

# CITIZEN MATTERS मुंबई

## BMC wants your inputs on the city budget; here's how you can share that

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Sabah Virani 25 January 2023



The BMC budget is likely to be presented between February 3 and 4 this year. Pic: KK, Flickr (CC-BY-2.0)

On January 18th, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) invited people to send in their suggestions for the annual municipal budget on Twitter. This is a step towards making the country's richest municipal corporation's budget more democratic. But with such an open question, and the fact that not many people are not even familiar with the structure and form of the budget, where do you start?

In a previous explainer, we covered the basics of the BMC's budget. We touched on how to read through the budget estimates as and when the BMC releases it, as it is a complicated bunch of documents that divides its accounts into different fund codes: general, health, improvement schemes, slum clearance, education, water supply and sewerage, tree authority as well as sections on income and operational expenses.

We also considered its criticisms, of which the lack of citizen involvement was glaring. In that sense, the current call is definitely a step forward.

“We definitely need a participatory budget in some form, where the corporation asks people for their views,” says Milind Mhaske, founder and director of the urban governance NGO Praja Foundation. “This is a beginning.”

## Behind the BMC budget

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Mumbai’s budget-making process is pretty undemocratic. “It is driven more largely by the municipal commissioner, not the elected councillors,” says Milind. The councillors submit their requests for their ward, in a highly researched manner along with budget estimates and other supporting factors, to the municipal commissioner way back in October. He might consult certain departments in November and December. As it nears preparation, the standing committee, consisting of elected representatives, then discusses and debates the budget.

“The councillors don’t have sufficient power to make substantial changes to the budget. But they highlight points that they think will be largely disadvantageous,” says Milind. This time, as the BMC elections have been delayed since last March and the wards have been without any elected representatives or standing committees, it is unlikely these processes have happened at all. The municipal commissioner and acting administrator, Iqbal S Chahal, will prepare, approve and present the budget to himself for the second time in history.

Citizens are not included throughout the process, although they always have the option to approach their councillor.



Iqbal S Chahal presenting the budget to the chairman of the standing committee for the year 2021-2022. Pic: @myBMC

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## Will citizen inputs make a difference?

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With only a week between the deadline for suggestions and the presentation of the BMC budget, latest on February 5th, it is doubtful that the exercise will actually take the suggestions received into account. “The budget is probably already prepared by now. When are they going to compile the suggestions, deliberate and debate upon them, and incorporate them?” asks Milind.

This likelihood has been acknowledged on Twitter, even as demands for pothole-free roads, hawker-free footpaths, etc have rolled in.

“The exercise is purely optical,” says Milind, who nonetheless welcomes it. “It’s a beginning.”

However, he has reservations about the open-ended manner in which suggestions have been asked for. “If you want to engage citizens, you need to give them a structured format; a drop-down list from which they can choose a footpath, road, garden, hospital, etc, in their area. This way citizens can be specific and demand improvements on a micro-scale which is doable.”

One example of a way to do this systematically can be taken from Pune, which invites citizens to fill out suggestion forms in advance in October. A nominal portion of the budget is reserved for the selected suggestions.



Only after the BMC elections are held and the standing committee reformed, the



elected corporators will receive the funds they can spend on their wards. Pic: Sheena Khalid

## Our call to you

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To send your suggestions for the budget to the BMC, you can either send an email to [bmcbudget.suggestion@mcgm.gov.in](mailto:bmcbudget.suggestion@mcgm.gov.in) or send a letter to the Chief Accountant (Finance) Department, 4th floor, Annex building, BMC head office, Mahapalika Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400 001.



### BRIHANMUMBAI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

Date 18.01.2023

Press Release

#### **Mumbaikars can send suggestions via e-mail or in written format by 28<sup>th</sup> January 2023, for the Budget Estimates of BMC for the year 2023-24**

- Suggestions via email will be accepted on e-mail - [bmcbudget.suggestion@mcgm.gov.in](mailto:bmcbudget.suggestion@mcgm.gov.in)
- Written instructions may be sent to the Office of the Chief Accountant (Finance) at Headquarters
- BMC Administration's initiative for public participation in municipal budget

Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation administration has undertaken the initiative to have public participation in the Budget Estimates, which is under preparation for the financial year 2023-24. Citizens residing in Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) area are requested to send their suggestions via email at- [bmcbudget.suggestion@mcgm.gov.in](mailto:bmcbudget.suggestion@mcgm.gov.in), by 28<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

Citizens of Mumbai are hereby informed that, the process of preparation of Budget Estimates for the financial year 2023-24 for Income & Expenditure of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation is underway. The Budget Estimate will be presented before 5<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

In view of public participation, citizens of Mumbai are being appealed that if Citizen wish to make suggestion regarding budget, they may send their suggestions on following email ID Email Id: - [bmcbudget.suggestion@mcgm.gov.in](mailto:bmcbudget.suggestion@mcgm.gov.in), on or before 28<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

If anyone wants to send the suggestions in writing, they can send it on below mentioned address on or before 28<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

Address:-

Chief Accountant (Finance) Department,  
4th Floor, Annex Building,  
BMC Head Office,  
Mahapalika Marg,  
Fort, Mumbai 400 001.

Link : <https://mumbai.citizenmatters.in/open-call-for-suggestions-on-the-bmc-budget-45105>