

Community Choices Fund Report Template

The community choices fund grant offer 2016/17 requires a report to be submitted to the Scottish Government by 30 April 2017 to include the following information:

- how the funding was spent, full details of the project, the number of participants (PB voters) for each event, the impact PB has had and plans to promote and support PB in the future. The report should include the views of participants on the process.
- Share any blogs, pictures and videos of the PB event on the PB Scotland website www.pbscotland.scot
- Participate, where possible, in PB learning networks and workshops to share knowledge, expertise and good practice.
- Provide an on-going contact point to speak to other groups in the area about the organisation's experience of PB.

Please provide information in the four sections below and email the completed template to community.empowerment@gov.scot by 30 April 2017.

Section One – The Project

Organisation: Leith Links Community Council (LLCC)

Address: c/o LLCC Secy, 22 Claremont Road, Edinburgh EH6 7NE

Project Title: CommUNITY Links: Brightening local lives

Grant Amount: £20,869

1.1 Please provide a brief overview of the project to include any partnerships working with key stakeholders:

The project was a small scale, hyper-local participatory budgeting exercise within our small community. Our primary aims were community engagement, involving the local community in financial decision making, and – through funding a range of projects - direct benefit to members of our local community along with an increased sense of shared local 'ownership'.

We invited applications for projects and activities that would benefit and brighten up the lives of members of the local community; supported potential applicants to develop and submit project applications; held a social in-person voting event; ran online voting; and awarded project money to the successful 'winning' applicants.

The project took place in 4 main phases, between October 2016 and March 2017.

- Design, planning and publicity (October – December 2016)
- Applications and Support (January / February 2017)
- Voting Process & Awards (March 2017)
- Review and Reporting (April 2017)

For a full, step by step, account of the process, and of activities at each stage, see **APPENDIX 1**, attached below.

Project in summary, see below: -

- Setting aside funding for administration and support, we originally had £15,500 to distribute to projects, which we divided into £3,000 for small projects (up to £400 each) and £12,500 for large projects (up to £2,500 each). In the end we managed, by saving on administration expenses, to distribute a total of £16,461.66 to projects.
- 33 applications were received: 11 for small projects and 22 for large projects, totalling £47,197.66 in all.
- Ultimately, 9/11 and 7/22 projects were fully funded (to a total of £16,461.66), chosen by the voting of the local community (920 voters overall).
- The local community was fully informed about the project from start to finish via a public 'launch', 4 separate leaflet drops to every household in the area), by social media (website, Facebook, Twitter, reposting) and by posters displayed locally.
- In-person voting (192 voters) was carried out at a social event, using voting card tokens (8 per voter). Online voting (728 additional voters) took place over 4 day period, via Survey Monkey. 920 voters in total.
- Results were announced within 24 hours of voting closing, and winning projects were awarded their cheque within 10 days after that.

Partners and Stakeholders

LLCC had no formal partners for the organisation of the project (partnership with other nearby Community Councils was considered, but rejected as the timescales were too short to allow for full-scale collaborative working).

For various stages of the project process, we worked informally with a number of local partners and stakeholders, as follows:

For use venues and facilities, we were grateful for the cooperation and support of the following local partners:

- * Leith Community Education Centre
- * The Hub / Ripple Project at Lochend & Restalrig Community Hub
- * Leith St. Andrews Church (and the Mary Phelan School of Dance)

For volunteer support at Help and Support Sessions and at the 'Launch night', Social Voting event and 'Awards Night', we were grateful for the hard work and support of:

- * Fellow Leith Links Community Councillors
- * Volunteers recruited through a network of local contacts, our own LLCC website and Facebook Group and especially the 'I Love Leith' Facebook Group.

Key stakeholders throughout the process were the various groups and organisations, including residents associations, operating within our community, who supported the Community Links project by sharing information and promoting the project, developing project ideas, and encouraging applicants to come forward.

Many of these groups ultimately did themselves submit an application for project funding, although some others chose not to.

1.2 Provide a summary of the level of participation and buy-in from the local community. For example who participated, what was the level of diversity amongst applicants and participants, and what support was provided e.g. childcare or travel costs and accessibility. Please provide a summary of the views of participants on the process.

Level of Participation

For a very small community (5,500 households) we were pleased with the level of participation at all levels.

Applications

33 project applications¹ were received in all (11 for the small grants, and 22 for the larger grants) from 28 different applicants.

Of these 33 project applications, 22 were from 'constituted' groups / organisations (one or two were still in the process of getting constituted), 1 was from a public body (Police Scotland, working in/with the community), while 10 were from unconstituted groups or from individuals.

Opening the applications to unconstituted groups was a 'unique selling point' of our hyper-local project. (Most public funding exercises restrict applications to registered charities and groups that are constituted, which creates a major barrier for smaller groups and projects.) We had actually hoped that more individuals and unconstituted groups would apply (that was one reason for establishing the 'small project' grants, at £400) and we will be trying to look into reasons why they didn't (and how to encourage more of this, if there is a 'next time').

Social Voting Event Attendees

Approximately 235 people attended the social voting event (no fixed figure as the rush got so intense at times that we lost count!) Not all of these were eligible to vote, but they stayed anyway and enjoyed the event. Details of the voters follows below.

Our local elected representatives Ben Macpherson MSP, and Tommy Sheppard MP also attended the event and took the opportunity to engage with project applicants, with voters and with members of the local community.

Voters

Anyone aged 8 years or above was entitled to vote, provided that they live, work, study or volunteer in the Leith Links Community Council area.

920 people voted altogether²; 192 in-person and 728 online:

¹ It is difficult to compare 'like with like' in any meaningful way when comparing PB events from different areas, as there are so many variables. Close to home, participation in our Leith Links Community Links project appears to compare favourably with the most recent Leith Decides (2016) in terms of attracting a relatively high level of project applications. (Leith Decides 2016 had only 55 applications from the whole Leith Neighbourhood Partnership area, a community more than three times the size of Leith Links (which attracted 33 applications on this project.)

² This total again compares quite favourably with Leith Decides 2016 which attracted 1,781 voters overall for a catchment area over three times the size/ population of ours.

920 people voted altogether; 192 in-person and 728 online:

* In-person votes – c. 235 people attended the event, but only 192 were eligible (by age, address) to be registered to vote / voted altogether.

* Online votes – nearly 1,000 additional votes were received online, but only 728 were accepted as valid (a number of the online votes had to be rejected as invalid because of duplication and/or because address details could not be verified as being in 'our area'.)

Voter status: A breakdown (from forms collected on the day) indicates that 71% of in-person voters were local residents while others were people who work, study or volunteer in the area (N.B. many fit two or more of those categories).

Please tell us what makes you eligible to vote today?		
Live	71%	130
Study	18%	33
Work	22%	40
Volunteer	24%	44

Equality and Diversity

Equality and Diversity information on voters was sought, via forms on the social voting day and via an online survey, for online voters.

Social Voting Event Day 11th March 2017

Out of 235 attendees, 192 registered, and voted. Of those, only a disappointingly small number (65, or 34%) completed Equality and Diversity forms.

Online Voting 11 – 15th March 2017.

Out of 728 valid online voters, disappointingly, only 28 returned Equality and Diversity information.

This return rate was not high, sadly (93 completed forms in total - about 10%), which means that the results are indicative only, and cannot reliably be taken to reflect the overall picture. See **APPENDIX 2** for a breakdown.

Support

General Support the whole Project – Universal Design

One of the aims of our Community Links project was to make the whole process as accessible as possible, for all, and especially including those who are potentially hard to reach or vulnerable (such as the young, and the elderly). To this end, we tried to devise a process that was as simple as possible at every stage – for project applicants, and for voters – and to provide support at every stage. In other words, rather than focussing on individual 'special' support and adaptations (though those would be made available whenever needed), we aimed for 'universal design' to make the whole project as inclusive and barrier-free as possible, for **all**.

For project applicants, the Application Form and Guidance Notes were as simple as we could make them.

We also offered Help and Support sessions so that prospective applicants could come and talk through their ideas, face to face with a member of the project team, and obtain guidance on how to design their project and complete their application.

Help and Support Sessions during the Applications Phase

Nine Help and Support sessions in all were provided, on a fortnightly basis, throughout January and February 2017.



The poster for the Community Links Fund is green and white. It features the title 'community links fund' in a stylized font, with the website 'www.communitylinksfund.net' below it. The text on the poster includes: 'Calling Leith Linkers - we have got a wee bit of money to spend in our local community!', 'Have YOU got an idea that could make a difference locally?', 'Could you get together with others and make your project happen, in our community?', and 'Come and talk to us about it...'. Below this is a table of sessions, followed by the Leith Links Community Council logo, the Scottish Government logo, and a map of Leith.

Day	Date	Time	Location
Wednesday	11 January	11am – 1pm	Restalrig & Lochend Hub
Thursday	12 January	6pm – 8pm	Leith Community Education Centre (Kirkgate)
Wednesday	25 January	11am – 1pm	Restalrig & Lochend Hub
Thursday	26 January	6pm – 8pm	Leith Community Education Centre (Kirkgate)
Wednesday	8 February	11am – 1pm	Restalrig & Lochend Hub
Thursday	9 February	6pm – 8pm	Leith Community Education Centre (Kirkgate)
Wednesday	22 February	11am – 1pm	Restalrig & Lochend Hub
Thursday	23 February	6pm – 8pm	Leith Community Education Centre (Kirkgate)
Monday	27 February	6pm – 7pm	Leith Community Education Centre (Kirkgate)

Four sessions were held in the day time, and five were evening sessions, with Community Councillor(s) present to greet prospective applicants and help them to formulate their project proposal.

All 33 project applicants attended at least one Help and Support Session (as the 'Rules' stated that - given that applicants were not necessarily constituted groups - submitting a proposal involved a 'live' ID check). But in many cases, applicants attended two or more sessions.

This was a great way for both sides to get to know each other and for the Community Councillors to learn about the work of the project group. (One of the aims of the project was for the Community Council to 'map' its area, as regards community groups and projects.)

Support at the Voting Event

Children

We did not provide childcare costs. We judged that this was not necessary as the event was open and welcoming to

children of all ages. We actively wanted to engage children and young people in the whole event.

As a 'drop-in' event, people were free to come and go and circulate as they pleased, so 'child-minding' was not really an issue. There were no 'sit-down' presentation that might be difficult for younger attendees. We provided 'help-yourself' refreshments and snacks for all, free of charge, including juice and 'child-friendly' goodies, and fruit. We provided a face-painter (free) to help to engage and entertain children. We made our voting process as basic and as practical as we could, so that younger children could manage it easily.

Travel

We did not provide travel costs as the whole project - including the voting event - were extremely local. Nobody would have had to walk more than a mile (absolute maximum) to participate (and for most, much less than this), and plenty local bus services passed the door of the event.

Accessibility

Physical Access

Our local area is very small and is notoriously lacking in public / community facilities, and venues of any size. We did not have much choice about where to hold our event. The venue for the social Voting Event Day (Leith St. Andrews Church Halls, Easter Road) - which was chosen because it IS in our area - was fully accessible: all on one level, and including provision of a wheelchair accessible toilet. It is perhaps not 'perfect' as it is an old building, adapted to be accessible, rather than purpose-built, but no problems or complaints were experienced.

All other associated public meetings held elsewhere (project Launch night, Results/ Awards nights) were held in the Leith Community Education Centre (just outside our area), which is also fully accessible (lift, automatic doors, wheelchair accessible toilet).

Accessible Communication (including Project Info Sharing)

We are very conscious of the need to make events as accessible as possible to people in our community who may experience barriers to communication - listening, understanding, talking, reading, writing. Some may be deaf or hearing impaired, or blind / visually impaired, or have reading difficulties due to learning difficulties or dyslexia etc. Also Leith is a diverse community that includes many people who are learning English as a second language and may not read and write English fluently. We were welcoming both project applicants and voters from the age of 8 years and upwards, who could not be expected to have a literacy age higher than their chronological age. For all of these community members, we felt that the simplest and least 'language heavy' systems would be best.

We made the day a 'drop in' rather than scheduling presentations at 'set' times, to avoid stressing people who were short of time or who might find it difficult to concentrate for long. We used instead a 'market stall' model whereby each project applicant had a table, displaying whatever they wanted to bring to illustrate their proposed project, and just interacted (talked) directly with voters to explain what their project was about, how it would work etc. Voters could spend as long or as short a time as they wanted, at each 'stall' and could examine materials and ask questions directly, which is an advantage over 'presentations'. In this way, information exchange was entirely oral, rather than requiring literacy. (This also obviated any need to produce printed materials using visual symbols to support written text, which is another approach we had considered.)

We deliberately did not want to require project applicants to 'make a presentation' as this can be very demanding and stressful for some people, to the point of maybe putting them off applying in the first place. (Also, with 33 projects on the table, we felt that even a short presentation from each would make for a very long Voter day for the public, and that we could thus risk 'losing' many of our voters because they simply couldn't stay that long.)

Accessible Voting

We had observed at first hand, over a number of years, the voting system at Leith Decides, which involves a lot of reading and a long and rather complicated 1-5 star rating sheet. We were determined to make our voting system simpler by introducing a card/ token based system, at the social voting event. There were voting cards for each project. Voters chose their favoured project and then 'posted' its card into a ballot box.

Comments on our Feedback board confirmed that we had succeeded in simplifying the process:

** Far simpler than Leith Decides – which is good – very good.*

** I love how simple and low fuss today has been. It's always better to keep things as simple as possible... Having four votes to share is the best way to go."*

We also offered online voting, to offer access to voting for people who could not make it to the social voting event, perhaps because of age, illness, disability or carer duties etc. Our Survey Monkey voting was simple.

Views of Participants

A brief summary is presented here, supplemented by verbatim quotes. A more comprehensive report of online voters and a full report of project applicants' views, is attached below as **APPENDIX 3**. Many of the points raised in these comments were also discussed in our Review session, and so are reported further under '**Evaluation/Review**' in **APPENDIX 4**.

Participants views were collected via:

1. A 'Feedback Wall' at the exit, on the Social voting event, where participants (attendees, voters and project applicants – though in practice it was mainly the former, as the project applicants were too busy) placed coloured dots, and added Post-Its with comments. (Return rate: 47/235)



2. An online survey of project applicants, following the social voting events, and the final results. (Low level of return: 12/29 – sadly there was no time to send out reminders to collect more.)
3. An online survey of online voters. (Low level of return: 28/728)

A snapshot of views, overall:

- * Views of the social voting day, including the card voting process, were overwhelmingly positive.
- * Views of the application process were very positive, in terms of simplicity and ease of use. One applicant felt the time frame was too short.
- * Applicants' views of the provision of Help and Support sessions were positive overall.
- * Views of the online voting process were a little more mixed. Respondents found the process easy, but some had important concerns about fairness, and about potential technical manipulation / abuse, see **APPENDIX 3**.
- * Views of the underlying principles of PB in general and the structure of our particular PB process were positive overall, but there were also a number of constructively critical comments made.

Lots of Praise...

The Social Voting Event was a busy, chatty, noisy, happy day. Quite a few people seemed to stay for much/most of the day (rather than just popping in to vote, quickly). Many people commented on how surprised and delighted they were that so many folk had come along, and what a cheerful and uplifting experience it was (although also very hot!) Answers to the **'What did you like best?'** question on the Feedback Board included the following:

- * *Very positive day! ☺*
- * *Great community spirit!*
- * *Great idea and great to see such a turnout. Very very hard to choose between all the worthy projects...*
- * *Really good event – highlighted all the amazing work happening in Leith!*
- * *Great community event. Great mix of people, Nice spread!*
- * *Good mix of age groups. Fantastic way to bring a community together.*
- * *I enjoyed today, very good.*
- * *The day was a great success...well worth the effort.*
- * *Great to discover other projects even if you've come to support a particular one.*
- * *You get a lot of bang for your buck with events like this; small amounts of money make a big impact in the local area.*
- * *I loved the social voting day, it was a great way to meet so many people from our community and get to know other projects. More events like this, please!*
- * *Overall this was a very positive experience for both the applicants and the local community, and very well organised.*
- * *Thanks to all who made the whole event and process possible. A fantastic job.*

There were no really negative comments, (only 'wishes' for funding on a bigger scale! 39 people said we needed more than £15,500, 2 people said that was 'about right' and nobody said we needed less)

Project Applicants

Jill Williams ('Bonnie's Community Café' project) felt the social voting event was very successful : *"It's been great, a really good opportunity to network and meet new people and get involved in the community a lot more."*

Another project team wrote: *Good chance to network, meet MSP / MPs, discuss our project. Good cakes, too!*

Debbie Douglas ('All Together Edinburgh' project) saw a benefit beyond the funding: *"This is a great event to raise the profile of the projects that are here and it's a good chance for the community to find some more information about what's going on in the area".*

...and some concerns:

Views about PB in general were positive overall: *"To involve the community in decision-making is a fundamental right and a great opportunity for a healthier society."*

However concerns were expressed:

- *Still not sure about it (participatory budgeting). Lot of effort from organisers and applicants, with small percentage of population voting.*
- *It's a shame that all of the projects aren't funded, rather than some. They are all worthy.*

The structure of our PB process, specifically (in particular, accepting applications from both constituted and unconstituted groups) was also questioned:

- ...It is always the school based groups that secure the funding as they are able to mobilise a large support from parents and pupils. Other smaller organisations are never able to compete with this pool of voters.
- It was obvious that bigger organisations ... could and will always outvote smaller grass roots organisation.s

One respondent raised the important issue of the need for an equality impact assessment:

None of the BME organisations who competed for funding were successful. I would want to know how the diversity of uptake is monitored by funders as they have a legal responsibility in this regard.

Several respondents felt that the online voting process could be open to abuse, and that it can disadvantage people “on the wrong side of the digital divide”.

Several people felt that our grants could have been kept smaller (£400 - £1000) in order to spread the funds around more widely, and should be limited to one application per group.

I feel that the small amount of money available should be targeted at small neighbourhood projects that have little chance of funding from elsewhere....Maybe more £400 projects and less of the £2,500 ones would be more appropriate.

1.3 Provide information about any national support received from PB Partners, the Scottish Community Development Centre or the Democratic Society (digital tools).

Our Community Links project benefitted from the following support from PB partners and the Scottish Community Development Centre:

* 2 members of our team attended a training event in Dundee, in September 2016 (an introduction to PB, run by PB Partners? and SCDC?).

* 2 members of our team attended an excellent international PB conference, in Edinburgh in October 2016.
<https://pbscotland.scot/conference/ideas/>

* 2 members of our team attended a PB workshop, at SCDC in Glasgow, 26 January 2017. This was especially valuable because it included a significant element of peer to peer discussion about important practical issues amongst the groups set to deliver a PB event in their area, very shortly, as well as valuable input from ‘experts’.

We were grateful for financial support from SCDC in the form of travel expenses to allow our team members to attend these days, as our organisation’s own funds are extremely limited and reserved for Community Council administrative matters.

We were very appreciative of the support of David Reilly of SCDC ‘on the ground’ at our Social Voting Event Day (11th March 2017). He attended our event, designed and ran an ‘Evaluation Wall’ to collect the views of voters, and carried out some short interviews with attendees. Following that, he wrote a Blog and a brief report of his independent evaluation of the Day, which was uploaded to PBScotland web site.

We were also grateful to David Reilly of SCDC who later helped us again, by advising us and facilitating an evaluative review of our whole Community Links PB process (See **APPENDIX 4**)

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We did not have contact with the Democratic Society (re digital tools). We were already familiar with their work, having attended workshops they ran at various events, including presentations to Edinburgh City Council (re Æith Decides) and at the October 2016 international PB conference (see above). We were already relatively well informed and familiar with the software products of the ‘key players’ in this field: especially Participare.

1.4 Did the project include any form of evaluation? If so please describe it briefly and include it as an attachment and provide a contact person.

Yes. Several measures were taken (see below). Full details of these measures are attached and the results are summarised in **APPENDIX 4: Evaluation & Review**

Support with evaluation was provided by David Reilly of the Scottish Community Development Centre.

Tel: 0141 248 1924 Email: david.reilly@scdc.org.uk

At the social Voting Event Day (11th March):

An 'Evaluation Wall' was conducted throughout the social Voting event, set up and led by David Reilly (SCDC) to gather the views of voters (and other attendees at the day) throughout the day and as they left the event.

David Reilly also carried out short interviews with attendees and project applicants throughout the day.

Feedback from this at <https://pbscotland.scot/blog/2017/3/16/leith-links-bringing-the-community-together-through-pb>

After the close of voting / project awards (April 2017):

1. A Survey Monkey survey was conducted, by the Community Links Fund project team, to obtain the views of project applicants.
2. A Survey Monkey survey was circulated to all online voters, for their views.
3. A Review session was held (20 April 2017), facilitated and recorded by David Reilly of SCDC, involving the 2 main organisers and 5 others of their fellow Community Councillors

Results of these are available in **Appendix 3 and 4**, below.

Section Two – Project Data

2.1 Please provide the following information. If more than one voting event is held for the project, please include all dates with total for each column (where applicable).

Event Date	Total Applications Received*	Applications put forward for voting*	Total applied for (£)	Number at Event/s	Number of Voters	Number of Successful applicants	Total for projects (£)
11.3.17 in-person	11 small (up to £400)	11	£4289	235	192	pending online voting	£ 3,100
11.3.17 in-person	22 large (up to £2,500)	22	£42908.66	235		" "	£13,361.66
In Total	33	33	£47,197.66	235			
11-15.3.17 online	same 33 projects	same 33	as above		728	7 small projects + 8 large projects	
Total:	33	33	£47,197.66	235	920	15	16,461.66

*N.B. Because of our 'Help and Support session, unsuitable applications (3) were withdrawn or weeded out BEFORE being completed and submitted, not after, hence 0 return here.

	No of staff* involved	No of volunteers to help staff	What format was used e.g. presentation/discussion/stall
			stalls
Total:	0	18	

***NOTE:**

We are confused by the use of the word 'staff' in this context.

All the Leith Links people involved were unpaid volunteers.

If by 'staff you mean 'organisers', there were 2 main unpaid organizers and 16 volunteers.

1 member of SCDC attended – does that count as 'staff'?

Or, by 'staff' do you mean representatives of the projects applying? If so, there were about 40-50 of them altogether (main applicant + supporters). Some may have been paid workers, within their own organizations, but the majority were volunteers (we did not collect data on their status).

Section Three – Sustainability

3.1 Please provide details of any engagement with the PB Scotland website. For example have any pictures or information been uploaded (if so include link), joined the PB Network or populated the PB Scotland map.

As individuals, the organisers (and perhaps others from the Leith Links team) have joined the PB Network.

A short report of our social voting event (with photos) has been uploaded to

<https://pbscotland.scot/blog/2017/3/16/leith-links-bringing-the-community-together-through-pb>

Our project is on the PB Scotland map (or at least, has been submitted, and is awaiting approval/ upload by admins)

We have more photos of our launch night, social voting day, and awards. We will be collating these into a 'photo-story' of the whole project, when we get the time, and making this available via our website and social media accounts. We would be happy to make these available to others, if anyone wishes to use these.

3.2 Please provide information about any opportunities to attend events to share your knowledge, expertise and good practice or any plans to do so in the future.

We normally participate annually (as Steering Group, and volunteer workers) at the Leith Decides event, and will continue to do so, assuming it takes place again in the future - a practical way to share.

Otherwise, at this point in time, we do not have any concrete plans to run or to attend any events to share our experience, although plenty of enthusiasm to try and capitalise on all the skills and experience gained.

We would be very open to invitations to do so either (individually, or together as a team), or to support / advise others in the planning stages.

3.3 Please provide contact details for individuals willing to speak to other groups about their community choices experience. This could be local, regional or national.

Name: Michael Traill

Email: michael.traill@hotmail.com

Name: Sally Millar

Email: sally.millar@icloud.com

Local/Regional/National/**All** (please highlight)

3.4 Please outline any plans you have to continue involving local citizens and local groups in decision making processes as a result of the community choices project.

PB is already well established in Leith as a concept (so much so that many locals are not aware of a time when community funds were *not* allocated in this way). We think that the next job is to move to the next level and explore/develop different models of PB. Our priority aims would be to look at ways of (1) increasing the number of voters, while perhaps keeping to in-person voting rather than online voting (2) 'applying' PB at earlier stages of the whole process, perhaps integrating with Community Action Plan building, or similar to create a less superficial set of choices and to avoid community groups competing against each other for funds. (3) We need to look at equality issues to ensure BME groups are not disadvantaged by an over-simple 'numbers game'.

We have already been highlighting other local (i.e. Edinburgh) PB initiatives, through our Community Council publicity (social media etc.) For example, *Islamophobia; City of Edinburgh Big Vote Party*. And we will be looking out for other new PB initiatives locally in the future and will publicise those to our community, through Leith Links Community Council social media.

We will also be participating in the next Leith Decides process and event, if and when that is held in 2017. One of our main organisers is on the Steering Group of Leith Decides and the other is very closely involved as an experienced volunteer. The Chair of our Community Council is a long-time volunteer, and other newer Councillors may well also choose to get involved.

Meanwhile, we are monitoring the PB Scotland Network website, and sharing information from this via our social media and networks, as appropriate – while getting great ideas from reading about all the other PB events taking place around the country and storing these up for future plans!

Scottish Government Community Choices Fund

We will be paying close attention as to whether/when new Community Choices funding will be available for 2017/18 and/or beyond.

If such funding is to be made available, we are anxious that it should be announced as early as possible, so that applications and award of funding can be completed early too. Last time, we were not made aware of the fund until June / July, were not informed of the results until mid-September, and were not in possession of the funds until October. Effectively, this means we had only 6 months in which to carry out something that would by any standards be a year's worth of work (at least!). This, bearing in mind that many community groups and certainly our own Community Council, are composed of volunteers, with other 'day jobs' and commitments, is unreasonably short and is not really a sustainable model. A two or three year cycle would be ideal, allowing for more embedded community working, not just a hastily assembled 'event'.

At this point, the Leith Links Community Council is in internal discussion as to whether we might apply again in future, and if there is a positive will to do so, what changes and improvements we would make to our PB model, building on our already well-developed experience. We feel we have learned so much through this exercise that we would be in an excellent position to innovate further while perfecting the basic processes.

Section Four – Additional Information

4.1 Please use this space to provide any further feedback not covered in the above sections.

Please see Appendices attached.

APPENDIX 1 - a detailed step by step account of the project

APPENDIX 2 – Equality & Diversity information

APPENDIX 3 – Views of Participants

APPENDIX 4 – Evaluation & Review

This last is perhaps the most important Appendix; we structured our evaluation discussion around the National Standards for Community Engagement.

Completed by: Sally Millar & Michael Traill

Role: Project Organisers

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Tel: 07500717914; Tell: 07502373090

Please email completed template to community.empowerment@gov.scot by 30 April 2017. If you have any queries please contact Kathleen Glazik, Policy Manager, Community Empowerment at Kathleen.glazik@gov.scot or 0131 244 0831.

APPENDIX 1

Leith Links Community Council

Community Links Fund Process: Step by Step

1. Design, planning and publicity

- The small project team met to discuss and plan each stage of the project and to draft materials for example; publicity leaflets & posters, Application Form, Guidance Notes for Applicants, Voting cards.
- The project was named '**Community Links**' (often later referred to as 'Community Links Fund')
- A logo was created and materials produced to advertise the project to the local community.



community links fund

www.communitylinksfund.net

- A tri-fold leaflet (Leaflet 1) was distributed to every house in the area, heralding the project and explaining its aims and terms of engagement and listing key dates. It urged people to think about projects they might like to put forward, and invited everybody to come to the Launch Night, to attend the Social Voting Event Day and take part in the voting process.
- The project was trailed on our Community Council website, and our Social Media sites, i.e. FaceBook and Twitter.
- A new website was created (www.communitylinksfund.net) although this later was incorporated as a 'project section' within a revamped website for the Leith Links Community Council (<http://www.leithlinksc.org.uk/our-projects/community-links-fund-20162017/>).
- Posters were posted all over the Leith Links Community Council, e.g. on park noticeboards, on large litterbins around the area, in local cafes etc.
- An advertisement for the project appeared in a local community Newspaper (The Speaker) which is distributed to homes in the Restalrig and Lochend areas that overlap into our Community Council area.
- We held a social Launch Night event (16 December 2017), with refreshments, at the local community centre, to mark the opening of the application period. The organisers announced the funding available from Scottish Government and the background, the aims and advantages of PB, and provided information about This was also an opportunity of people to meet the Community Council, pick up Applications Forms and Guidance Notes, ask questions and get answers on any points that were unclear.

2. Applications and Support

- Following the 'Launch Night' on 16 December 2016, the Community Council was open to receiving applications (Application forms and Guidance Notes were available online for download, as well as in hard copy form).
- A second leaflet was circulated to all households in the area (Leaflet 2, early January 2017) Side 1 invited project applications and listing the places, date and times of Help and Support sessions on offer. Side 2 was an 'Invitation' to the Social Voting Event Day, noting date, time and place, and details of online voting. Bundles of these leaflets were also distributed to parents via the 3 local Primary schools.
- Help and support sessions were provided fortnightly throughout January and February. These were two hour sessions, half were held in the day time and half were held in the evening. They were held in two different community hubs, at both 'edges' of our area, to minimise the travelling needed to reach a

session. Two or more Community Councillors made themselves available to talk through ideas for projects with the applicants, to suggest possible local partners and resources, if relevant, and to offer guidance and support with completion of the application form.

- All of the applicants attended at least one Help and Support session, as it was a requirement of application to hand in the application form in person, and for face to face ID checking etc.
- Most of the 33 project applicants also attended at least one other Help and Support session, and a few people attended more than two. This was a good chance for us all to get to know each other and find out more about the groups / organisations / individuals and their projects. Contact was also made by email and in face to face meetings outside the Help and Support sessions (for those unable to make the set dates and times) to offer additional support for applicants.
- The most common form of support required was a joint 'thinking through' of how to structure the proposed project so that it would be of direct benefit to the Leith Links community, predominantly (as well as others, in many cases), while keeping things as straightforward as possible to implement.
- Completed applications were received in dribs and drabs between 16 December 2016 and 27 February 2017. There was a noticeable 'last minute rush' at the final session.

3. Voting

- A third leaflet (leaflet 3) was printed, urging people to vote at the social Voting Event (and giving info about where and when etc.) or online (website details provided). These were not distributed to households, but handed out personally to friends and neighbours, and at local hotspots in the days immediately preceding the Voting event. e.g. Tesco's, Leith Academy (local Secondary school), Bijou Restaurant etc.
- The Social Voting Event Day was held at Leith St. Andrews Church Halls on Saturday 11th March 2017, from 11am – 1:30 pm. The venue was 'advertised' externally with balloons and bunting, and volunteers stood at the entrances with leaflets, to encourage locals to come in. Free refreshments and snacks were provided in a social café setting (staffed by volunteers), and people were very much encouraged to stay and chat - with project applicants and with each other – not just dash in to vote and then leave again. This was a great opportunity for people to meet and to find out about groups and activities in their local community of which they were perhaps unaware, previously. A face painter (free) was provided to keep children entertained and engaged.
- When people arrived, they were greeted and invited to register to vote, by filling in a registration form that captured their name and address and confirmed their eligibility to vote. They were also asked to fill in an Equality and Diversity form. They then had their hand 'stamped' to show that they were bonafide voters. They were informed that each registered voter could post up to 4 votes per hall / category (i.e. 8 votes each, altogether), but was allowed to vote only once for any particular project.
- Voters could learn about and then vote for projects in two categories. Small grant projects were grouped in one hall (and colour coded in blue), and large grant projects were grouped in the other hall (and colour coded in green). Project applicants each had a 'stall' (a small table) and were free (within the constraints of the space) to display whatever materials they had chosen to bring with them, to illustrate their project. One or more of the project team stood at their stall to explain their proposed project. Each project /stall had a box of voting cards (unique to each project).
- Voters moved freely around, viewing the stalls and chatting with the project applicants. If they wished to, they accepted or helped themselves to a voting card from the project table which they then (or later) either posted in the ballot box as one of their 4 votes (per hall/category) or discarded in a 'Discards Box' beside the Ballot box (if they had more than 8 voting cards and needed to prioritise).
- Each hall had a ballot box, so votes for each category (large and small grants) were kept separate. A volunteer stood by each ballot box and checked that each voter (a) had a hand stamp to show they were

registered as eligible voters, and (b) were only 'posting' a maximum of 4 votes, and only one vote per project. The volunteer then stamped the voter's hand to show they had voted (in green or blue). By the end of the day, voters had three hand stamps – one to show they were bona fide voters; one to show they'd posted up to 4 'blue project hall' votes; and one to show they'd posted up to 4 'green project hall' votes.

- Around 235 people attended the day, including the local MSP (Ben MacPherson SNP) and MP (Tommy Sheppard SNP). Of those, 192 registered to vote, and voted. (The others were not eligible to vote due to age (under 8) or because they did not live, work or volunteer in our area.) Each person could post up to 8 votes each, altogether. 1467 votes were received in total (an average of 7.64 each) indicating that almost everyone did indeed vote for 8 different projects and not just for one project they might have been particularly supporting.
- Votes were counted immediately after the Social Voting Event closed and totals recorded.
- Online Voting was opened at 11.30am on 11th March and closed at 12 midday on Wednesday 15th March 2017. Online Voting was via Survey Monkey software (cheap and simple).
- Online votes were counted immediately after online voting closed. Voters had to be scrutinised 'manually' to check that they were indeed resident in the Leith Links Community Council area, or worked or volunteered here. A significant number of online voters had to be discounted, because they did not fulfil this requirement (in spite of there being a clear map on the start page, to let people check if they were geographically eligible. 728 valid voters were accepted.
- In-person and online votes were totalled and the 'winners' emerged. These results were not released until 'Awards Night'.
- Overall, 920 valid voters were registered. The overall total number of votes cast confirmed that, as with in-person voters on at the Social Voting Event Day, most online voters voted for a spread of projects, not for just their own one favourite project.
- Of the 11 small grant project applications, 9 of the projects were successful, leaving only 2 unfunded.
- Of the 22 large grant project applications, 7 projects were successful, leaving 15 unfunded.

4. Awards

- A social 'Awards Night' event, with refreshments, was held on 16 March in the Leith Community Centre. Most of the project applicants attended, with friends/colleagues etc., as did members of the Community Council, volunteers from the Social Voting Event Day, and other interested locals. The organisers announced the final results of the voting, and congratulated the winning projects, whose representative then gave a brief speech about what they would be spending the project money on.
- On the same day, all project applicants received an email from the organisers informing them of the result of their bid.
- The results were posted online (LLCC website, Facebook Page Twitter)
- Over the next two weeks, members of Leith Links Community Council met with each of the successful project applicants and handed out the award cheques. Applicants all signed a 'Declaration' acknowledging receipt and confirming compliance with all the terms and conditions etc.
- All award cheques were distributed to the successful projects by 31 March 2017.
- Photos were posted on LLCC's Facebook page showing applicants receiving their awards.

5. Evaluation, Review and Reporting

- David Reilly of SCDC posted a blog about the event on PB Network website. <https://pbscotland.scot/blog/2017/3/16/leith-links-bringing-the-community-together-through-pb>

- Contact was made with the project applicants who were not successful, commiserating and suggesting possible alternative sources of funding. This will be further followed up later.
- All project applicants were contacted as asked to complete an evaluation survey, relating to their experience of the project process, overall.
- An analysis was made of the equality and diversity data available.
- A final leaflet (leaflet 5) was circulated to all households in the area (mid-April), summarising the voting stage of the project and outcomes, and listing the successful projects and their awards.
- A review/evaluation session was held on 20th April, facilitated by David Reilly of SCDC, to review the whole process. These discussions and ratings were written up (attached below as Appendix 4)

APPENDIX 2

Voter Equality & Diversity

Out of 920 voters, only 93 Equality and Diversity Forms were collected

This level of return (10%) means that the results cannot be taken as reliably reflecting the totality of voters.

Voter		65		28		93	
Equality and Diversity		At Voting Event		Online Voters		Totals	
How old are you?							
8 – 11	9%	6		0		6	6.5%
12 – 15	8%	5		0		5	5%
16 – 24	2%	1	7%	2		3	3%
25 – 44	40%	26	43%	12		38	41%
45 -64	34%	22	43%	12		34	37%
65 -84	6%	4	7%	2		6	6.5%
85+	2%	1		0		1	1%

Do you have a disability?

Yes	6%	4	11%	3	7	7 %
No	91%	59	82%	23	82	89%
Do not wish to answer	3%	2	7%	2	4	4 %

What gender are you?

Female	46%	30	64%	18	48	52%
Male	52%	34	36%	10	44	47%
Do not wish to answer	2%	1		0	1	1%

Your Employment status?

Employed	63%	41	79%	22	63	68%
Seeking employment	2%	1	3.5%	1	2	2%
Not seeking employment	12%	8	7%	2	10	11%
Student / School pupil	18%	12	7%	2	14	15%
Do not wish to answer	5%	3	3.5%	1	4	4%

What is your ethnicity?

White	78%	51	100%	28	107	85%
Black	2%	1			1	1%
Asian	9%	6			6	6%
Mixed	2%	1			1	1%
Other	2%	1			1	1%
Did not wish to answer	8%	5			5	5%

Your Nationality?

British (including English & Scottish)	51	27	78	84%
Polish	1		1	1%
New Zealander	1		1	1%
Belgium	1		1	1%
Earthling	1		1	1%
Sierra Leone	1		1	1%
American	1		1	1%
Nepali	2		2	2%
Italian	1		1	1%
German	1		1	1%
Australian	0	1	1	1%
Did not wish to answer	4		4	4%

APPENDIX 3

Views of Participants

On-the-Day Voters

A representative sample of the views of voters at the voting event is reported in the main report, above. These were overwhelmingly positive, albeit relatively superficial, reflecting a happy and successful social event.

Online Voters

28 / 728 online voters returned a survey on their views about the online voting process. A range of interesting comments were made, but the overall results are obviously not statistically significant.

We have made a summary analysis of the comments, to highlight key issues, below. Copies of the actual returns are available on request.

The overall flavour of returns was positive.

- *I thought the whole process was excellent and well managed by Leith Links Community Council.*
- *"Open to everyone and a good range of projects available"*
- *"Very happy with the process"*

A majority agreed that they would like to see this form of PB repeated, in our community, and that more money (or at least the same amount of money) should be available.

A majority liked the online voting process, mostly because it was accessible and simple:

- *"simple and quick process suitable for all"*
- *"well-laid out, easy to follow and not too long"*
- *"I liked how easy it was to vote (compared with Leith Decides)"*
- *"I was one of the people who voted online and found it very easy to do so. This is far more convenient for me and a much appreciated option."*

The issue was raised as to whether voters could really make a fully informed choice on the basis of the limited information available about projects online. One person suggested that *"a little video of each project might have helped."*

Some people felt that the online voting system favours certain applicants, and discriminates against older people: *"Too many school projects and they have an unfair advantage in voting numbers. More weighting should be given to projects that supply sections of the older Community in Leith with things to do that keeps them as active participants in our Society.... as the older population also won't vote online in such great numbers the voting system needs tweaking somehow. It's not always about who makes the greatest 'noise', we need to be watchful of how our 'quieter' parts of our society have the access to social inclusion projects that bring a sense of respect/care of older generations."*

Finally, but very importantly, several people felt the online voting system was flawed and very easily open to corruption / abuse and manipulation *"by tech-savvy individuals"*.

Project Applicants Survey

12 out of 28 project applicants returned a survey. This low response rate surprised and disappointed us. If there had been more time available we would have re-sent out the survey, with reminders and a further request for returns, which might well have been fruitful. It was not considered appropriate to make a 'statistical' analysis of these responses.

Not all questions were answered by all respondents. The table below shows the responses in full.

The project applicants have a more in-depth knowledge of the whole process than voters, by and large and those that responded here are presumably / arguably those that felt most strongly that they had views to share. We found the comments made by project applicants to be insightful about key issues in PB, and very useful: these are definitely helping to shape our thinking on the 'shape' of future PB exercises that we may undertake.

	Question	😊	😞	? or N/R	Comments
1	About You - what did you apply for and were you successful? Up to £400 grant	4	1	7	
	Up to £2,500 grant	5	4	3	
2.	How did you become aware of the Community Links Fund?				Leith Links Community Council : website or Social Media (3) Leaflet/Poster (1) Public meeting (1) Email (1) Word of Mouth (5) Link shared via Facebook (1)
3.	Applications for funding were accepted between 12/12/16 & 27/2/17. Do you feel that this time frame was...	11	1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too short - It all happened really fast, some time to prepare for the event and promotion would have been useful. (1) • About right (11)
4.	During the applications stage we held a number of help & support drop in sessions. Do you feel these were...	11		1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful (11) • I only attended the final session but I think its a great idea, especially for those who aren't used to applying for funding.
5	Regarding our application form, did you feel this was...	11	1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to understand and complete (11) • Difficult to understand and complete – not sure about naming our project and what was going to be seen, for people to vote on. (1) • Would have preferred a Word document, difficult to find software to complete the PDF.
6	We required applicants to submit their applications to us during our help & support drop in sessions. Do	9	1	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was nice to have face to face contact, which you don't usually have with funders • It did seem an unusual requirement

	<p>you feel that this was appropriate?</p> <p>This was to act as a 'filter' to ensure that only applications which were (1) eligible and (2) complete were handed in.</p>				<p>but was useful as we could talk over the idea and gain advice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That was fine, but don't agree that some of them were eligible, from the results. • Would have preferred the option to submit electronically (this could still have been returned if incomplete etc.) • Very good idea.
7	<p>We divided our funding between a small fund (up to £400) and a large fund (up to £2500). Do you feel this was a good idea?</p>	9	3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do think the balance could be tilted more to the advantage of £400 projects, to spread the money around more. • People should just have asked for what they needed up to a certain amount, and just applied for one, not two. • More smaller amounts of £500, and £2000
8	<p>We limited applicants to one application for up to £400 and one application for up to £2500. Do you feel this was a good idea?</p>	10	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people got two lots of money and some people got nothing. • Maybe more fair to allow organisations only one application to either a small or a large grant. • Helps spread the funding.
9	<p>Our main criteria was that projects must benefit the people or place of the Leith Links Community</p> <p>Council area. Given that this fund was delivered by Leith Links Community Council, do you feel this was a good idea?</p>	12			<p>Yes, but this did not happen, some people from outwith the area got the money with promises that they will do things in the area but who's to say that they will.</p>
10	<p>We allowed both online and in person voting, do you feel this was a good idea?</p>	10	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that know they have a large membership are at an advantage over smaller grass-roots projects as they can rally support online, and I did notice that the projects that can rally support this way did not bother to attend the voting day. • Not everyone is online and not able to go to events, a lot of the older generation don't have access to computers. • Online voting can favour larger organisations who have a bigger database of contacts and volunteers. Maybe on-the-day-voting could be weighted? • Not sure of the checks for the online voting, i.e. within area, voting more than once?
11	<p>We held a social voting day as part of the decision making process. Do you feel that it should be part of the</p>	8	3	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, I think small groups capacity is very low to deliver on this. <i>(N.B. This applicant did not attend the social</i>

	application criteria that applicants participate in the social voting day?				<p><i>voting event, for either project, which was viewed negatively by others that did make the effort to attend.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitely ((i.e. they should have to attend) • Good to encourage but shouldn't be obligatory.
12	We held an event to announce the results of the voting process. Do you feel that it should be part of the application criteria that applicants participate in this event?	5	3	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They should not receive it if they can not be bothered to show when others put in the effort. Leith Primary has lots of people, got two awards, and no show. • Good to encourage but shouldn't be obligatory.
13	General feedback regarding social voting day.			5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I did feel that the rooms, particularly the one at the back, were on the small size for the number of tables and applicants. • I felt it was a very positive experience for both the applicants and the local community. • I loved the social voting day, it was a great way to meet so many people from the community and get to know other projects. More events like this please! • Very lively and worthwhile. • The day was a great success. It gave a chance to put your project forward to people. Well worth the effort. • Not made clear on entering that you can vote for four. • Great way to meet people from other projects and get first hand information.
14	General feedback on online voting			7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good straightforward process • I feel that this was a good idea • It sounds as though we got fifty fifty voting, so it works! • It was obvious that bigger organizations; Schools, the Police and established charities could and will always outvote smaller grass roots organizations. • As said before, not everyone can access computers, maybe could set up voting system in different areas hat old and young could come to vote like what was done for the council voting.
15	...on participatory budgeting			10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still not sure about it. Lot of effort from organisers and applicants with small percentage of population voting. • I do have real issues with participatory budgeting. It is always the school based groups that secure the funding as they are able to mobilise a large support from parents and pupils. Other smaller

					<p>voluntary organisations are never able to compete with this pool of voters. The other issue I have is about how an equality impact assessment is undertaken in relation to the budgeting. None of the BME organisations who competed for funding were successful. I would want to know how the diversity of uptake is monitored by funders as they have a legal responsibility in this regard.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think that was set at about the right level,
16	...on applications process			7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I found the application to be straightforward but I would recommend using a word document instead of PDF. I had to get a new program to convert the PDF so I could type out the application. • Positive • I am not sure about the criteria for application. I feel the small amount of money available should be targeted at small neighbourhood projects that have little chance of funding from elsewhere and not used as a top up for state-funded organisations or big charities. Maybe more £400 projects and less of the £2500 ones would be more appropriate. • I do not think that the schools or the Police should receive funding, these are already funded while others in the area are not. • Straightforward.
17	...on Results / Awards night event			9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was well organized but I felt disappointed that not all the applicants attended. • I enjoyed the announcement evening, it was a good forum for networking. • Every applicant should have someone attend.
18	... miscellaneous			7	see below
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That producing the survey monkey report would be useful for transparency on results would be a good idea. • Overall this was a very positive experience and very well organized. • Thanks to all who made the whole event and process possible. A fantastic job. • Smaller groups don't have the same following as the bigger groups, also don't have the same social media, so obviously they will get less votes. Places like Claremont Park Nursing Home had no chance which was sad and it is smack bang in the middle of the area. • It gave smaller groups a chance to get funding 					

APPENDIX 4

Evaluation & Review

How good was our Participatory Budgeting process?

On 20th April, Leith Links Community Councillors met to discuss and review their Community Links fund process. The purpose was to consider and record how effective the overall process, social voting event and online voting were at meeting both our and Scottish Government's purposes.

We bid for Community Choices funding to achieve something for the community and as a method for deepening our links in the community.

The Scottish Government's purpose for their Community Choices fund was to support participatory budgeting as a tool for community engagement.

Given the SG's purpose we structured our evaluation discussion around the National Standards for Community Engagement, the evaluation was facilitated by Scottish Community Development Centre.

Our key learning points include:

- With more resources but especially more time, our PB process could have had a broader and deeper reach and might have had even better outcomes.
- PM is a means and not an end, we should first decide on our overall community engagement aim and the appropriate methods will follow.
- We are not at all sure if online voting is appropriate and fitting with the community engagement aim of PB.

If doing PB again we might consider tying a social voting event in with an established community celebration, in order to achieve the maximum possible reach in terms of voter numbers, and would continue to keep it inclusive, simple, relaxed and welcoming.

Planning – Overall, we rated our planning as **Good**.

A recurring key learning point was that there was not enough time between being awarded Community Choices funding and the end of year, to carry out the process properly.. With more time we could have invested more in the planning process, possibly entering into a partnership with other local Community Councils, and involving more people from target communities. That could have broadened and deepened our reach and delivered even better outcomes.

Our delivery plan worked, was decided by consensus and structured week-by-week. Our event and process generated a fantastic buzz and outcomes. If PB is a hook, then the hook worked. However, this took a lot of work. As volunteers, with 'day jobs', this was very demanding. A lesson learned; if doing this again we might use some of the budget for admin support – to lighten our load.

We learned that a proactive personal touch was really effective to encourage applications we contacted groups and individuals directly. This worked, and some of these groups received funding, including The Dry Dock. With more time and resources we could have done more of this.

Help and support sessions were held to build capacity of potential applicants. Three potential applicants withdrew from the process which is a sign of success; we don't want to waste anyone's time. A number of applicants attended more than once, to fine tune their application.

We decided to split awards between a large and a small pot. We focused on promoting to small unconstituted groups and individuals who might apply. This was important to us because we thought that small grants can make a big difference. However, we found that individuals and t smaller / more grassroots groups did not come forward in the numbers we had hoped for. Not only do they need support to apply, they need greater support overall, to build the capacity to undertake delivery of a project. s. With more time, we might have been able to address this issue for some applicants.

Methods – overall we rated our methods as **satisfactory** overall. (In fact, maybe patchy - some aspects were good or very good while other aspects were perhaps a bit weak.)

We received a lot of very positive feedback, including on our very simple voting system. We worked hard to keep things simple and had simple and open criteria, not overly stewarded. The benefits of the process came through bringing people together and the social contact our social voting event encouraged was very valuable. The venue for our social voting day was good, well known within our community council area, and had not been associated with PB processes previously.

If we were doing it again we would make it a condition that applicants had to attend the social voting event, something we missed by oversight this time.

In all, 192 people voted in person on the day and we received 728 valid votes online (around 200 were deemed invalid as out of our bounds). We are unsure of the value of online voting process and discussed this. It would be useful (but not currently possible) to analyse more forensically if and how the online voting pattern is different from on the day voting. On balance, votes were spread widely and evenly enough to reassure us that there was no undue cause for concern about 'fairness'. And nearly all voters cast their full 8 votes (rather than just voting for one 'pet' project). However, some projects (e.g. Men's Sheds) were clearly very popular on the day, when voters could talk to applicants, but did not receive funding in the end – were they less well understood by online voters or outnumbered by groups with bigger networks they could call on, for online votes? . We appreciate that using online voting is a balancing act, and requires us to get the balance right between providing enough information about the projects to allow for informed decisions but without providing so much information that the site is unwieldy. The only negative feedback we received about online voting was that some older people who don't have online access may have been disadvantaged.

It could be an entirely reasonable decision to have on day, in person voting only (with appropriate adjustments for people with disabilities). Some of our group favour this approach.

We thought it a good decision to split between small and large funds of money. In future we would probably rule that applicants could only apply to one fund, not to both,. We might restrict the small fund criteria further, so that only individuals and unconstituted groups could access this, so they are not in direct competition with larger groups.

We discussed the role of schools and had mixed views. We were concerned that teachers organised large scale voting in schools, which unfairly skewed voting. While recognising their need for extra funds, we also wondered if schools, being publicly funded already and with good access to resources like parent councils, are appropriate recipients of PB funds?

However, we were pleased to see so many young people at the social voting event. Children engaging in democracy is a good thing, that we want to support. There might be ways to manage this such as putting schools and parent councils in a section of their own, so that they devise and choose their own favourite school-focussed projects amongst themselves but do not compete with other community projects. Ultimately this discussion will continue and may be superseded by our online / offline considerations.

We had a general concern that there are winners and losers within PB and that pitting people and groups in the community against each other, when all are so much in need of funding support, is not always a positive approach. Having said that, there were no practical evidence or complaints about this.

Working Together – overall we rated our working together as **good**.

As a group, and as a Community Council, we could have shared the burden more evenly. With more time, we could have opened the whole process out to involve more of the community, this might have reduced a funder / applicant dynamic and increased community 'ownership'.

However, given the very short timescales we had to set up a tight working group to make effective decisions and action those very quickly. We did this with a great team spirit and the social voting day was very positive – we really enjoyed it.

Communication – overall we rated our communication as **very good**.

We pushed the boat out with leafleting, fliers and posters, social media, Facebook, Twitter and our own website. Every household in the Leith Links area received three leaflets: one to publicise the process and invite applications, one to support applications and publicise the social voting day (in addition to households, every primary school child/family in our area received this leaflet), and one to inform them of results. That was 18,000+ leaflets.

We found with phone calls and emails that a personal touch works best in encouraging applications and spreading ownership of the process. Due to limitations of time it was not possible to visit and talk to groups in person, but we think that would be good to do, ideally.

We know our communication worked because we got beyond the 'usual suspects' in terms of applications, and voting patterns showed people were not just voting for their pals. A real mark of success was people spontaneously deciding to join us and take part, on the day (down to bunting and balloons? Fliers? Or being chatted up by volunteers on the door?) We publicised results on social media and leaflets and held an open 'Awards Night' event, inviting all the volunteers and all the groups involved.

Impact – overall we rate our impact as **very good**.

There were lots of immediate impacts and a strong potential for long term impacts.

The PB process definitely raised the profile of the Community Council; people have been talking about it and asking us about it. Our online presence, likes and followers have all increased.

New people became involved by answering adverts to help at the social voting day. One attendee was new to Edinburgh, she volunteered to help on the social voting event and used the day to get to know people and projects in the community before deciding who to volunteer with – something she has since followed up on.

Two of the groups who applied for funds during the event have since made links and are now working together to maximise the impact they can have for the area. There has been a suggestion of a social event for all project applicants.

We are planning to monitor all the funded projects with a 'light touch' on a three monthly basis, will receive a short 'End of Project' report from them, and will survey them again at a later date to ask for information on long term impacts.

With time and resources it would be interesting to capture long term impact, amongst all participants, as well as amongst projects that were funded, however that might not be proportionate given the workload involved in the PB process. This might have helped us answer whether people taking part felt closer to public spending decisions.

Inclusion and support – overall we rated our inclusion and support as **good**.

We have learned that for an application to happen, we need to do more than just invite people to apply. Holding face to face support sessions helped; it was important to do more than simply support people by telephone.

We were successful in removing barriers by an accumulation of how we structured the event, decisions we made, what we did and what we chose not to do.

Having small funding available for ideas for individuals and constituted groups removed barriers that would have otherwise prevented their involvement. As did our decision not to require applicants to 'pitch' formally.

Our voting system was simple, and the atmosphere and culture of the voting event was supportive and welcoming. We had quite a relaxed criteria for voting, we trusted people to tell us if they were eligible to vote or not – this fitted the spirit of what we were doing.

We thought about more intensively targeting and prioritising some disadvantaged or hard to reach communities – and with more time we could have tried this by appointing an 'expert/advisory panel' of people with links in those communities. We were pleased to have diverse applications, including from Polish and African groups.

We might also think of tying the process / social vote in with a bigger event – e.g. as part of the Leith Festival / Gale Day .

We are only now starting to address the issue of support for groups that did not receive funding. We are also looking into possible 'crowdfunding' to build up a 'legacy' of funding for community groups, but responses so far are not too encouraging. One idea we may try to follow up is to organise a 'Meet the Funders' session for groups in need of funding. (City of Edinburgh Council previously arranged this event, but we will now consider the feasibility of doing it ourselves, locally.)

What's next for us and Participatory Budgeting / Community engagement more widely?

In principal, if PB and community choices fits our aims and vision for the Community Council we would apply again. We would want to build on this year's successes and perfect our model.

We are interested in working in partnership in the future, for example, working with 'community experts', working with the other local Community Councils. We talked about working specifically with the local community groups where there is most energy, in order to 'cascade down' capacity building to smaller groups and individuals.

We recognise that the best approach is to first think about our overall purpose for community engagement and then think, how does PB support that? There is no perfect model for PB but if we start with our purpose the process should follow. Participatory budgeting is the means, not the end.

We had a good discussion about the value of awarding of money. Some group members thought that PB processes can be best used to focus on generating ideas for what is needed in the area, and setting priorities, with local groups then being commissioned to carry out the work. I.e. if local people vote / decide that litter is the biggest issue. the funds are given to local anti-litter work.

One idea would be to secure a pot of money which we then divide amongst priority areas and rather than us running a single event, we support partners to deliver their own mini PB processes within their communities i.e. with Citadel Youth Centre, Elderly Community groups, local Secondary school, BME community groups.

If Scottish Government run Community Choices again we would be happy to input into the application process to help make it clear and timely.