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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Environment &amp; Regeneration Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>18 January 2024</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Director, Environment and Regeneration</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>E+R/24/01/06/SJ/JH</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Jennifer Horn</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 7145573</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>UK Government Long Term Plans for Towns Fund: Greenock</b>		

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## **1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1  For Decision  For Information/Noting
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide information on the recently published guidance from the UK Government on the Long Term Plans for Towns.
- 1.3 It then sets out the requirements for the Town Board, supported by the Council, to create a Long-Term Plan for Greenock which reflects the aspirations of the community and includes a 10 year vision and a 3 year investment plan annexe.
- 1.4 The report also sets out the funding and capacity funding which will be received from the UK Government's Long Term Plan for Towns Fund.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- Notes the content of the report;
  - Agrees on a recruitment process to appoint a Town Fund Chair;
  - Delegates the authority to the Environment and Regeneration Director to support the Town Fund Chair in the creation, including membership of the Town Board, creation of an engagement plan and scheme of development of the Long Term Plan for Greenock, and designating the geographical area in scope;
  - Agrees the membership of the Town Fund Chair letting group; and,
  - Supports the need for an appropriate project resource.

**Stuart Jamieson**  
**Director, Environment and Regeneration**

### **3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

- 3.1 In September 2023, the UK Government Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced that Greenock was one of 7 areas in Scotland to be allocated funding for the UK Government's Long Term Plan for Towns.
- 3.2 This is part of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda and aims to address challenges faced in towns such as deindustrialisation and high street decline, by supporting local areas to develop a Long-Term Plan to invest in and regenerate their town, based on the priorities of local people, and do this by establishing a Town Board, made up of local people, businesses and politicians, to oversee and deliver the Long-Term Plan. To do this the towns will receive an endowment-style fund of £20million and support over 10 years to be spent on the issues that matter to local people.
- 3.3 The UK government expects that through Long-Term Plans, towns across the UK will identify measures that matter most to local people. They have provided 3 broad investment themes under which to make improvements:
  - Safety and Security
  - High Streets, heritage and regeneration, and
  - Transport and connectivity.
- 3.4 Following the announcement in September, the UK Government published guidance for the funding on the 18 December 2023.

### **4.0 UK Government Long Term Plan for Town Guidance**

#### **Funding Available**

- 4.1 Greenock will receive a 10-year endowment-style fund with £20million of funding and support. Funding will be released over a 7 year period and local authorities have the flexibility to spend it over 10 years, with light touch assurance from DLUHC. The full funding profile will be provided in early 2024.
- 4.2 Inverclyde Council will receive £50,000 of capacity funding in the 2023-2024 financial year. This will be paid as an RDEL grant.
- 4.3 Capacity funding should cover upfront costs of setting up a Town Board. Capacity funding might want to be used on:
  - Convene a Town Board
  - Run community engagement
  - Support the Town Board in developing Long-Term Plans
  - Provide technical expertise to the Town Board for project development including feasibility studies and business cases.
- 4.4 Once Town Boards are established a further £200,000 in RDEL capacity funding will be released at the start of the new financial year 2024-2025. Town Boards should advise local authorities on how best to use this money to support the development of their Long-Term Plan.

#### **The Process**

##### **Establishing a Town Board**

- 4.5 Inverclyde Council will be the accountable body for the funding and executing plans. The Town Boards are responsible for developing the Long-Term Plan, working closely with local people.

- 4.6 The Council is required to invite a Chair to the Towns Board. The Chair must be independent of the Council, either a local community leader or local business person, who is best placed to convene partners and is a respected figure in the community with an obvious passion for the place. They must be a champion for the town and provide leadership for the Town Board, ensuring it is community-led and embedded within the local area. They can be anyone who holds a prominent role such as:
- A local charitable organisation
  - A philanthropist
  - The head of a Further Education College
  - A director for the NHS Board or Trust
  - A director of a football club.
- 4.7 Consideration should be given to the length of tenure for the chair, given the length of the Long-Term Plan is a 10 year vision, therefore towns may wish to consider succession planning e.g. vice chair role.
- 4.8 Elected representatives, such as MPs, MSPs or local councillors cannot chair the Town Board.
- 4.9 The UK Government has stated that where a local area already has a board/group in place e.g. Community Planning Partnership subset, that utilisation of that forum is encouraged to avoid unnecessary duplication and allow towns to move quickly to draw up their Long-Term Plan. However, if an existing forum is to be repurposed, it is incumbent on the chair, supported by the Council, to ensure the right people are around the table to full reflect the priorities of the town.

### **Town Board membership**

- 4.10 With regards to membership of the Board, the guidance is non-prescriptive however there are some rules that apply:
- The chair must be independent, as stated above
  - The local MP must be represented on the Board, but not chair. The local MSP can also be represented.
  - One elected member can be a member of the board, but not chair.
  - A senior representative of the police should sit on the board.
  - Town Boards should sign up to the Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan principles)
  - The board should be representative of the interest of the town.
- 4.11 In representing the interests of the town, the following examples of people could sit on the board however it could differ to reflect local context:
- Community partners, such as: community groups, faith groups, local charities, neighbourhood forums, youth groups, Third Sector Interface (TSI).
  - Local businesses and social enterprises, such as key local employers or investors in the town.
  - Cultural, arts, heritage and sporting organisations
  - Public agencies and anchor institutions such as schools and colleges, relevant government agencies for that area e.g. Community Planning Partnerships
- 4.12 Town Boards should consider the size of membership needed to create and thereafter deliver the plan. Where necessary, the Board could convene smaller working groups to aid community engagement and delivery of the Long-Term Plan.
- 4.13 Town Boards must be set up by no later than 1 April 2024. They can be set up earlier and the sooner the Board is established the sooner funding can be confirmed.

## **DLUHC's Offer**

- 4.14 To enable the Towns Board to develop and deliver their Long-Term Plan, UK Government DLUHC have a local area team and Towns Unit will provide support along with other agencies e.g. Scotland's Towns Partnership. DLUHC will seek to align cross-government activity to ensure that resources are used most efficiently. The DLUHC offer includes:
- A data pack for each town, with local insight profile curated by DLUHC's Spatial Data Unit
  - A policy toolkit, outlining powers available to towns and partners across the town
  - A list of policy interventions with an already agreed case for investment
  - Dedicated support from the respective area team to help guide Town Boards and local authorities through the process.
- 4.15 Additionally, an independent, consultancy-style High Streets and Towns Taskforce will be established in 2024 to support towns after their Long-Term Plan is submitted.
- 4.16 As yet the Scottish policy toolkit has not been published and the data pack for Greenock has not been received.

## **Ensuring the Town Board is a community-led institution**

- 4.17 Town Boards should be community-led institutions that build civic capacity in the town. The local authority will act as the accountable body, provide secretariat function and will help empower the Town Board in driving forward a community-led vision for change.
- 4.18 The Town Board and the local authority should also consider existing community organisations that might want to undertake work on behalf of the Town Board. Capacity funding could be used support this, or the recruitment by a third-party of an individual to lead the development of the Long-Term Plan full-time. Local Trust research shows that employing a single member of full-time staff from the community helps to build local capacity and resilience. If support is required to identify suitable community organisations, local authorities should speak to their respective area team leads in the first instance. Area teams will provide ongoing support for the duration of the programme, including helping local authorities and Town Boards to access the support they need, and acting as a focal point between them and central government, including the Towns Unit and the High Streets and Towns Taskforce.
- 4.19 As well as emphasis on being community-led, the UK Government also set out governance guidelines for the Town Board and state that the Council must support and provide guidance to the board.

## **Setting a Strategy**

- 4.20 Town Boards should drive priorities for investment, identify projects to delivery change and steer the long-term vision for their town, in conjunction with the local community. Town Boards are responsible for developing the Long-Term Plan, building on any good work which is already underway.
- 4.21 The Long-Term Plan should comprise a 10 year vision, which clearly identifies the longer-term priorities for the town, and a 3 year investment plan as an annex.
- 4.22 The Plan will confirm the geographical area that will be covered. UK Government guidance states that, as a default, the Plan should use the boundaries defined by the Office for National Statistics. This is important so that local communities and other bodies understand where the area of benefit will be. The geographical area should be contiguous.

- 4.23 As stated above, UK Government has set out 3 broad investment themes which the Long-Term Plan should address:
- Safety and security
  - High streets, heritage and regeneration
  - Transport and connectivity
- 4.24 Under each theme are interventions that projects can come under. Town Boards can chose to create bespoke interventions however a business case complying with HM Treasury's Green Book would be required.
- 4.25 The Town Board's 10 year vision should be a long-term, strategic document. It should be backed by insights gained through engagement with local people, to create buy-in with the public. The fund guidance provides detail on the requirements of the plan which should include: a vision statement; strategic case for change based on evidence, data and local engagement; planned direction of travel across the 3 investment themes and the interventions that shall be used to achieve this; evidence that it is community-led; and clear achievable milestones.
- 4.26 The 3 year investment plan annexe must set out:
- the interventions and powers the Town Board wishes to use over the 3 years for each investment theme;
  - whether the interventions are from the list of interventions or are 'off-menu';
  - how the Town Board will use the interventions locally and how much they will cost; and
  - how the interventions will address the outcomes set out in the 10-year vision, grounded in evidence and data.
- 4.27 Local authorities will receive the investment from the Long-Term Plan for Towns over the next 3 years to fund the Town Board's 3-year investment plan. It is strongly encouraged that Town Boards to work with the local authority and other partners to consider how additional funding can be attracted from other sources. This could include new private investment, philanthropy or other public funding, particularly where there is scope for partnership working between bodies or agencies.
- 4.28 Local authorities must be engaged throughout the development of the plan, including discussing the list of interventions and powers to be used from the toolkit. In many cases, the council will need to formally agree through its own structures to deploy powers or interventions where they interact with council responsibilities (for example, planning permission for a new cycle path). Where an intervention would commit the local authority to future expenditure beyond long term plan for towns fund (for example ongoing maintenance of a new leisure facility), Town Boards must engage with local authorities and ensure that this is agreed.
- 4.29 The UK Government have stated that Town Boards, supported by the local authority, must develop a single Long-Term Plan to be submitted to DLUHC on, or before 1 August 2024. The funding guidance states that they recognise that Scottish councils operate with different recess periods to England and further discussion is to be undertaken with Scottish local authorities. On 20 December 2023 an information session was attended by Inverclyde Council alongside other Councils. The difficulty of the 1 August deadline was stressed by all local authorities in attendance.

## **Support from the High Streets and Towns Taskforce**

- 4.30 To support Town Boards, towns will be able to seek support from the consultancy-style High Streets and Towns Taskforce. This support can be accessed once the Long-Term Plan has been published. Further information will be published in early 2024.

### **Monitoring**

- 4.31 The Guidance notes states that alongside future updates the UK Government will set out plans for evaluation.
- 4.32 With regards to assurance, the Long-Term Plan for Towns funding will be assured in line with the requirements set out in the Levelling Up Funds Local Authority Assurance Framework, which is the same method used for other UK Government funding e.g, Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Fund. In addition, like all funding, public authorities must comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the Local Authority as the accountable body should ensure subsidy control rules are followed.

### **Next Steps for Inverclyde Council**

4.33 **Between 3 January 2024 and 1 April 2024:**

- Inverclyde Council to establish an agreed mechanism for appointing a chair for Town Board and then appoint the chair. It is suggested that a cross party group be formed to meet prospective candidates.
- Work with the chair to set up the Town Board or repurpose an existing forum if possible e.g. Greenock Town Centre Regeneration Forum.
- Support Town Board in planning and initiating community engagement
- Within this time the Council should receive £50,000 of capacity funding and a data pack for their town, with a local insight profile curated by DLUHC's Spatial Data Unit, to be shared with the Town Board once established.
- Commence recruitment of an appropriate temporary resource to deliver the project, which will be contained within the Regeneration and Planning Service.

4.34 **By 1 April 2024:**

- Ensure Town Board is established.

4.35 **From 1 April 2024 to 1 August 2024:**

- On 1 April, DLUHC will release the next £200,000 of capacity funding to support the development of the Long-Term Plan, including additional community engagement activity.
- Support the Town Board to submit their Long-Term Plans (comprising their 10-year vision and 3-year investment plan) from 1 April and before 1 August. The Plan will set out how funding will be allocated and spent, with the local authority as the body ultimately accountable for funding.
- DLUHC assess plans as they come in, and release 2024 to 2025 capital and revenue funding once plans are approved.

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Financial	x	
Legal/Risk	x	
Human Resources	x	
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	x	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights & Wellbeing		x
Environmental & Sustainability		x
Data Protection		x

## 5.2 Finance

Initial funding of £50,000 will be due imminently.

One off Costs

<b>Cost Centre</b>	<b>Budget Heading</b>	<b>Budget Years</b>	<b>Proposed Spend this Report £000</b>	<b>Virement From</b>	<b>Other Comments</b>
Town Centre Fund	Grant	2023/24	(50)		

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

<b>Cost Centre</b>	<b>Budget Heading</b>	<b>With Effect from</b>	<b>Annual Net Impact</b>	<b>Virement From (If Applicable)</b>	<b>Other Comments</b>

## 5.3 Legal/Risk

None.

## 5.4 Human Resources

Recruitment process.

## 5.5 Strategic

Projects proposed are in line with current Inverclyde Council policies.

## 5.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

### (a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required.

NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required.

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.

NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty.

(c) Children and Young People

Has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?

YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.

NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children's rights.

## 6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 None.

## 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.