

COUNCIL AGENDA

Supplementary Item

9 March 2022

ALL INFORMATION AVAILABLE IN VARIOUS FORMATS ON REQUEST

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CITY OF BUSSELTON



LATE ITEMS FOR THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 9 MARCH 2022

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16. FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES REPORT

16.2 YOU CHOOSE COMMUNITY FUNDING PROGRAM - PILOT PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING BASED PROGRAM

STRATEGIC THEME	6. LEADERSHIP Visionary, collaborative, accountable
STRATEGIC PRIORITY	6.2 Council engages broadly and proactively with the community.
SUBJECT INDEX	Community Engagement
BUSINESS UNIT	Executive Services
REPORTING OFFICER	Strategic Projects / Grants Officer - Julie Rawlings
AUTHORISING OFFICER	Chief Executive Officer - Mike Archer
NATURE OF DECISION	Executive: Substantial direction setting, including adopting budgets, strategies, plans and policies (excluding local planning policies); funding, donations and sponsorships; reviewing committee recommendations
VOTING REQUIREMENT	Simple Majority
ATTACHMENTS	Attachment A Vote Totals (Weighted)  

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

That the Council:

1. Endorse the funding distribution of \$96,304 to the following preferred projects as chosen by the community through the You Choose community funding program:

1	Shelterbags	\$20,000
2	Supporting Pets of Older Persons	\$7,750
3	Busselton Hospice Care Lasting Words	\$10,875
4	Waste Not Want Not	\$20,000
5	Ludlow Tuart Forest Heritage Walk Trail	\$18,596
6	Vasse Fathering Project	\$19,083

2. Endorse the remaining budget of \$3,696 being returned to the Donations, Contributions and Subsidies budget.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of determining the CEO's key performance indicators (KPI) for 2021/2022, the Council and the CEO agreed to implement a pilot participatory budgeting style program titled "You Choose" (the Program), to provide opportunity for the community to have more involvement and input into the way in which a portion of Council funds is allocated.

This report details the approach, promotion, and outcomes of community voting and recommends that Council endorse the funding of the most popular projects, as voted by the community.

BACKGROUND

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a process of democratic deliberation and decision-making. It can take many forms but is based around the principles of local ownership and involvement in setting budget priorities and identifying projects for public spend.

Although Council cannot devolve its decision making responsibilities under the *Local Government Act 1995*, it can create opportunities for greater community ownership over portions of its budget. The decision to explore how, and to what extent, a PB approach could be implemented at the City of Busselton was largely focused around this objective, as well as improving community engagement, increasing transparency and accountability, and providing an opportunity for community capacity building.

Specifically the relevant CEO KPI set in 2020/2021 required that the CEO:

Develop and provide to Council a participatory budget methodology report in readiness for implementation of a pilot program in 2021/2022 for the 2022/2023 budget.

Officers researched PB approaches implemented at a number of other local governments across Australia and workshopped a range of options with Councillors at a session held on 3 March 2021. Recognising that this would be the City's first exploration of a PB centred approach, it was agreed that a pilot program should focus on a small and clearly defined portion of the City's budget to determine the community's appetite for such a venture.

The Program endorsed by Council on 28 April 2021 was for implementation during the 2021/2022 budget year (and not 2022/2023 as originally envisioned). The relevant CEO KPI for 2021/2022 therefore requires that the CEO:

Implement the You Choose program and report the outcomes to Council at its conclusion for consideration of its continuation and / or expansion of PB principals to other aspects of the City's budget.

OFFICER COMMENT

In addition to being PB centred, the intent of the Program is about the community developing their capacity to deliver projects and initiatives, with support from the City, as opposed to the City driving delivery. It's about increasing community ownership which in turn contributes to the building of community resilience, capacity and cooperation.

The ethos of the Program is encapsulated in the following description:

Projects or programs that help to shape the physical, social and cultural development of neighbourhoods or the broader community neighbourhood, and which promote the capacity of local communities to develop, implement and sustain solutions.

Program Approach

The program was launched and promoted in September 2021 at two community information events held in Busselton and Dunsborough. This provided an opportunity for ideas to be shared and for staff to provide some technical assistance.

Community proposals were submitted via an on-line application form through the City's website/Your Say platform. Enquiries were managed through a dedicated You Choose City email address. The City's libraries also assisted with enquiries.

All 27 submissions received were reviewed by a panel of City staff against a set of criteria. The criteria were designed to ensure that the proposals were in keeping with the ethos of the program, safe, legal, and broadly achievable. The role of the panel was not to determine whether or not something is a good idea but simply to ensure that those core criteria were met and / or to offer suggestions as to how the proposal could be adjusted to suit.

Following the review 26 submissions were deemed suitable to be put to the community to deliberate on, with only 1 proposal determined not to meet the criteria. City staff are assisting the proponent to identify other opportunities aligned to their proposal, as priorities allow.

Program Promotion

The City promoted the program through a range of communication methods, commencing in September 2021 through to the end of voting on 17th February, 2022. Promotion included the following:

Medium	Method	Reach	Effectiveness	Statistics
Community Information Events (12 th and 13 th October 2021)	Face to Face	Busselton and Dunsborough	As a new concept these sessions were necessary to explain the program and answer queries face to face.	
Community Directory	Direct contract through the Directory	All local groups etc listed through the Directory	Click Rate – Awareness. September October	42.17% 42.11%
Direct Mail	Email	Schools & P&C	Minimal takeup.	1 Project proposed by a School.
Meetings	Face to Face	Chambers of Commerce, Social Services Health Alliance Group meeting.	Great enthusiasm and engagement demonstrated.	Multiple projects proposed.
Bay to Bay	Email	City's registered database	Number of clicks to the program January 2022 October 2021	81 57
Local Newspapers	Media Release (Media Monitoring)	Local newspapers and radio Mayors column	15/9/21 23/11/21 21/1/22	100% take-up of media releases issued.
In keeping with the ethos of this community led program many proponents took to promoting the Program and specifically their project to the community through the local paper and their networks which created greater engagement outcomes.				
Local Newspaper	Community Page	Community	Targeted advertising promoted the various milestones of the program and contributed to the voter turnout.	
Social Media	Facebook (and some Instagram)	An average of 1,173 persons reached per post.	12 posts generating 175 reactions and shares.	

City's Website	Front page, updated community funding page(s)	All visitors to the website	Feedback on rebranding of the City's community funding and consolidated information has been well received.
Community Funding Brochure	On-line through the website. Hardcopies in City buildings.		Feedback from the information session participants was positive.
Staff Briefings (& City Intranet	Face to Face On-line Intranet: Project Board and CEO Message.	City Staff	Staff appeared engaged and participated in the project through assistance with assessment, promotion and trialling of the voting tool.
Councillors	Email Postcards	All Councillors Postcard recipients	Councillors appeared engaged.
Video (Program Introduction and 'How to Vote')	Your Say	Your Say viewing audience	Awareness raising. No direct outcomes /feedback reported.
Posters	Staff and Community Notice Boards	Libraries and visitors to the NCC	Awareness raising. No direct outcomes /feedback reported.
Message Board	Electronic	Passing traffic	Awareness raising. No direct outcomes /feedback reported.
Email Footers	Email Signature Panel	All receiving emails from City staff.	Awareness raising. No direct outcomes /feedback reported.

Community Voting

Commencing 21 January 2022, the community took part in allocating the \$100,000 budget using a Prioritise Budget tool available through the City's Your Say site. This tool allowed people to choose how they would like to spend the budget by selecting which of the 26 projects they would like to see funded. They could then prioritise the projects they had selected. Participants could submit a surplus budget (less than \$100,000 spend) but could not go into deficit (over \$100,000).

At the close of voting 1277 eligible votes had been received. The most popular projects, as voted by the community in order of preference are:

Project Name	Project Summary	You Choose Project Value
1. Shelterbags	<p>Rotary Club of Busselton Geographe Bay</p> <p>The project is intended to provide emergency help in the form of a waterproof sleeping bag to Busselton and South West People who are sleeping rough. Various organisations and charities who assist people in need may apply to Rotary to have access to the addition of Shelterbags to offer their clients free of charge. Rotary will provide storage for the bags.</p> <p>Total Project Cost: 1 full shipping container of 750 Shelterbags at approximately \$75 each, \$56,000. Allocation of the bags within the Southwest will be reflective of the contributions made. The proponent is contributing \$10,000 and advises the remaining funds of \$26,000 is being sought from South West Rotary Clubs.</p>	\$20,000

2. Supporting Pets of Older Persons	Pets of Older Persons (POOPS) Funding is to support the Volunteers of POOPS to continue to deliver and safely expand services to the elderly in the Busselton and Dunsborough region by providing home visits, dog walking and looking after pets when an owner has to go into hospital and supporting the purchase of new equipment. Total Project Cost: \$7,750	\$7,750
3. Busselton Hospice Care Lasting Words	Busselton Hospice Care Inc Funding will allow people who are approaching the end of their life to have their stories, thoughts and special memories captured. This funding will provide volunteer training and associated costs along with evaluation of data and preparation of final documents. Total Project Cost: \$50,505 (includes \$34,630 in-kind contribution from Busselton Hospice and \$5,000 secured via another funding partner).	\$10,875
4. Waste Not Want Not	South West Biotech Pty Ltd Funding will contribute to the setup of a pilot Black Soldier Fly Farm in the City of Busselton as solution to the food waste problem. A site has been secured for the farm at Bio Soil Kaloorup Road, Vasse. Total Project Cost: \$123,156 (the proponent advises that it is confident in raising the additional funds required).	\$20,000
5. Ludlow Tuart Forest Heritage Walk Trail	Ludlow Tuart forest restoration group Funding will enable the establishment of a circular, sign posted and lime stone paved trail. It is proposed to create a people friendly informative walk that encompasses the heritage Ludlow settlement site, the southern bank of the Ludlow River all within the heart of the only Tuart forest in the world. The trail will provide access to future resource space for Aboriginal heritage, traditional arts and crafts displays, the establishment of a native plants nursery and food garden, and a yarnning circle in a forest setting. Total Project Cost: \$18,596	\$18,596
6. Vasse Fathering Project	The Vasse Primary School Fathering Project Group The Project is a schools based community group that encourages fathers and father figures to be the best they can with their children. Funding will enable the purchase of a trailer to have a completely portable multi use self-contained fun unit to service the three existing groups in Vasse, West Busselton and Georgiana Molloy Primary schools. The trailer itself would form part of the assets of the Vasse Primary School Fathering Project. The trailer would be available to any of the other Fathering Project groups in the SW region. Total Project Cost: \$19,083	\$19,083
Total Value		\$96,304

The total votes, weighted by rank, are attached at Attachment 1. The weighting provided the highest score to the projects that were selected by people as their first prioritised project, with the weighted score reducing for the second, third, fourth and so on.

The data captured through the voting process enabled staff to verify voter's eligibility, with duplicate votes (a small number voted twice assuming their first attempt was unsuccessful) and those of non-residents / ratepayers removed. Fifty three votes were ineligible.

The six projects chosen are clear favourites of the community. They align with the ethos of the Program and will bring a benefit to the community. It is noted that two projects identify the need for additional funding - the Shelterbags and the Waste Not Want Not projects. The spirit of the Program supports the 'have a go' mentality with the intent to build community resilience through co-operation and problem solving. Potentially, by supporting these projects, community discussion and cooperation can be encouraged to obtain the additional funding required; although the amount outstanding is noted as significant for the Waste Not Want Not Project.

If however either project is unable to obtain enough funding to proceed within 6 months from the commencement of the agreement, the funding commitment from the City will be withdrawn. The intent would then be to fund the next preferred project being No. 7 the Outdoor Classroom proposed by the Busselton Dunsborough Environment Centre Inc., for an outdoor play and learning venue at a value of \$19,984, and, if required the No. 8 project 'Love Living with Wildlife' at a value of \$20,000.

Alternatively, in the event that Council decided not to fund the Waste Not Want Not Project, due to the reliance on significant additional funding, the Outdoor Classroom project could be funded now instead.

Council is asked to endorse funding for the six preferred projects. A simple agreement that includes a reporting and acquittal process (including presentation of receipts) will be prepared for each funded project. Opportunities for celebration and promotion of community achievements will also be identified within each agreement.

Successful projects are expected to be completed by 30 June 2023. This will be followed by a report presented to Council on the outcomes of this final phase of the Program and consideration of its continuation and / or expansion of PB principals to other aspects of the City's budget. The table below provides some measurements and assessment of the Program to date. Targets were set by officers prior to the programs launch to help measure its success.

Demonstrated Strong Interest and Participation	How	Target	Actual
Registrations for Community Event	Registration process	>50	45
You Choose Voting page views	Statistics on page view	>200	9066
Budgeting tool used for voting	Number of votes cast	>200	1330
Program Comments	Collected Data	Positive >10	352
Voting Question – Should the Program continue?	Yes /Undecided/ No	Not set.	1,276 Yes 44 Undecided 10 No
Email Enquiries/contacts re project proposals	Enquiry Log	>20	63

Submissions Received for project proposals	# received	>15	27
Media Coverage – media releases are picked up.	Media Monitoring	100% pick up rate for local newspapers	100%

Statutory Environment

The officer recommendation supports the general function of a local government under the *Local Government Act 1995* to provide for the good government of persons in its district.

Relevant Plans and Policies

The officer recommendation aligns to the Council policy - Sponsorship Arrangements. This Policy outlines the framework under which the City will enter into Sponsorship Arrangements for the purposes of facilitating the provision of a service, program, event, activity or endeavour that may contribute to the economic, social, environmental or cultural development of the City. The Program is a form of Sponsorship Arrangement under this Policy.

Financial Implications

Council allocates 0.5% of rates per annum to the Donations, Contributions and Subsidies budget. \$100,000 of that funding was allocated in this year to this new pilot program, with the remaining budget allocation funding the Community Assistance Program (CAP) run by the Community and Commercial Services Directorate.

The total value of the projects recommended to be funded is \$96,304, leaving \$3,696 to be returned to the Donations, Contributions and Subsidies budget and the broader community funding pool.

Stakeholder Consultation

This Program achieved a high level of engagement with our community by providing the opportunity to partner with Council and make final recommendations for Council's consideration. This level of engagement - referenced as collaboration in the City of Busselton's Community Engagement Framework - is usually only undertaken with a smaller audience such as reference and advisory groups, as outlined in the Framework. Achieving such broad community participation is a positive outcome of this Program's PB concept.

Participatory budgeting in its purest sense would see full empowerment provided to its citizens to determine a government budget. While Council cannot devolve its decision making responsibilities under the *Local Government Act 1995*, this Program has been a positive step in creating an opportunity for greater community ownership over a part of Council's budget with the added benefit of contributing to community resilience, co-operation and problem solving.

The response rate and feedback received suggests that the concept of engaging and collaborating in this way has been very well received. The Program also value added to the City's community funding programs more broadly by generating greater awareness through the new consolidated community funding branding developed and launched at the start of this Program.

Further community engagement will continue throughout the project implementation period as the project proponents celebrate their achievements as milestones are reached.

Risk Assessment

An assessment of the potential implications of implementing the officer recommendation has been undertaken using the City's risk management framework. Community led projects often rely on volunteers and/or additional funding for implementation and as such there is a risk that one or more of the programs will not meet its intended objectives nor be completed on time.

The controls in place to mitigate these possibilities include a customised agreement for each project with City staff monitoring set milestones. Agreements will require the acquittal of funds, with any funds not expended returned to the Donations, Contributions and Subsidies budget.

As a result there are no risks of a medium or greater level being identified.

Options

As an alternative to the proposed recommendation the Council could:

1. Choose not to allocate funding to one or more of these projects; and/or
2. Fund one or more of the remaining 20 projects that include (listed in order or rank by weighting):

7. Outdoor Classroom	\$19,984
8. Love Living with Wildlife	\$20,000
9. Busselton Street Art Project	\$20,000
10. Bay Life Community Café Outdoor Area	\$15,100
11. Piazza on Prince	\$12,000
12. Busselton Woodturners Equipment Expansion	\$8,633
13. Enclosed BBQ Undercover Area	\$20,000
14. Community Reading Engagement	\$7,195
15. Child Cyber Safety	\$11,000
16. Seniors Computer Lessons	\$11,000
17. Travel the Whale Highway	\$18,875
18. Adventure Sailing	\$15,897
19. Vasse River Goldrush 2022	\$20,000
20. Let it Grow Dunsborough	\$12,317
21. FireWise Demonstration Garden	\$18,000
22. Busselton and Dunsborough Community Radio	\$20,000
23. Sky Stories Light Show	\$20,000
24. Rescue of the SS Georgette	\$20,000

25. Discover Busselton	\$20,000
26. Takin' it to the Streets	\$20,000

CONCLUSION

The Program has demonstrated it is highly engaging and meets the goals and objectives identified by Council, providing broad opportunity for the community to identify projects for public spend and to decide their priorities for that spend.

The community have embraced the pilot program and provided some suggestions for improvement which will be incorporated into a final review of the Program post implementation of the successfully funded projects. It is recommended that Council endorse the funding of the six most popular projects as voted by the community.

TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

Funding agreements will be established in March / April 2022. Successful projects are expected to be completed by June 2023.

YOU CHOOSE community funding program 2022



**You Choose
Program**

Vote Totals (Weighted)

Weighted by rank.

	Weighted	Project	Amount
1	531.68	Shelterbags	\$20,000
2	468.90	Supporting Pets of Older Persons	\$7,750
3	411.76	Busselton Hospice Care Lasting Words	\$10,875
4	390.80	Waste Not Want Not	\$20,000
5	389.80	Ludlow Tuart Forest Heritage Walk Trail	\$18,596
6	340.29	Vasse Fathering Project	\$19,083
			\$96,304
7	298.81	Outdoor Classroom	\$19,984
8	274.2	Love Living with Wildlife	\$20,000
9	249.74	Busselton Street Art Project	\$20,000
10	222.54	Bay Life Community Café Outdoor Area	\$15,100
11	202.81	Piazza on Prince	\$12,000
12	200.29	Busselton Woodturners Equipment Expansion	\$8,633
13	195.18	Enclosed BBQ Undercover Area	\$20,000
14	188.34	Community Reading Engagement	\$7,195
15	185.68	Child Cyber Safety	\$11,000
16	179.87	Seniors Computer Lessons	\$11,000

YOU CHOOSE community funding program 2022



**You Choose
Program**

	Weighted	Project	Amount
17	178.25	Travel the Whale Highway	\$18,875
18	171.38	Adventure Sailing	\$15,897
19	162.06	Vasse River Goldrush 2022	\$20,000
20	160.54	Let it Grow Dunsborough	\$12,317
21	146.15	FireWise Demonstration Garden	\$18,000
22	121.63	Busselton and Dunsborough Community Radio	\$20,000
23	100.20	Sky Stories Light Show	\$20,000
24	89.93	Rescue of the SS Georgette	\$20,000
25	82.22	Discover Busselton	\$20,000
26	65.42	Takin' it to the Streets	\$20,000

Rows per page:
All