

OFFICERS REPORT**ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITY - PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING**

Submitting Councillor: Josh Fergeus

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Notes that participatory budgeting has been shown to significantly contribute to broader public participation in local governance, and has been associated with improvements in public health, reduced corruption, greater trust in government, higher tax compliance and stronger economic growth ¹;*
2. *Notes that 43% of respondents in the Monash 2021 and Beyond community survey wanted ‘more openness and transparency’, and particularly more detail on Council expenditure;*
3. *Notes the following Council policy positions which align with the principles of participatory budgeting:*
 - *“People can have a say in, and are at the centre of, our decisions” (Council Plan, 2017-21);*
 - *“Enhancing community consultation and involvement in our decision-making”, (Council Plan, 2017-21);*
 - *“We commit to actively engaging our community in decision-making to shape our services”, (Council Plan, 2017-21);*
 - *“A city which actively listens, engages and values community wisdom in shaping its own future”, (A Healthy & Resilient Monash, 2017-2021);*
 - *“What we will do: support community to have an active role through participation in civic and community life”, (A Healthy & Resilient Monash, 2017-2021).*
4. *Requests that Officers provide a report to Council no later than September 2019 detailing options for a limited trial of participatory budgeting to contribute to the development of the 2020-2021 Council Budget;*
5. *Refer the Participatory Budget Project to the 2020-2021 Budget process, to allow for the appropriate allocation of resources should Council choose to proceed with the Project upon receipt of the Officer report.*

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

A participatory approach to Council’s budget is likely to have a greater cost than for the current process. However, the options developed in the Officer Report, to be presented in September 2019, could be modelled to vary in cost whilst still achieving an increase in community participation.

¹ Hagelskamp, C, Leighninger, M, & Rizzolo, A (2016) *Public spending, by the people*. Yankelovich Center for Public Judgement, New York

IMPACT ON INTERNAL RESOURCES

Additional staff resources would be required to properly research the experience of other councils that have piloted participatory budgeting, the lessons they learned, and to reflect these in options for Monash to consider.

There is also significant work to understand how this would relate to the requirements of the new Local Government Bill if it was to be enacted by the next Victorian Parliament. Under this Bill, all councils would be required to develop a community vision as well as 10-year asset plan and long term financial plan, and a 4-year Council Plan and Budget.

Coordinating community engagement across these plans will require a lot of planning and work. A key element of participation is to ensure it is informed which will require bringing together a range of information about Council's services and their supporting assets, as well as the complex range of drivers for Council's priorities.

Lastly, a Business Case for the options needs to be prepared setting out the costs and expected benefits for each option put forward. This Business case would need to be drafted by the end of September to ensure it can be considered as part of the 2020/21 Annual Planning Process.

There may be some unbudgeted cost to undertake this research, and prepare a Business Case for the 2020/21 Annual Planning Process, depending upon what is revealed through our research.

COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

The Notice of Motion notes that participatory budgeting aligns with many Council policies and plans.

RELEVANCE TO WORK ALREADY UNDERTAKEN BY OFFICERS OR COMMITTEES

There has been some preliminary internal discussion on the implications of the Local Government Bill and community involvement already features in the Annual Planning Process.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.