

REPORT TO INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE - 16 MAY 2019

DISTRIBUTION OF SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT TOWN CENTRE FUND

1 Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Consider the contents of this paper, which outlines the new Scottish Government Town Centre Fund and the work to distribute this Fund to eligible projects**
- 1.2 Acknowledge the use by the Director of Infrastructure Services of delegated powers (as provided in the Scheme of Governance by reason of special urgency, as summarised in paragraph 2.5), after consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson of Infrastructure Services Committee (ISC), Council Leader and Chief Executive to:**
 - a) Set the criteria to be used for the distribution of the Town Centre Fund in Aberdeenshire detailed in Section 2.8;**
 - b) Agree the process for the distribution of the Funds in Aberdeenshire as set out in sections 2.8 and 2.9;**
 - c) Approve the projects in the first round.**
- 1.3 Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure Services to approve future applications to the Town Centre Fund in line with the said criteria and process following consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson of Infrastructure Services Committee (ISC), Council Leader and Chief Executive for the 2019/2020 financial year.**
- 1.4 Instruct the Director of Infrastructure Services to report back to Committee with details of future applications approved under recommendation 1.3.**

2 Background/Discussion

- 2.1 The Scottish Government announced in December 2018, as part of their budget allocations, that £50 million had been ring-fenced for a Town Centre Fund that would be distributed to Local Authorities as part of their capital settlement. The purpose of this Fund is to drive local economic activity and to stimulate and support place based economic improvements in town centres. The aim is to invest in inclusive growth which supports town centres to become more diverse and sustainable, creating footfall through local**

improvements and partnerships which encourage town centres to become more vibrant, creative, enterprising and accessible places for their communities.

- 2.2 The Town Centre Fund compliments a wider package being delivered by the Scottish Government which offers business support to help town centres to become diverse, thriving and sustainable places. Support is also delivered through the Scotland's Towns Partnership in the form of additional information, support and services for town centre partnerships. Uses of this Town Centre Fund can include re-purposing buildings for housing, retail, business, social and community enterprise, services, leisure, and culture, tourism and heritage; and, improving access and infrastructure.
- 2.3 The Scottish Government has allocated £3,286,000 of the new Town Centre Fund to Aberdeenshire Council for distribution to projects in 2019-20. This £3.28m is expected to be passed over to the Council in quarterly payments. The monies must be "used" in the financial year 2019-20 and if not, used funds have to be returned to the Scottish Government so there is an urgency in allocating the Fund. To qualify for funding projects will have to be completed, or, at least work started or contracts signed within 2019-20. This will mean that projects will have to have planning permission, if required, in place before grant letters are issued.
- 2.4 On 7 March 2019 further information was received from the Scottish Government regarding the grant offers, terms, conditions, payments and guidance. Officers then began the process of consulting Services, Area Managers, business groups and community organisations on which projects would qualify for the funding given the tight timescales. A list of potential projects is now held by the Strategic Town Centres Executive.
- 2.5 A paper to the Senior Leadership Team approved the approach but, due to the short time-scale, urged that projects be allocated funding as soon as possible through delegated powers to the Director of Infrastructure after consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair and Opposition Spokesperson of ISC, the Council Leader and the Chief Executive. The Scheme of Governance allows a decision to be made by officers on any matter which ordinarily requires to be determined by the Council or committee but, by reason of special urgency, it is impractical to convene a meeting of the full Council or the relevant committee to make the decision.
- 2.6 On 29 March 2019, a briefing was issued to all Councillors, asking Councillors to pass on details of any suitable project to their Area Manager.
- 2.7 Key town centres which can benefit from the Fund are those stated within the Local Development Plan and which align with the Town Centre First Principle; Banchory, Banff, Ellon, Fraserburgh, Huntly, Inverurie, Macduff, Peterhead, Portlethen, Stonehaven, Turriff and Westhill. Certain projects that are in smaller town centres and score well on other criteria will also be considered.

- 2.8 On 8 May 2019 the Director of Infrastructure Services, following consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair and Opposition Spokesperson of ISC, Leader and Chief Executive (the Town Centre Fund Panel), was asked to agree that applications to the Town Centre Fund would be judged on the following criteria:

Criteria for Large Projects Town Centre Fund
The funding can only be granted to capital projects.
Projects should lead to transformational change.
Projects funded should be deliverable within set timescales as monies have to be legally committed by March 2020.
The monies should stimulate and support a wide range of investments which encourage town centres to diversify and flourish.
Monies should be granted to projects where the public have been consulted, whether through a place standard exercise, developed through a charrette, a study or another form of public consultation. If public consultation has not taken place then a robust business plan should be in place.
Monies will be allocated to projects that can lever in additional funds.
Deliverability of a project should be taken into account when allocating the Fund
The sustainable use of the asset will be taken into account when allocating funding.

- 2.9 The Director also approved the allocation of the first tranche of funding following consultation with the Town Centre Fund Panel. A list of the projects approved will be circulated to Members at this meeting of ISC. Those projects will only use about one third of the Fund allocated to Aberdeenshire so dates for other Panels are being set and officers continue to work with Services and external organisations to bring more projects to the Panel. In order to ensure the applications can be dealt with timeously and given the urgency surrounding the grant process it is proposed that power is delegated to the Director to continue to approve applications following consultation with the Town Centre Fund Panel.
- 2.10 Delivery of both proposed funds should fit into the themes of the Scottish Governments Town Centre Action. These themes include:
- **Town Centre Living** – footfall is key to achieving thriving, successful towns centre; 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 (BIDs) 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 Wifi 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 connected places which promote natural and cultural assets, designed in partnership with local communities and key stakeholders.
- 2.11 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

3 Scheme of Governance

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section F1.1b of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to the approval of resources to support Economic Development.
- 3.2 Section B1 and B2 of the Specific Delegations to Officers, as set out in Part 2B of the List of Officer Powers in the Scheme of Governance also apply to this report. Section B1 authorises the Delegated Officer to take a decision on any matter which, in their opinion requires to be determined by Full Council, Committee or Sub-Committee, but by reason of special urgency it is impractical to convene a meeting of the Full Council, Committee or Sub-Committee. Section B2 provides that any decision taken by the Delegated Officer shall be taken after consulting with the Chief Executive and Chair and Vice-Chair and the main opposition spokesperson of this Committee.

4 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are staffing implications for different teams including Economic Development, Planning and Area Managers. At present it is not envisaged that additional staff will need to be employed to administer this Fund.
- 4.2 Finance officers have been informed by the Scottish Government that the Town Centre Fund monies will be received quarterly starting at the end of March 2019. The Fund monies will be placed in reserves within the Economic Development budget.
- 4.3 An Equality Impact Assessment, and a Town Centre Impact Assessment, were carried out and appear in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. Only positive impacts were identified.
- 4.4 The following risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level: Budget Pressures; Changes in government policy, legislation

and regulation; Working with other organisations; Reputational Management. The following risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level: Community Empowerment, City Region Deal, Regeneration and Economic Development.

Stephen Archer
Director of Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by: Morna Harper, Service Manager - Economic Development, and Audrey Michie, Strategic Town Centres Executive

Date: 17 April 2019

APPENDIX 1
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1: Title and aims of the activity (“activity” is an umbrella term covering policies, procedures, guidance and decisions).	
Service	Infrastructure Services
Section	Economic Development
Title of the activity etc.	Town Centre Fund distribution
Aims of the activity	To allocate Scottish Government Town Centre Fund (TCF) to projects that will make transformational changes to our town centres.
Author(s) & Title(s)	Morna Harper, Service Manager, Economic Development

Stage 2: List the evidence that has been used in this assessment.	
Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).	Scottish Government letters giving information and guidance on TCF and applications to the Fund.
Internal consultation with staff and other services affected.	Discussions with colleagues, services, Area Managers and councillors.
External consultation (partner organisations, community groups, and councils).	Third sector organisations and Scottish Government.
External data (census, available statistics).	Town centre studies and consultations. Background knowledge of Town Centre developments throughout Aberdeenshire.

Other (general information as appropriate).	
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Stage 3: Evidence Gaps.	
Are there any gaps in the information you currently hold?	No

Stage 4: Measures to fill the evidence gaps.		
What measures will be taken to fill the information gaps before the activity is implemented? These should be included in the action plan at the back of this form.	Measures:	Timescale:
	N/A	N/A

Stage 5: Are there potential impacts on protected groups? Please complete for each protected group by inserting "yes" in the applicable box/boxes below.				
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Age – Younger	Yes			
Age – Older	Yes			
Disability			Yes	
Race – (includes Gypsy Travellers)			Yes	
Religion or Belief			Yes	

Gender – male/female			Yes	
Pregnancy and maternity			Yes	
Sexual orientation – (includes Lesbian/ Gay/Bisexual)			Yes	
Gender reassignment – (includes Transgender)			Yes	
Marriage and Civil Partnership			Yes	

Stage 6: What are the positive and negative impacts?		
Impacts.	Positive (describe the impact for each of the protected characteristics affected)	Negative (describe the impact for each of the protected characteristics affected)
Please detail the potential positive and/or negative impacts on those with protected characteristics you have highlighted above. Detail the impacts and describe those affected.	The project will enable increased participation for all ages and abilities and create a positive contribution towards the improvement of historic buildings, town centre living and volunteering.	
	The project will help to plan and develop fully accessible facilities.	
	Where public uses are identified, the facilities will be open to all.	

Stage 7: Have any of the affected groups been consulted?

<p>If yes, please give details of how this was done and what the results were. If no, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating steps?</p>	<p>Not directly, but as part of the overall consultation and research undertaken in many town centres..</p>
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Stage 8: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce negative impacts?

<p>These should be included in any action plan at the back of this form.</p>	Mitigating Steps	Timescale
	N/A	N/A

Stage 9: What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups?

<p>These should be included in the action plan.</p>	<p>The promotion of inclusiveness across all the facilities and inclusion in user groups will build positive relationships across the various disciplines.</p>
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Stage 10: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?

<p>By promoting an accessible and “open to all” policy.</p>

Stage 11: What equality monitoring arrangements will be put in place?

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<p>These should be included in any action plan (for example customer satisfaction questionnaires).</p>	<p>There will not be any specific monitoring for equalities.</p>
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Stage 12: What is the outcome of the Assessment?		
<p>Please complete the appropriate box/boxes</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>No negative impacts have been identified.</p>
	<p>The project will bring facilities presently underused back into full use. The project will increase the number of community and cultural or business facilities in the town centre. The project will increase opportunities for participation and paid/unpaid work.</p>	
	<p>2</p>	
	<p>3</p>	

* Stage 13: Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.
<p>N/A</p>

Stage 14: Sign off and authorisation.		
<p>Sign off</p>	<p>1) Service and Team</p>	<p>Infrastructure Services, Economic Development</p>

2) Title of Policy/Activity	Town Centre Fund	
3) Authors: I/We have completed the equality impact assessment for this policy/activity.	Name: Audrey Michie Position: Town Centre Executive Date: 29 th April 2019 Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:
	Name: Position: Date: Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:
4) Consultation with Service Manager	Name: Morna Harper Date: 1 May 2019	
5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	Name: Belinda Miller Position: Head of Economic Development and Protective Services Date:	Name: Position: Date:
6) If the EIA relates to a matter that has to go before a Committee, Committee report author sends the Committee Report and this form, and any supporting assessment documents, to the Officers responsible for monitoring and the Committee Officer of the relevant Committee. e.g. Social Work and Housing Committee.		Date:
7) EIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: eia@abdshire		Date:
(Equalities team to complete) Has the completed form been published on the website? YES/NO		Date:

APPENDIX 2

TOWN CENTRE FIRST IMPACT ASSESSMENT (TCFIA)

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that town centres have an important role to play in the sustainable development of local economies.

The Town Centre First Impact Assessment (TCFIA) allows officers in all services to identify the detrimental and beneficial effects that decisions we take may have on our town centres. It will allow officers to consider any implications that council decisions may have on Aberdeenshire’s key town centres. Examples of this include changes to: the provision of civic and community facilities, employment land, retail, residential buildings, cultural assets, transportation, leisure and tourism.

A Town Centre Ambassador has been nominated within your service, you can locate your Town Centre First Ambassador through the Town Centre First Principle Arcadia pages.

Project Information	
Title of Committee Paper	Town Centre Fund
Service	Infrastructure Services
Department	Economic Development
Author	Morna Harper
Have you consulted your Town Centre First Ambassador?	Yes (Audrey Michie)

1) Could your Project Paper cause an impact in one (or more) of the identified town centres? – Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Inverurie, Westhill, Stonehaven, Ellon, Portlethen, Banchory, Turriff, Huntly, Banff, Macduff.	
Yes	All

2) If approved would your project cause an impact (either positive or negative) with regards to the footfall of any of these town centres?	
Yes	

3)

Please describe the aims of the committee paper?	To approve procedure for TCF
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4) What are the positive and negative impacts?		
Impact	Describe the positive impact?	Describe the negative impact?
Bringing town properties back into use for business, community and/or cultural use Improvement of public realm.	The properties will be utilised by community and/or commercial groups Reduction of dereliction Increased footfall in town centre.	None.

5) What mitigating steps will be taken to reduce or remove negative impacts? If none see Q6	
Mitigating Steps	Timescale
N/A	

6) Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.

Question 7: Sign off and Authorisation

<p>3) Author: I have completed the TCIA impact assessment for this policy/ activity.</p>	<p>Name: Audrey Michie Position: Town Centre Exec. Date: 29/05/2019 Signature:</p>	
<p>4) Consultation with Service Manager</p>	<p>Name: Morna Harper Position: Service Manager, Economic Development Date:</p>	
<p>5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service</p>	<p>Name: Belinda Miller Position: Head of Service, Economic Development and Protective Services Date:</p>	
<p>6) Have you consulted with your Town Centre First Ambassador?</p>	<p>Yes: Audrey Michie</p>	
<p>7) TCFIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: tcfia@aberdeenshire.gov.uk</p>	<p>Date Sent:</p>	

