



BATHGATE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

TOWN CENTRE FUND 2019/20: PROPOSED FUNDING AWARDS

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to invite committee to consider the applications to the Town Centre Fund 2019-20 and to agree the allocation of funding for the Bathgate ward.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Local Area Committee:

1. notes that 14 applications have been received for projects within the ward;
2. notes the recommendations provided by officers within the Bathgate ward;
3. agrees to award funding as set out in the report;
4. notes that the available fund for Bathgate is over-subscribed;
5. notes that if the officer recommendation on funding awards is accepted there will be no unallocated budget;
6. notes that should there be any unallocated funds, this would be available for distribution to projects elsewhere in West Lothian, and that it will be for Council Executive to decide on the distribution of unallocated funds;
7. notes that some of the funding costs remain as estimates and delegates the Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration to finalise award amounts within the overall value of the funding available within the ward; and
8. notes the terms and conditions associated to the awarding of grants as set out in the report.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; making best use of our resources; working in partnership.
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	To be assessed on an individual project basis but it is not anticipated that any proposals will require being the subject of specific assessments.
III	Implications for	The report sets out specific delegations to the

	Scheme of Delegations to Officers	Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration.
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None.
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Outcome 1 – We make West Lothian an attractive place to do business. Outcome 10 – We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the services we need. Outcome 12 – We value and enjoy our built environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	A total of £1.826 million will be available to the Town Centre Fund across West Lothian. In Bathgate ward, this represents £161,674.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	Not applicable.
VIII	Other consultations	Capital Asset Management Board

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 Background

In February 2019 the Scottish Government announced, as part of its budget, a new Town Centre Fund. The fund is a ring fenced capital allocation of £50 million for 2019/20. The fund is based on the Scotland's Town Partnership working definition of a town being a place with a population of 1,000 or more, which equates to 484 towns across Scotland, 23 for West Lothian. This allocation for West Lothian is £1.826 million.

Funding is aimed at addressing the core themes of the Scottish Government's Town Centre Action Plan 2013 and the Town Centre First Principle which requested that government, local authorities, the wider public sector, businesses and communities put the health of town centres at the heart of proportionate and best value decision making. It also encouraged a focus on delivering the best local outcomes regarding investment and de-investment decisions, alignment of policies, targeting of available resources to priority town centre sites, and encouraging vibrancy, equality and diversity. It committed to a collaborative approach which understands and underpins the long term plan for each town centre.

The themes of the Town Centre Action Plan 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.

D2 West Lothian Council’s approach

The Council Executive agreed on 11 June 2019 that the funding detailed above should be allocated to all 23 communities with populations over 1,000 through a grant application process (see background reference below). The deadline for receipt of applications was set for 31 August 2019 to allow for decisions to be taken and projects delivered within the stated delivery deadline of 31 March 2020.

The process agreed that decisions on the applications would be as follows:

- 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.
- After doing so, if there is a balance remaining of the aggregate amount allocated to the ward, Local Area Committees have the power to apply that balance to applications for the ward area which have not already been funded at all or fully.
- After doing so, if a balance remains, Council Executive will decide how and where all remaining balances from the Local Area Committees should be spent across the whole council area.

D3 Bathgate Applications

Within the Bathgate ward there is only one town (Bathgate) eligible for the funding and following the deadline of 31 August 2019, 14 applications were received for projects in the Bathgate ward. The table below sets out the overview of funding available and the scale of funding requested:

Town	Town allocation	No of applications received	Total requested	Over/under
Bathgate	£161,674.00	14	£544,391.00	-£382,717.00
TOTAL	£161,674.00	14	£544,391.00	-£382,717.00

Following receipt, all applications have been reviewed by officers through the Capital Asset Management Board and recommendations and advice is set out in the attached Appendix 1.

The following table provides a summary of those applications received and the recommended allocations for Bathgate ward.

Bathgate (£161,674)

Code	Application	Amount applied for	Recommended allocation
BAT01	Creation of Volunteering and Third Sector Hub	£39,750	£39,750
BAT02	Visitor leaflet display rack	£295	£295
BAT03	Bathgate Band equipment	£8,966	£0
BAT04	Town centre deep clean	£10,000	£0
BAT05	Improving Bathgate profile	£6,300	£6,300
BAT06	Reconnect Regal Reface	£55,580	£45,580
BAT07	Town centre tree lighting	£12,000	£12,000
BAT08	Property (roof) refurbishment	£15,000	£0
BAT09	Creating a sense of place	£86,500	£31,500
BAT10	Restoring the McLagan Fountain and Water Project	£50,000	£0
BAT11	Water Feature	£50,000	£0
BAT12	Street Furniture & Lighting	£35,000- £120,000	£0
BAT13	Putting Bathgate on Map	£50,000	£26,249
BAT14	Commuter Car Park and Access to Railway Station	£50,000	£0
	TOTAL	£544,391	£161,674

Remaining Balance: **£0**

The Committee is asked to note that the level of available funding is significantly over-subscribed in Bathgate town, and that there is no unallocated funding to Bathgate ward. Members are asked to consider the officers recommendations as made, as being those that will benefit the local community.

The Committee is also asked to note that with regard to Bathgate there is the Council's Town Centre Improvement Fund (capital programme) that could potentially support gaps in funding for certain projects, where full funding is not available. This would be subject to further discussion and meeting eligibility criteria.

Members are, however, asked to note that there may be some variance in the final costings for the projects and the recommendations seek delegated authority the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration to approve minor variances within the total funding available to the Local Area Committee. This variation will relate only to the costs of work. There is no provision for changing the scope of the work other than a reduction in the works in order to keep costs within the approved funding.

D4 Delivery of Projects

Following committee's decision on the funding requests, all applicants will be notified of the outcome. In some instances the projects will be delivered by the council on behalf of the community group, however, in others the grant funding will be paid direct to the community group. In the latter case the community group will hold full responsibility for the delivery of the project. Where projects are to receive funding they will be required to agree to conditions of grant, which will detail the conditions which have to be satisfied prior to the funding being released.

As all projects have to be delivered, or contractually committed, by 31 March 2020, officers will, at the end of January 2020, contact any applicant who has not drawn down the grant funding. At that stage the applicant will be asked whether they still intend to progress the work and to confirm that any necessary contracts can be let by 31 March 2020. If this is not confirmed, or where the council has reservations that it can be achieved the matter will be reported to Council Executive for a decision on the funding. Where possible that report will also detail a reserve list of any applications which could be implemented to utilise the available funding, although opportunities to do so will be very limited because of time constraints.

E. CONCLUSION

The Town Centre Fund 2019-20 offers significant additional capital funding to improve West Lothian's town centres. The projects in the Bathgate ward will deliver community identified projects that would not otherwise have been carried out in Bathgate. The timescales for delivering this work has made the application and assessment process challenging for both the applicants and officers. The delivery of the agreed projects will be equally challenging as detailed in the report and will require ongoing monitoring by officers to ensure delivery within the prescribed timescales.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Council Executive, 11 June 2019

<https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/submissiondocuments.asp?submissionid=42684>

Appendices/Attachments: Appendix 1: Application Recommendation Spreadsheet
Appendix 2: Town Centre Application Forms

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8 October 2019