
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

8th December 2020

Cabinet

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| Title: | Town Centre Fund 2020-2021 |
| Purpose: | To seek approval for the allocation of recently announced additional Town Centre Funding. |
| Recommendation: | It is recommended that Cabinet agrees to the approach set out including the allocation of funds to support the acquisition and improvement of vacant/derelict sites, and projects in Millport, Dalry, Stevenston and Kilbirnie. |

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In September 2020 Scottish Government announced an additional £18 million to be provided to local authorities through the Town Centre Fund, which forms part of the £230 million Economic Recovery Stimulus package announced in June 2020. This equates to a further £0.507M funding which is in addition to an earlier North Ayrshire allocation of £1.418M, proposals for which were agreed by Cabinet in May 2019.
- 1.2 This report sets out proposals for expenditure of the additional funding, with investments to allow the acquisition and improvement of vacant sites given the priority this represents for local members and communities, as well as support for projects in Millport, Dalry, Stevenston and Kilbirnie.

2. Background

- 2.1 Following agreement with COSLA and local authority Leaders, the Scottish Government announced on 9 September 2020 that £18 million would be provided to local authorities through a Town Centre Fund. That saw an allocation of £1.418M to North Ayrshire, proposals for which were agreed by Cabinet in May 2019. This included approximately £1M be utilised to prioritise action in Stevenston and Dalry; with the remaining £0.418M being utilised to support a range of other projects and community-led initiatives across North Ayrshire town centres.
- 2.2 The North Ayrshire additional allocation of £0.507M requires financial commitment by March 2021 and project completion by September 2021. The further grant fund is for capital expenditure which is additional to that which is already or would otherwise be allocated to the 2020-21 budget and should not substitute for existing spend.

- 2.3 The Government have advised that the aim of this additional £18 million fund is to stimulate local construction activity and support employment across Scotland. Local authorities should also make investment decisions in the context of national and local commitments to town centres including the Town Centre First Principle and the Town Centre Action Plan; and more recently, the Place Principle.
- 2.4 The consideration of potential projects has been informed by the grant conditions, the deliverability of projects, consultation with local ward members, known community-based projects and priorities, and alignment with actions identified in the emerging North Ayrshire Regeneration Delivery Plan.
- 2.5 On this basis, it is recommended that the fund is allocated as follows:

| Project | Description | Proposed Budget |
|--|---|------------------------|
| Asset acquisition, development and environmental works | Fund to support the acquisition of sites identified through ongoing elected member and public engagement. Ability to conclude acquisitions will be subject to successful negotiation. | £0.300M |
| Millport CARS | Funding to support ongoing CARS initiative due to additional costs arising as a result of Covid19. | £0.120M |
| Dalry Pavilion Improvements | Funding to support refurbishment works to pavilion for community use due to additional costs arising during detailed design. | £0.030M |
| Stevenston Shopfront Improvements | Funding to support additional shopfront improvements as a result of the initial scheme being oversubscribed. | £0.030M |
| 2 Main Street Kilbirnie | Additional funding to support post-demolition improvement works for use as amenity space | £0.017M |
| Garnock Street, Kilbirnie | Additional funding to implement full extent of resurfacing works | £0.010M |
| Total | | £0.507M |

- 2.6 The ability to conclude asset acquisitions within the funding timescales is subject to owner value expectations and interest in sale. If officers identify that acquisitions will not proceed to the full value, then funds will be reallocated to existing town centre projects in Dalry and Stevenston or others identified within this paper and in the emerging North Ayrshire Regeneration Delivery Plan. This approach seeks to maximise the impact of the fund, while supporting a range of initiatives, in line with current funding conditions.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet agrees to the approach set out including the allocation of funds to support the acquisition and improvement of vacant/derelict sites, and projects in Millport, Dalry, Stevenston and Kilbirnie.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 The North Ayrshire additional allocation of £0.507M requires financial commitment by March 2021 and project completion by September 2021. The additional grant fund is for capital expenditure which is additional to that which is already or would otherwise be allocated to the 2020-21 budget and should not substitute for existing spend.

Human Resources

- 4.2 No implications

Legal

- 4.3 Individual projects will consider legal implications through their development and will progress in compliance with grant conditions.

Land and building acquisitions will require negotiation. Mechanisms such as compulsory purchase orders will be considered where value expectations prove to be unreasonable, and where sites blight communities.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 Recognising that almost a third of the Scottish population lives within 500 meters of a derelict site, and that in deprived communities that figures increases to 55%, the need for an asset acquisition, development and environmental works fund has been identified with the intention of enabling the Council to positively intervene and tackle long-term vacant land and buildings.

Environmental and Sustainability

- 4.5 It is expected that the recommendations in the report will have a range of positive environmental impacts. Projects will address identified environmental improvement opportunities, including positive enhancements to vacant and derelict land and improving the urban fabric of town centres, in line with Scottish Planning Policy and the Scottish Government Town Centre First Principle.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 The recommendations support the delivery of the Council Plan outcomes under the Inspiring Places and Aspiring People themes, particularly our ambitions to achieve an inclusive, growing and enterprising economy and a vibrant, welcoming and attractive environment.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 Through locally agreed priorities, this fund will primarily support the delivery of the Land and Assets pillar. The development and implementation of a strategic regeneration programme will support social, economic and environmental outcomes through the delivery of physical and environment land and asset improvements.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Internal consultation has taken place to identify deliverable projects to maximise the benefit of the fund for North Ayrshire communities
- 5.2 Furthermore, the emerging Regeneration Delivery Pan is currently the subject of public consultation on the Council's Consul platform, elected member workshops and locality coordinators continue to provide input. This has informed the proposals contained in the report.
- 5.3 Previous public consultation exercises, such as charrettes have also informed the identification of projects.

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For further information please contact **Alex Mackenzie, Development Manager**, on **01294 324788**.

Background Papers

1. Town Centre Fund Cabinet Paper, 14 May 2019