



What role can PB play in Post Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal

Workshop Report July 2020



Workshop Programme

10.00: Welcome (Jez Hall, Louise O’Kane and Simon Sloan)

Participants should introduce themselves by the chat function, and we will use polling to share who’s in the meeting.

10.10: Framing our Conversation

- **Ruth McNeill** from **Armoy Community Association** on the experience of the ‘Armoy Open Pot’ PB process and how it has galvanized community action in response to COVID-19
- **Jennie Dunlop** from **Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council** on plans for the ‘Take 500’ PB process and its role in building community resilience and empowerment post COVID-19

10.25: Deciding our Open Space topics (Jez Hall)

Choose from the submitted questions and invite questions from participants

10.35: Open Space Round 1: Theme “What’s changed and what still holds true?”

10.55: Return to the main room. Selecting second round topic rooms.

11.00: Open Space Round 2: Theme “What’s achievable, desirable or essential?”

11.20: Brief Plenary Discussion on key learning

Plus using chat to harvest additional written comments and a closing evaluation poll

11.30: Closing Comments (Louise O’Kane and Nichola Creagh)

Introduction and Welcome

On Thursday 25 June 2020, forty-two participants joined an online zoom-shop to explore how Participatory Budgeting (PB) can help to transform and empower people's lives in the context of post Covid-19 recovery. The session was jointly hosted by PB Works and the Department for Communities and was facilitated by Jez Hall and Jayne McFadyen, Shared Future CIC. The workshop provided an opportunity to review the recommendations emerging from the PB Strategic Insight Lab and to lay the groundwork in developing and agreeing prioritised actions to advance Participatory Budgeting.

Jez Hall welcomed participants and invited them to introduce themselves via the chat function. The workshop programme was outlined and the overall framing question for the workshop posited:

'In the context of Covid-19 recovery, how can we use Participatory Budgeting to help transform and empower people's lives?'

Louise O'Kane, Community Places, welcomed participants. Louise noted that the response from local communities and anchor organisations to the Covid-19 crisis has been remarkable, immediate and agile with countless examples of local groups, clubs and individuals taking the lead in providing support and reaching those most in need. Louise highlighted that collaborations, relationships and connections between central and local government, statutory partners, CVS and grassroots communities have been re-invigorated and that Community Planning Partnerships have been central to this response. She stressed that partnership working which previously may have taken months, if not years, to build had accelerated at pace through a collective response to Covid-19 and that there is an appetite, expectation and willingness that these relationships and the shared actions and power which have emerged should be sustained in the longer term. Louise suggested that quality PB processes that genuinely put people in the lead, that build trust, create stronger communities, that give people real power over real money, offer an equitable and transformative way forward in planning for recovery and renewal. Louise thanked Ruth McNeill and Jennie Dunlop whose contributions would help to frame the conversation.

Simon Sloan, Department for Communities, also extended a welcome to participants and highlighted the opportunity to follow up on the Strategic Insight Lab held in November 2019 which focused on the challenge question: *How can we use Participatory Budgeting to help transform and empower people's lives?* Simon noted that the [Report of the I-LAB](#) produced a raft of recommendations which needed to be focused down to provide concrete steps. Simon highlighted that it is timely to revisit the recommendations in light of the pandemic and welcomed ongoing participation in contributing to developing PB to transform and empower people's lives.

Poll 1 was launched to provide a flavour of the sectors represented at the workshop. Most participants represented the Regional and Local Public Sector, followed by Local and Regional Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector, with three participants from Scotland and two 'Other' represented by the Housing Sector.

Poll 1: Sector

Local Public Sector	8
Local VCFSE Sector	3
NI Wide Public Sector	4
NI Wide VCFSE Sector	5
From Outside Northern Ireland	3
Other	2

A second poll was launched to determine the level of knowledge of PB amongst participants. Most respondents had delivered or actively participated in a PB Project or had joined a PB Works training, awareness or planning session. Several participants had attended the November 2019 PB Strategic Insight Lab. Only two of the participants had no prior knowledge of PB.

Poll 2: How familiar are you with PB?

Delivered or actively participated in a PB Project	12
Have read about PB but that is about all	3
Joined a PB Works training/awareness/planning session	11
No previous knowledge	2
Participated in the November 2019 I-Lab	5
Other	2

Framing the Conversation

Ruth McNeill, Armoy Community Association, Armoy Open Pot

Ruth shared her experience of the recent Armoy Open Pot PB process as part of the Glens Healthy Places Initiative. She explained that she hadn't previously heard of PB and was initially skeptical of it and felt that it might not work in Armoy. However, with the enthusiasm of Karin Eyben and Noeleen Diver they were convinced to give it a go. Ruth explained that they received great interest from the community and received 40 bid applications to the PB process. Ruth noted that the experience of the Voting Night was overwhelming and well supported by the community:

“a phenomenal amount of people came to the community centre, people who had never been in the community centre before in the 20 years that it has been there. We were blown away by the engagement and connectivity of people in their own communities. We were never able to tap into that before.”

Ruth commented, that prior to the Open Pot they had developed a Village Plan, engaging with the community on what they wanted to see develop in the area. But the format of the PB process was a completely different scale and people really got on board with it - were really empowered by having a direct say on what they thought the resources should be spent on in the community:

“It created a buzz that had never been seen in the community before.”

Ruth explained that the PB process was just being wrapped up when Covid-19 struck. She noted that it was the enthusiasm from the PB process and a new invigorated way of thinking in the community which led to such a fantastic response from the community in the support efforts that the Community Association implemented. Ruth explained:

“We had 36 people registering to volunteer, something which previously didn't happen in Armoy. The local business and individual financial support from people was incredible – a real sense of trust in the Community Association, a new sense of

trust, that we were doing something really good and they wanted to support that and I feel that was definitely on the back of the PB process.”

Ruth highlighted that the Community Association with the trust and support of the community has been able to deliver services like Meals on Wheels, Food and Shopping, Telephone friending all down to that sense of community connection developed through the PB process. Also, on the back of the PB process Ruth shared that the Community Association have been involved in the development of a Community Spirit Framework with the Royal Society of Public Health in London. The process will help to promote and develop a good community spirit in Armoy. Ruth also pointed to the example of the two local primary schools in the village which are segregated. While the children have some shared education that is where the sharing in the community stops. Ruth explained that the parents have never had any interaction with each other and as a result of being involved in the PB process both of the Parent Teacher Associations from the primary schools have come together to develop joint fund-raising events and to work together. In Ruth’s concluding comments she highlighted the power of PB and the desire to secure a cycle of PB with a repeat process to enhance impact:

“Our experience is that PB is a really powerful way for the community to interact and have much better connectivity to each other and to the community. We would really want to see it happening again and we think that the impact that a repeat PB process could have would be even greater and powerful for community spirit. I don’t think we would have had the same community response to Covid-19 had it not been for the really successful PB project.”

Jennie Dunlop, Community Planning Manager, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council

Jennie acknowledged the loss and hardship that many people have experienced as a result of Covid-19 and the lockdown over the past few months. She noted that much has been written and talked about in relation to recovery, renewal and transformation after Covid-19 and that many of the issues that were present before Covid have been amplified. Jennie explained that it is important to consider why the Community Planning

Partnership wanted to do PB in the first place before examining its role in response to Covid-19 recovery and renewal. Jennie highlighted that there are lots of reasons why you would want to do PB. Firstly, it addresses some of the challenges to doing engagement well. Secondly, it is about empowerment in a way that builds collaboration. Thirdly, it is about the power of relationships. Jennie shared that the Community Planning Partnership has developed a [Community Engagement Strategy](#) which sets out and supports their approach to engagement. Drawing on the research of Oliver Escobar it highlights three key challenges of engagement: inclusive and diverse, quality dialogue and deliberation and engagement that is impactful.

Jennie stressed that:

“PB can address those challenges, it is not often that we get to run a process where the decision-making is in the hands of participants and that is a reason in itself to do PB. From a Community Planning perspective, it enables equal partnership working and sharing of resources (support, money, ideas, networks, local knowledge) in the design and delivery of the PB process.”

There are 15 members in the PB Working Group, Jennie explained that while this might mean that meetings are longer, it has also resulted in some great ideas including the name, ‘Take 500’ where groups will be invited to come up with an idea to promote 5 ways to wellbeing.

Jennie highlighted:

“It’s about the power of relationships – connect is one of the 5 ways to wellbeing and relationships are really powerful, a magic happens when you bring people together who may not have met otherwise. Social connections in response to this crisis are so important to community resilience. We hope to continue with the Take 500 PB process, it is likely that it will move online, and I think that it will be a challenge to make sure that we really make those connections.”

It was stated that the community response has been fast, sophisticated, kind, collaborative and compassionate. The Community Planning Partnership's CVS Panel have undertaken a survey of the local community response (47 respondents) which illustrates the scale of the support. For example, distributing food to 10,000 people a week; accredited counselling; be-friending; activity packs; quizzes; training; yoga; parent and support; pet walking; socially distanced street bingo; signposting; helplines – all from the community.

Jennie noted:

“communities have acted quickly and creatively to support each other and if we run PB in the aftermath of the immediate response to Covid-19 it really says that we value what communities can do, especially the preventative effect of what they do in relation to social isolation and loneliness. PB can help us to invest in that and enables the community to decide where that investment goes as they know best.”

Jennie's concluding remarks raised the issues that we haven't heard from children and older people in the last few months and that there will be some difficult financial decisions ahead. It was highlighted that PB gives us a way to make those difficult decisions together and that there may be ways to learn and save money from some of the community innovations that have come forward.

Open Space Breakout Sessions

Jez Hall introduced the Open Space discussion and asked participants to suggest questions for two open space rounds of small group breakout sessions under the broad themes of:

Round 1: “What’s changed and what still holds true?”

1A: How might Covid Recovery Funds be used to deliver PB at scale?

1B: What role can PB play in genuinely sustaining the community energy and partnership working which has flourished in response to Covid-19?

1C: How can we strategically align PB with community planning?

1D: What would it take to ensure communities and citizens are aware of PB?

1E: What about engagement with the most vulnerable or marginalised groups of individuals?

Round 2: “What’s achievable, desirable or essential?”

2A: How do we overcome the challenges and issues with digital to ensure we keep the delivery of PB going, particularly in current circumstances?

2B: Tips for practical ways to put PB grant making online?

2C: How do we overcome digital divides...who may not be able to get on-line...and carry on relationships?

2D: What are the opportunities to be ambitious and connect to the new normal?

2E: How can we align a PB project with specific policies like Healthy Places/ Making Life Better... and make links to mainstreaming?

The notes of each breakout session are detailed in Appendix 2 and a summary of the key points of discussion are outlined below.

1A: How might Covid Recovery Funds be used to deliver PB at scale?

It was recognised that community action is valuable, but the challenge is how can it be sustained and how could PB be integrated into Covid 19 actions? The point was made that PB may be perceived as tokenistic if it doesn’t upscale and move beyond small grant

making approaches. It was noted that uncertainties such as Brexit and whether we are even in a recovery phase pose a challenge to investment and that resources available post Covid may be reduced. It was suggested that there could be a focus on re-purposing existing funds for PB, if the public sector can be encouraged to take more 'risk', respond with agility (as the VCS has) and if senior decision-makers and budget holders learn from the innovative approaches which have arisen in response to Covid-19. The point was made that Mainstreaming PB does not mean that it is funds taken away from government, just spent another way. Money allocated to departments for economic or public service recovery can simply be spent using a different commissioning formula. For example, the 1% commitment in Scotland which is intended to drive innovation in public services.

1B: What role can PB play in genuinely sustaining the community energy and partnership working which has flourished in response to Covid-19?

There was agreement that the community response to Covid-19 has been phenomenal and has highlighted that active participation, responding quickly, knowledge on the ground, trust and collaboration at a local level really matter. It was acknowledged that a rebalancing of power between sectors, with more genuine partnership working which shares and learns will be required going forward. It was noted that PB can fuel collaboration and change the relationship between the CVS and public sector – moving from one of transaction to one of transformation. It can also reinvigorate communities on the ground, building cohesion and enabling new voices to be heard. As groups move beyond the initial crisis response and get back to engaging with their communities PB can play a role, it can amplify their voice and create connections to those at a strategic level. Examples from Moray and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon demonstrated that many of the responses while centred on food, have been about much more than food, providing a conduit for community connections. This connectivity needs to be kept alive and strengthened as we move from crisis management to the development of sustainable communities. PB can support that transition and harness more creative and innovative responses. There are also lessons to be learned from the response to the crisis in reducing barriers to participation and accessing resources, with shorter application processes and reduced reporting requirements. It was noted that for PB to become

transformational we need to do it, repeat it, learn from it and build on that momentum through cycles of PB.

1C: How can we strategically align PB with community planning?

It was noted that digital solutions would be required to enable immediate progression of PB during the pandemic period. There is an opportunity to learn from on-line PB processes such as [Youth Leading Change](#) delivered by Newry, Mourne and Down Community Planning Partnership. It was highlighted that to ensure strategic alignment PB should be integrated with existing departmental policies. This is already happening e.g. Armoys Open Pot, Glens Healthy Places was aligned to the Department of Health's [Making Life Better](#) and the planned Take £500 PB process through Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Community Planning Partnership links to the Public Health Agency's [Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing](#). It was noted that an evaluation of the Glens Healthy Places Project will be available soon and learning shared. It was suggested that Government Departments and Community Planning partners through partnership working and pooling resources for PB can demonstrate leadership and it was questioned whether there is a specific role here for the Department for Communities in supporting this? It was highlighted that the Department of Education are currently undertaking a survey on how to involve children and young people in decision-making – are they aware of PB? a wider knowledge of PB across departments is needed. Another comment noted that there have been a range of PB pilots across the region and that while there is an opportunity to share innovation and best practice there is also a legislative route to ensuring community engagement, rights to participation and empowerment which may be necessary to achieve a similar scale of participation supported through the Community Empowerment Act in Scotland.

1D: What would it take to ensure communities and citizens are aware of PB?

The message to citizens and communities needs to set out what PB is about, that it is about creating connections, building relationships and empowerment not simply a funding mechanism. This requires a whole community approach, linking to local groups, community forums, councillors, DEA co-ordinators, networks, and using community voice, social media, newsletters and newspapers to promote and share what PB is about.

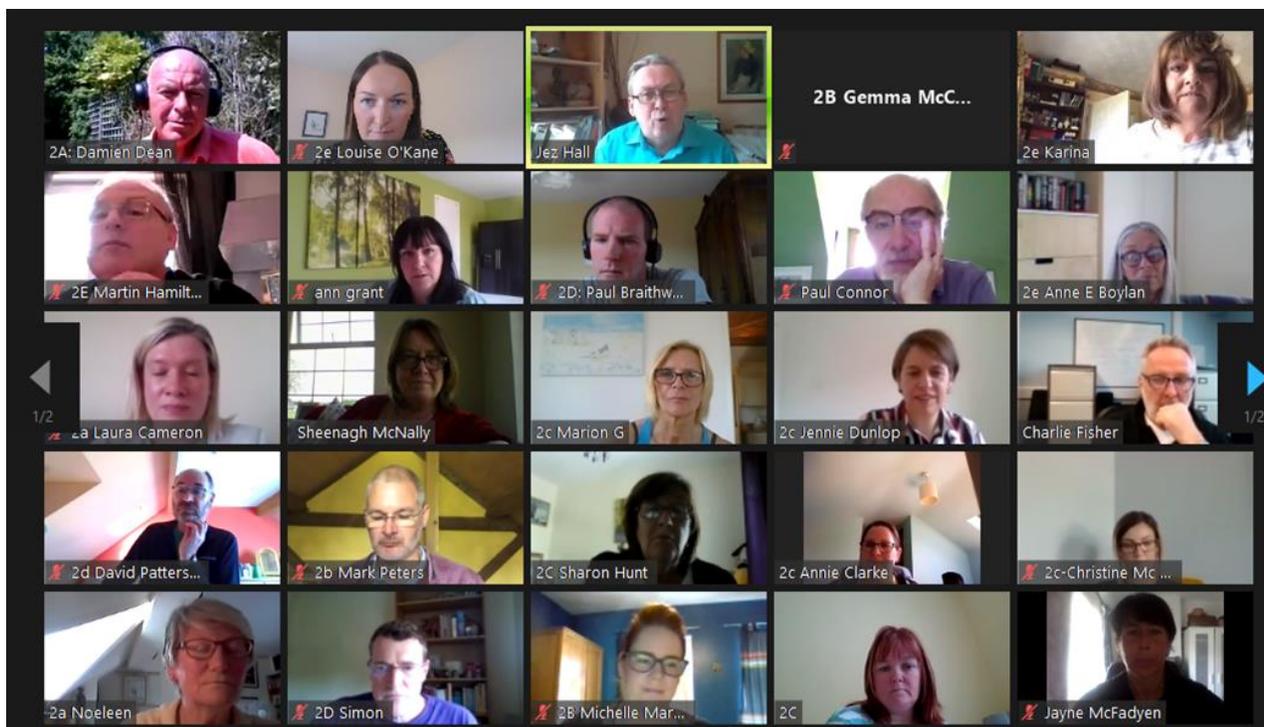
It was noted that the terminology used needs to have appeal, terms such as Community Fund may be more easily understood than PB. It was also stressed that information events, face to face connections and partnership working can increase the reach and impact of any PB process. It was noted again, that for greater impact and awareness PB needs to connect to higher level strategic priorities e.g. Together Building A United Community (T:BUC). It was noted that considering the impact of Covid, there is an opportunity to reflect on and identify groups that might benefit from a PB initiative e.g. Home-Start, Sure Start, Cruse Bereavement.

1E: What about engagement with the most vulnerable or marginalised groups of individuals?

It was stressed that we need to be clear by what we mean by most vulnerable or marginalised groups and to recognise that ‘one size does not fit all’. It was noted that we need to ask the community as experts what they would like to do post Covid while we still have contact with them, keep these new relationships alive, build on them and reflect and learn from what has worked well. The issue of ‘digital divide’ was also raised, those who do not have access to technology may feel even more excluded, are there opportunities for PB to happen within the current social distancing restrictions?

2A: How do we overcome the challenges and issues with digital to ensure we keep the delivery of PB going, particularly in current circumstances?

It was noted that in Moray, Scotland the pandemic forced a digital approach and that learning on the possibilities and problems is ongoing. In Moray, [D21 \(Democracy 21\)](#) platform is being used with a blended approach of on and offline. They have seen their overall engagement increase. However, as online engagement has increased, they have found less folk attending preparatory and support workshops in person. Challenges such as reaching younger people who have their own interests online which can be difficult to break into and older people who can find online approaches more tiring were noted. It was commented that the most successful cohort for digital accessibility is between the ages of 20 – 50 years. The old and the young are more problematical, and the digital divide complicates this further, particularly for rural communities.



Snapshot of some of the participants at the Zoom-shop

Good practice from Scotland was shared including the '[Connecting Scotland](#)' initiative delivered by SCVO which facilitates digital training and supplies devices to sheltered housing; and in relation to Youth PB, Young Scot have provided support working with schools and communities to facilitate PB. Young Scot have been supporting Local Authorities by offering an online voting tool for young people enabling them to vote at a time and place convenient to them. They have developed a [Young Scot Card](#) for young people and via their Young Scot account, they are issued a code that enables them to vote on the platform. If a school is involved, they issue the codes to the school and the school designates and supports voting <https://young.scot/get-informed/angus/the-power-of-youth-what-is-it-all-about>

It was suggested that internet kiosks in post offices would be a very supportive infrastructure to have in place in current circumstances. POs have remained open and the elderly and other demographics can access them. Schools and libraries are other places for digital infrastructure. The government's Digital Strategy should not only combat isolation and promote wellbeing but be expected to expand on other services, including the use of PB. We should not discount the use of traditional media to engage with the elderly, for example, radio, newspapers, posters in shops and public spaces also

– a blended approach will work best. It was stressed that we need to target and tailor our PB delivery to the needs of each group to maximise accessibility and engagement. It was suggested that a resource to support successful Digital PB, which draws on existing tools and good practice e.g. Triangle’s Digital Inclusion Toolkit for its tenants with learning disabilities, and funding for mentoring and support for Digital PB is needed in Northern Ireland.

2B: Tips for practical ways to put PB grant making online?

It was noted that technical solutions can promote fairness and inclusion such as password protection to prevent multiple voting or abuse of the process. A dedicated support person to assist with online voting can also remove barriers to participation. This approach was used in the Community Cash, Fermanagh and Omagh PSCP PB process – guidance can be shared. It was suggested that we should learn from other digital PB processes e.g. in Scotland, use existing digital platforms for PB and consider how digital processes still contribute to building community connections. There was consensus that guidance on quality on-line PB would be useful. It was noted that a Digital PB workshop to raise awareness and support groups would be beneficial.

2C: How do we overcome digital divides...who may not be able to get on-line...and carry on relationships?

It was suggested that off-line workshops should be provided in line with safe social distancing regulations to local community and voluntary sector groups to upskill in digital technology and platforms such as zoom. Grants and funding via a PB approach should be made available to address digital exclusion, particularly in rural areas and intergenerational learning could be established where younger people train older people in digital skills. It is important to learn from other projects that had delivered online PB and there may be lessons from the satellite internet hub projects that were delivered through neighbourhood renewal. It was noted that there needs to be a cross departmental solution, beyond a silo mentality, to bring Department of Education, Department for Communities, Department of Health together to tackle digital disadvantage, not through separate initiatives as is currently happening.

2D: What are the opportunities to be ambitious and connect to the new normal?

It was noted that there is a need to move into a more collaborative space between citizen and public sector, moving beyond small grants and into broader decision-making processes. The Scottish commitment to allocate at least 1% of local authority budgets via PB by 2021 was noted, this has enabled a shift from small grant processes and created a pathway to influence decision-making on mainstream public budgets. However, it was noted that maintaining principles of PB and good practice can be a challenge in mainstream approaches and that it is also important to include a small grant focus given that it supports participation and provides an important hook to engage communities in local community development action, voluntary participation, and creates an appropriate level for many citizens to be active in their local places. Both approaches are required and play particular roles. It was suggested that legislation for a Community Right to Participate in decision making with reference to public finance and financial planning is required and legislation for PB as a component of Community Planning may also be useful. The idea of an advocacy campaign led by the VCSE sector in response to the aftermath of Covid was raised. This could draw on PB principles for citizen engagement in considering how public service requirements, as well as economic recovery, and how systems, planning and engagement should be reformed. Specific asks would need to be determined. It was also noted that we need to build and broaden our culture of participation, by creating opportunities and spaces to bring children and young people into the process.

2E: How can we align a PB project with specific policies like Healthy Places/ Making Life Better... and make links to mainstreaming?

A number of opportunities were discussed to drive and integrate PB with existing policies and complement strategic government initiatives, these included: Department of Justice's Communities in Transition Project (Community Safety and regeneration); PHA's Making Life Better; Executive Office, Together Building a United Community (T:BUC) a huge opportunity for Housing Associations to use PB to deliver shared communities; and a refreshed Programme for Government. It was noted that this integration can provide hooks to scale PB, enabling Departments to pool resources and work together. A

participant from Scotland highlighted the commitment agreed by the Scottish Government and COSLA in 2017 to have at least 1% of local authority budgets subject to PB by 2021 embedding PB as a way of working. He noted that in Moray this equates to £1.7 Million being allocated via PB, significant resources. He also noted that the challenge remains to demonstrate to members and officers that this isn't about giving grants out but about giving the community an opportunity to make real decisions about policy. He offered the example of [Fife](#) where the community are deciding how £22 Million should be allocated to transport services.



Snapshot of some of the participants at the Zoom-shop

It was noted that the Department for Communities have a central role in overseeing Community Planning and that Community Planning Partnerships can act as a platform for PB. It was suggested that the DfC could play a role in providing a strategic home for PB across Government by allocating resources to make it happen and targeting and encouraging partners to contribute too rather than leaving it to those Community Planning Partnerships who choose to use PB. The importance of genuine partnership working and behind the scenes support from the outset was stressed – it can become popular for partners to piggyback or offer resources after the hard work has been

completed. It was also noted that it is essential that the community are involved in the development of policy for PB. Drawing on the experience of Moray, the community were reached via community councils who have links on the ground to ensure that they were genuinely brought into the development of the PB framework document and part of the structures and delivery of PB. It was also stressed that we need to build on PB activity, it shouldn't be one off pilots, for greater impact the process needs to be repeated, again and again, so that people can see the difference and real impact it can make.

A third poll was launched to explore what participants felt was most important to ensuring PB support post Covid-19 recovery. Two key priorities emerged which placed an emphasis on scaling up PB including, 'Building PB into strategy development and mainstream resource allocation' and 'Strategically aligning PB with Community Planning'. These were followed by a focus on people led Participatory Budgeting, 'Citizens supported to co-design PB Programmes' and 'Ensure communities and citizens are aware of PB'. 'Commitment to use existing resources more flexibly', 'Engagement with the most vulnerable or marginalized groups of individuals' and 'Grow and maintain a culture of collaboration and shared learning' followed. Interestingly, only one person prioritised growing an appropriate governance framework.

Poll 3: What do you think is the most important to ensure PB support Post Covid-19 recovery?

Build PB into strategy development and mainstream resource allocation	8
Strategically align PB with community planning	7
Citizens supported to co-design PB Programmes	4
Ensure communities and citizens are aware of PB	4
Commitment to use existing resources more flexibly	2
Engagement with the most vulnerable or marginalised groups of individuals	2
Grow and maintain a culture of collaboration and shared learning	2
Grow an appropriate governance framework	1

In drawing the zoom-shop to a close Jez asked participants about how their expectations for the session had been met. All the participants noted that their expectations had been met, more than met or well exceeded.

Poll 4: How did today go towards meeting your expectations?

Did not meet	0
Partially met	0
Met	13
More than met	8
Well exceeded	6

Thank-you and Close

Louise O’Kane thanked everyone for their participation and energetic discussions and noted that a report of the workshop would be circulated to all participants and made available on the [PB Works website](#). She also reminded participants of the opportunity to sign up to the [PB Works NI Network](#) to receive information about upcoming events and to contribute to the development of PB across the region.

Nichola Creagh, Department for Communities, provided some final closing comments noting that the Innovation Lab had produced a series of recommendations which need to be further distilled into concrete actions to move PB on. Nichola, reflected that the zoom-shop had helped to ‘Covid proof’ the recommendations and to move us into the next phase. She stressed that she is eager to review the notes of this discussion and to explore what we can all do to make PB happen going forward.

Jez reminded participants that the google documents of the breakout rooms would remain open for 24 hours for additional comments.

The workshop was brought to a close.

Appendix 1: List of Participants

First Name	Surname	Organisation
Meline	Avagyan	University of Tartu
Anne	Boylan	ACJSNI
Paul	Braithwaite	CFNI / PB Works
Derek	Browne	Social Enterprise Programme
Laura	Cameron	Moray Council
Annie	Clarke	Southern Health and Social Care Trust
Paul	Connor	Moray Council
Nichola	Creagh	Department for Communities
Damien	Dean	Department for Communities
Noeleen	Diver	Triangle Housing Association / PB Works
Anne-Marie	Doherty	Northern Health and Social Care Trust
Jennie	Dunlop	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
Charles	Fisher	Development Trust NI
Carol	Follis	Fermanagh and Omagh PCSP
Kelly	Foster	Ark housing
Fiona	Garven	Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)
Wendy	Gibbons	Outer West Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership
Marion	Graham	Triangle Housing Association
Ann	Grant	County Down Rural Community Network
Frances	Haire	Department of Finance
Jez	Hall	Shared Future CIC
Martin	Hamilton	Newington Housing Association
Lisa	Harris	Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Sharon	Hunt	Choice Housing
Raymond	Jackson	Confederation of Community Groups Newry
Chris	Leech	Craigavon Food Bank & Emmanuel Church
Michelle	Markey	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
Gary	Maxwell	Department of Health
Claire	McAuley	Sport NI
Gemma	McCaughley	CFNI / PB Works
Karina	McCollum	Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Lesley	McCombe	Department of Justice
Jayne	McFadyen	Shared Future CIC
Sheenagh	McNally	Supporting Communities NI
Christine	McNeill	Supporting Communities NI
Ruth	McNeill	Armoys Community Association

Louise	O'Kane	Community Places /PB Works
David	Patterson	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council / PB Works
Mark	Peters	Community Volunteer /PB Works
Tammy	Rountree	Connswater Homes
Simon	Sloan	Department for Communities
Debbie	Smith	Southern Health and Social Care Trust
Paul	Stuart	Grove Community Housing Association

Appendix 2: Open Space Breakout Room Notes

1A Breakout Room

1A: How might COVID Recovery Funds be used to deliver PB at scale?

Name of convener: Paul Braithwaite

Name of note taker: Jez Hall and Paul Braithwaite

Key points from the discussion:

1. PB is parked.... how do we integrate PB into Covid 19 actions? We recognise community action is valuable... The question is how do we sustain it? But PB also needs to be done at scale...beyond small grants.... otherwise it could become perceived as tokenistic.... What is the policy area we can apply PB at scale?
2. The COVID 19 money has already been allocated, not sure there will be any further new funds. However, the money to charities emerged 'out of the blue' so it's possible. Funding will be tight. Perhaps focus should be repurposing existing funds.
3. The impact of Brexit. Risk of the future means people aren't 'investing' and so everything slows down. How do people raise their needs? Build on those that are taking initiatives. Cultural sectors are adapting but so many challenges.
4. How do we build small scale viable manufacturing? challenges of small-scale businesses who are wanting to rebuild after Covid and trade across Europe. Communication from national government is unclear and has created uncertainty. Policies don't seem coherent and we need more circular thinking (like <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org>)
5. How do we encourage the public sector to take risks? Can we repurpose existing funds? VCS sector has been more agile than government.
6. Are we actually in a recovery phase, or will we go back into emergency response? PB might not be considered an appropriate vehicle for emergency response due to need to act fast
7. Lots of innovation happening but how to bring those to the attention of senior decision-makers and budget holders?

Table to add additional thoughts

Name (optional)	Your comment or contribution	Who needs to act on this?
Jez	Mainstreaming PB does not mean that it is funds taken away from government, just spent another	

	<p>way. Money allocated to departments for economic or public service recovery can simply be spent using a different commissioning formula. See what they are doing with the 1% in Scotland. PB 1% is to drive innovation in public services, not transfer it to the VCS sector?</p>	
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1B Breakout Room

1B: What role can PB play in genuinely sustaining the community energy and partnership working which has flourished in response to COVID-19?

Name of convener and notetaker: Louise O’Kane

Key points from the discussion:

1. Community response is phenomenal - we are all part of the community - opportunity to show how participation and input matters. Not easy to keep that going - rebalancing of inputs and a more genuine partnership, share, learn, re-balance of power between sectors. PB can help to do that.
2. In Scotland seen an increase in collaboration at a local level - communities know where need is and can respond quickly. Knowledge on the ground of where need is - PB can fuel more of that and change relationship between public sector - transformational rather than transactional
3. Other side of COVID-19 - engagement from new voices - whole community coming together - it is needed - rebalancing of power. Lack of trust of statutory agencies, less of a personal link and knowledge of where people are - key to use comm groups on ground who have that trust already more so than statutory partners. PB has a real buzz - can reinvigorate the community.
4. Volunteers are really busy, especially at the outset - burn out? Taking a well-earned break - groups concerned about normal activities, especially those who run centres, revenue, how will they operate safely, getting back to Community Engagement- how can PB help with that? Agencies have been able to respond with resources - good if that can continue to happen through PB
5. Moray experience - a lot of support work - food response, community larders - nice to do but getting back to normal - older people, unwell people from hospital, shielding, isolated, carers, - continued support needed for them. It wasn’t just a food project - addressing other things - need to hear from people, their voices amplified so those at strategic level understand and connect with people. PB can help people shout about how they are addressing need in the community
6. In ABC - again food not primary issue but conduit for community connections - links into community at accelerated pace - it would be a real waste to see those connections lost - need to strengthen them and keep that connection alive. We need to move from Crisis management to a sustainable community’s mindset - PB can aid that transition from crisis to something more longer term, more sustainable to change the narrative

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| 7. Community got up and got on with it- knew where support was needed. PB can support that innovative response and be more creative - get beyond funding criteria and lengthy applications, PB can harness that innovative work. Requirement for reporting and accessing resources much shorter/easier/ lessons here for PB process - reducing barriers to participation. |
| 8. Moving to transformational processes- do, repeat, and build on that momentum |

Table to add additional thoughts

Name (optional)	Your comment or contribution	Who needs to act on this?

1C Breakout Room

1C: How can we strategically align PB with community planning?

Name of convener: Simon Sloan

Name of note taker: Karina McCollum

Key points from the discussion:

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| 1. For immediate progression due to pandemic circumstances digital solutions needed. David in Newry & Mourne trialed a youth PB with digital demo and voting - lessons can be shared widely - will be other examples. |
| 2. Strategic alignment - through integration with existing departmental policies e.g. Take £500 / Take 5 Mental Health % ABC - also Armoy Open Pot (Glens Healthy Places) described by Ruth in earlier presentation aligned to MLB and local Community Plan. This way departmental staff see overt benefits. |
| 3. Consensus in govt departments/Community Planning agencies to pool resources to show leadership - partnership key - role for DfC? |
| 4. Glens Healthy Places evaluation due - useful to share how this happened with other organisations and to build on this type of partnership working. PB was one element of the approach (not a lot of money required). |
| 5. Dept of Education currently carrying out a piece of work - survey on how to involve children/young people in decision making - are they aware of PB? Wider knowledge of PB across departments needed. |
| 6. Innovation underlying approaches - sharing / adapting best practice - range of NI pilots available. Legislative route to community engagement, rights to participation and empowerment necessary to achieve full scale ref: Community Empowerment Act (Scotland). |

Table to add additional thoughts

Name (optional)	Your comment or contribution	Who needs to act on this?

1D Breakout Room

1D: What would it take to ensure communities and citizens are aware of PB?

Name of convener: Mark Peters

Name of notetaker: Gemma McCaughley

Key points from the discussion:

1. Terminology needs to be appealing. 'Community Fund' is understood more than Participatory Budgeting. Marion spoke about what worked in their programme. Information event was vitally important, as provided face to face connections with people. Partnership approach worked well as they partnered with Sport NI. This led to more participations
2. Partnership is key to this and found that area wide offers a range of opportunities - for credibility, for spreading the messages, for impact.
3. Face to face is important, localised makes an impact however it is important that it reflects higher level strategic priorities such as local area action plans/local council/. Programmes i.e. TBUC etc.
4. Considering the impact of Covid, there is an opportunity to reflect on what groups could be identified that would best benefit from a PB initiative. - i.e. Homestart, Sure Start, Cruse Bereavement
5. The message needs to be about what PB is about - it is not just a funding mechanism and messages to citizens and communities should highlight that it is also about empowerment, connections and relationships.
6. This needs a whole community approach to promoting the messages. Linking in with local connections, local councilors, DEA coordinators and networks, will advance and promote the initiatives and inform communities of what is being done and why.
7. Utilising all forms of marketing; community voices, groups, social media, newspapers, newsletters, local trust and community forums will all help advance the messages and objectives of PB

Table to add additional thoughts

Name (optional)	Your comment or contribution	Who needs to act on this?

1E Breakout Room

1E: What about engagement with the most vulnerable or marginalized groups of individuals>?

Name of convener: Paul Connor

Name of note taker: Lisa Harris

Key points from the discussion:

1. What do we mean by “most vulnerable or marginalised groups or individuals”
2. Ask people what they would like to do going forward during this time we still have contact with them through the Covid crisis. Do as much as possible to keep the relationships alive and build on those now.
3. When the community comes together there are excellent results. The community are the experts so we must engage with them
4. What are other mechanisms for PB working within current connection restrictions as people may feel even more excluded if they do not have technology. Digital Divide.
5. Is there a way of publicising what has worked well, and what we have learnt from during the Covid Crisis to start the PB process
6. How has Covid Crisis changed the support we are offering within our communities?

Table to add additional thoughts

Name (optional)	Your comment or contribution	Who needs to act on this?
Paul Connor	Rural communities can offer particular challenges when it comes to marginalised groups, however, city / urban environments pose their own set of challenges when dealing with groups as well. There has to be an understanding that one size does not fit all	

2A Breakout Room

2A: How do we overcome the challenges and issues with digital to ensure we keep the delivery of PB going, particularly in current circumstances?

Name of convener and notetaker: Noeleen Diver

Key points from the discussion:

1. Laura- The pandemic has forced us into digital and we are all learning about the possibilities and problems. They have used D21 (democracy 21) platform in Moray within a blended approach of on and offline. They have seen their overall engagement increase. However, as online engagement has
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increased, they have found less folk were coming out to preparatory and support workshops in person. <https://en.d21.me/>

2. Damien - NMD Council had an online PB for Youth with offline voting. They found, surprisingly, young people were not so easy to engage online. Also, older people find digital quite tiring, e.g. zoom meetings which would be relevant to workshops.

3. Chris- In his experience of working with young people, they have their own interests online and it is hard to break into these to engage with them. Probably the most successful cohort for digital accessibility is between the ages of 20 – 50 years. The old and the young are more problematical, and the digital divide complicates this further, particularly rurally. He would promote a blended approach, when this is possible.

4. Laura- Described the 'Connecting Scotland' initiative of SCVO and how important this is. For example, they facilitate digital training and supply of devices to sheltered housing. With Youth PB, they have been supported by Young Scot who worked with schools and communities to facilitate PB. Young Scot have been supporting Local Authorities by offering an online voting tool for young people for some time providing the opportunity for young people to vote at a time and place convenient to them. This is the only link I can currently find but it's for Angus But other areas have done similar. (Young Scot is a discount card for young people in Scotland and is very popular.) Via their young Scot account, they would be issued a code that allows them to vote on the platform. If a school was involved, they issued the codes to the school and the school designated and supported voting. <https://young.scot/get-informed/angus/the-power-of-youth-what-is-it-all-about>

5. Chris- We used to have internet kiosks in post offices which would be a very supportive infrastructure to have in place in current circumstances. POs have remained open and the elderly and other demographics would access them. Schools and libraries are other places for digital resources. The government's Digital Strategy not only should combat isolation and promote wellbeing but be expected to expand on other services, including the use of PB. We should not discount the use of traditional media to engage with the elderly, for example, radio, newspapers, posters in shops and public spaces etc.

6. Damien- It is clear that we need to target and tailor our PB delivery to the needs of each group to maximise accessibility and engagement.

7. Noeleen- Might a suggestion from this group be the creation of a resource of what elements are needed to make digital work successfully for PB, what tools already exist and the establishment of funding for mentoring/support of digital PB here in NI? We might also establish a trawl for good practices already happening in other spheres, e.g. the digital inclusion toolkit that Triangle uses for its tenants with

learning disabilities and we might draw on the experiences of our neighbours in Scotland and the ROI and elsewhere.

Table to add additional thoughts

Name (optional)	Your comment or contribution	Who needs to act on this?

2B Breakout Room

2B: Tips for practical ways to put PB grant making online

Name of convener: Carol Follis and Mark Peters

Name of note taker: Mark Peters and Gemma McCaughey

Key points from the discussion:

1. Carol spoke about her recent experience with PB initiative online. She will share her guidance with PB Works. Covered technical solutions to promote fairness and inclusion. I.e. only one vote per person; groups voted for 7 projects including their own. Inclusion - an identified support person to assist with online voting removed barriers to people to participate.
2. Learn from other digital processes elsewhere e.g. Scotland
3. Run a workshop like this to support groups/raise awareness
4. Think through the process, test the voting process. Ideas to use a password mechanism to prevent multiple voting/abuse of process
5. Key question - how can digital processes still ensure PB builds community connections?
6. Consensus from the group that it would be good to have guidance on Quality online PB initiatives. Provide guidance notes, support person for groups participating.
7. Research and use existing digital platforms to run a PB event.

Table to add additional thoughts

Name (optional)	Your comment or contribution	Who needs to act on this?

2C Breakout Room

2C: How do we overcome digital divides... who may not be able to get online... and carry on relationships.

Name of convener: Lisa Harris

Notes provided by Raymond Jackson and Jennie Dunlop

Key points from the discussion:

1. Needs to be a cross department solution (get departments out of silo mentality – Education, DfC and Health all tackling digital disadvantage but not together !!)
2. Workshops should be provided (when possible with social distancing) to local com/vol sector groups to upskill these groups. These workshops should not be on-line (as this will undermine the learning – some individuals/groups extremely limited re digital technology including zoom etc.)
3. Grants/ funding – locally (possibly via PB) specifically to address digital exclusion (particularly in rural areas)
4. Young people to train older people (inter age Programmes)
5. Satellite internet hub projects have happened through neighbourhood renewal
6. Need to learn from other projects that had delivered online PB.

Table to add additional thoughts

Name (optional)	Your comment or contribution	Who needs to act on this?

2D: Breakout Room

2D: What are the opportunities to be ambitious and connect to the new normal?

Name of convener: Paul Braithwaite

Name of note taker: Charlie Fisher

Key points from the discussion:

1. A need to move into a more collaborative space between citizen and public sector - beyond small grants and into broader decision-making processes.
2. N.B: Scotland has 1% commitment (a positive and a negative) - moved from small grant process and practice (need to maintain this given that it supports participation) whilst considering the

pathway into influence and decision making for mainstream public budgets. Maintaining principles of PB and good practice can be a challenge.
3. Maintain small grant focus, it's an important hook to engage communities in local community development action. Operating at a small-scale level it supports community action, voluntary participation, creating an appropriate level for many citizens to be active in their local places.
4. Legislate for a Community Right to Participate in decision making re public finance and financial planning. Legislate for PB as a component of Community Planning.
5. An advocacy campaign led by the VCSE sector in the aftermath of Covid drawing on PB principles for citizen engagement in considering public service requirements as well as economic recovery and reform of systems, planning and engagement. Need to determine the specific ask?
6. We need to broaden out who we engage - build a culture of participation, create the opportunity and space to bring children and young people into the process.

Table to add additional thoughts

Name (optional)	Your comment or contribution	Who needs to act on this?

2E: Breakout Room

2E: How can we align a PB project with specific policies like healthy places... and make links to mainstreaming.

Name of convener: Karina McCollum

Name of note taker: Louise O’Kane

Key points from the discussion:

1. Newington Housing Association and Ashton Community Trust, have a Communities in Transition Project and we are hoping to complement that – Community safety, regeneration - attract interest to make a visible difference / complement government initiatives - progress on the ground at a local level. New Lodge and Ardoyne - delivered new houses in this area and have established good relationships. COVID has had a big impact to planning and outcomes. Festival of North - platforms there to work with to promote PB.
2. Where might potential funding come from - linked to area from Armoy PB - how can we scale it up. Need a hook - initially Healthy Places - bigger piece on Making Life Better PHA - Each

department could pool resources and work together. Build on PB activity - shouldn't be one off - bigger impact - should be repeated.
3. TBUC resources can be used via PB to deliver shared communities - whole area for Housing Associations.
4. Scottish Government - moved to mainstreaming 1% of Budget. In Moray, this equates to £1.7 Million towards PB - significant resources. Trying to get past members and officers - not about giving grants out but about giving community opportunity to make decisions around policy. Example of Fife – where community decided on £22 Million on how transport should look.
5. Department for Communities have a central role overseeing Community Planning – Community Planning Partnerships could deliver PB - role here for DfC to allocate resources to make it happen and ask partners to contribute too. Ask/Target rather than just those who choose. CPPs can act as a platform.
6. PB needs to happen again and again -cycle - so people can see the difference and real impact it can make.
7. Partners can come in towards the end of PB process to add resources after the hard work has been done- needs to be genuine partnership from the outset -a lot of work behind the scenes - where the activity happens - popular for partners to piggy back, get interested at the launch point - has to be a genuine partnership
8. Community involvement in developing policy for PB is essential- In Moray out framework document the community were genuinely brought into it. Reached out to community councils on ground who have links, community need to be part of delivery and part of the structures.
9. PB needs a strategic home /driver across Government -refreshed PfG opportunity here? Health service could take a consistent approach and work through Community Planning
10. Local Makers - Craft NI taught to use hands constructively and have a positive outcome

Table to add additional thoughts

Name (optional)	Your comment or contribution	Who needs to act on this?

Appendix 3: Sector, Familiarity with PB, Priorities and Evaluation

Four Live Polls were launched during the workshop:

Poll 1: Sector

Local Public Sector	8
Local VCFSE Sector	3
NI Wide Public Sector	4
NI Wide VCFSE Sector	5
From Outside Northern Ireland	3
Other	2

Poll 2: How familiar are you with PB?

Delivered or actively participated in a PB Project	12
Have read about PB but that is about all	3
Joined a PB Works training/awareness/planning session	11
No previous knowledge	2
Participated in the November 2019 I-Lab	5
Other	2

Poll 3: What do you think is the most important to ensure PB support Post Covid 19 recovery?

Build PB into strategy development and mainstream resource allocation	8
Strategically align PB with community planning	7
Citizens supported to co-design PB Programmes	4
Ensure communities and citizens are aware of PB	4
Commitment to use existing resources more flexibly	2
Engagement with the most vulnerable or marginalised groups of individuals	2
Grow and maintain a culture of collaboration and shared learning	2
Grow an appropriate governance framework	1

Poll 4: How did today go towards meeting your expectations?

Did not meet	0
Partially met	0
Met	13
More than met	8
Well exceeded	6

This Report was prepared by Louise O’Kane, Community Places and PB Works

