

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

Submitting Councillor: 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.*
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 April 2020 detailing options for a limited trial of participatory budgeting to contribute to the development of the 2021-2022 Council Budget.*
5. *Refers 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

As noted in the NOM, participatory budgeting does not need to require additional expenditure in Council's budget or long-term financial plan, as in some areas projects may be a reprioritisation of existing resources and capital works renewal programs.

However, the long term impact of 'rate capping' on Monash City Council means that available discretionary expenditure, above maintaining existing services and infrastructure, will progressively decline over the next few years. Ideally participatory budgeting would be integrated in the longer term strategic planning and community engagement anticipated in the proposed Local Government Bill 2019.

IMPACT ON INTERNAL RESOURCES

Participatory budgeting would require significantly more officer time to plan, prepare, coordinate and analyse than our recent approaches to consulting the community for the annual Budget.

Research and analysis to understand the different participatory options available to Monash, the lessons learnt from other councils, recent experience and discussion internally and with Councillors to agree on a proposed model would require officer / consultant time above existing staff resources.

Preparing a Business Case for consideration in the 2020-21 Annual Planning Process would need to be undertaken in the next few months to ensure the proposal can be considered by Councillors along with other projects for the proposed 2020-21 Budget.

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

Officers continue to monitor the progress of the proposed Local Government Bill 2019 and have commenced internal discussions on how the requirements for a community vision, a 10 year Financial and a 10 year asset plan, as well as a four year Council Plan and a 4 year Budget may have value at Monash and what would be involved in operationalising these.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.