



Ryde's Time To Shine  
Participatory Budgeting Report

*MutualGain ~ July 2022*



## Introduction

Participatory Budgeting (PB) originated in Brazil in the 1980s, has spread worldwide and is a method of giving local people the opportunity to decide how public money is spent in their communities. A Brazilian resident involved in PB in its early development said *"If it feels like we've decided, it's PB. If it feels like someone else has decided, it isn't."* This core principle, of residents having the final say on the allocation of resources is central to PB, regardless of scale. People naturally feel they want to have influence over where they live. PB offers then that in a very practical way.

It is important to recognise that PB should be seen as an effective community engagement tool, rather than merely a different means of allocating resources.

In 2019, Hampshire Police secured Home Office funding to support interventions designed to address issues relating to incidence of violent crime locally. It was decided to allocate £15,000 funding based on recorded levels to areas across Hampshire, of which Ryde was one. Sovereign Housing also provided an extra £5k to be put into the PB pot, making the total amount available £20k.

MutualGain were commissioned to provide support and facilitation to the programme. This programme was overseen by Sargent Jason Taylor (Hampshire Police, Alan Budge and Antigua Riley-Corion (MutualGain).

MutualGain are specialists in building social capital and have an extensive track record of training and supporting the delivery of Participatory Budgeting projects across the UK.

An online 'World Café' event was delivered in June 2021 This was an in-depth interactive consultation event, where local residents determined the key themes under which they would want the money spent. These were identified as:

- Engaging Young People
- Bringing the Community Together To Improve Wellbeing and Mental Health Issues
- Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour

The original intention was to begin the training/supported delivery for the PB event shortly after the World Café, however Covid intervened, and the project was effectively put on hold for several months.



## Scoping, Training, and Supported Delivery

During the period of 'peak Covid' , there had been a general 'mass migration' onto Zoom platforms; when the Ryde programme was relaunched in Autumn 2021, it was agreed the training and supported delivery sessions should take place online, with the option of holding a live voting event, dependent on the Covid situation at the time.

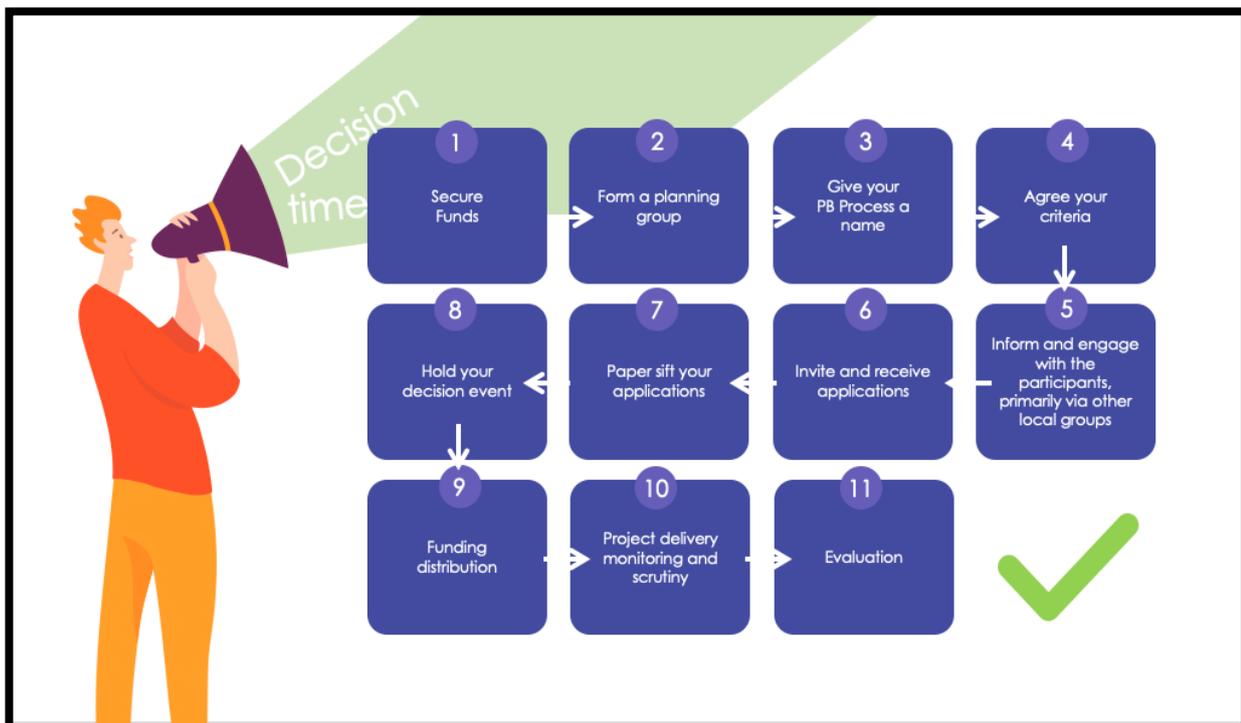
An initial online training event was held in December 2021.

The training was delivered online over two two-hour sessions and covered the following areas:

- The development and philosophy of PB
- The relationship to strengths-based approaches to engagement and building social capital
- The values and principles of PB
- The role of the community planning group
- A short practice PB session

The PB programme is designed to take the planning group through a training process that helps them to understand how and why PB was developed, through to the key values and principles and the roles required to ensure the voting event is a success.

Planning the PB event is broken up into different stages to ensure the success of the programme. The stages are shown below.



Invites were sent to everyone on the original World Café database; at the session, however, the attendees were limited to the Police Sergeant, and officers from local Housing Trusts (Sovereign and Vectis Housing).

Four x two-hour sessions were held between January and June 2022, to;

- agree criteria for bidding organisations (see table below)
- plan the live voting event in detail.

These sessions, although having limited attendance were a great exercise in democracy in action, as the attendees worked through the issues in detail – voting age, geographical area of benefit etc.

One of the key points regarding PB, is that the final decision on who receives funding must rest with the residents at the voting event. The planning group's role with regard to, for example checking the bids against agreed eligibility criteria is to provide the bidders with support/feedback wherever possible, rather than being seen as taking any final decisions themselves. The group understood this and worked throughout on that basis.

### **Good Practice:**

The level of engagement and commitment to the process demonstrated throughout by the Housing Trust reps was impressive and proved vital in ensuring the process was delivered successfully.

### **Learning Points:**

With the exception of input from the police, (which, owing to changes of role and other calls on police time was inconsistent) and focussed input from one elected member in particular in the run up to the event, the support for the process among the wider group of service providers and the community was distinctly lacking. This may have been due in large part to the effect of the long Covid induced break where a lot of the original momentum generated by the World Café event may have been lost.

## Key Decisions and Eligibility Criteria

<b>Can the planning group apply?</b>	Yes, but they must declare an interest at the point when projects are being assessed initially against agreed eligibility criteria.
<b>What is the limit for a single application?</b>	£5000
<b>Are multiple applications acceptable?</b>	Yes, projects must be separate and not exceed a maximum of £5000.
<b>Can public/private organisations apply?</b>	Yes, any group or organisation may bid as long as their project is serving Ryde, and the profits are not given to stakeholders and/or directors etc.
<b>What is the age limit for voters?</b>	12 years
<b>Do applicants have to come from the area?</b>	No, provided the money is spent for the benefit of those living in Ryde.
<b>Do applicants have to be from a constituted group?</b>	No, but non-constituted groups should be supported by a constituted group/organisation, that will hold their funding in a ring-fenced bank account.
<b>Is there an age limit for those applying?</b>	Yes, 16yrs (With adult mentoring if appropriate)
<b>What will the voting process be?</b>	At a live event, participants will score each project 1 to 5, with the projects receiving the most votes overall receiving funding.
<b>How long will each project present for?</b>	Two minutes plus two minutes Q&A from the audience.

## Roles On the Day

Alan from MutualGain hosted the PB voting event. Other roles, such as the registration desk, looking after those who would be presenting, were taken up by others within the planning group:

- Karen Lucioni (Isle of Wight Council) gave a warm welcome to attendees and applicants at the beginning of the event
- Toby Eaglan (Sovereign Housing Association) acted as our MC, welcoming applicants to the stage
- Other members of the planning group took on roles of timekeeping and vote counting

## Application and Registration

It took a while for applications to be submitted once the application process was opened. However, at the close of the application process, a total of 17 applications had been submitted. Unfortunately, four of the applications withdrew from the process for a range of personal reasons. Therefore, 13 projects went forward to the face-to-face voting event.

Eventbrite is used for the registration process to ensure that the numbers potentially attending can be accommodated. In the case of Ryde, a total of 45 people registered, although it is usually the case that less than this number attend the in-person event.

## The Voting Day; 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2022

The voting event was held live on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2022 at Ryde Academy. The venue was chosen as it was reasonably centrally located, with appropriate facilities (hall, catering equipment etc).

A total of 43 people attended the voting event and support the local projects.

In relation to the voting, six projects were fully funded, with one project receiving partial funding. The breakdown of the winning projects is shown below:

Rank	Project / Organisation	Amount Requested	Status
1	Ryde Inclusion Centre	£650.00	Fully Funded
2	Football Fun Factory	£5,000.00	Fully Funded
3	Vectis Boating and Fishing: Junior Fishing Frenzy	£500.00	Fully Funded
4	Ryde Youth Project: Family Meal Kits	£600.00	Fully Funded
5	Rob Hill Foundation: Operation Addiction Recovery	£5,000.00	Fully Funded
6	John Cattles Skate Park	£5,000.00	Fully Funded
7	Wightlink Warriors Speedway School	£5,000.00	Partially Funded (£1,750)
8	Umbrella Hub	£5,000.00	Not Funded
9	Forever Wild At Heart	£4,880.00	Not Funded
10	Independent Arts: Arts and Shine in Ryde	£4,600.00	Not Funded
11	Aspire Creative Hub: Food and Music	£3,045.00	Not Funded
12	Isle of Wight Diversity	£4,000.00	Not Funded
13	Nature Therapy: Artful Drumming Café	£1,000.00	Not Funded

### Good Practice:

The question and answer slots – post each presentation – were particularly lively and informative; a lot of intelligent queries from the audience. The two minute 'allowance' for questions was often exceeded but the organisers felt this was appropriate as the extra information gleaned was valuable, and there was time in the day to allow for some 'slippage' as there weren't that many bids to get through.

The opportunity for networking was enthusiastically taken up – requests for contact details, firm commitments to book onto some of the programmes on offer from other participants in the room etc.

### Learning Points:

There was some confusion as to the pre-event messaging re use of PowerPoint/video. Two bidders wanted to use PowerPoint/electronic aids and were diplomatically informed that wouldn't be appropriate given the other bidders were presenting entirely 'live'.

There was also a suggestion that it might be worth live streaming the events in future.

## Post Event Feedback

An evaluation form was issued to each participant: 30 responses were received. (Note: Some respondents didn't answer every question)

QUESTION	YES	NOT SURE	NO
<b>The day was well organised</b>	22	6	1
<b>I liked the venue</b>	22	5	2
<b>The event was in a good location</b>	23	2	3
<b>Voting instructions were clear</b>	25	2	2
<b>I think everything was done fairly</b>	20	10	0
<b>I think this is a good way to allocate funding</b>	23	7	0
<b>I would do this again</b>	22	5	2

These responses clearly demonstrate significant support for the process.

In particular, under the headings relating to fairness and funding allocation, there were no outright negative responses, and a significantly smaller number of 'don't knows', compared with those who approved.

The evaluation forms also included a space for written comments, as follows:

- *'I think it's really important (to hold this type of event) because people have more control.'*
- *'I think it's a really good idea.'*
- *'There look to be some really interesting projects here.'*
- *'I had no idea half these projects existed.'*
- *'People say there's nothing going on locally, but there's all this.'*
- *'I would like to see much more publicity for these organisations. I knew so little, and I spend my life on social media'*
- *(Would have been good) 'to be allowed to use tech to present.'*
- *'Networking is key (so would have been good to) have some contact cards available, in case some people don't get to speak personally to others.'*
- *'Everyone who made a presentation deserved to be awarded the grant. I think the £20k should be shared between them all!'*
- *'There seems to be a lot that needs to be done in the community for mental health and bullying.'*
- *'Having to vote on such a wide variety of projects is very difficult. (Also) it was hard to get people to attend for a whole afternoon.'*
- *'It was a good community engagement session. Well done! But questionable whether the community can assess the impact of the requests (for funding).'*
- *'It would have been worth coming without getting funded!'*
- *'Brilliant day. Thankyou.'*

Participants were also asked to complete equality monitoring, and impact forms. The data from these can be found in the appendix at the end of this report.

## Planning Group Feedback

In addition to these responses from participants, members of the planning group were invited to a de-brief/feedback session shortly after the event. Some attended in person, (via zoom) whilst others responded by email.

The group fed back as follows:

- The planning sessions were well organised and the explanation of each part of the process was good.
  - The hall worked well
  - Pleasantly surprised at the numbers in attendance at the event
  - 'It (PB) is a great concept. I've enjoyed the entire process. (PB) is at the top of the ladder of (community) participation. Brilliant.'
  - It will be great to see it take effect, once the groups have received their funding
  - We definitely feel we could do it ourselves now, and will be looking to identify funding, select areas to deliver in etc. It would need to be in the next financial year now, so a budget could be identified and allocated.
  - I stayed involved because it was about *community*, bringing people together.
  - The voting day went really smoothly. It's been an absolute pleasure working with you (MutualGain.)
  - I thought the day went well and time keeping was there or thereabouts with the delivery of presentations / Q&A
  - I thought the event went really well.
  - Thank you for your hard work, I would definitely say it was a success and something I would do again
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- The planning process was lacking in community members
  - I probably prefer shorter planning sessions but that's maybe because I'm well versed in grant making.
  - A pity the housing sector were the only ones involved all the way through. The planning process would have benefitted from more cross agency/community input.
  - A shame the time frame was so extended e.g. the gap between the World Café and the PB event in particular, but that was largely due to circumstances (Covid) beyond anyone's control.
  - To get more engagement from the community, would a joint online and face to face event be possible?
  - Many of the applicants had brought a Powerpoint with them which they were unable to use. Clear guidance on this would be good.
  - We funded well established groups in the community but I would be concerned if we gave money to a person or organisation that we

didn't know about and we hadn't checked if they have the right legal/safeguarding documents

- Maybe next time it would prove more beneficial to research the proposed dates as it appears we clashed with several other local events (Binstead community centre family day / beach football to name a few)
- I missed some of the comms so maybe some sort of distribution group would be more beneficial going forward?

## Conclusion

This project was delivered successfully under what were far from ideal circumstances. The 'crude' bottom line is that seven projects received funding to make well-supported interventions in their local areas, and a lot of community information was shared at the voting event.

The arrival of Covid meant that the original momentum created through the World Café was dissipated, with the knock-on effect that recruiting to the planning and delivery of the PB voting event suffered, in terms of quantity, if not quality. There was minimum community input into the planning process, in spite of repeated attempts by the police and housing providers in particular to recruit to the planning group.

This group, primarily composed of officers from Sovereign and Vectis Housing Trusts, did however offer consistently high-quality input into the planning, and without this local knowledge and involvement, the process would have been far less successful, if not impossible to implement.

The feedback received from participants on the day and from planning group members post-event was strongly supportive of the view that the event was worthwhile, and that PB is a powerful mechanism for distributing funding. Of particular note is the commitment in principle from the housing sector to attempt to secure funding/resources to repeat and build on the process in future years.

There is some key learning to be considered, particularly around

- a) the 'blending of online/live processes, as we continue to enter a more 'zoom-friendly'/live streaming environment,
- b) the ways in which community members in particular, as well as officers and elected members can become more actively involved in the planning process.

As Covid recedes, these issues will hopefully be addressed more efficiently in future.

The group were a pleasure to work with while delivering this programme. We would like to say a huge thank you to:

- Toby Eaglan
- Sharon Harvey
- Ellie Speed
- Mark Merideth
- Karen Lucioni
- Debbie Budge
- Cole Rollo
- Jason Taylor
- Ryde Academy and Staff!

***'A real eye opener. Very thought provoking. We're allowed to vote on Brexit but not on local things we really know about. (Which we can here.) It's been really great. Thankyou.'***