

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT TOWN CENTRE CAPITAL FUND 2020

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report concerns the utilisation of £444,000 of town centre capital funding distributed by the Scottish Government as part of their 2020-21 economic recovery stimulus package. The distribution to councils has been based on a complex formula relating to general population and the number of towns with a population in excess of 1,000 people. This funding was accepted on 23rd September 2020, and it is now within the Council's gift to spend this funding, taking full account of the guidance that was provided by the Scottish Government and attached to this report as **Appendix B**.
- 1.2 Due to the immediate need to build resilience within the economy, the aim of the fund is to support construction activity within town centres. A key constraint of the fund is therefore the tight timeline to physically deliver capital projects within the current financial year, or at the very least, agree a signed contract for the works or be started on site by 1st April 2021. Consequently, it is likely that any works we can support are part of an established programme of works, potential match funding is in place if required, and staff/community resources are in place to deliver the identified capital projects.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council:
- Agree the list of capital projects, attached as **Appendix A** to this report, that comply with the Scottish Government guidance.

3.0 DETAILS

- 3.1 The Scottish Government Town Centre Capital Fund 2020 has now been distributed to Councils, with Argyll and Bute Council receiving £444,000. The national distribution is based on the population of each council area and the number of towns with 1,000 people or more. The national distribution can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/news/regenerating-communities-1/>
- 3.2 The intention of the fund is to support employment across Scotland by way of helping to stimulate local construction activity within town centres. The fund comes with guidance on how it should be spent, which is attached as **Appendix B** to this report.
- 3.3 Potential capital projects have been identified on the basis that they meet the criteria and are considered to be deliverable within the required timeframe set by Scottish Government. The projects are attached as **Appendix A** to this report and focus on supporting town centre businesses and local contractors through a range of small-scale projects, such as shopfront improvement grants. The success of each project will be closely monitored to ensure deliverability. Where the risk of being able to deliver within the required timeframe becomes too high, it is intended for the respective ring-fenced amount to be reallocated to an alternative project within the same town.
- 3.4 The constraints related to the timescales, combined with the need for an immediate response to help stimulate economic recovery precludes extensive engagement with communities over project proposals, which would normally characterise the approach taken by council officers.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This report concerns the 2020, Scottish Government Town Centre Capital Fund allocation that has been distributed to the council. Project proposals for the £444,000 Fund are attached to this report as **Appendix A**, and which are considered to meet the criteria and guidance, which is attached to this report as **Appendix B**. The Fund needs to support construction activity immediately in an effort to stimulate economic recovery. Projects have been chosen to support the viability of our town centres and where possible linked to either a town centre action plan that has often been taken forward through a making places initiative. A key constraint of the Fund is the tight timescale in terms of delivery. Projects need to be completed, started on site, or at the very least have a signed contract agreed by 1st April 2021. To achieve a range of capital projects that will make a meaningful difference there is a need to make quick decisions and link where possible to established programmes of work.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 **Policy** – There is a need to comply with the Scottish Government Town Centre First Policy.
- 5.2 **Financial** – None arising directly from this report. The Scottish Government expect that any uncommitted funds by the 1st of April 2021 will have to be returned to them.
- 5.3 **Legal** – No legal issues.
- 5.4 **HR** – None.
- 5.5 **Equalities / Fairer Scotland Duty** – None
 - 5.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – None
 - 5.5.3 Islands – Project proposals support utilisation of the fund within the town centres of Tobermory, Bowmore and Rothesay.
- 5.6 **Risk** – The delivery of these projects within the identified timescale is the principle risk that needs to be addressed.
- 5.7 **Customer Service** - None

Customer Service – There are no customer service implications.

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Appendix A Proposed Project List

Appendix B Scottish Government Town Centre Capital Fund Guidance