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# NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

24 January 2023

## Cabinet

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Town Centre Fund Update</b>
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<b>Purpose:</b>	To provide an update on the delivery of the approved Town Centre Fund projects and seek approval for the reallocation of the balance of funding.
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<b>Recommendation:</b>	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) Notes the progress made on the implementation of the agreed Town Centre Fund projects, and the remaining balance of £147,092 which requires to be allocated</li><li>(b) Approves the proposals for the remaining balance of the Town Centre Fund as detailed at Appendix One; and</li><li>(c) Provides delegated authority to the Executive Director (Place) to agree any future changes to the funding allocations in consultation with the Portfolio Lead if required</li></ul>
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## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Scottish Government's Town Centre Fund was developed to enable Local Authorities to support their high streets to be more diverse, sustainable and successful in the face of changing and evolving retail patterns. Local Authorities received direct allocations under the Fund, with North Ayrshire Council receiving a total of £1.925m over two allocations.
- 1.2 Cabinet approved the acceptance of the allocations in May 2019 and December 2020 and the expenditure of the allocations on a range of projects in Dalry, Kilbirnie, Millport and Stevenston. The approved projects are substantially complete, resulting in a remaining balance of funding of £147,092 that requires to be reallocated to maximise the spend under the Fund. The remaining balance is substantially comprised of unrequired contingency allocations for the identified projects and a proportion of the asset acquisition fund. The latter was not utilised due to the private sale of a site resulting in purchase not being progressed. This report provides an update on progress on the projects and seeks approval of the proposed reallocation of the balance of funding.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 The Town Centre Fund was launched in 2019/20 as part of the Scottish Government's economic recovery stimulation package to support town centres to become more

vibrant, enterprising and accessible. It was developed to enable Local Authorities to stimulate and support a wide range of investments which would encourage town centres to diversify and flourish and create an increase in footfall through local improvements and partnerships.

- 2.2 The Fund encouraged a balance of larger scale interventions, together with support for some smaller projects, recognising that splitting funds equally amongst all centres would dilute potential impact. It recommended that town centre audits, charrettes and local knowledge inform the process of identifying appropriate projects.
- 2.3 North Ayrshire Council received an initial award of £1.418m and a further award of £0.507m. Cabinet approved the expenditure of these allocations in May 2019 and December 2020 on a range of projects in Dalry, Kilbirnie, Millport and Stevenston. The projects identified were informed by:
- The Fund's conditions and guidance;
  - A qualitative scoping exercise informed by town centre audits, conservation area management plans, charrettes, SIMD data, locality and community priorities and an assets review;
  - Consultation with Elected Members;
  - The deliverability of projects within the Fund timescales;
  - Consideration of previous and planned investment in town centres; and
  - Alignment with the developing actions in the then emerging Regeneration Delivery Plan.
- 2.4 The projects are now predominantly complete. A summary of the full list of projects including an update on progress and the budget position on each is provided at Appendix One. This has resulted in a balance of £147,092 in the Fund. This is substantially comprised of unrequired contingency allocations for the identified projects and a proportion of the asset acquisition fund. The latter allocation was part utilised for the purchase of a car park in New Street, Stevenston and a long term vacant property at 2 Main Street, Kilbirnie but not fully utilised due to the private sale of a proposed further acquisition site in Stevenston which resulted in the purchase by the Council not being progressed.
- 2.5 The balance of funding therefore requires to be utilised or financially committed within the current financial year. It is proposed that the remaining £147,092 be reallocated as set out below. Further details on each of the projects and the purpose of the reallocations is provided in the Appendix One:
- Dalry Play Links: £30,000 to support the delivery of the Lochshore Play Links project in the Garnock Valley. This will see the installation of three unique play features in Beith, Kilbirnie and Dalry which are reflective of the unique heritage connections between each town and Lochshore. These have been designed through co-design workshops with residents of each town. They will act as signposts between each town and Lochshore, encouraging new visitors to Lochshore to explore the wider area;
  - Dalry Active Travel Improvements: £91,306 to support the upgrade of the Lover's Walk link to Dalry Station to improve active travel and support the B714 Upgrade project;
  - Stevenston Shopfronts: Additional £5,786 to support works to the Pop Inn, thereby expending a total of £286,500 on the 100% funded Shopfront Improvement

Scheme in Stevenston town centre. Initial scoping work and consultation identified strategic areas of focus to address the poor condition of town centre buildings.; and

- Stevenston Beach Hub: Supporting the creation of the new multi-functional community hub located adjacent to Stevenston shore. The hub, operated by Raise Your Voice with Ardeer (RYVA), facilitates new indoor and outdoor activities to the benefit of local communities and promote Stevenston beach as a destination. An additional £20,000 is being allocated to support accessibility and environmental improvements at the Hub.

- 2.6 This approach aligns with the previous Cabinet approvals and accords with and contributes to the Regeneration Delivery Plan. It is also proposed that delegated authority be provided to the Executive Director (Place) to agree any further changes to the funding allocations in consultation with the Portfolio Lead if required.

### **3. Proposals**

#### **3.1 That Cabinet:**

- (a) Notes the progress made on the implementation of the Town Centre Fund projects;
- (b) Approves the proposals for the balance of the Town Centre Fund as detailed at Appendix One; and
- (c) Provides delegated authority to the Executive Director (Place) to agree further changes to the funding allocations in consultation with the Portfolio Lead if required.

### **4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty**

#### **Financial**

- 4.1 The balance of the Town Centre Fund requires to be expended or financially committed by 31 March 2023. The cost of the identified projects will be met by this allocation alongside identified match funding.

#### **Human Resources**

- 4.2 The identified projects will be delivered through the existing Regeneration Team resource.

#### **Legal**

- 4.3 The legal implications of the projects will be considered through their development and progress in compliance with the grant conditions.

#### **Equality/Socio-economic**

- 4.4 The identified projects will assist in meeting our socio-economic duty as set out in the Fairer Scotland Duty. The projects and Town Centre Fund seek to reverse economic, social and physical decline and reduce socio-economic disadvantage. They also aim to build community wealth and tackle local deprivation through the regeneration of our communities by maximising the potential of our land and assets. An initial screening

will be undertaken to establish if an Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessment is required for projects on a case by case basis.

### **Climate Change and Carbon**

- 4.5 The identified projects align with the Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy workstreams of: Green Economy; Transport and Travel; Natural Environment; Sustainable Operations; and Carbon Absorption. The climate change and carbon impacts of the projects will be assessed on a case by case basis to minimise the potential impacts in line with best practice.

### **Key Priorities**

- 4.6 The identified projects have been informed by the priorities identified within the Local Outcomes Improvements Plan and Locality Partnership priorities. The implementation of the projects will contribute to achieving the Council Plan priority outcomes and will contribute to the ambitions for: an inclusive, growing and enterprising economy; North Ayrshire to be well-connected with effective infrastructure; and for a sustainable, vibrant, welcoming and attractive environment.

### **Community Wealth Building**

- 4.7 The identified projects will contribute to delivering on the ambitions on the Community Wealth Building Strategy Land and Assets pillar. Their delivery will have a positive impact on the Council's ambitions, particularly across the pillars of:
- Land and Assets: by supporting equitable land development and the development of underutilised assets for community use.
  - Procurement: through the inclusion of appropriate community benefit from supplier clauses within projects; and by considering local supply chain opportunities and support delivery by smaller scale and local contractors where appropriate.
  - Financial Power: by investing in localities and leveraging external national investment into North Ayrshire.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 The proposal for the balance of the Town Centre Fund was informed by the assessment process outlined at Section 2.3 and the Regeneration Delivery Plan. The Regeneration Delivery Plan was the subject of extensive consultation including workshops with Council Officers; workshops with Elected Members; reports to and feedback from North Ayrshire Ventures Trust and the Community Wealth Building Expert Panel; and public engagement via Consul. It was also informed by the Locality Partnerships' priorities and previous public consultation exercises including Charettes.

Russell McCutcheon  
Executive Director (Place)

For further information please contact **Louise Kirk, Senior Manager Regeneration**, on **01294 324766**.

**Background Papers**

Cabinet Report – Town Centre Fund, May 2019

Cabinet Report – Town Centre Fund, December 2020

## Appendix One: Town Centre Fund Update

Project	Description	Current Position	Current Budget Allocation	Proposed Budget Allocation	Change
<b>Dalry</b>					
Dalry Building Improvement Grants	Delivery of a 100% funded grant Building Improvement Scheme in Dalry. Initial scoping work and consultation identified strategic areas of focus to address the poor condition of buildings within the town, several of which are at key entrances and provided a poor impression of the town centre.	Majority of works are complete, with weather dependant decoration to be undertaken. Proposed reallocation of unused contingency.	£177,065	£159,806	-£17,259
Dalry Streetscape Improvements	Town centre improvement works to provide an improved pedestrian environment further to the opening of the Dalry bypass and a substantial reduction in traffic numbers.	Removal of low level railing and relining works are outstanding and being progressed.	£120,883	£120,883	£0
Dalry Park Improvements	Improvements to Dalry Public Park to enhance the Town Centre including works to the Pavilion and drainage improvements.	Complete, retention outstanding.	£255,454	£255,454	£0
Dalry Events & Marketing	Support for town marketing and events. This included: Christmas Lights; Hilltap Toon Launch and a Digital Marketing Project.	Complete, no retention required.	£16,198	£16,198	£0
Dalry Play Links	The installation of three unique play features in Beith, Kilbirnie and Dalry which are reflective of the unique heritage connections between each town and Lochshore. These have been designed through co-design workshops with residents of each town. They will act as signposts between each town and Lochshore, encouraging new visitors to Lochshore to explore the wider area.	New project – Proposed allocation to support delivery of Community Play Links project in Garnock Valley. This additional funding will be distributed equally between the three towns.	N/A	£30,000	£30,000
Dalry Active Travel Improvements	Upgrade of the Lover's Walk link to Dalry Station to improve active travel and support the B714 Upgrade project.	New project – Proposed allocation to support active travel improvements.	N/A	£91,306	£91,306
<b>Dalry Total</b>			<b>£569,600</b>	<b>£673,647</b>	<b>£104,047</b>

Stevenston					
Stevenston Shopfront Improvement Grants	A 100% funded Shopfront Improvement Scheme in Stevenston town centre. Initial scoping work and consultation identified strategic areas of focus to address the poor condition of town centre buildings.	Proposed additional funding to support further works to local business premises Pop Inn.	£280,714	£286,500	£5,786
Stevenston Beach Park Pavilion	Supporting the creation of a new multi-functional community hub c.70m2 located adjacent to Stevenston shore. The hub, operated by Raise Your Voice with Ardeer (RYVA), facilitates new indoor and outdoor activities to the benefit of local communities and promote Stevenston beach as a destination.	Proposed additional funding to support accessibility and environmental enhancements at the Hub.	£50,000	£70,000	£20,000
Stevenston Streetscape Improvements	Works to provide an improved pedestrian environment, through increasing pavement widths, environmental improvements, changes in traffic management and funding to support purchase of strategic site for car parking. Comprised of New Street and Mill Dam Route Improvements.	Works complete, proposed reallocation of contingency.	£345,276	£303,660	-£41,616
<b>Stevenston Total</b>			<b>£675,990</b>	<b>£660,160</b>	<b>-£15,830</b>
Millport					
Millport CARS Project	Funding to the support ongoing CARS initiative due to additional costs arising as a result of Covid19.	Funding allocation complete.	£120,000	£119,699	-£301
<b>Millport Total</b>			<b>£120,000</b>	<b>£119,699</b>	<b>-£301</b>
Kilbirnie					
Town Centre Projects	Kilbirnie 2 Main Street: The purchase of a long-term vacant building that was in a state of significant disrepair and blighted Kilbirnie town centre for years Kilbirnie Garnock St. Carpark Improvements: An opportunity to improve visitor parking and the public space surrounding Stoneyholm Mill.	Complete, proposed reallocation of contingency.	£118,500	£111,022	-£7,478
<b>Kilbirnie Total</b>			<b>£118,500</b>	<b>£111,022</b>	<b>-£7,478</b>

<b>West Kilbride</b>					
West Kilbride Shopfront Improvement Grants	Phase 1 of a 100% grant funded Shopfront Improvement Scheme in West Kilbride. Initial scoping work and consultation identified strategic areas of focus to address the poor condition of buildings within the town, several of which are at key entrances and provide a poor initial impression.	Phase 1 Complete and Phase 2 underway funded by PBIP in 2022/23.	£93,426	£93,426	£0
<b>West Kilbride Total</b>			<b>£93,426</b>	<b>£93,426</b>	<b>£0</b>
<b>Beith</b>					
Town Centre Projects	Beith Main Street Public Realm improvements: to improve the street as the northern gateway to the Beith conservation area and the setting of existing listed buildings. Beith Christmas Lights: Beith Town Centre Initiative organise the annual switch on of the Christmas Lights, the Parade and general festivities for the town and visitors. Additional lighting fixtures were purchased to support the initiative.	Complete, no retention required.	£83,731	£83,731	£0
<b>Beith Total</b>			<b>£83,731</b>	<b>£83,731</b>	<b>£0</b>
<b>Kilwinning</b>					
Town Centre Projects	Kilwinning Bridgend Improvements: Major public realm improvements were undertaken c.2010 to deliver an improved streetscape. In the interim period elements of infrastructure have failed and additional areas were identified. These works were undertaken to improve the longevity and impression of the streetscape. Kilwinning McGavin Park Improvements: Given the proximity to the town centre, the park was identified as an asset that could be improved both for the local community and to attract visitors.	An alternative solution to replacement setts for Bridgend improvements is required and being progressed by Roads.  McGavin Park works are complete.	£52,950	£ 52,950	£0
<b>Kilwinning Total</b>			<b>£52,950</b>	<b>£52,950</b>	<b>£0</b>



<b>Irvine</b>					
Town Centre Projects	Irvine Christmas Lights: Irvine Special Events Forum organise the annual switch on of the Christmas Lights and general festivities for the enjoyment of the people of the town and visitors. To support the activities, additional lighting fixtures were purchased. 36 Bank Street: Funding to support the development of a feasibility study for a Town Centre living pilot	Complete, no retention required.	£15,900	£15,900	£0
<b>Irvine Total</b>			<b>£15,900</b>	<b>£15,900</b>	<b>£0</b>
<b>Other</b>					
Acquisitions	Funding to identify the development potential and viability of sites identified through ongoing elected member and public engagement.	Shortlisted site sold privately, proposed reallocation of funds.	£135,437	£55,000	-£80,437
Valuations & Ownership Searches	Undertaking valuations and ownership searches on priority sites.	Complete.	£8,269	£8,269	£0
Project Officer	Employment of Town Centre Officer.	Complete.	£51,197	£51,197	£0
<b>Other Total</b>			<b>£194,903</b>	<b>£114,466</b>	<b>-£80,437</b>
<b>Total</b>		No change to overall project total Town Centre Fund spend.	<b>£1,925,000</b>	<b>£1,925,000</b>	<b>£0</b>