

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Officer (Regulatory & Regeneration)****Infrastructure, Regeneration & Economic Development Committee****1 November 2023**

Subject: Place Based Investment Programme Fund & Alexandria Masterplan

1 Purpose

- 1.1** This report seeks Members' approval for the funding allocation for 2022/23 to 2025/26 which represent years 2 to 4 of the 5 year Place Based Investment Programme Fund (PBIP) to projects in Alexandria and wider West Dunbartonshire Council (the Council) area.

2 Recommendations**2.1.1** It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) notes the progress on development and delivery of the projects arising from the Alexandria Masterplan for which PBIP was allocated
- (ii) approves the 2024/25 allocation of £0.471m and a proportion of the 2025/26 allocation, with an estimated total of £1.149m over three years to projects arising from the Alexandria Masterplan
- (iii) approves the 2023/24 allocation of £0.471m of Council's Place Based Investment Programme to Community Grants
- (iv) notes that the remaining 2022/23 allocation of £0.310m will go towards the development of an activity centre in Clydebank
- (v) note that recommendations on the allocation of the remaining 2025/26 funding will be made in a future report, and will be subject to circumstances and priorities near the time
- (vi) authorises the Chief Officer - Regulatory and Regeneration to conclude on behalf of West Dunbartonshire Council, the award of the contract(s) to deliver the Alexandria projects in line with Contract Standing Orders and the Financial Regulations.
- (vii) authorises the Chief Officer - Regulatory and Regeneration to award Grants to eligible Community groups following a formal selection process

3 Background

- 3.1** In 2021 the Scottish Government announced a capital "Place Based Investment Programme" (PBIP). The Programme is considered to be a

successor to the Town Centre Fund, and can be used to develop projects that meet Government's regeneration priorities including

- Investments shaped by the needs and aspirations of the local communities.
- Supporting ambitions in the Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027 such as town centre revitalisation, community-led regeneration, community wealth building and 20-minute neighbourhoods.
- Accelerating ambitions for net zero, wellbeing and inclusive economic development and tackling inequality.

3.2 PBIP is a multi-year non-competitive Programme with the requirement that each year's allocation of funding is committed within that financial year. Funding for 2024/25 and 2025/26 is still to be confirmed, but an estimated likely allocation to the Council is as follows:

Year 1 2021/22	£0.780m - spent
Year 2 2022/23	£0.676m - received and committed
Year 3 2023/24	£0.471m - received
Year 4 2024/25	£0.471m
Year 5 2025/26	£0.471m

3.3 A report to IRED in September 2021 approved the allocation of years 2 (2022/23) and 3 (2023/24) of PBIP funding with an estimated total of £1.149m to projects arising from the Alexandria Masterplan

3.4 The Alexandria Masterplan, which has been subject to extensive consultation and been developed in close liaison with the community and other stakeholders, was approved by the IRED Committee in September 2021. It provides a clear and realistic framework to guide land use, development and spatial interventions in Alexandria. The Masterplan comprises 12 strategic projects which positively respond to community and stakeholder aspirations:

1. Main Street
2. Smollett Fountain
3. Property Improvements
4. Mitchell Way
5. New Homes
6. Alexandria Library
7. St Andrew's Church
8. Community Education Centre
9. Green Heritage Corridors

10. Cycling and Walking Network

11. Christie Park

12. Lomond Galleries

3.5 Following the allocation of PBIP to projects arising from the Alexandria Masterplan the 12 projects were assessed against the PBIP criteria in order to make recommendations to members on which projects should be prioritised. The criteria included deliverability within the PBIP timeframe, the capacity for the lead organisation to deliver and the social, economic and environmental impact.

3.6 Following the assessment process the highest scoring projects were:

- **Green Heritage Corridors** – this has the potential to be a community led project which proposes more greening and other enhancements such as artwork, play facilities and growing spaces along key routes to and within the town centre.
- **Cycling and Walking Network** –this aims to develop a network of safe walking and cycle routes in the area. It is an essential part of delivering the ‘20 minute neighbourhood’ concept and encouraging more active travel in the area.
- **Alexandria Library** –To complement the recent internal works and strengthen the library’s role as a community/heritage hub this project would investigate enhancements to improve the setting of the building, offer opportunities for outdoor event space and celebrate the towns’ heritage.

Information on the outcome of the assessment process was discussed with members in November 2021 and shared with the Alexandria Town Centre Forum thereafter. It was anticipated that these projects would be developed and committed in years 2 and 3 (2022/23 and 2023/24) of the PBIP funding.

4 Main Issues

4.1 The Council remains committed to delivering a raft of town centre improvements in Alexandria in line with the Alexandria Masterplan as approved in 2021. Preparation works to develop the Green Heritage Corridors and Cycling and Walking Network projects is well underway including procurement of a design team. Due to the nature of these projects, communities must now be consulted on the scope of the project and further develop the ideas before they can progress. Consequently, these projects cannot be delivered in the timeframe required to use 2022/23 and 2023/24 PBIP funding. The Council is committed to delivering these projects and will progress them by ringfencing 2024/25 PBIP funding and a proportion of the 2025/26 funding to match the previously agreed sum and these projects will be committed in 2025/26.

- 4.2** In order to ensure the Council can continue to access 2022/23 and 2023/24 PBIP funding and use it in a meaningful way for Alexandria, a range of other improvements projects to enhance the town centre will be delivered with 2022/23 funding used before the end of the 2023/24 financial year while work is ongoing to progress the Alexandria Masterplan projects for future years.

Improvement projects which align with the masterplan and can be delivered with year 2022/23 of PBIP funding totalling £366,000 and completed before the end of the 2023/24 financial year are:

Project	£,000
Dalmonach Steps (replacement and upgrade of existing footpath steps and lighting between Dalmonach Rd and A813)	120
Property improvements at the shopping centre	141.5
Town Centre car park improvements	100
Improvements to the façade of Alexandria Library	4.5
Total	366

These works, coupled with projects not funded by the PBIP fund like the Smollett Fountain renovation and shop front improvements, will collectively enhance the look and feel of the town centre.

- 4.3** The total cost of the works deliverable in Alexandria within the 2022/23 schedule is £336,000. It is proposed that the remaining £310,000 of 2022/23 fund is allocated to progress the development of an activity centre in Clydebank. This will not impact on the overall funding available for Alexandria, as the full £1.149m will be invested to improve Alexandria by 2025/26.
- 4.4** It is further proposed that the £471,000 of funding allocated for 2023/24 is distributed to areas throughout West Dunbartonshire through a community grant approach. This would involve the regeneration and communities teams working together to offer community groups and organisations the opportunity to apply for capital grants. There would be two levels of grant offered, small grants up to £5,000 and larger grants of over £50,000. The grants would be awarded applying a strict criteria to ensure they are used to fund capital projects which align with community aspirations and need.
- 4.5** Small grants would be distributed through Participatory Budgeting (PB) process. This approach is in step with the Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2027 which seeks to increase the amount of Council resources directed by communities (Strategic Priority 1) and residents and engaged and empowered and participate directly in service design and delivery (Strategic Priority 4). Larger grants of over £50,000 will be distributed following a formal assessment of applications submitted by eligible community groups. Detailed guidance will be based on previously implemented capital grants.
- 4.6** A recommendation for the allocation of the remaining £161,000 of 2025/26 PBIP funding will be subject to circumstances and priorities near the time, with a report brought to a future IRED Committee for approval.

5 People Implications

- 5.1** Existing staff within Regeneration will develop and implement the projects in Alexandria in cooperation with key stakeholders. Support will be required at key stages from other Services, including Procurement and Finance. Grant applications will be assessed by Officers from Regeneration, Communities, Finance and Asset Management.

6 Financial & Procurement Implications

- 6.1** The PBIP is capital funding available to West Dunbartonshire Council. All projects to be funded will be subject to the usual procurement procedures.

7 Risk Analysis

- 7.1** All projects are subjects to a range of risks that may impact on them being delivered on time and on budget. The Alexandria projects will be developed taking a project management approach to design and delivery. Risk will be mitigated by availability of a suitable level of resource to progress the projects. The Community Grants applicants will be assessed on their capacity to deliver the works and administer the grant. The Council already has experience of managing the process.
- 7.2** Should the Committee decide not to proceed as recommended then this will delay the project resulting in financial implications, reputational damage and possible impact on future grant funding..

8 Environmental Sustainability

- 8.1** It will be a priority to take a 'zero carbon' approach to project selection and to reflect the aims of the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

9 Equalities Impact Assessment

- 9.1** An equalities screening was undertaken for this report to determine if there is an equalities impact. It notes the importance of addressing equalities and related areas, such as health, socio-economic (Fairer Scotland Duty) impacts and Human Rights including children's rights, and engaging with communities of place, interest and experience. To facilitate this, Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out for the community grants and for PBIP funded projects, which will inform decision making.

10 Environmental Sustainability

- 10.1** It will be a priority to take a 'zero carbon' approach to project selection and to reflect the aims of the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

11 Consultation

11.1 Alexandria Masterplan has been through extensive stakeholder and community consultation. The projects identified for PBIP will be developed and delivered in conjunction with the local community groups, Alexandria Traders Association and which will be able to apply for Community Grants for capital works to fund projects shaped by their needs and aspirations.

12 Strategic Assessment

12.1 The Council has agreed its five main strategic priorities for 2022 – 2027. The Place Based Investment Programme is consistent with the following objectives:

- Our neighbourhoods are sustainable and attractive.
- Our area has the infrastructure for sustainable and inclusive growth where businesses can flourish.
- Our residents are engaged and empowered.

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Chief Officer - Regulatory & Regeneration

23 October 2023

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Appendices: Members Briefing Note- Prioritisation of Alexandria Projects for PBIP

Background Papers: Place Based Investment Fund, IRED Report, September 2021
Equalities Impact Screening

Wards Affected: All