

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Officer (Regulatory & Regeneration)****Infrastructure, Regeneration & Economic Development Committee****6 November 2024**

Subject: Place Based Investment Programme Fund & Alexandria Masterplan

1 Purpose

- 1.1** This report asks Members to note the update on the Place Based Improvement Programme and to progress with delivery of the Alexandria masterplan projects.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that Committee:
- (i) notes the update regarding availability of the Place Based Investment Programme funding for Year 4 and Year 5
 - (ii) notes the progress on development and delivery of the projects arising from the Alexandria Masterplan for which Place Based Investment Programme funding was allocated
 - (iii) notes the progress on development of the Mitchell Way improvement project
 - (iv) 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.

3 Background

- 3.1** In 2021 the Scottish Government announced a capital “Place Based Investment Programme”. It was designed as a five-year non-competitive Programme (2021/22 to 2025/26) to with the requirement that each year’s allocation of funding is committed within that financial year. The Programme was considered to be a successor to the Town Centre Fund, and conceived to 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 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 In Summer 2024 we received correspondence from the Scottish Government advising that due to uncertainties around the Scottish Government’s financial position and an ongoing review of their capital commitments, the confirmation of the PBIP allocation for 2024/25 had been delayed.

3.3 On 11 October 2024 we have received a confirmation from the Scottish Government that they are unable to release the 2024/25 allocation of PBIP funding as the projects did not meet the criteria in terms of urgency and criticality. No information was providing regarding future 2025/26 PBIP funding allocation. The Government advised that their financial position remains extremely precarious and emergency spending controls have been introduced to support wider pressures.

3.4 The following PBIP funding has been received in previous years:

Year 1 2021/22	£0.780m
Year 2 2022/23	£0.676m
Year 3 2023/24	£0.471m

Originally an estimated likely allocation for Year 4 and Year 5 to the Council were as follows:

Year 4 2024/25	£0.471m
Year 5 2025/26	£0.471m

3.5 A report to IRED in September 2021 committed to delivery of projects arising from the Alexandria Masterplan and allocated circa £1.147m of PBIP to those projects. The 12 projects Alexandria Masterplan were assessed against the PBIP criteria in order to make recommendations to members on which projects should be prioritised.

3.6 A report to IRED in November 2023 provided an update on allocations of the Place Based investment Programme funding and on progress with delivery of the Alexandria Masterplan projects.

Year	Allocation	Project	Status (Nov 24)
Year 2 2022/23	£0.366m	Alexandria Masterplan	Received & Spent
	£0.310m	Clydebank Activity Centre	Received & Allocated
Year 3 2023/24	£0.471m	Community Grants	Received & Spent

Year 4 2024/25	£0.471m	Alexandria Masterplan	Not released
Year 5 2025/26	£0.310m	Alexandria Masterplan	tbc
	£0.161m	Allocation tbc	tbc

4 Main Issues

4.1 The Council remains committed to delivering a raft of town centre improvements in Alexandria in line with the approved Alexandria Masterplan and priorities identified by the assessment process in November 2021. Notwithstanding the disappointing updates from the Scottish Government, the Regeneration Team have continued to progress development of projects using existing funding.

4.2 As Place Based Investment Programme funding in Year 4 will not be released there will be a funding gap of up to £0.781m in the Alexandria Masterplan budget. To ensure funding is available for delivery of the Alexandria Masterplan projects, Regeneration Team have considered ways to reprioritise other long-term commitments and notional contributions towards future projects across the Council area over 2025/26 and 2026/27

Alexander Street

4.3 £0.471m of Year 4 2024/25 Place Based Investment Programme funding was allocated to Alexander Street Improvement project, which will deliver the aims and objectives of Green Heritage Corridors and Cycling and Walking Network from the Alexandria Masterplan. To ensure that the project can go ahead, £0.471m will be reallocated from other long-term commitments and notional contributions towards future projects.

4.4 In February 2024 a design team were appointed to develop the Alexander Street project. Over the past few months, they have been working with the local community, stakeholders and Council officers to develop designs for a number of improvements along Alexander Street between the River Leven and Main Street. The local community have had an opportunity to engage with the project at the inception stage during a family fun day in April (hosted in CATRA premises on Alexander Street). Once the concept designs were developed, the community were able to provide comments and indicate their priority interventions during an Alexandria market event in June, where the design team had a stall.

4.5 Feedback received from the community as well as from the Council's Roads and Greenspace teams have been incorporated into the final proposal. Technical design and tender documentation will be completed in November. It

is expected that a contractor will be appointed in early 2025 and the project completed by the end of 2025.

4.6 Alexandria Masterplan – further project(s)

£0.310m of Year 5 2025/26 Place Based Investment Programme funding was allocated to further Alexandria Masterplan projects, which are yet to be defined. If no PBIP funding is released by the Scottish Government in 2025/26, £0.310m could be reallocated from other long-term commitments and notional contributions towards future projects.

Alexandria Masterplan – Town Centre improvements

- 4.7** Property improvements at the shopping centre for which £0.141m was allocated have been completed. Town Centre car park improvements for which £0.100m was allocated have been delayed due to access and coordination issues. The new Bank Street housing development managed by the Council's Housing team is currently out to tender and their programme may affect when and how the resurfacing work can be delivered.

Mitchell Way Public Realm Improvement

- 4.8** Funding for Mitchell Way improvements (£0.800m) was allocated from the Council's capital budget in 2017 however due to uncertainties around the LIDL development it was not possible to progress this project before now. The funding has been carried forward each year.

- 4.9** A design team has been appointed for the Mitchell Way improvement project. The team have already been working on the Alexander Street project, and have a good understanding of Alexandria. They have established strong working relationships with a number of key stakeholders in Alexandria, including the Vale of Leven Trust (VoLT), Central Alexandria Tenants and Residents Association (CATRA), the Traders Association and the Community Council.

- 4.10** Public engagement is planned for early 2025. It was concluded that it would be difficult to organise meaningful engagement in late 2024 due to competing priorities including BID Ballot and Christmas lights switch-on event planned by the local community. The aim of the engagement will be to establish priorities for the Mitchell Way project and to find out what further improvements could be delivered in the town centre in the future as and when funding becomes available. It is expected that the engagement and design process would continue until late 2025 with works starting on site in early 2026.

4.11 Shop Front Improvement Grants

The grant scheme funded by Shared Prosperity Fund which offers grants of up to £10,000 per property helped 15 business in Alexandria to improve the frontage of their premises, with more 9 businesses planning to deliver improvements before the funding deadline of 31 March 2025. Collectively these improvements contribute to making the Alexandria town centre a more attractive and welcoming place. The grant scheme is now closed for new

applications however similar schemes will be considered in the future if funding becomes available.

Business Improvement District

- 4.12 Alexandria Traders Association have been working for over a year to develop a Business Improvement District (BID) in Alexandria town centre. The final BID Proposal was approved by the Council and the Scottish Government on 4th September. The Chief Officer for Regulatory and Regeneration confirmed in a letter to the BID Proposer that the BID Proposal is approved and that the Council will not exercise their right to veto the proposal. The Ballot date has been set for 14 November and the ballot papers have already been distributed to all persons eligible to vote. If the businesses vote in favour of the BID, it will become operational from 1 April 2025.

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 Legal.

6 Financial & Procurement Implications

- 6.1 Place Based Investment Programme funding allocation for Year 4 2024/25 will not be released by Scottish Government. To ensure that the Alexander Street project can go ahead, £0.471m will be reallocated from other long-term commitments and notional contributions towards future projects. If Year 5 2025/26 allocation is not released, the Council can consider re-prioritising other longer term regeneration commitments to ensure that funding for the Alexandria Masterplan projects is available. All projects to be funded will be subject to the usual procurement procedures.

7 Risk Analysis

- 7.1 All projects are subject 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.

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 Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out for the Alexander Street project. Equality Impact Assessment will be completed for the Mitchell Way project.

10 Consultation

- 10.1** Extensive engagement with the local community and stakeholders was undertaken for the Alexander Street project. Engagement for the Mitchell Way projects is planned for early 2025.

11 Strategic Assessment

- 11.1** 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.

Alan Douglas

Chief Officer - Regulatory & Regeneration

6 November 2024

Person to Contact: Gillian McNamara

Appendices: None

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

Place Based Investment Programme Fund & Alexandria Masterplan, IRED Report, November 2023

Equalities Impact Screening

Wards Affected: All