

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Strategic Lead, Regeneration

Infrastructure, Regeneration and Economic Development Committee:

15 May 2019

Subject: Scottish Government Town Centre Fund

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Committee of the Scottish Government Town Centre Fund 2019/20 and to advise on recent discussions and consultations on the use of the Fund in West Dunbartonshire. The report does not identify specific projects for expenditure but proposes ways in which the Fund could be invested.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Committee;

- (i) notes West Dunbartonshire Council's share of the Town Centre Fund, the eligibility criteria for projects, and timescale for expenditure;
- (ii) notes the consultations that have taken place in each town prior to and as a result of the announcement of the Town Centre Fund, and
- (iii) notes that developed projects will be presented to IRED committee for approval during 2019/20.

3. Background

3.1 In late 2018 the Scottish Government signalled their intention to introduce a £50m fund for town centres. The Town Centre Fund was launched in early March 2019 and terms and conditions were received by local authorities on 7 March 2019.

3.2 The terms and conditions set out high level criteria for the expenditure of the Fund, and provided information on each local authority's share of the £50m. The Council has been allocated a sum of **£859,000**.

3.3 The Fund is expected to be invested in *"in the context of national and local commitments to town centres including the Town Centre First Principle and the Town Centre Action Plan; and more recently, the Place Principle. As such, it is expected that investment decisions are based on approaches which are collaborative and place based with a shared purpose; and, make*

use of tools and support developed by the Scottish Government, Scotland's Towns Partnership and other key partners; and, take account of further guidance outlined in Schedule 4." Schedule 4 expands on what is eligible for spend – *"place based economic investments which encourage town centres to diversify and flourish, creating footfall through local improvements and partnerships"*. Specifically, this fund will contribute to transformative investments which drive local economic activities and re-purpose town centres to become more diverse, successful and sustainable.

- 3.4** In particular, the grant will fund a wide range of investments which deliver against the themes of the Town Centre Action Plan including town centre living and supporting town centres to be vibrant, accessible and enterprising places. This could include re-purposing buildings for housing, retail, business, social and community enterprise, leisure, culture, tourism, and heritage or improving access and infrastructure.
- 3.5** The Fund must be spent or legally committed by the end of 2019/20, therefore projects need to be at the design/consultation stage now, or be capable of being advanced quickly.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** The relatively short timescale for the expenditure of the Fund lends itself to capital expenditure that can be made quickly or projects that are already underway. The latter can include extending the scope of projects that are currently being delivered.
- 4.2** In **Dumbarton** recent consultations and discussions on potential improvement projects have taken place at Dumbarton Town Centre Forum and with businesses that have engaged in recent consultations. Ideas have focussed on re-purposing vacant and derelict buildings, bringing increased footfall to the town centre, greening projects, improving connections between Dumbarton Central station, the town centre and Castle, to name a few. Longer term aspirations for the regeneration of the town centre, taken from previous consultations on, for example, the Dumbarton Town Centre Masterplan of 2014, actions from the Dumbarton Rock and Castle Charrette of 2015, and the options for the re-use of Glencairn House in 2017 which refers to community use of Glencairn House and accommodation of a museum, as well as bringing more life and activity to Riverside Lane and the riverfront.
- 4.3** The limited Town Centre Fund won't address all of these needs, but does provide an opportunity to explore the masterplan for Dumbarton town centre, and based on previous consultations identifying quick wins and appropriate projects that would meet the criteria for the Town Centre Fund.
- 4.4** The 2014 **Clydebank** charrette and the Clydebank Can workshops in 2018 has provided the Council with a steer on regards to the aspirations of the

community and local businesses. Connecting Clydebank, the £4.3m roads and public realm project that will connect Queens Quay with Clydebank town centre and railway station, for example, was designed to meet needs identified at the charrette. Specifically related to town centre regeneration, there is a strong interest in increasing activity at and near the Canal and at Three Queens Square, and more likely due to the limited timeframe, focus on improvements of public realm at South Sylvania Way at the bottom of the shopping centre in partnership with the shopping centre owners is a possibility.

- 4.5** The Council is committed to the ongoing regeneration of **Alexandria**, and will be funding further public realm improvements to complement the investment in a new food-store and retail/housing development planned for Mitchell Way. A new Multi Group has been set up by the Your Communities team that aims to represent the interests of community groups active in the town, and early consultation has taken place to gauge the interest in additional projects that fulfil the requirements of the Town Centre fund which will may include public realm and shop front upgrades.
- 4.6** In conclusion, Council is asked to note the ongoing consultations taking place on projects that can be funded by the Town Centre Fund, and that IRED committee papers will be presented for project approvals during 2019/20.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no significant implications for staff resourcing.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** The Town Centre Fund provides an additional £859,000 of capital budget to the Council. This will contribute to the Council achieving its ambitions laid out in the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2015 - 2020.
- 6.2** Guidance will be sought from procurement to ensure all relevant processes and procedures in spending this fund are followed.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** The principal risk relates to expenditure of the Fund within financial year 2019/20; to mitigate these projects will be selected for their deliverability as well as their fit with the terms and conditions of the Town Centre Fund.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** An equalities impact assessment is not necessary for this report. An EIA screening will be carried out as necessary on project activity arising from the Town Centre Fund.

9. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- 9.1** A strategic environmental assessment is not necessary for this report. Strategic Environmental Assessments will be undertaken as necessary for any new Town Centre project activity

10. Consultation

- 10.1** Since the Town Centre Fund was announced consultation has been undertaken with internal Services including at the Clydebank charrette Implementation Group and with Asset Management, Planning and Your Communities. External consultation has been held with Dumbarton Town Centre Forum and Alexandria Multi Group. Project ideas presented in this report have also been informed by Clydebank Charrette and Clydebank Can.

11. Strategic Assessment

- 11.1** The proposals contained within this report support the four 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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Appendices: None

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: **All Wards**