

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Strategic Lead, Regeneration

Infrastructure, Regeneration and Economic Development Committee:

21 August 2019

Subject: Town Centre Fund

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to progress projects related to the Town Centre Fund expenditure in 2019/20.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Committee;

- (i) approves the town centre improvement projects in Alexandria, Clydebank and Dumbarton described in this report utilising the full allocation from the Scottish Government's Town Centre Fund allocation to the Council of £859,000;
- (ii) agrees the allocation of £51,000 from previously secured developer contributions to part fund the recommended project in Dumbarton, and
- (iii) agrees that completed tenders related to the Town Centre Fund will be presented at the next available Tendering Committee for approval.

3. Background

3.1 At the last meeting of IRED Committee held on 15 May 2019, Members noted West Dunbartonshire Council's allocation of £859,000 from Scottish Government's £50m one-off Town Centre Fund and noted that developed proposals would be presented to a future meeting of IRED for approval. Scottish Government's intention for the Fund is to contribute to transformative investments which drive local economic activities and re-purpose town centres to become more diverse, successful and sustainable.

4. Main Issues

4.1 Committee heard that due to the tight timescales for identifying, designing and procuring the projects, the methodology for allocating the Fund to eligible projects would need to be based several factors but principally the selected projects' deliverability during this financial year. Extending the scope of projects that had already gone through options appraisal would

also be preferred e.g. Dumbarton Waterfront Path, together with robust evidence of community needs and demands. Using previous community consultations drawn from charrette reports, together with recent conversations taking place at town centre Forum meetings, the projects recommended for approval in this report are both achievable and conform to Scottish Government's aspirations for the use of the Fund.

- 4.2 Developer contributions secured by the Planning Service for green infrastructure enhancements will be accessed and in part contribute towards the works proposed at Riverside Lane as a gateway to the Dumbarton riverside pathway project as described at 5.13.
- 4.3 Evaluation of the benefits of the project is required by Scottish Government, and specific advice has been given on this. Benchmark data is already available in "Your Town" audits that were carried out by Scottish Towns Partnership for the Council in 2016, with a further evaluation to be undertaken in 3 years time to measure the success of the projects.

5. Proposed Projects

- 5.1 There are four separate projects recommended for approval; two in Alexandria, one in Clydebank and one in Dumbarton. As the total value of all projects will exceed the £859,000 allocation, it is proposed that the Local Economic Development capital budget will be utilised to meet the additional costs.

Alexandria

- 5.2 There has been recent investment, and more in the pipeline for Alexandria, including the completed housing redevelopment of Kippen Dairy site by Cordale Housing Association, the planned housing by the Council at Crevel Court and the proposed mixed use development at Mitchell Way, which includes a landscaped upgrade along Mitchell Way. In recommending appropriate projects for the Town Centre Fund, it was important to identify projects that complement these planned developments and that meet the needs of communities and business interests.
- 5.3 Recent discussions have taken place at the Alexandria Multi-Group and at Alexandria Town Centre Forum. Place development and physical regeneration concerns from the community relate to lack of investment in the town centre, important buildings being under-used, the current condition of Mitchell Way as well as roads infrastructure condition particularly around the train station. Interest was expressed in better pavements and footpaths, improved signage, improving the appearance of neglected buildings, more arts/community spaces within the town centre and the restoration of the Smollett Fountain, which is located at the crossroads of the historic town centre. The recent and proposed housing developments close to the town centre were welcomed as a way of bringing more people and life to the centre and consequently improving safety and security in the evenings.

5.4 The Town Centre Fund could begin to fund some of the priorities. It is also recommended that the Council facilitates a longer term vision, to be developed in collaboration with the actively engaged communities and businesses, using evidence of community need drawn from the very recent Place Standard conversations. This vision, or plan, would identify a range of priority investments, should further funding become available.

5.5 Taking account of these recent consultations, the proposed Town Centre Fund projects in Alexandria are provided below:

a. Refurbishment and re-use of three High Street properties, at an estimated cost to the Town Centre Fund of £280,000 across the properties, to bring them back into productive use for a mixture of upper floor social housing and office uses, and ground floor commercial/retail or temporary arts and community uses. This project meets the Fund's aspirations of re-purposing vacant and obsolete properties within town centres and increasing footfall. The Town Centre Fund will be used for eligible elements of expenditure, with further capital funding from Asset Management to meet the rest of the costs, estimated at £150,000. Grant funding from Housing will be used to acquire the residential properties for the HRA at market value. The properties are:

1. 76 – 80 Main Street, ground and upper floor – this is a comprehensive building refurbishment that will provide improved retail units and upper floor affordable flats;
2. 158 – 160 Main Street, ground and upper floors – formerly the Lagavulin, the property will be split into two retail/commercial units with upper floor storage, to meet the demand for smaller units in Alexandria; and
3. 119 Main Street – this will include improvement to the appearance of the entrance of the close on Main Street, and refurbishment of the upper floor for office use.

b. Design development for the restoration of the Smollett Fountain as a landmark feature within the town centre, and improved roads and footpaths adjacent to the Fountain. Given the anticipated complexity of this project and level of specialist resource required, it is unlikely that the project will be delivered in full during 2019/20. So, while the designs can be funded from Town Centre Fund at an estimated cost of £30,000, implementation of the restoration work will be funded by the Council's Local Economic Development budget during 2020/21. The restoration costs are unknown at this time.

5.6 All of the properties and the Smollett Fountain are in Council ownership meaning that no third party approvals are required. Asset Management will be leading on the building refurbishment projects and their programme will reflect the conditions on legal commitment of the Town Centre Fund this financial year.

Clydebank

- 5.7** With the extensive regeneration programme in place at Queens Quay well underway, together with the redevelopment of the Playdrome, Whitecrooks and Roseberry Place in the pipeline, Clydebank is a town in transition. The approved public realm and roads infrastructure on Dumbarton Road, Connecting Clydebank, will be a key project in making the town more cohesive and, the potential of a new transport interchange at the train and bus stations, connections to the town centre will be much improved. The appearance of the town centre is generally good, helped by investment in the public realm near the Canal and at Three Queens Square several years ago. The Clydebank Charrette and Clydebank Can Charrette that took place in 2015 and 2018, respectively, pointed to the need for a number of improvements, some of which are already underway e.g. Connecting Clydebank, and others, such as bringing more footfall and community activity to the Canalside at Three Queens Square, are being developed into longer term project plans.
- 5.8** The high quality town centre public realm at the Canal doesn't extend to the southern part of the Clyde Regional Shopping Centre, where the condition of the shopping thoroughfare of Sylvania Way South is in a poor condition and uneven. There is a need to address this area and at the same time provide a better public realm for this busy pedestrian route that is close to the bus and railway stations and is often the first impression of Clydebank town centre for visitors. The proposed project for the expenditure of Town Centre Fund in Clydebank is:
- a. Public Realm Upgrade of Sylvania Way South (the uncovered area as shown in Appendix 1) at a cost of £250,000 including fees, resurfacing, new street furniture and landscaping.
- 5.9** Edinburgh House represents the private majority owner of the Clyde Regional Shopping Centre and the Council has a minority share of the ownership of the overall Centre, however the section of Sylvania Way South proposed for the public realm upgrade is primarily in Council ownership. Edinburgh House has been consulted on this proposal and has indicated that they would consider a contribution to the cost of the project which is estimated at £250,000, any final contribution will be considered once we finalise the detailed design and determined the contractual costs of delivery.
- 5.10** Design development, informed by local business and community engagement on the proposed layout will take place between July and September 2019. Tendering, including a report to Procurement Committee will be completed by January 2020 with the contract work legally committed thereafter, with an anticipated start date in March 2020. Given that the work will take place in a busy shopping area with many retailers and businesses as well as shoppers potentially affected, construction methods that minimise inconvenience will be put in place. It is not anticipated that

planning permission will be required, but that will be subject to further discussions when the detailed designs are finalised.

Dumbarton

- 5.11** With the relocation of staff to Dumbarton town centre and the restoration and re-use of important buildings at 16 Church St and Glencairn House in the pipeline, in Dumbarton the Council is already leading on key Scottish Government regeneration principles, most notably Town Centre First. Furthermore, new housing development at the Waterfront will result in 1,000 residents living close to Dumbarton town centre, bringing much needed footfall to local businesses and vibrancy to the town centre. The value of these housing and retail developments at the Waterfront has been estimated at £4.4m GVA to West Dunbartonshire.
- 5.12** Despite these positive developments, much more could be done with the High Street in order to tackle the diminishing shopping offer that is symptomatic of retail trends throughout the country, and to tackle the blight caused by empty and derelict properties. Re-purposing buildings for uses other than shopping is one way of addressing these issues, and dialogue with private owners of town centre properties to consider re-purposing options has started. Any changes arising from these discussions will however take some time to happen, and in the meantime the best use of Town Centre Fund and any other funding source that might emerge is in projects that contribute to the vitality of the town as it is now, while not compromising any future plans. It is also important that projects take account of issues raised during previous and recent conversations with local residents and businesses.
- 5.13** In the recent past there have been various successful community engagements; the Town Centre Masterplan consultations in 2012, at the Dumbarton Rock and Castle Charrette in 2015, and at the quarterly Dumbarton Town Centre Forum, where there is a range of community and business interests represented. A common theme in all of these discussions is the importance of Dumbarton town centre's relationship to the River Leven and a general agreement that the High St has turned its back on the water. The Waterfront pathway linking the town centre with the Rock was developed to remedy this issue. The pathway is being delivered in phases as agreements with the private landowners are made, however, the "gateway" to the walkway from the town centre at Riverside Lane has not yet been included in the plans. The proposed Town Centre Fund project for Dumbarton town centre is:
- a. A high quality gathering place and gateway, at an estimated cost of £350,000 including fees, to the Waterfront Pathway at Riverside Lane to include greening, seating, and "pocket park" facilities that will help connect the High Street with the riverfront, with a £51,000 allocation from developers contributions as agreed with the Planning Service.

- 5.14** The land is currently jointly owned by the Council and Cullross, the latter having taken fairly recent ownership of a strip of land in order to facilitate their housing development. Agreement has been reached with Cullross that the land will transfer back to the Council. In addition to the usual consultees, Scottish Water, who has an operational building on Riverside Lane, will also be consulted. Regarding the ongoing issue of flooding from the River Leven and how it may impact on the project, the project designer will liaise with Roads and Transportation and their flood consultant. Consultations with Dumbarton Town Centre Forum on design options will take place during the design development.
- 5.15** Design development and stakeholder consultations will take place in July, August and September 2019. The design will be ready for tender in October 2019 and with a target date for Procurement Committee in January 2020 to allow the project to be legally committed well within the financial year and to commence on site early spring 2020. It is not anticipated that planning permission will be required, but that will be subject to further discussions when the detailed designs are finalised.

6. People Implications

- 6.1** There are no implications for staff resourcing, other than the resources required from various services e.g. Economic Development, Asset Management, Procurement, Planning to take this forward.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1** The Town Centre Fund provides an additional £859,000 of capital budget to the Council. The balance required for the Dumbarton Waterfront Path Gateway is being provided by the Planning Service as part of the developers' contributions budget being made available.
- 7.2** The budget expenditure breakdown is as follows:

Project	Town Centre Fund	Developer Contributions	Other
Alexandria Buildings Improvements	£280,000		£150,000*
Smollett Fountain Design	£30,000		
Sylvania Way South	£250,000		£tbd**
Dumbarton Waterfront Path Gateway	£299,000	£51,000	
Total	£859,000	£51,000	£150,000

- 7.3** *The total budget for the refurbishment of the three properties in Alexandria is an estimated £430,000, with the remainder being funded from Asset Management capital. When complete, housing grant funding is expected to be used to acquire the flats for the Housing Revenue Account. **As explained in 5.9, a proportionate consideration toward the cost of Sylvania Way South is anticipated from Edinburgh House, a figure cannot be estimated at this stage
- 7.4** Every project identified will be procured either through existing frameworks or fully tendered through Public Contracts Scotland with guidance from our procurement business partner.

8 Risk Analysis

- 8.1** The principal risk is that the projects cannot be legally committed by the end of the financial year; however the projects have been selected for their deliverability as well as their fit with the conditions of the Town Centre Fund.
- 8.2** Two of the four projects, namely Sylvania Way South in Clydebank and the Waterfront Path Gateway project in Dumbarton town centre have a degree of reliance on third party interests for their approval, and in the case of Clydebank, on part-funding. To mitigate this, early discussions have been held and verbal agreement has been reached on the principles of each project, therefore minimising the risk of non-cooperation at a critical later stage.
- 8.3** There is always a risk that tendered cost will exceed budget cost. The pre-tender cost will be subject to a cost appraisal by the design team so that projects can be value engineered prior to tender, if required.

9. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 9.1** An EIA screening has not identified any issues, however care will be taken in the construction phases to minimise disruption generally, and specifically for protected groups.

10. Consultation

- 10.1** The projects recommended for approval directly address community interests identified and recorded in a range of previous consultations including charrettes in Dumbarton and Clydebank, Place Standard conversations in Alexandria and noted during meetings of the Dumbarton and Alexandria Town Centre Forum meetings. Projects will be subject to further input during design development from members of the Town Centre Forums, and, in Clydebank during community and business engagement events to be held in late summer 2019, dates to be confirmed.
- 10.2** Given the requirement to commit and deliver the Town Centre Fund projects this financial year, early consultations have been held with

Procurement, Asset Management, Greenspace, Planning, Communities Team, Roads and Transportation and Legal Services individually and at stakeholder meetings. External consultations have been held with third party owners and other stakeholders, and communication will continue during the project planning and delivery phases.

11. Strategic Assessment

11.1 The proposals contained within this report support the following strategic priorities of the Council's updated Economic Development Strategy (2015-20).

- Stimulating economic investment and growing the business base
- Creating an inclusive and prosperous place where people choose to live work and invest
- Building stronger partnerships and innovative approaches to delivery

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Date: 1 August 2019

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Appendices: Appendix 1- Sylvania Way South

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All Wards