

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**ANGUS COUNCIL - 16 DECEMBER 2021**

**CAPITAL GRANT ALLOCATIONS: PLACE BASED INVESTMENT PROGRAMME, RENEWAL OF PLAYPARKS & NATURE RESTORATION FUND**

**REPORT BY ALISON SMITH, INTERIM DIRECTOR OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**

**ABSTRACT**

This report provides information on three capital grant allocations to Angus Council from the Scottish Government for Place Based Investments, Playpark Renewal and Nature Restoration. It recommends projects for approval to use the grant allocation for the current financial year 2021/22.

**1. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

It is recommended Committee:

- (i) Agree the list of projects/proposals for use of the Place Based Investment allocation of £720,000 for 2021/22;
- (ii) Agree the list of projects/proposals for use of Renewal of Play Park Capital Allocation of £108,000 for 2021/22 ;
- (iii) Agree the list of the projects/proposals for use of the Nature Restoration Fund allocation of £95,000 for 2021/22;
- (iv) Note that a further report will be brought to the next meeting of Angus Council setting out the process and engagement for allocation of funds for future years.
- (v) Agree that the Council write to the Scottish Government to request flexibility on the spend profile of the Place Based Investment Grant.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN**

2.1 Delivery of the projects will contribute to the following priorities in the Council Plan:

**Economy:** We want Angus to be a 'go-to' area for business

- spend Council money locally where we can help to grow our local economy
- support the creation of local, paid, and lasting job opportunities for our citizens
- make Angus a low-carbon, sustainable area
- support business and economic growth by improving the physical and digital infrastructure

**People:** We want to maximise inclusion and reduce inequalities

- work collaboratively for and with our citizens to keep them safe in resilient communities
- reduce social isolation and loneliness
- offer our citizens a range of opportunities to help them achieve their potential and to reduce poverty

**Place:** We want our communities to be strong, resilient and led by citizens

- continue to reduce the council's carbon footprint with the aim of reducing our net carbon emissions to zero by 2045
- engage with citizens and communities to deliver the right services in the right place at the right time

- increase the supply of affordable housing and improve the council's current housing stock so it is fit for the future
- coordinate our place-based activity and investment through the development of the Angus Local Development Plan (known as the AngusPlan)

### **3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 As part of the Scottish Government budget Angus Council has been allocated funding from 3 separate funds, provided as part of the general capital grant. It is understood that each of these funds will continue beyond this initial year of 2021/22 however to date this has not yet been confirmed for the Nature Restoration Fund.

#### **Place Based Investment Programme**

3.2 The Council has been allocated £720,000 from the Scottish Government for 2021/22 from the Place Based Investment Programme. The main objectives of the Programme are:

- To link and align place based initiatives and establish a coherent local framework to implement the Place Principle;
- To support place policy ambitions such as town centre revitalisation, community led regeneration. 20 minute neighbourhoods and Community Wealth Building;
- To ensure that all place based investments are shaped by the needs and aspirations of local communities;
- To accelerate our ambitions for net zero, wellbeing and inclusive economic development, tackling inequality and disadvantage, community involvement and ownership.

3.3 Although specific amounts for future years have yet to be confirmed it is estimated based on the Year 1 proportions that future years would equate to £1.9M in total split over 4 years. The grant is capital in nature and can only be used to fund capital expenditure of the local authority or a third party. Funds must be spent or legally committed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 or will require to be returned.

#### **Renewal of Playpark Fund**

3.4 The Scottish Government have set out an overall £60M programme to renew playparks across Scotland. At present initial funding of £5M has been agreed for 2021/22 with a capital allocation for Angus of £108,000. There is no deadline to spend or commit these monies.

3.5 The funding is to be used to deliver a programme of renewal, recognising that the extent of renewal, and refurbishment will vary across the whole play estate and be influenced by local plans and investment priorities and engagement with children and young people. Nationally agreed principles against which spending plans should be developed are still to be set out but key to this will be the engagement of children and young people as part of the process of agreeing local priorities.

#### **Nature Restoration Fund**

3.6 The Scottish Government has set aside additional funding of £10 million to support a wide range of projects that will deliver nature restoration, safeguard wildlife and tackle the causes of biodiversity loss especially climate change. £5M is allocated to local authorities and the remainder split into a small competitive fund administered by Nature Scotland (£1M) and the balance going directly to established nature restoration projects across Scotland. The Angus allocation is £95,000.

3.7 The purpose of the fund is to support actions that help nature recover across Scotland. It will therefore run across two themes:

- Making Space for Nature (urban focused nature based solutions for biodiversity and climate change); and
- Helping Nature Recover (rural focused biodiversity enhancement, climate resilience and reinstatement)

- 3.8 The capital funding allocated to Angus Council is to support new, or to enhance existing, approaches that further biodiversity and deliver positive effects for biodiversity and enhance local ecosystems and address the climate emergency and its impacts through mitigation and adaptation and by promoting nature based solutions. Projects must be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

#### **4. CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 The timelines for the delivery of capital projects and associated spend for each of these funds is very tight. In order to ensure that the council can fulfil the requirements of the grant the focus has to be on projects that can be delivered within the timeframe and the necessary staff resources available for delivery.
- 4.2 However engagement and working closely with communities is a key element of all funds but to do this well takes time. One benefit of additional years funding commitment is that it provides scope to develop projects with and support communities to deliver those which have the biggest impact. Drawing together all the activity, investment and proposals for their areas and clearly identifying priorities will inform future proposals and officers will support communities in developing timelines and shaping proposals. It is proposed to set aside a small grant fund to third parties to undertake feasibility and assessment work to develop proposals. A further report will therefore be brought back to Council setting out the options for the allocation of funds for future years.
- 4.3 Whilst the 5 year timescale for the Place Based Investment Programme is welcomed, the grant conditions requiring funds to be committed on an annual basis undermines the benefits this timeframe offers for opportunities to identify and develop projects and deliver those that may deliver the biggest impact for communities in Angus. It is therefore proposed that the Council write to the Scottish Government to request flexibility on the spend profile.
- 4.4 Engagement with children and young people is a key requirement of all funds but a specific requirement of the Playpark Renewal Fund. At present there is no restriction of a timeframe for use of the funds allocated to 2021/22 however the process for engagement that ensures meaningful input will need clearly set out. The current proposals therefore set out the key areas for where spend should be allocated to help target this engagement activity.

#### **5. PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 It is recommended that a strategic approach is applied to the allocation of funds to allow those which have the biggest impact to progress. An early allocation to a geographical area would be factored into any assessment for future years ensuring distribution across Angus over the lifetime of the funds.
- 5.2 The projects identified in Section 5.3 as recommended for approval were drawn together by officers from an assessment of those already in development given the short timescales for spend/commitment. These include proposals put forward to the Cycling Waking Safer Routes funding. Any grant funds require officer resource to oversee and manage the process. This has been factored into the proposals outlined below

##### **Projects Recommended for Approval**

#### **5.3 Place Based Investment Programme (£720,000)**

The timescale for Year 1 has been particularly challenging to identify projects which are deliverable within the timeframe and provide a suitable fit with the criteria. This has resulted in a small number of projects coming forward which are unlikely to be funded in future years.

##### Recommended Project List

Angus Wide – Village & Town Community Led Halls Grant Fund <i>(For energy efficiency and resilience improvements to halls managed by the community. Application process managed with the Vibrant Communities Team)</i>	£ 130,000
Arbroath – Seaton Park	£ 200,000

*(To provide funding to allow delivery of £600k Phase 1A of Full size 3G Facility, fencing and floodlights)*

Brechin City Football Club Community Trust Hub	£ 50,000
<i>(Purchase of modular facilities to allow for community use of facilities)</i>	
Brechin – Community Led Tourism Group	£ 5,000
<i>(For capital works towards signage and signage upgrades)</i>	
Carnoustie – Seafront Seats & Bins Replacement	£ 23,000
Forfar – Resurface Path from Craig O Loch to Ranger Centre	£ 12,000
Kirriemuir – Den Footpath Resurfacing	£ 50,000
Monifieth – Community Centre (MCRG project)	£ 250,000
<i>(To meet funding shortfall of project cost following tender exercise and value engineering)</i>	

#### 5.4 **Renewal of Playpark Fund (£108,000)**

Kirriemuir – Martin Park play area	£ 17,800
Montrose – The Splash unit replacements	£ 6,900
Crombie – Play park timber unit replacements	£ 32,000
Arbroath – West Links vandalism replacement	£ 13,500
Letham – Dempster Park play area unit replacement	£ 6,800
Forfar – Graham Crescent unit replacement	£ 6,500
Monifieth – Blue Seaway unit replacements	£ 24,500

#### 5.5 **Nature Restoration Fund (£95,000)**

Officers have undertaken an assessment of projects which would meet the criteria as set out in the funding allocation, be delivered within existing resources and the timeframe. The following 3 projects are recommended for use of the £95,000 funding allocation for this financial year:

Brechin - Den Biodiversity Improvements	£ 32,000
Angus Wide – Cut and Lift Machinery for Wildflower Meadows	£ 35,000
Angus Wide – Standard Tree Planting in Angus	£ 28,000

## 6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications as all proposals are contained within the allocated funding, there are indirect financial implications through officer time to support the delivery of projects supported by the funding and any administration of these to third parties. The Village and Town Community Led Halls Grant Fund will require more detailed resource which will be met within the Vibrant Communities team.
- 6.2 Administration of small funding packages requires significant officer time and therefore the identified projects seek to focus on larger funding projects which can be easily delivered.

## 7. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached as Appendix 1.

**NOTE:** No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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