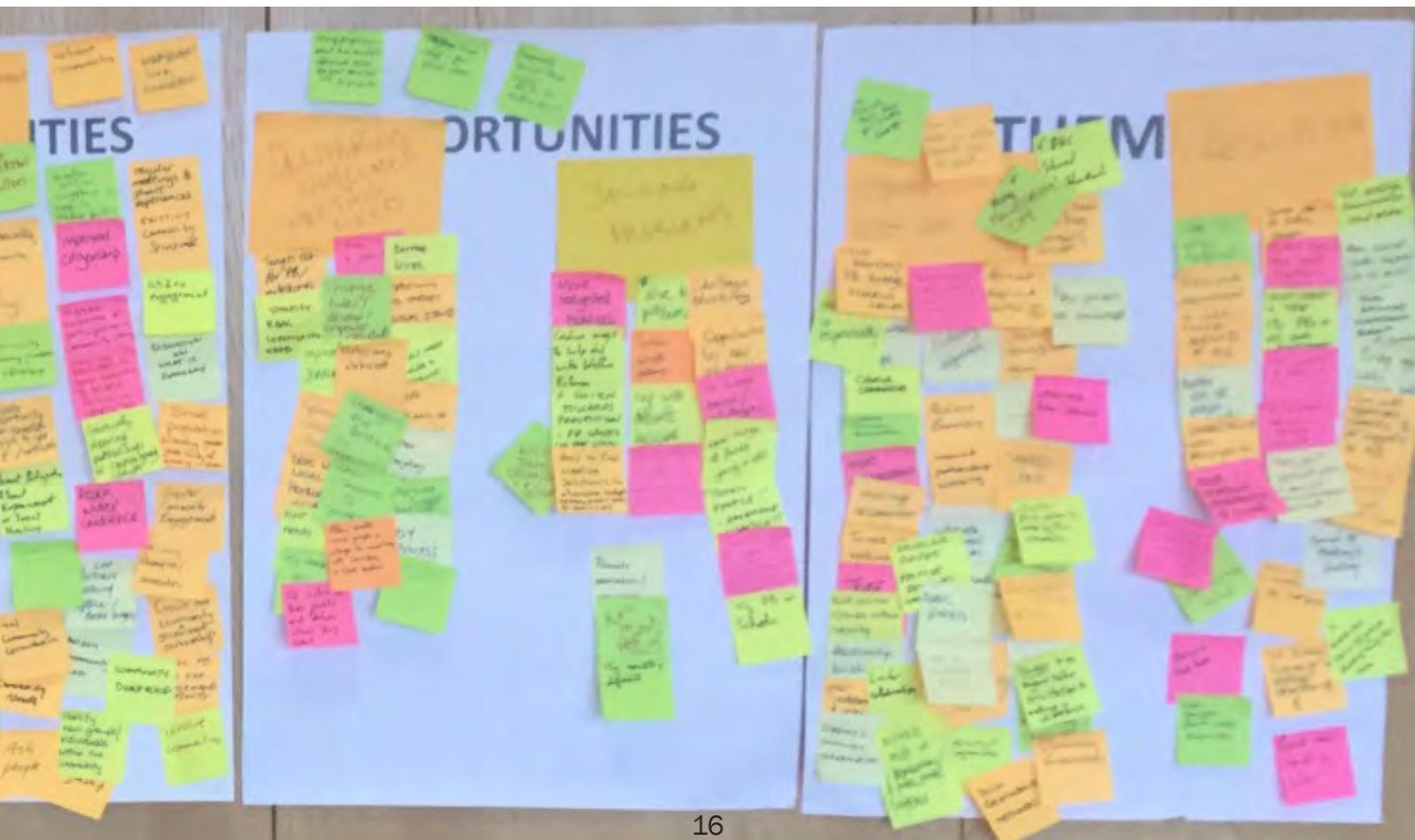
Next Steps

The Department for Communities, in the first instance, will consider this report and the outworking's of the 2 day Strategic Insight Lab that has provided the first stage of a strategic direction on the challenge question in the form of a set of recommendations.

This report provides a factual account of the 2 day event and summarises all the key information gained from the work of the group.

Due to time restraints only a selection of questions were able to be progressed through idea generation and development.

There is scope to further develop thinking and ideas around this issue by taking forward further questions (**Appendix C**) that could be achieved through further ½ day facilitated workshops.



Appendices

Participatory Budgeting Strategic Insight Lab Participant List

Name	Organisation
Chris Armstrong	Triangle Housing
Catherine Black	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Karen Beattie	NI Audit Office
Sean Beattie	Libraries NI
Paul Braithwaite	The Community Foundation NI
Laura Campbell	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Annie Clarke	Southern Health & Social Care Trust
Louise Clarke	NI Housing Executive
Mona Conway	NI Housing Executive
Nichola Creagh	Department for Communities
Alan Curran	SportNI
David Cuthbert	Belfast City Council
Chris Davis	NI Housing Executive
Noeleen Diver	Triangle Housing
Paul Donnelly	Department of Agriculture Environment & Rural Affairs
Jennie Dunlop	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
Karin Eybin	Garvagh Forest School
Emma Farnan	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Charlie Fisher	Development Trust NI
Carol Follis	Fermanagh Omagh Policing & Community Safety Partnership
Jacqui Gilmore	Newington Housing Association
Lynsey Gray	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Jez Hall	Shared Future Community of Interest
Victoria Hamilton	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Russell Hampton	Police Service of Northern Ireland
Deirdre Hasson	Education Authority
Shauna Houston	Public Health Agency
Briege Lafferty	Department of Agriculture Environment & Rural Affairs
Ciara Laverty	Keep NI Beautiful
Stevie Lavery	Belfast City Council Policing & Community Safety Partnership
Patricia Mackey	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Kathy Maguire	Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
Harry Maher	Department for Communities
Barbara McAtamney	Department of Justice
Edmond McClean	Public Health Agency
Karina McCollum	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council
Janet McConville	Southern Health & Social Care Trust

Name	Organisation
Catherine McFarland	NI Housing Executive
Louise McMahon	Health & Social Care Board
Lauren McMenamy	Newry Mourne & Down District Council
Rita McNamee	Libraries NI
Catharine McWhirter	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Francis Meehan	Education Authority
Gary Mortland	Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Dr. Louise O'Kane	Community Places
Grainne Mullin	Radius Housing Association
Tim O'Malley	Clanmil Housing Association
David Patterson	Newry Mourne & Down District Council
Mark Peters	Participatory Budgeting Works NI
Sharon Polson	Department for Communities
David Quinney-Mee	Rathlin Development & Community Association
Gerard Rocks	Southern Health & Social Care Trust
Stephen Semple	NI Housing Executive
Simon Sloan	Department for Communities
Maryann Smith	Department of Finance
Vicki Titterington	Linking Generations NI
Wendy Thompson	Health & Social Care Board
Anita Waite	Department for Communities
Deirdre Ward	Department for Communities

Agenda for Participatory Budgeting Strategic Insight Lab

Challenge Question:

'How can we develop Participatory Budgeting to help transform and empower people's lives?'

Day 1

- Sue Barclay – Introductions. What to expect over the 2 days. Ground Rules.
- Louise Warde Hunter - Deputy Secretary Housing, Urban Regeneration and Local Government, Department for Communities
- Jez Hall – Director, Shared Future CIC – A Community Interest Company. Participatory Budgeting from an international perspective

BREAK

- Carol Follis – PCSP Manager Fermanagh & Omagh Council – Participatory Budgeting in NI
- Insight gathering and population
- Empathy Mapping and feedback

LUNCH

- Empathy Mapping and feedback continued
- COG

BREAK

- COG continued
- Theming

Day 2

- Reflection on Day 1
- Question Development

BREAK

- Question Development continued
- Question Selection
- Idea generation on selected questions

LUNCH

- Idea Selection and development

BREAK

- Development of ideas into recommendations
- Consideration of recommendations to challenge question
- Wrap up, next steps and close

Full List of questions generated on themes (selected questions in bold)

Collaboration (Across all sectors to deliver)

- How can we identify all partners and secure commitment to PB?
- **How can we use PB to develop, grow and maintain a culture of collaboration and shared learning?**
- How can we enable Departments to engage collectively / pool resources to maximise outcomes?
- How can power be equitably shared / distributed / maintained?

Governance / Accountability / Risk

- **How can we develop and grow an appropriate governance framework that proportionally manages risks and maximises the benefits of PB?**
- How do we change the culture to enable PB across all sectors?
- How do we manage collaboratively with the community the perceived and real risks to the established volunteer/ community sector?

Political willingness to support PB

- How can we use PB to contribute to growing trust, continuous engagement, active participation in politics and society?
- How can we take 'bad / sectarian' politics out of PB and focus on outcomes / impact?
- How do we maintain the core values of PB and still secure political support?

Community engagement and involvement

- **How can we ensure communities and citizens are aware of PB, see it as relevant and have confidence and capacity to participate?**
- How can we help PB support controversial innovations?
- How can we transform the culture and system to focus on long term outcomes through engagement?
- How do you broker and retain initial community engagement and involvement?
- **How do you ensure meaningful engagement of the most vulnerable / hard to reach / marginalised groups of individuals in the PB process and ensure the process is fun, playful, different and creative?**
- How can we use PB to define communities?
- **How can we build PB into citizenship education programmes?**

Delivering and measuring outcomes / impact

- **How can we enable communities / Departments to co-design outcomes and mechanisms for measurement and build capacity to deliver transparent, inclusive processes?**
- How can we capture the longer term /social value / narrative value of PB?
- **How can we ensure PB outcomes strategically align with Programme for Government (PFG), community planning and make life better and vice versa?**
- How can we continue learning for measured outcomes?

PB knowledge / capacity / skills

- How do we engage, learn and grow to ensure a high quality and consistent thriving approach to delivering PB – informed by best practice from NI and beyond?
- **How can we facilitate and ensure that citizens engage with and bring their knowledge and experience to the heart of the co-design process?**
- How can we ensure best communication / PB branding / consistency so communities recognise and buy in?

Scaling / mainstreaming

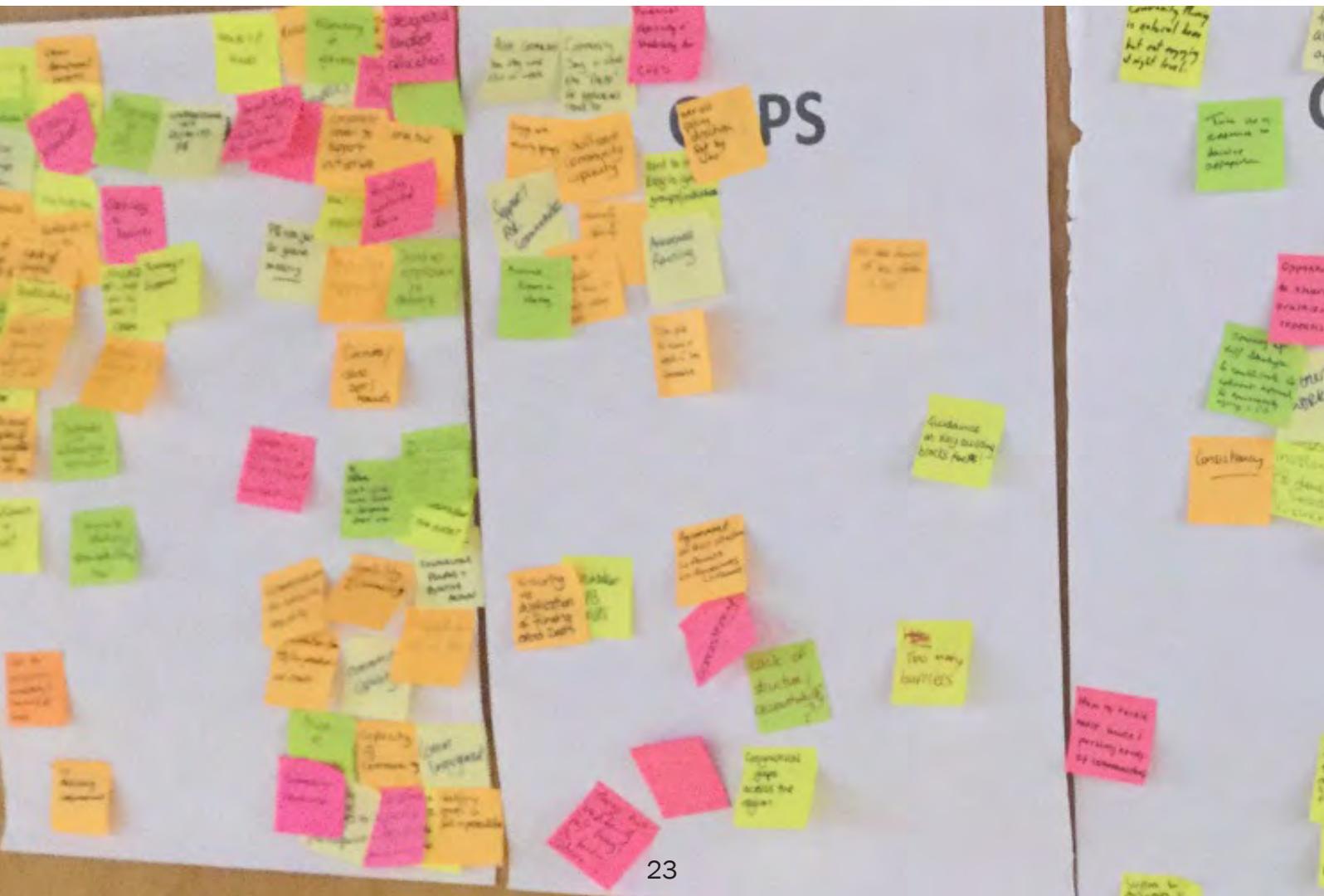
- How do we create an evidence base to support mainstream PB?
- How can we upscale PB without diminishing quality / the level of public services?
- How can the aspirations of PB be decided?

Resources

- How do we make the case to stakeholders (those who hold resources, expertise and knowledge) of the benefits / values / reasons for PB?
- How do we identify the full costs of running a PB programme - to include impact evaluation?
- **How can we use PB to secure commitment to use existing resources more flexibly to respond to local needs and sustain it?**
- How can we gain commitment at an appropriate level to multi – year funding / long term budget management?
- How can we ensure that PB can demonstrate value for money?

Leadership and strategy

- How do we ensure / demonstrate P adds value to the democratic process?
- How can we ensure we reflect and learn to improve our PB process – civic leadership?
- How do we use PB to influence culture and to build confidence and trust in our leadership (representative and participatory)?
- How can we grow a grassroots movement for PB?
- **How can we build PB into strategy development and mainstream resource allocation?**
- How do we identify the ownership needed to drive PB forward (including the role of the Senior Responsible Officer)?



Contact

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