

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET7 December 2017Joint Report by Deputy Chief Executive and Director of EnvironmentROADS REVENUE PROGRAMME – RESULTS OF EAST REN DECIDES: ROADS**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the results of the Roads Revenue Programme participatory budgeting exercise, entitled “East Ren Decides”.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- (a) Notes the results of the participatory budgeting exercise and the ranking of the schemes;
 - (b) Notes the key messages and learning points from the evaluation of the process;
 - (c) Approves the recommendation to take forward the top two schemes in each area; and
 - (d) Authorises the Director of Environment to put the schemes out to tender and adjust the details of the schemes to ensure that the £600,000 allocation is fully committed.

BACKGROUND

3. Participatory budgeting is a decision-making process in which residents decide how to allocate part of a public budget. Participatory budgeting allows local people to identify, discuss, and prioritise public spending projects, and gives them the power to make real decisions about how money is spent

4. The Cabinet, at its meeting on 22 June 2017, approved the mechanism to allow a “participatory budgeting” exercise to take place to apportion £600,000 of the Roads Revenue budget allocation. This report now details the outcome of the exercise.

5. The report made clear that it was important to note this was the first time a process of this kind had been carried out in East Renfrewshire and that it would be a learning experience.

6. 33 potential roads schemes were identified, which were all in a similar need of repair, within a £35,000 to £100,000 cost range, but unlikely to be prioritised through the regular roads maintenance programme. These are located across the four locality areas of East Renfrewshire:

- Lavern Valley (Barrhead, Neilston & Uplawmoor)
- Newton Mearns
- Thornliebank & Giffnock
- Netherlee, Stamperland, Clarkston, Busby, Eaglesham and Waterfoot

7. These localities were presented to the meeting of the Cabinet on 28 January 2016, as a core part of the Council's community engagement arrangements, to be used in any engagement which may be targeted at specific community areas. They are formed from natural community council areas which local people recognise. They match, as far as possible, the boundaries of school catchment areas and they mirror the local areas used by the new Health and Social Care partnership.

8. In the spirit of the Community Empowerment Act the localities amalgamate natural communities, while East Renfrewshire's ward boundaries do not. For example, Eaglesham is grouped with half of Newton Mearns and the other half of Newton Mearns is combined with Neilston.

REPORT

9. The participatory budgeting exercise was launched in late June under the banner "East Ren Decides" and closed on 8 September 2017. The Council's online platform Citizen Space was used to host the voting process, with residents limited to voting in their chosen locality. The participatory budgeting scheme was underpinned by a publicity and communications programme that ensured local residents were aware of the opportunity to influence this substantial level of investment in roads across the authority area. This included information on the Council's social media platforms, coverage in the national and local media and two pop-up events held at The Foundry, Barrhead and Eastwood Health & Care Centre.

10. The report to the meeting of the Cabinet on 22 June 2017 stressed that this was a pilot participatory budgeting scheme to give local people a key role in a decision making process on an issue which is regularly identified as one of the top priorities for residents.

11. Over 1,200 residents voted and the results of the vote are shown in Appendix 1. The cost of progressing with the top two schemes in each locality area is £50,000 over the £600,000 budget set aside for this process. However, it should be noted that the scheme values shown are estimates and not tender prices. It is therefore possible that when the schemes are tendered that prices for each scheme could be more or less than the estimated value. Therefore, it is recommended that the Cabinet delegates to the Director of Environment the ability to adjust the details of the schemes to ensure that the £600,000 allocation is fully committed.

12. Following the tender process, if the total cost of all schemes falls below £600,000, then it is proposed that additional funds should be allocated to a scheme within the Levern Valley, where possible, to offer a more proportionate distribution of the total funds between locality areas.

13. In October 2017 COSLA Leaders endorsed the *Community Choices Budgeting* framework, which commits Councils to a target of 1% of our budget to be subject to PB by the end of financial year 2020/21. Building on the learning from East Ren Decides: Roads we will work with national and local partners as we develop our local framework to achieve this target.

CONSULTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS

14. As agreed at the meeting of the Cabinet on 22 June 2017 an evaluation of the process was carried out. The full evaluation is attached in Appendix 2 with key learning points summarised below.

15. There were 1,290 valid votes cast over a period of 10 weeks. This is one of the highest response rates for any consultation on Citizen Space and the highest that is not aimed specifically at parents. The pattern of voting over the 10 week period showed that social media was effective in promoting the process with spikes in the level of voting following social media updates.

16. This high level of participation suggests a level of support for the participatory budgeting process. There were over 300 comments made by voters on Citizen Space with 13% of these comments referring to the voting process itself. Whilst half of these comments expressed the view that voting was an inappropriate method for distributing roads and footway repair funding, roughly the same number welcomed the opportunity to vote on the funding. Those who commented on social media were more likely to disagree with voting as a method for allocating resources. However this number is small compared to the overall number of people who participated in voting. More analysis of comments can be found in Appendix 2.

17. There was a particularly strong turnout in Eaglesham and Waterfoot, with almost 6% of residents voting, and this resulted in roads schemes in this area being voted the top two in the wider locality. This is a semi-rural community, with limited public transport and reliance on travel by car, which may explain the active participation from this area. This mobilised response to influence decision making and result in the resurfacing of two local roads could be viewed as a success of the participatory budgeting process.

18. However the different rates of turnout and the grouping of roads projects also led to the unexpected outcome of an unequal distribution of roads projects across East Renfrewshire's ward boundaries. For example following the particularly high turnout in Eaglesham and Waterfoot there were no successful schemes from the Clarkston and Williamwood ward.

19. There was also a pattern of lower voting in more deprived areas of the authority. This could be as a result of lower levels of internet access, however levels of car ownership are also lower.

20. Appendix 2 presents the full evaluation findings on the exercise. The learning will inform East Renfrewshire Council's use of participatory budgeting process in the future. The following areas of success were identified:

- East Ren Decides: Roads achieved a high level of resident engagement, with one of the highest responses rates to an East Renfrewshire Council consultation.
- Analysis of voting levels over the period showed that social media is an effective way to promote the opportunity to vote.
- Feedback showed that participants found the process simple to understand.

21. Analysis of voting patterns and comments suggests the following learning should inform any future online process:

- Consideration of ways to facilitate participation in communities with higher levels of deprivation.
- The "locality" approach to selected areas may have to be revisited in any future consultations (depending upon the nature of the budget/service being considered for participatory budgeting).
- Ensuring that information needed to make decisions is easily accessible, visually appealing and easy to understand as possible.

- Continue to consider alternative methods to engage residents in participatory budgeting processes offline

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

22. The total additional funds to be allocated as part of the participatory budgeting exercise is £600,000. Should the top two schemes in each area be progressed the estimated value of the works is £650,000. However, as stated above it is recommended that the Director of Environment is authorised to adjust the details of the schemes to ensure that the £600,000 allocation is fully committed.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

23. The participatory budgeting exercise has been a success in terms of community engagement, and has created a level of interest amongst other local authorities, the media and the general public. The Roads Service, the Communications team and the Partnerships team have all partnered together on this project.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

24. There are no implications of the proposals specifically in terms of staffing, property, legal, IT, equalities and sustainability.

CONCLUSIONS

25. In conclusion the participatory budgeting exercise has been completed and had a high level of support from residents. Valuable learning has been gained from carrying out the exercise and by recommending that the top two ranked schemes in each area are progressed this ensures that residents' views are reflected.

RECOMMENDATIONS

26. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- (a) Notes the results of the participatory budgeting exercise and the ranking of the schemes;
 - (b) Notes the key messages and learning points from the evaluation of the process;
 - (c) Approves the recommendation to take forward the top two schemes in each area; and
 - (d) Authorises the Director of Environment to put the schemes out to tender and adjust the details of the schemes to ensure that the £600,000 allocation is fully committed.

Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Environment

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Reports to Cabinet – 23 March 2017 & 22 June 2017

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Appendix 1 – RESULTS OF THE PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING VOTING

Levern Valley (Barrhead, Neilston and Uplawmoor) results

Project	Type	Cost	Rank
Kirktonfield Road, Neilston	Carriageway	£50,000	1
Commercial Road, Barrhead	Footway (Part only)	£45,000	2
Commore Avenue, Barrhead	Carriageway	£40,000	3
Crebar Drive, Barrhead	Carriageway	£50,000	4
Harelaw Avenue, Neilston	Footway	£50,000	5
Cruachan Way, Barrhead	Carriageway	£35,000	6
Nethernton Drive	Footway	£50,000	7

Giffnock & Thornliebank results

Project	Type	Cost	Rank
Berryhill Drive, Giffnock	Carriageway	£75,000	1
Belmont Drive, Giffnock	Carriageway & Footway	£100,000	2
Rowand Avenue, Giffnock	Carriageway & Footway	£100,000	3
Merrycrest Avenue, Giffnock	Carriageway	£100,000	4
Merryton Avenue, Giffnock	Carriageway	£100,000	5
Giffnock Park Avenue/Briarlea Drive, Giffnock	Carriageway	£50,000	6
Ashlea Drive, Giffnock	Carriageway	£50,000	7
Etive Drive, Giffnock	Carriageway & Footway	£100,000	8

Newton Mearns results

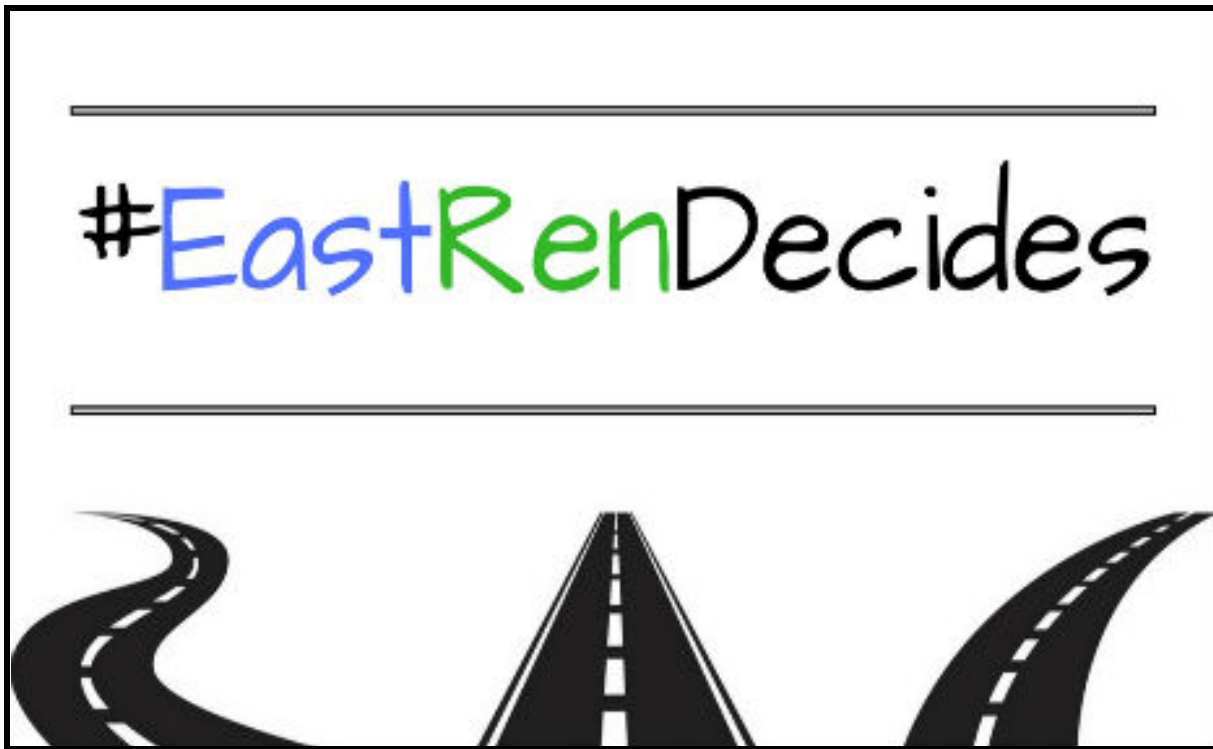
Project	Type	Cost	Rank
Corrour Road, Newton Mearns	Carriageway	£80,000	1
Hazelwood Avenue, Newton Mearns	Carriageway (Part only)	£100,000	2
Kinloch Road, Newton Mearns	Carriageway & Footway	£100,000	3
Castlehill Drive/Broomhill Avenue	Carriageway (Part only)	£60,000	4
Lomond Drive, Newton Mearns	Carriageway	£80,000	5
Kings Drive/Kings Gardens	Carriageway	£40,000	6
Balgray Road/Carswell Road, Newton Mearns	Footway	£50,000	7

Netherlee, Stamperland, Clarkston, Busby, Eaglesham and Waterfoot results

Project	Type	Cost	Score
Bonnyton Drive Culs-de-sac, Eaglesham	Carriageway & Footway	£100,000	1
Craighlaw Avenue, Waterfoot	Footway	£100,000	2
Morven Drive, Clarkston	Carriageway	£65,000	3
Orchy Drive/Orchy Gardens, Stamperland	Carriageway & Footway	£100,000	4
Rockburn Drive, Clarkston	Carriageway & Footway	£80,000	5
Woodbank Crescent, Clarkston	Carriageway & Footway	£40,000	6
Sunbury Avenue, Clarkston	Carriageway	£40,000	7
Woodvale Avenue	Footway	£70,000	8
Oakley Drive, Netherlee	Carriageway & Footway	£100,000	9
Norwood Drive	Footway	£100,000	10
Lynton Avenue	Carriageway	£65,000	11

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East Ren Decides: Roads
Evaluation



Community Planning Team
December 2017

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1. Background

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a decision-making process, in which residents decide how to allocate part of a public budget. Participatory budgeting allows local people to identify, discuss, and prioritise public spending projects, and gives them the power to make real decisions about how money is spent.

In June 2017 East Renfrewshire Council's Cabinet agreed to distribute £600,000 of the roads and pavements resurfacing budget through a pilot participatory budgeting process, with the learning to inform East Renfrewshire Council's use of participatory budgeting process in the future. The vote ran from 26 June until 8 September 2017 through East Renfrewshire Council's online consultation tool, Citizen Space.

2. Key messages of the evaluation

Areas of Success

- East Ren Decides: Roads achieved a high level of resident engagement, with one of the highest responses rates to an East Renfrewshire Council consultation.
- Analysis of voting levels over the period showed that social media is an effective way to promote the opportunity to vote.
- Feedback showed that participants found the process simple to understand.

Learning Points

Analysis of voting patterns and comments suggests that any future online process could be enhanced in the following ways:

- Consideration of ways to facilitate participation in communities with higher levels of deprivation.
- The "locality" approach to selected areas may have to be revisited in any future consultations (depending upon the nature of the budget being considered for participatory budgeting).
- Ensuring that information needed to make decisions is easily accessible, visually appealing and easy to understand as possible.
- Continue to consider alternative methods to engage residents in PB processes offline

3. Votes cast

There were 1,290 valid votes cast. This is one of the highest response rates for any consultation East Renfrewshire Council has held on Citizen Space and the highest not aimed specifically at the parents and carers of school pupils. 32 votes were removed as they were not valid. Examples of why votes were discounted include: the respondent did not provide a real name, voting multiple times, or voting with an address outside East Renfrewshire.

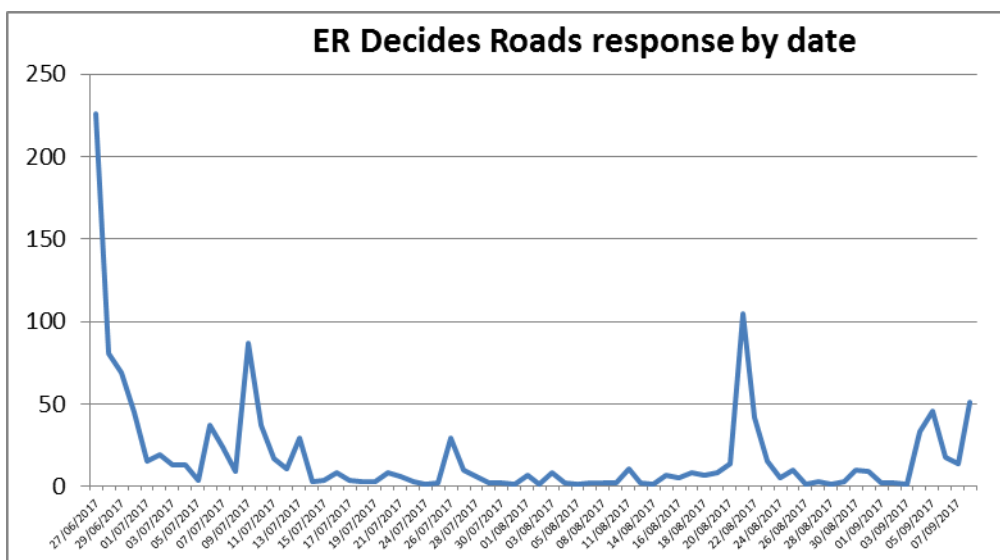


Figure 1

As figure 1 above shows, the largest proportion of votes were cast when the process was launched in late June 2017, subsequent spikes in voting levels were linked to reminders sent out through East Renfrewshire Council's social media accounts.

Breakdown of voters

Residents were limited to voting in their chosen locality. Netherlee, Stamperland, Clarkston, Busby, Eaglesham and Waterfoot was the most popular with 538 residents opting to vote in this locality, almost triple the number who selected Levern Valley

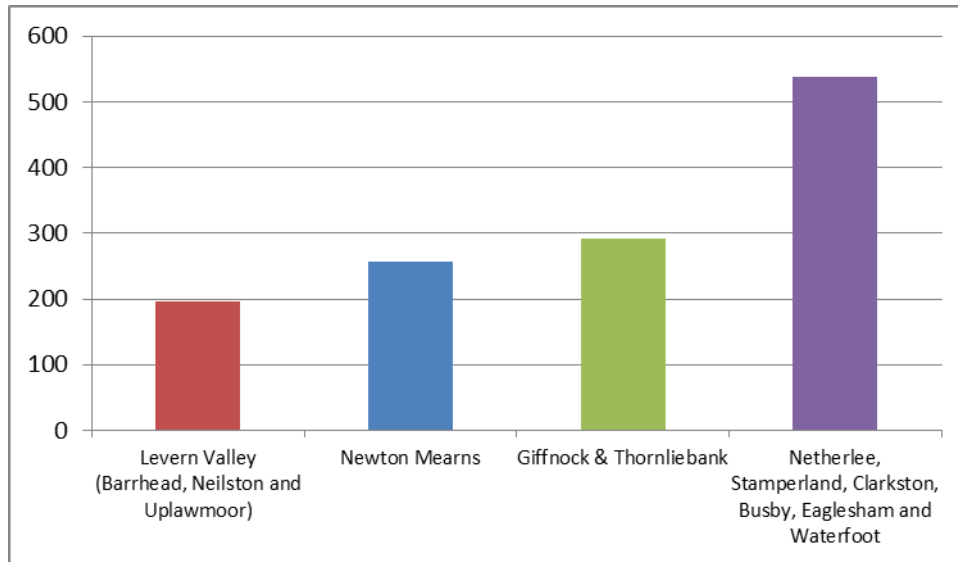


Figure 2

As set out in table 1 below, engagement in the process varied across our communities, in Eaglesham and Waterfoot almost 6% of residents voted, this is compared with 1.8% of East Renfrewshire as a whole and 0.7% in Busby.

Locality	Community Council Area	% of pop. who voted ¹
Levern Valley	Barrhead	0.9%
	Neilston	1.1%
	Uplawmoor	3.1%
Newton Mearns	Broom, Kirkhill and Mearkskirk	1.1%
	Crookfur Greenfarm and Mearns Village	1.6%
Giffnock & Thornliebank	Giffnock	2.7%
	Thornliebank	0.9%
Netherlee, Stamperland, Clarkston, Busby, Eaglesham and Waterfoot	Busby	0.7%
	Clarkston	2.7%
	Eaglesham and Waterfoot	5.9%
	Stamperland and Netherlee	2.0%
East Renfrewshire average		1.8%

Table 1

¹ Note- For analysis purposes this is based on the percentage of population who are aged over 18 in each Community Council Area, however here was no age restriction to take part in the vote.

The different rates of turnout led to the unexpected outcome of an unequal distribution of roads projects across East Renfrewshire's ward boundaries. There was a particularly strong turnout in Eaglesham and Waterfoot, with almost 6% of residents voting. This resulted in roads schemes in this area being voted the top two in the wider locality, and there were no successful schemes from the Clarkston and Williamwood ward.

Voters by deprivation

When we analyse voters by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), Table 2 below, we find a slightly higher proportion of voters came from our least deprived communities than our population as a whole. Similarly a slightly lower proportion of voters come from our most deprived communities than East Renfrewshire's population as a whole.²

SIMD Quintile	No. votes	% of total votes	% of population in this Quintile
SIMD 1 (20% Most Deprived)	47	3.6%	6.6%
SIMD 2	58	4.4%	9.0%
SIMD 3	79	6.0%	9.5%
SIMD 4	273	20.8%	14.4%
SIMD 5 (20% Least Deprived)	841	64.1%	60.5%

Table 2

4. Evaluation of the process

After submitting their vote residents were asked if they found the voting process easy to understand – over 95% of residents agreed.

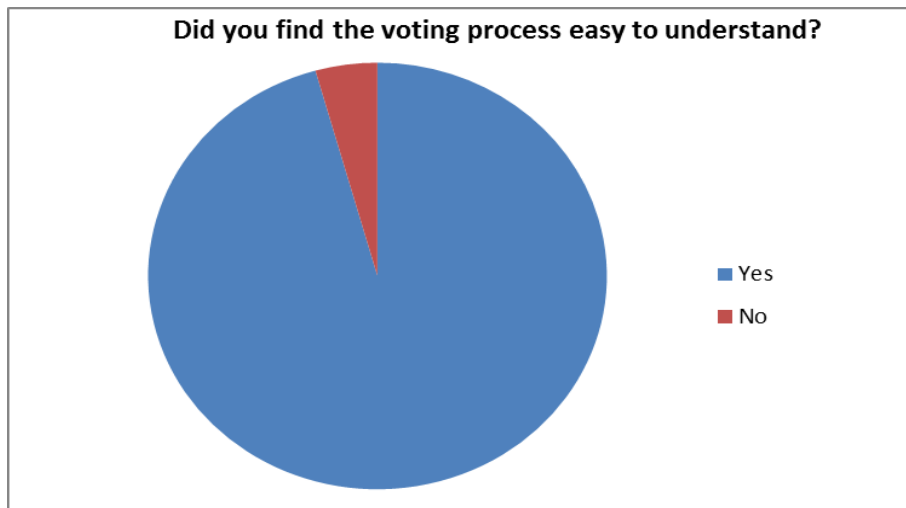


Figure 3

Comment analysis

There were opportunities for residents to comment on the process. This could be done via Citizen Space or on social media. On Citizen Space, roughly a quarter of voters left a comment, a summary of the comments can be found in table 4 below.

² Note- The % of households owning a car is lower in our most deprived communities than our least deprived.

Comments type	No. comments	%
Which specific roads were eligible	211	64%
General comments on local roads	38	11%
Presentation or promotion	35	10%
Voting is the wrong method to allocate funding	24	7%
Positive comments on the opportunity to influence	21	6%
Technical problems	6	2%
Total	335	

Table 4

Almost 65% of comments were linked to which roads were included for selection or suggesting additional roads should be included in the vote. A further 11% of comments included a general statement on the conditions of local roads.

10% of comments mentioned the promotion or presentation of the vote. A common request was to include maps or pictures of the roads to assist in decision making.

Whilst 7% of comments expressed that voting was an inappropriate method for distributing roads and footway repair funding, 6% of comments welcomed the opportunity to vote on the funding.

Social media analysis

Analysis of comments on the Council's Facebook posts with ten or more comments was undertaken to understand the social media response to this process. In some cases, it is a small number of individual Facebook users generating a high number of comments. Around half of the comments were from residents who disagreed with the participatory budgeting process itself and around a third of comments were about the condition of roads generally, including roads that had not been prioritised as part of the voting process.

5. Impact of promotion offline

To ensure local residents were aware of the voting process and able to take part East Renfrewshire Council took a number of steps to promote the process 'offline'.

Local and national media coverage

The voting process received coverage in the Eastwood and Southside Extra and the Barrhead News. The Convener for Community Services and Community Safety was interviewed about the project on BBC Radio Scotland's Kaye Adams Programme.

Libraries and customer first

The vote was promoted in all East Renfrewshire's libraries and through our gadget bars in Customer First. Libraries and Customer First staff were briefed to support residents to vote.

Community pop-ups

We held community pop-ups at the Foundry in Barrhead and Eastwood Health and Care Centre in August to promote the vote. Roughly 300 leaflets were distributed to local residents. However subsequent analysis found that these had no noticeable effect on the number of residents voting in the 48 hours following the pop-up.

6. Conclusions

East Ren Decides: Roads achieved a high level of resident engagement, with one of the highest responses rates to an East Renfrewshire Council consultation. As a result work will progress to resurface residential roads which would not normally have been prioritised.

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