

## Community Budgeting Deferred

At its meeting Council decided to defer the \$1.6 million Community Budgeting project until the 2017/18 budget.

The Community Budgeting project was designed around giving four local communities a say in how \$400,000 would be spent in each of their towns.

Mayor of South Gippsland Shire, Councillor Bob Newton was circumspect about the deferral. “Unfortunately, due to the tight timelines involved in getting panels convened and recommendations back to Council for the 2016/17 budget there wasn’t the chance to build a groundswell of support in the community,” said the mayor. “We could have proceeded, but the small number of nominees would have made the process unrepresentative – the exact opposite of what we’d hoped to achieve.”

Councillors acknowledged that the report adopted in October was explicit about the fact that a process designed to elicit panel recommendations in time for the 2016/17 budget would be rushed. Council was also seen as breaking new ground by taking this approach as nothing had been done like this in such a short time frame before.

“We knew it would be tight, but as a group – and remember that the October report was carried unanimously – we were genuinely interested in empowering those four communities to have a say about capital works projects in their towns. There is nothing lost from having had a go – in fact there is quite a lot of learning that’s been gained and we have been seen as pioneers in trailing a new method to engage with our community.

“We will take stock, receive a report in the new year about how to better approach this for 2017/18, and tackle it again with all our new-found knowledge under our belts,” concluded the mayor.

The community members who nominated to be part of a community panel will be invited to meet the Council in order to discuss their ideas as part of the process to frame the 2016/17 budget.

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