

**UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND – VIBRANT AND LIVING SPACES GRANT
FUND – ALLOCATION OF FUNDING**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 On 11th August 2022, Policy and Resources Committee agreed the Investment Plan for Argyll and Bute Council’s allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF). The Investment Plan included an allocation of £304,262 of capital funding to create a Vibrant and Living Spaces Grant Fund. This report asks Council to approve the projects recommended for funding to allow successful projects to start delivery, as under the current criteria for the UKSPF funding, projects need to be completed and fully drawn down by 31st March 2025 with no opportunity for grant funding to be carried forward into the 2025/26 financial year.
- 1.2 Following an open application process, Argyll and Bute Council received 38 applications from community organisations across Argyll and Bute. In total, this amounted to a funding request of £1,328,612.31. Following closure of the fund, a robust assessment process took place in line with the UK Government and Council guidance issued to applicants. For projects which met the minimum scoring requirement, it is proposed that funding is allocated to the highest scoring projects, with 9 projects being recommended to be funded as outlined in paragraph 4.2 (Table 1) of this report.
- 1.3 The total grant awarded under the proposals set out in paragraph 4.2 amounts to £302,974 of grant award and leaves a small surplus of £1,288 which is proposed to be held to enable small uplifts of funding to be awarded to any approved project which may experience price increases or require additional works within the scope of the project.
- 1.4 It is recommended that Council agrees:-
1. The recommended projects in paragraph 4.2 are taken forward to be offered a grant at the level of funding set out;

2. The remaining small surplus is held to address any shortfalls in project budgets as they progress;
3. Delegated authority be given to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth, in consultation with the Leader and Depute Leader in regard to any necessary future changes required between specific allocations subject to not exceeding the budget available.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 On 11th August 2022, Policy and Resources Committee agreed the Investment Plan for Argyll and Bute Council's allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF). The Investment Plan included an allocation of £304,262 of capital funding to create a Vibrant and Living Spaces Grant Fund. This report asks Council to approve the projects recommended for funding to allow successful projects to start delivery, as under the current criteria for the UKSPF funding, projects need to be completed and fully drawn down by 31 March 2025 with no opportunity for grant funding to be carried forward into the 2025/26 financial year.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that Council agrees:-

1. The recommended projects in paragraph 4.2 are taken forward to be offered a grant at the level of funding set out;
2. The remaining small surplus is held to address any shortfalls in project budgets as they progress;
3. Delegated authority be given to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth, in consultation with the Leader and Depute Leader in regard to any necessary future changes required between specific allocations subject to not exceeding the budget available.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 Argyll and Bute Council launched an open call for applications on 12th January 2024 with a closing date of Friday 23rd February 2024. The fund was promoted by the Council's Corporate Communications Team and Community Development Team. Applications were considered from organisations which have a not for profit status (such as registered charity, social enterprise or community interest group) and Argyll and Bute Council received 38 applications in total which amounted to a funding request of £1,328,612.31, more than £1m over the funding available.

4.2 Following closure of the fund, a robust assessment process took place in line with the guidance issued to applicants. For projects which met the minimum scoring requirement, it is proposed that funding is allocated to the highest scoring projects until such time as only minimal funding remains. The following 9 projects are recommended to be funded:

Table 1: Recommended projects for the UKSPF Vibrant and Living Spaces Grant

Organisation	Project	Grant requested	Grant proposed
We Are With You	Bute Recovery Hub	£17,000.00	£17,000
MacDougall of Dunollie Preservation Trust	Improving the World of Trees	£37,346.00	£37,346
Cove Sailing Club SCIO	Club House Build	£49,998.00	£49,998
Mull and Iona Community Trust	Dorus Caolas Ulbha – Sound of Ulva Gateway Heritage Interpretation	£25,500.00	£25,000
Dunoon Community Development Trust	Grow Food Grow Dunoon at Struan Lodge	£17,120.00	£17,120
Tayvallich Initiative Ltd	Tayvallich Grows	£10,098.00	£10,045
Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust	Gigha MUGA	£50,000.00	£50,000
Project 81 Youth and Community Enterprise	Community Garden Room	£46,523.85	£46,465
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (Benmore Botanic Garden)	Benmore Walled Garden Redevelopment, Phase 1	£50,000.00	£50,000

4.3 The 9 successful projects split across the administrative areas as follows:

Table 2: Administrative area split of UKSPF Vibrant and Living Spaces Grant allocation

Area	Number of Projects	Value of Projects	Value of Grant
Bute and Cowal	3	£235,120.00	£84,120
Helensburgh and Lomond	2	£735,150.85	£96,463
Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands	2	£170,098.00	£60,045
Oban, Lorn and the Isles	2	£67,846.00	£62,346

4.4 Under the current criteria for the UKSPF, projects need to be completed and fully drawn down by 31 March 2025 with no opportunity for grant funding to be carried forward into the 2025/26 financial year.

4.5 The total grant awarded under the proposals set out in paragraph 4.2 amounts to £302,974 of grant award. This leaves a small surplus of £1,288. Since the remaining unallocated value is below the £10,000 minimum grant threshold, we therefore seek to hold this to enable small uplifts of funding to be awarded to any approved project which may experience price increases or require additional works within the scope of the project.

4.6 It is proposed that delegated authority be given to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth, in consultation with the Leader and Depute Leader in regard to any necessary future changes required between specific allocations subject to not exceeding the budget available.

4.7 Subject to the agreement of Council, we now propose to award grants to the successful applicants in line with the standard grant offer format provided for this fund. Where possible, unsuccessful projects will be signposted to other sources of support and funding.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 As outlined above, an open competitive application process has been carried out to identify potential recipients of the Vibrant and Living Spaces Fund. This has been followed by a robust assessment process in line with guidance issued to applicants. The application and assessment process has now been completed and the highest scoring projects identified. Subject to Council approval, we will now move to the award of grant contracts and work with the projects towards project delivery.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy - projects are expected to support communities providing new and improved facilities which will support Council policy objectives contained within the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, Economic Strategy and others. All projects have been scored against the contribution that they make to Council plans and strategies.

- 6.2 Financial - external funding of £304,262 has been granted to cover the costs of these grants.
- 6.3 Legal – support from the legal team will be required to review the draft grant agreements which will condition the use of the grants and their associated drawdown and reporting.
- 6.4 HR - officer time has been required to run the application and assessment process and continued involvement will be required liaising with community organisations in relation to the funding.
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
 - 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics - all organisations receiving grants will be expected to meet relevant equalities requirements.
 - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - the projects will support socio-economic development for those groups who receive funding.
 - 6.5.3 Islands – grants are recommended to be awarded to projects within 3 of our islands – Bute, Gigha and Mull. All island based community organisations had the opportunity to submit applications.
- 6.6 Climate Change - some of the projects receiving funding will contribute directly to helping to organisations address climate change requirements.
- 6.7 Risk - the main risk associated with the funding is that projects will not progress as expected and not all funding will be able to be drawn down.
- 6.8 Customer Service – n/a.
- 6.9 The Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – all organisations receiving grants will be expected to meet relevant UNCRC requirements.

Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth

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For further information contact:

Fergus Murray, Head of Development and Economic Growth

Fergus.Murray@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Anna Watkiss, Senior Planning Development Officer

Anna.Watkiss@argyll-bute.gov.uk