

5. TOWN CENTRE FUND - CAPITAL GRANT 2019/20

The Council Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration setting out proposals for the delivery and operation of the Town Centre Capital Grant 2019/20 of £1.826 million, which had been allocated to the council via the local authority capital settlement form the Scottish Government.

The report advised that in February 2019 the Scottish Government announced, as part of their budget settlement within the local authority capital settlement, a new ring fenced capital fund of £50 million for a Town Centre Fund. This resulted in an allocation of £1.826 million to West Lothian.

The purpose of the grant was to enable local authorities to stimulate and support place based economic investments which encouraged town centres to diversify and flourish, creating footfall through local improvements and partnership.

In particular, the grant should fund a wide range of investments which deliver against the themes of the Town Centre Action Plan including town centre living and supporting town centres to be vibrant, accessible and enterprising places.

The grant was exclusively for capital expenditure which was additional to that which was already or would otherwise be allocated to the council's 2019/20 capital budget, and should not substitute existing spend.

The Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration explained that it was proposed to allocate the grant to communities in West Lothian on the same basis that was used to distribute the Scottish wide funding to each local authority area. As such it was proposed to allocate the grant to each place with 1,000 people or more, 50% or funding based on the number of towns and 50% based on the population. Appendix 1 to the report provided the proposed allocation to the 23 communities

The report further advised that due to tight timescales to spend the allocation, the Economic Development and Regeneration team would contact the current networks, including Town Centre Management Groups, Community Councils and links to communities used to develop the allocation of the Village Improvements Fund and Locality Regeneration Planning to assist in identifying projects, as well as wider publicity to encourage applications.

In terms of governance it was recommended that Local Area Committees make decisions on the applications and that as far as possible the money allocated to communities in each ward area was to be used in the ward. All applications would be presented to the relevant Local Area Committee. A deadline would be set for late August 2019 to allow applications to be considered at September Local Area Committee meetings. It was

probable that additional Local Area Committees would be required.

After the initial round of decisions if there was still a balance remaining, the committee would be able to allocate that to applications in the ward area which had not been funded at all or not fully funded. If there was still a balance remaining then the Council Executive would decide how and where all remaining balances should be spent across the whole council area.

The report recommended that the Council Executive:

1. Approve the list of eligible areas and allocation to each area, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
2. Approve the assessment of the criteria for projects as set out in the report.
3. Agree that decisions on the applications are made as follows:-
 - a) Local Area Committees will consider applications from each community to the fund and have the power to award funding in full or in part as they see fit up to the amount allocated to that community.
 - b) After doing so, if there was a balance remaining of the aggregate amount allocated to the ward, Local Area Committees would have the power to apply that balance to applications for the ward area which had not already been funded at all or fully.
 - c) After doing so, if there was still a balance remaining, Council Executive would decide how and where all remaining balances from Local Area Committee should be spent across the whole council area.
4. To note that additional Local Area Committee (LAC) meetings may be required.
5. Note the conditions pertaining to the grant as set out in the report.

Motion

To approve the terms of the report.

Moved by the Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick and seconded by Councillor Kirsteen Sullivan

Amendment

The model currently proposed to establish financial distribution of Town Centre Funds from the capital grant is so highly influenced by the over weighted Fixed allocation as well as the arbitrary cut off of 1000 residents that the grants distribution, as proposed, is unfair in the extreme and the diversity of amounts per head of population is so disparate as to be

unacceptable. Equally there seems to be little if any consideration in this model of need, of deprivation, or ability of small clusters of population to best utilise these funds.

Executive Council therefore ask that officers review this model and bring revised proposals to the Council Executive on 25 June 2019 based on a more equitable distribution of funds related to population, deprivation and need.

Moved by Councillor Charles Kennedy and seconded by Councillor Peter Heggie

A roll call vote was taken which resulted as follows:-

Motion

Amendment

Frank Anderson

Alison Adamson

Harry Cartmill

Charles Kennedy

Tom Conn

Peter Heggie

David Dodds

Damian Timson

Lawrence Fitzpatrick

Carl John

Dom McGuire

George Paul

Kirsteen Sullivan

Decision

Following a roll call vote the Motion was successful by 9 votes to 4 and was agreed accordingly.