

# **PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**

## **Environment and Infrastructure Committee**

**15 May 2019**

### **Delivery of Retail Façade Improvements and Town Centre Management Initiatives in Rural Towns**

#### **Report by Executive Director (Housing and Environment) (Report No. 19/140)**

The purpose of this report is to outline options to utilise the additional non-recurring resource of £200k allocated in the Council's revenue budget to provide support for retail façade improvements and town centre management initiatives in rural towns. It is recommended that funding will be allocated through a grant scheme mechanism aligned with the Community Environment Challenge Fund to be called the Community and Business Placemaking Fund. This will allow applications for assistance to be submitted by businesses and representative business and community bodies. Priority will be given to schemes that deliver the greatest community economic benefits.

#### **1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES**

- 1.1 Rural towns across Scotland are facing increasing challenges in adapting to changing economic conditions to sustain vibrant town centres for residents and visitors. Support and assistance is required to help with improvement, diversification and repurposing.
- 1.2 The Scottish Government has allocated £50m grant funding through the Town Centre Fund for support across Scotland. This capital fund is targeted at supporting larger transformative social or economic projects. £1,983,000 has been awarded to Perth & Kinross Council based on the overall population, and the number of towns with a population of at least 1,000.
- 1.3 Additionally, the Council previously committed £100k non-recurring revenue funding for retail façade improvements in rural towns to ensure that the frontages of their premises are updated, welcoming, and convey being open for business, to encourage local and visitor spend.
- 1.4 The Council also committed a further £100k non-recurring revenue funding towards rural town centre management initiatives to enhance the economic potential of rural towns by providing a point of contact for local businesses and partnership forums.
- 1.5 This revenue funding could also support any capital funding through the Town Centre Fund.
- 1.6 It should be noted that town centre management support is currently only provided within Perth however following the resignation of the current City Centre Manager, an opportunity will be taken to redefine the role to include an

appropriate level of management support to the principal towns of Aberfeldy, Alyth, Auchterarder, Blairgowrie, Coupar Angus, Crieff, Dunkeld & Birnam, Kinross, and Pitlochry.

## **2. PROPOSALS**

- 2.1 The allocation of funding for retail façade improvements and town centre management initiatives in rural towns is proposed on the basis of agreed criteria and grant conditions. In addition, it needs to be driven by local community and business proposals. This is in line with national policy frameworks and guidance focusing on place based investment, linked to local needs and opportunities supported by community planning and empowerment, community asset transfer, and evidence from local place standards or design charettes.
- 2.2 Therefore it is proposed that the criteria and grant conditions ensure that funded projects will:
- have a degree of public or business support within defined localities
  - have the necessary landlord and regulatory consents
  - demonstrate anticipated community and economic benefits
  - maximise community economic benefits
- 2.3 The majority of principal towns have a combination of community councils, established representative locality frameworks, business representative groups, tourism business associations and development trusts. Proposals in other smaller towns with a population of 1,000 or more should also be eligible for assistance providing they have established representative organisations.
- 2.4 In addition, it will be necessary to ensure that the requisite landlord and regulatory permissions and consents are secured to enable proposals to be delivered legally and to a high quality.
- 2.5 Proposals should also be required to demonstrate anticipated community and economic benefits, to provide clarity on what the allocation of funding will achieve, and enable future assessment of its impact.
- 2.6 Similar place based, community led, improvements are currently supported through the Community Environment Challenge Fund (CECF). Since 2011/12, up to £100,000 of funding has been available annually through the CECF. The Fund is aimed at community groups leading and delivering environmental projects which would make a significant difference to their local environment, and which have been widely supported within the community. The Environment Committee approved changes to the CECF in June 2013 to make the Fund more accessible to community groups and local organisations. This was to streamline the assessment and approval process, as well as assist community groups to improve their areas, in partnership with the Council (Report No.13/271 refers).

- 2.7 In line with the CECF, the use of funding would be maximised by prioritising funding assistance towards proposals that have secured match funding from other public or private sources or, in the case of town centre management initiatives, that can generate income. Proposals for façade improvements should also indicate an ongoing maintenance commitment to protect and maintain benefits.
- 2.8 Current support for the management of the CECF is undertaken by the Community Greenspace team. They promote the scheme and assess and determine applications for assistance against eligibility criteria and guidance on conditions of the grant.
- 2.9 A similar process to that developed for the CECF will be used for the retail façade and town centre management funding which is proposed to be named the Community & Business Placemaking Fund (CBPF), and which will broadly adopt the process and grant conditions used for the successful CECF.
- 2.10 Initial assessment of applications from representative business organisations and community organisations would be undertaken by economic development staff and, in line with current CECF process, the views of ward members will be sought on each application before final approval was given.
- 2.11 The proposed eligibility and grant criteria for the new CBPF is attached at Appendix 1.

### **3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is proposed that the fundamental principles and streamline approach of the successful Community Environment Challenge Fund will be adopted and adapted to deliver retail façade and town centre management initiatives in rural towns through the new Community and Business Placemaking Fund. The new scheme will operate during the 2019/20 financial year.
- 3.2 It is recommended that the Committee:
- i) approves the expenditure of funding in 2019/20 for retail façade improvements and town centre management initiatives within rural towns through a new scheme to be named the Community & Business Placemaking Fund.
  - ii) approves the guidance for the scheme as set out in Appendix 1.
  - iii) requests the Executive Director (Housing and Environment) to promote this initiative and secure participation with representative business and community bodies in rural towns.
  - iii) requests the Executive Director (Housing and Environment) to bring back a report in a year's time detailing the outcomes achieved.

**Author**

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**Approved**

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Barbara Renton	Director (Housing and Environment)	12 April 2019

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Yes / None</b>
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	<b>Yes</b>
Corporate Plan	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Resource Implications</b>	
Financial	<b>Yes</b>
Workforce	<b>Yes</b>
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Assessments</b>	
Equality Impact Assessment	<b>No</b>
Strategic Environmental Assessment	<b>No</b>
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	<b>No</b>
Legal and Governance	<b>Yes</b>
Risk	<b>No</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	
Internal	<b>Yes</b>
External	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Communication</b>	
Communications Plan	<b>No</b>

### 1. Strategic Implications

1.1 This report supports the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement in terms of the following priorities:

- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

#### Corporate Plan

1.2 This report supports the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities:

- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

## 2. Resource Implications

### Financial

#### Revenue

- 2.1 The creation of the new Community & Business Placemaking Fund can be funded by utilising the previously approved funding for the delivery of Rural Town Retail Façade Improvements (£100,000) and Rural Town centre Management Initiatives (£100,000). This is non-recurring funding available for 2019/20 within the existing Housing & Environment Revenue Budget. The cost of administering the Fund can be met from existing staff and operational resources.

#### Capital

- 2.2 None

#### Workforce

- 2.3 None.

#### Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.4 There are no immediate implications in respect of asset management arising from the recommendations of the report

## 3. Assessments

### Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.
- 3.2 The proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:  
(i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

### Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.3 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.
- 3.4 The proposal recommended in this paper has been considered under the Act and the pre-screening has identified that the proposal will have no environmental effects, it is therefore exempt. The reason for concluding this is that the recommendation in this report will have no direct environmental

effects as they relate to management and governance arrangements in respect of the delivery of a grant scheme to third parties.

#### Sustainability

- 3.5 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of the Climate Change Act, the Council has a general duty to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community, environmental and economic impacts of its actions.
- 3.6 The proposals and recommendation in this report will have positive impacts as they relate to management and governance arrangements to support sustainable development and integrate with requirements to link the allocation of funding with planning and economic development policy and assessment for community, environmental and economic impacts where appropriate

#### Legal and Governance

- 3.7 The Head of Legal and Governance has been consulted and is in agreement with the contents of this report.

#### Risk

- 3.8 Risk to the Council will be mitigated in respect of proposed to management and governance arrangements requiring scrutiny and audit of proposals in relation to planning and economic development policy and assessment for community, environmental and economic impacts where appropriate

### **4. Consultation**

#### Internal

- 4.1 The Head of Finance and the Head of Legal and Governance have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

#### External

- 4.2 Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust have been consulted in the preparation of this report given previous involvement in the delivery of rural town façade improvement schemes.

### **5. Communication**

- 5.1 The report if agreed will require communication and promotion of the scheme to representative business and community bodies in rural towns.

## **2. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 2.1 The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (and not containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

Environment Committee June 2013 (Report No.13/271)

Environment and Infrastructure Committee, May 2018, (Report No. 18/176)