
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

23 January 2024

Cabinet

Title:	UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Communities and Place Fund Update
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Purpose:	To provide an update on the first round of the Communities and Place Fund under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and to seek approval for the proposed approach to the second round for 2024/25.
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Recommendation:	That Cabinet: a) Notes the update on the first round of the Communities and Place Fund in 2023/24; and b) Approves the proposed approach to the second round of the Fund in 2024/25.
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Communities and Place Fund was approved by Cabinet on May 2023. This forms part of the Council's Investment Plan to utilise the £6.2m allocation received under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Communities and Place Fund aims to support the delivery of community projects through a competitive grant fund and participatory budgeting programme. It seeks to complement the range of external funding opportunities currently available and to support community-led projects by providing a flexible and inclusive source of funding.
- 1.2 The first round of the Fund is supporting nine projects across North Ayrshire through the £160,330 allocation. This report provides an update on the progress of the Fund and seeks approval for the proposed approach to the second round in 2024/25. This has been informed by the first round, feedback from stakeholders and the level of funding available in 2024/25.

2. Background

- 2.1 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) is part of the Levelling Up Fund agenda, providing £2.6bn funding across the UK between April 2022 and March 2025. The overarching objective of SPF is to build pride in place and increase life chances, underpinned by three investment priorities:

- Communities and Place;
- Supporting Local Business; and

- People and Skills.

- 2.2 The Investment Plan for the Council's £6.2m three year allocation was approved by Cabinet in August 2022 and by the UK Government in December 2022. The Communities and Place investment priority aims to enable places to invest to restore their community spaces and relationships and create the foundations for economic development at the neighbourhood level. The approach outlined for this priority in the Investment Plan sought to support the delivery of community projects through a competitive grant fund and participatory budgeting programme.
- 2.3 Cabinet approved the Communities and Place Fund in May 2023. This aims to provide a flexible and inclusive source of funding for communities to meet local need and achieve local outcomes across a broad range of activities. It seeks to complement the range of external funding opportunities currently available and to support community-led projects. It is comprised of a:
- Competitive grant scheme for communities;
 - Participatory Budgeting (PB) programme; and
 - Funding allocation to support smaller scale Council led projects that meet the aims and objectives of SPF and allow the Council to meet strategic goals.
- 2.4 Round one of the Fund opened on 21 June 2023 and closed on 21 July 2023. Applications were assessed by the assessment panel following the process approved by Cabinet in May. The total Fund allocation of £160,330 was awarded to the nine projects outlined below:

Applicant and Project Summary	Value
The Ayrshire Community Trust: Delivery of a bespoke programme of support for people living in deprived communities, aimed at people who may be experiencing financial hardship, isolation and loneliness.	£25,000
Beith Trust: Contribution towards the renovation of Geilsland House, as part of the wider redevelopment of the Geilsland Estate.	£21,100
Scottish Maritime Museum: Programme of community engagement to increase volunteering opportunities and the interactions between the local community and the museum.	£10,600
Irvine Community Sports Club: Extension of the Time to Talk: About You programme of mental health and wellbeing in Irvine.	£23,000
North Ayrshire Table Tennis Club: Purchase of equipment for the group to develop a North Ayrshire table tennis centre.	£10,200
Beith Playpark Action: Contribution towards a zip-wire in Orr's Park, Beith.	£13,086
Irvine Tennis Community: Contribution towards the Irvine Tennis Club redevelopment project.	£25,000
Kildonan Hall and Improvements Committee: Site preparation and foundations for the new Kildonan Community Shop and Café.	£24,716
Dalry Community Sports Club: Provision of new and upgraded lighting in Dalry Public Park	£7,628
Total	£160,330

- 2.5 The Fund was significantly oversubscribed with thirty-nine applications totalling £720,000 requested from the available £160,330 budget. The projects supported

deliver on the wide range of interventions identified in the Investment Plan, alongside Locality Priorities. Advice has been provided to unsuccessful applicants to enable them to pursue alternative sources of funding or to resubmit to the second year of the Fund.

- 2.6 The Council led projects being supported by the fund are at various stages of delivery and development. An update will be provided on these to Cabinet as part of a progress update paper on the Regeneration Delivery Plan later in 2024. The Participatory Budgeting process opened on 18 August 2023 and closed on 16 September 2023. A total of 25 applications were received with voting being open between 23rd October and 11 November 2023. £30,000 of the allocation was subsequently awarded as follows:

Applicant and Project Summary	Value
Café Solace & Kilbirnie and Glengarnock Community Association: Development of a community garden to grow food to make low cost, nutritious meals at the community centre and the installation of security cameras and additional parking facilities.	£5,000
Friends of Trindlemoss & Bourtrees Hill and Broomlands Community Association: A Festival of Food integrating different cultures to celebrate new Scots and provide Trindlemoss day attendees with the opportunity to experience different foods and different cultures.	£5,000
Beith Orr Park Neighbourhood Watch & Place Woodland Group: Delivery of the Garnock Valley Carves event and the purchase of equipment for the Place Community Woodland project.	£5,000
Dementia Friendly Largs and District in partnership with Alzheimer's Scotland North Ayrshire: Provision of a Virtual Dementia Tour to care providers, council staff, Fire Service, Police, students, carers and families supporting people living with dementia in the North Coast.	£5,000
Radio City Association: Provision of Community Cook Classes to build cooking skills to combat the cost of living crisis, including free ingredients and chef instruction.	£5,000
Dalry Community Sports Hub: Working in partnership with Dalry Community Development Hub and Dalry Action Group to reintroduce a gala event in Dalry Public Park.	£5,000
Total	£30,000

- 2.7 The Communities and Place allocation for 2024/25 is £961,794. The allocations are predetermined and must be spent within the financial year. This is comprised of £650,794 of capital, £200,076 revenue and £110,924 towards administration costs across the programme.
- 2.8 Cabinet approved the allocation for the Communities and Place Fund competitive grants of £500,000 of capital and £100,000 of revenue and £31,003 to the PB process. The balance of funding is allocated to support smaller scale Council led projects that meet the aims and objectives of SPF and allow the Council to meet strategic goals. These projects will be aligned to the Regeneration Delivery Plan and wherever possible match funding will be sought.
- 2.9 The proposed approach to the competitive grant element remains substantially unchanged from the first round, approved at Cabinet in May 2023. The following amendments are however proposed:

- An increase of the maximum funding request from £25,000 to £100,000.
- An updated assessment panel is in the process of being assembled with membership expected from third sector organisations, North Ayrshire Council, community partners and the Youth Parliament.
- The panel will be supported by the Programme Manager who will provide additional training to panel members and work with applicants to develop projects ahead of submission.
- An Expression of Interest (EoI) process to act as a sift early in the process. This will ensure prospective applicants are given guidance on other potential sources of funding if the Fund is not appropriate for their project.

2.10 The proposed approach has been informed by the first round, feedback from stakeholders and the increased availability of funding in 2024/25. The oversubscribed Round One outlined a clear demand for increased funding and provided an indication of the types of projects which could potentially be supported. Subject to approval of the proposed approach, the second year of the Fund will be launched in February 2024 with a closing date in March 2024. This aims to maximise the time available to applicants to deliver projects in 2024/25 and therefore the types of activities which can be funded.

2.11 The Fund will be promoted through North Ayrshire-wide community engagement. This will follow the approach agreed for round one to ensure information is disseminated and communities are encouraged to participate. This will utilise existing links via Locality Partnerships alongside in person and online events and a social media campaign. The arrangements for the second year of the PB process will be developed in early 2024. Further updates will be provided to Elected Members as the Fund progresses.

3. Proposals

3.1 That Cabinet:

- a) Notes the update on the first round of the Communities and Place Fund in 2023/24; and
- b) Approves the proposed approach to the second round of the Fund in 2024/25.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 The cost of delivering the Communities and Place Fund will be met by the SPF funding allocation. The second round in 2024/25 totals £600,000 and is made up of £500,000 capital and £100,000 revenue.

Human Resources

- 4.2 The Communities and Place Theme is managed by the SPF Programme Manager with support from the Claims and Compliance Officer. Both roles are funded by the SPF funding allocation.

Legal

- 4.3 The Fund's grant application and offer documentation was reviewed by Legal Services for the first round. The updated documentation will be reviewed by Legal to ensure continued compliance for the second round.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 The approved Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan aims to deliver on social and economic outcomes and was subject to the following impact assessments: Equality and Children's Rights; Islands and Fairer Scotland Duty. The Communities and Place Grant Fund aims to provide a flexible and inclusive source of funding for communities to meet local need and achieve local outcomes across a broad range of activities. The application and assessment process ensures alignment with the Fairer Scotland Duty and Council priorities, to address socio-economic inequality and embed a Community Wealth Building approach.

Climate Change and Carbon

- 4.5 The approved Investment Plan aims to improve the North Ayrshire and Ayrshire economies in accordance with net zero ambitions. This links with the ambitions of the Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy 2024-27 and the ambition for a fairer, greener, and more inclusive economy as set out in the Council's Economic Recovery and Renewal Approach. A key aspiration of the Shared Prosperity Fund Communities and Place theme is to deliver measures to support net zero and energy efficiency and enhance the natural environment. Several interventions specified by the Fund can deliver on these aims.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 The Communities and Place Fund is contributing to achieving the Council Plan priority outcomes and will contribute to the ambitions for wellbeing, communities and local democracy and climate change.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 The approved Investment Plan was informed by the Community Wealth Building strategy with the SPF themes cross referenced with the five pillars and respective related Regeneration Delivery Plan, Economic Recovery and Renewal Plan and Island Plans. The Investment Plan approach was considered by the CWB Expert Panel and advice provided on embedding CWB into the proposals.
- 4.8 The approach proposed for the Communities and Place Fund ensures investment is targeted locally to add value to and enhance existing activities across the funding landscape. It empowers local communities to deliver on their own priorities and encourages added capacity through partnership working, creating a resilient and robust local delivery ecosystem.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Communities and Place Fund proposal has been developed in consultation with Elected Members (at the Policy Advisory Panel), Connected Communities, community organisations and community stakeholder representatives as outlined in Appendix One. This has been further tested through consultation with The Ayrshire Community Trust and Arran Council for Voluntary Services. The oversubscribed Round One outlined a clear demand for increased funding and provided an indication of the types of projects which could potentially be supported through the Fund.

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For further information please contact **Calum Couston, Programme Manager – Shared Prosperity Fund**, on 07867159975

Background Papers

Cabinet Report: UK Shared Prosperity Fund, 23 August 2022

Policy Advisory Panel Report: UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Communities and Place, 18 April 2023

Cabinet Report: UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Communities and Place Fund, 30 May 2023