

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET3 December 2020Report by Director of EnvironmentTOWN CENTRE CAPITAL FUND 2019/20 & 2020/21**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Cabinet on those projects which received funding from the 2019/20 Town Centre Capital Fund allocation and seek approval for those projects which will be funded from the additional 2020/21 grant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Cabinet is asked to:

- a) Note the background and objectives of the Town Centre Capital Fund;
- b) Note the progress of those projects funded in 2019/20; and
- c) Approve additional projects totalling £475,000 for 2020/21 as set out in this report.

BACKGROUND

3. In March 2019 the Scottish Government and COSLA announced a £50 million fund for improving Scottish town centres. The Fund has been shared between the 32 local authorities and is based on the number of towns and population in each local authority area.

4. The purpose of the Fund is to "*stimulate and support place based economic investments which encourage town centres to diversify and flourish, creating footfall through local improvements and partnerships*". Specifically, the Fund was intended to contribute to transformative investments which drive local economic activities, support employment and re-purpose town centres to become more diverse, successful and sustainable. East Renfrewshire Council received an allocation of £981,000 for capital expenditure on town centre projects. Proposals for spending this allocation in East Renfrewshire were approved at by the Cabinet at its meeting on 28 November 2019. This report provides an update on the progress of those projects.

5. The Scottish Government is delivering a further £30 million capital into regeneration in 2020/21 as part of the £230 million economic recovery stimulus package, particularly aimed at supporting construction activity across Scotland. As part of this the Scottish Government agreed with COSLA that £18 million will be provided to local authorities through the Town Centre Fund. East Renfrewshire Council were awarded a further £353,000 in September 2020 to develop projects which will contribute to the economic recovery stimulus package. This report recommends how this £353,000 is spent.

6. In terms of guidelines the aim of this additional £18 million fund is to stimulate local construction activity and support employment across Scotland and local authorities should ensure this is prioritised in investment decisions. Local authorities should also make investment decisions 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.

7. More specifically, the Scottish Government advises that investments should be based on local priorities and should extend to localities with a population of 1,000 or more. The sort of activity and projects that could create economic improvements include:

- Projects clearly linked to a long term strategy or vision and how this can build on the distinctiveness of the place.
- Partnership and collaborations with a range of organisations including private companies and community organisations in order to maximise sustainability, impact and leverage.
- Low carbon and sustainable interventions to reduce car usage, improve cycling, leisure and pedestrian links, creation of strategic and high quality greenspace infrastructure, town and city parks.
- Strategic digital infrastructure linking businesses, public sector, communities and key stakeholders into social media and marketing platforms.
- Acquisition of buildings, land or site assembly in the town centre as part of a strategic vision.

8. This grant should not be a substitute for existing spend and if the grant is not used in the financial year 2020/21, it requires to be repaid to the Scottish Government. All grant expenditure must be complete by 31 March 2021. Expenditure is defined as “*work that will be completed; or, at least work or contracts signed or commenced within 2020/21*”.

9. Grant may also be used to fund third party capital expenditure either directly or through the provision of grants to third parties (public sector bodies, private sector bodies or individuals).

REPORT

10. The 2019/20 projects previously reported to the Cabinet are making good progress and are on track to be delivered by the end of September 2021. These include an intelligent lighting scheme in Barrhead, public realm improvements in Eaglesham and Neilston, a community noticeboard in Thornliebank and an extensive winter lighting programme in various town centre/village locations. With regard to the winter lighting programme the majority of equipment has been installed in all locations and will be activated before Christmas 2020. This is expected to have a dramatic visual impact.

11. It should be noted that there was an underspend of £122,608 from the 2019/20 allocation due to the new signalised junction at Barrhead Road, Newton Mearns taking longer to develop than anticipated. Work is underway to develop this project under a separate funding stream.

12. It has been confirmed with the Scottish Government that the £122,608 can be carried forward for schemes in 2020/21 i.e. can be added to the additional £353,000 making a total of £475,000 available for new schemes in this current financial year.

13. To ensure a collaborative approach in relation to spending the additional £475,000, an initial “Call for Ideas” was issued to the community and other stakeholders within East Renfrewshire town and neighbourhood centres to give partners the opportunity to help shape the plans.

14. In prioritising the proposals from the Council and other organisations, particular consideration was given to:

1. Deliverability given the conditions of the grant offer;
2. The geographical spread of grant across the Council area;

3. The economic benefits and outcomes of each project;
4. The sustainability of the proposed project

15. Ultimately, using the criteria set out above, priority was given to a mix of initiatives ranging in scale and content some of which would ensure “quick wins” and some that may take longer to realise economic impact.

16. A number of the proposed projects, whilst undoubtedly beneficial, were unfortunately unable to meet the tight timescales associated with the funding. The Council’s Economic Development team will retain these suggestions for future funding opportunities and will work with community groups to develop their ideas into shovel ready projects.

17. The table below details the proposed projects to be committed by 31st March with either contracts being signed or works commencing.

Address/Project	Proposal	Cost £
ER Place/Shop Local Campaign	Capital spend associated with the Place/Shop local branding that will complement the existing campaign and link with the Council’s economic recovery actions	£80,000
Cowan Park, Barrhead	Installation of CCTV at Cowan Park which contribute to the improved safety of the park/town centre and encourage residents to be outdoors and improve their health	£20,000
Town Centre Lighting – Newton Mearns	Partial extension to intelligent lighting on Mearns Road and Broompark shops. This proposal will improve the vibrancy of town centre and improved safety.	£100,000
Town Centre Lighting – Eaglesham	Partial extension to intelligent lighting - Glasgow Road/Gilmour St, Eaglesham. This proposal will improve the vibrancy of town centre and improved safety.	£85,000
Neilston Village Centre Regeneration	A range of regeneration initiatives for Neilston Village Centre	£100,000
Thomas Donohoe statue, Busby	Memorial to Thomas Donohoe. This will provide a distinctive landmark and improve the vibrancy of the town centre.	£15,000
Busby Library, Busby	Painting of Busby Library to celebrate the buildings centenary and installation of new heating system and toilets.	£70,000
Menorah, Clarkston	Installation of Menorah Lighting at Clarkston. This project will provide a distinctive landmark and improve the vibrancy of the town centre.	£5,000
Total		£475,000

18. The Place Branding and Economic Recovery Scheme (including Shop Local) is the subject of a separate report on the agenda for this meeting of the Cabinet.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

19. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Project implementation will be funded through the Scottish Government Town Centre Capital Fund.

20. The Council must comply with the conditions of the grant, as set out in Scottish Government guidelines.

CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

21. Consultation has taken place with a range of key stakeholders within the community.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

22. There are no equalities, IT or staffing implications associated with this report.

CONCLUSIONS

23. The Town Centre Capital Fund programme provides an excellent opportunity to deliver further investment to key areas of East Renfrewshire and complement/build upon the range of proposals already approved by the Cabinet last year. In addition, it will contribute to activity around place branding and economic recovery as outlined in the separate Cabinet report on this agenda.

24. The timescales for delivery are challenging particularly in relation to the additional schemes proposed in paragraph 17 of the report. Both the existing projects and the proposed projects will make a considerable impact on local town and village centres.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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Director of Environment

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