
Report To:	Environment and Regeneration Committee	Date:	2 May 2019
Report By:	Corporate Director Environment, Regeneration & Resources	Report No:	ENV024/19/SA
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Subject:	Town Centre Capital Fund 2019/20 – Award to Inverclyde Council		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the award of £660,000 to Inverclyde Council through the local authority capital settlement from the town centre fund. The report outlines the conditions on the fund and recommendations in respect of expenditure.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Scottish Government created a town centre fund for the financial year 2019/20 to enable local authorities to stimulate and support place based economic investment which encourages town centres to diversify and flourish. The funding is capital grant and is ringfenced for town centre economic regeneration activities. The methodology for distribution across Scottish local authorities has been based on population and the number of town centres per local authority area. The Inverclyde settlement for 2019/20 is £660,000.
- 2.2 The grant conditions require that full expenditure is achieved in financial year 2019/20. The aim of the fund is to deliver against the themes of town centre action plans, including:-
- **Town Centre Living** – Encouraging stronger residential presence within town centres,
 - **Vibrant Local Economies** – Creating a supportive business environment potentially through business improvement districts and other partnerships,
 - **Enterprising Communities** – Support to social services, arts and events including community impairment and community based activities,
 - **Accessible Public Transport** – Creating and accessing public facilities and services, supported by economic, service and transport hubs,
 - **Digital Towns** – Exploiting digital technology and promoting Wifi infrastructure,
 - **Proactive Planning** - Land reform and supporting the creation of sustainable low carbon and connected places.
- 2.3 The Scottish Government funds “Scotland’s Towns Partnership” to provide support and services which contribute to the vitality and viability of town centres. Officers have engaged with Scotland’s Towns Partnership in respect of the award to Inverclyde and taken advice in respect of the appropriate investment of the £660,000. A challenge facing Scottish councils is that the funds must be spent in financial year 2019/20, the expectation is that expenditure will be on shovel ready projects.

- 2.4 The advice from Scotland's Town Partnership was to focus on Greenock Town Centre. Greenock Town Centre remains our primary shopping centre and has suffered significant decline in recent years. A significant challenge is the Oak Mall Shopping Centre and Members will recall a recent planning application which sought the demolition of a third of the ground floor footprint, this being associated with the reduction in viable retail space.
- 2.5 It is proposed that officers engage with the Oak Mall Shopping Centre with a view to supporting masterplanning around the shopping centre's future aspirations. The town centre fund contribution may assist with issues such as landscaping improvement of the urban realm in association with a regeneration of the shopping centre.
- 2.6 There are a number of sites around Greenock Town Centre where acquisition either directly or facilitated by the Council would encourage economic regeneration. It is proposed that officers will explore the opportunities in respect of a number of sites, this issue being related to another report to this Committee regarding a policy in respect of derelict or underused sites.
- 2.7 The Greenock Regeneration Forum is progressing urban realm improvements in West Blackhall Street. The forum recently agreed to complement the West Blackhall Street urban realm project through supporting a proposal from the Tourist Group for revised street signs and information displays in the heritage quarter. It is proposed that an allocation be made within the town centre fund to support the proposals in the heritage area and that transportation and street furniture measures which are complementary to the West Blackhall Street Urban Realm Project be considered.
- 2.8 In view of the pressures of achieving a full spend in 2019/20 officers would advise that it may be prudent to use a proportion of the funding to substitute existing allocations thereby freeing up these allocations for Town Centre Regeneration expenditure in future years.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- Notes the award of £660,000 capital grant to Inverclyde Council for financial year 2019/20 from the Scottish Government Town Centre Fund,
- Approves the general direction of proposed expenditure as indicated in the summary above,
- Approves specific expenditure of £20,000 to deliver heritage road signs and information boards in the heritage quarter of Greenock, and
- Notes that further reports will be brought forward as work progresses.

Scott Allan
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4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Earlier this year, the Scottish Government as part of the budget settlement for 2019/20, created a town centre capital fund to assist regeneration of town centres across Scotland. £50m was awarded nationally and this was distributed to local authorities based on a mixture of population and a number of town centres per local authority area. Inverclyde received an award of £660,000 for financial year 2019/20.
- 4.2 The funding is ringfenced and is conditioned with respect to expenditure. It is expected that local authorities will 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. It is expected that investment decisions will be based on approaches which are collaborative and place based with a shared purpose and also that councils will make use of the tools and support developed by the Scottish Government "Scotland's Towns Partnership" and other key partners.
- 4.3 Scotland's Towns Partnership as an organisation has been heavily involved in directing how the additional funding would be best spent. There are a number of guiding principles which councils are asked to follow including:-
- Town Centre Living – Footfall is key to achieving thriving, successful town centres and the best footfall is residential for people who will use shops, services and will care for its safety and security in the evenings,
 - Vibrant Local Economies – Creating a supportive business environment including the involvement of business improvement districts and other local partnerships,
 - Enterprising Communities – Social enterprise, services, arts and events and community empowerment and community based activities which increase the health, wealth and wellbeing of town centres,
 - Accessible Public Services – Creating and accessing public facilities and services, supported by economic, service and transport hubs,
 - Digital Towns – Exploiting digital technology and promoting wiifi infrastructure to enable access to information, data analytics, marketing opportunities, branding and communication with the wider world,
 - Proactive Planning – Land reform and supporting the creation of sustainable low carbon and connective places which promote natural and cultural assets, designed in partnership with local communities and key stakeholders.
- 4.4 Officers have engaged with Scotland's Towns Partnership for advice on utilising the Inverclyde award. The clear advice is that the focus should be on Greenock Town Centre as this Council's primary shopping location. Greenock has suffered significant decline in recent years evidenced by the recent planning application by the Oak Mall Shopping Centre to demolish approximately a third of the footprint. The situation in Greenock is in contrast to Gourrock where there has been substantial recent investment in a town centre action plan, and Port Glasgow where retail development has significantly expanded the town centre.
- 4.5 It is a condition of the grant that full expenditure must be achieved in financial year 2019/20. There is an inherent assumption therefore that the funds will be directed towards shovel ready projects.
- 4.6 Officers propose to engage with the Oak Mall Shopping Centre with a view to exploring partnership working towards regeneration of the shopping centre in line with the recent planning application. There is potential to assist the shopping centre through supporting urban realm improvements within public space created through potential future demolition. Officers will determine if a viable scheme can be developed in partnership and will report back to future Committees.
- 4.7 It is also proposed that the funding is used in the consideration of site purchase across the town centre. A number of sites are identified in a separate report to this Committee regarding planning policy. The acquisition of town centre sites to promote positive development,

potentially in partnership with other organisations such as local housing associations, would fit well with the guidelines to the expenditure of this fund.

- 4.8 The Council is already committed to an urban realm improvement in West Blackhall Street. It is proposed that officers explore potential transportation and street furniture associated measures which would support and complement the West Blackhall Street proposals. This may include for example aspects of the traffic management required to deliver the West Blackhall Street scheme.
- 4.9 The Greenock Regeneration Forum recently endorsed a proposal by the Inverclyde Tourist Group to erect street names and information displays in the Greenock heritage quarter. There is a specific funding requirement of £20,000 needed to deliver this scheme and specific approval is sought to commit £20,000 from the town centre fund award to progress this.
- 4.10 In view of the significant challenges around achieving full expenditure in financial year 2019/20, it may be necessary to substitute existing allocations for regeneration with the town centre fund award to achieve full spend. Any funding substitutions will therefore be freed for investment in future years against regeneration.
- 4.11 Future reports will be brought back to the Committee as projects progress.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

5.1 One off Costs:-

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
Capital	Town Centre Fund	2019/20	600		Requires to be spent by 31.3.20

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings):-

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments

Legal

- 5.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Human Resources

- 5.3 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

Equalities

- 5.4 Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

Yes See attached appendix

No This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Repopulation

5.5 This report supports the Repopulation agenda through supporting economic growth in Greenock Town Centre.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.1 None.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.