

Agenda Item	7
Report No	DSA/011/21

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee

**Date:** 9 November 2021

**Report Title:** Place Based Investment Funds – Proposed Funding Allocations

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following on from the budget agreed by the Highland Council in March 2021, a £100,000 Place Based Investment Fund was allocated to each Ward for the 2021/22 financial year. This Fund is intended to enable a flexible local response to address the four harms of Covid which are identified as direct health harms; health impacts not directly related to Covid; societal impacts and economic impacts.
- 1.2 Early discussions with Local Members at Ward level have identified three initial priority areas for spend against the Place Based Investment Fund for the Ward. This report asks the Committee to agree the budget allocations outlined in the report and also to note additional priorities identified for potential future spend.

### 2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to:

- i. **Invest in Village and Town Amenities and Maintenance - £80,000**
- ii. **Invest in Playparks - £10,000** - Recognising the increased usage of open spaces and supporting local projects to improve play opportunities. Funding to be delegated to the Head of Community Support and Logistics
- iii. **Support Business - £10,000** – to support the Business Community to establish formal representative groups funding to be delegated to the Highland Council's Development and Regeneration Team.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – The resource implications are set out in the report. The proposals outlined would allocate up to £100,000 from the Dingwall and Seaforth Place Based Fund.

- 3.2 Legal – No legal implications.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – The allocation of funds being proposed within the report will enable activities to be directed in ways that promote equality and tackle poverty.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – Investment in open spaces will increase walking rather than car travel.
- 3.5 Risk – There are no identified risks as projects will either be delivered in-house within the known budget or will be provided as grants to established experienced organisations using the Highland Council’s standard grant criteria/process.
- 3.6 Gaelic – There are no specific Gaelic implications.

#### 4. Background

4.1 As part of the budget setting process, a Place Based Investment Fund was created for 2021/22 allocating £100,000 to each Ward across Highland. The aim of this Fund is to address the four harms of Covid:

- **Direct health harms**; to people’s health through contracting the virus.
- **Health impacts not directly related to Covid**; a wider impact on health and social care due to the impact on services and how people can or maybe cannot use these services.
- **Societal impacts** - as a result of the measures put in place to slow the spread of the virus this could lead to increased feelings of isolation or anxiety and impact on the wellbeing of individuals. It is also noted how different groups of the population have been adversely impacted by the pandemic – younger people and older people.
- **Economic impacts** – how the economy has been impacted by the pandemic including employment and income for individuals.

Any funding needs to set out how it will address one or more of the four harms of Covid.

4.2 **Investment in Village and Town Amenities and Maintenance Improvement - £80,000** - These funds will be available for consideration on application (up to £20,000) from formally constituted and established community groups, charities or Development Trusts/Companies to deliver or manage through direct employment or contract of suitably experienced Village/Town Operatives to improve the amenity of the area and carry out identified repairs, replacements and seasonal maintenance. Groups must be able to demonstrate their ability to directly employ, manage or contract the necessary relevant service. Posts would be temporary and could be full or part time. The applicant body would be expected to work together in co-ordinated way with already established community volunteer groups and the Highland Council’s Amenity Manager to ensure what scope of works required is reflected in the commissioning such as paths, grass cutting, grounds maintenance.

Such projects would improve the amenity of areas in villages and towns which in turn would have a wider impact on health and wellbeing of the community. This has been highlighted through Community Councils, Mid Ross Community Partnership and Housing Rate Your Estate engagement to Members as a priority. Such a project would also improve economic impacts through civic pride and encouraging more locals and

visitors to take time out to enjoy both urban and rural paths networks and parks and the stunning scenery. Path networks would be clear of obstructions and accessible for everyone. With an expected increased footfall this would generate more business opportunities in the areas and sense of pride.

Organisations and groups will be asked to apply within an agreed timescale which will see commitment by mid-March and all projects must be completed by December 2022.

The funds would be managed by the Ward Manager in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation, with grants awarded of £10,000 or over being reported to a future Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee.

4.3 **Investment in Playparks - £10,000** – Members and communities in Dingwall and Seaforth are aware of the importance of play in the lives of children, young people and their families and the benefits to their mental health and well-being of having access to quality accessible equipment. The impacts of Covid have been felt across the age ranges. This important investment which will help in keeping Playparks open with replacing equipment that has been removed or has a life span of less than 3 years as well as replacement play bark.

4.4 **Supporting Business - £10,000** – Members are aware that there is not a collective business voice in the two key business centres in Dingwall and Seaforth Ward. They would wish to support the business community to establish formal business representative groups in Dingwall and Muir of Ord if they so wish. A proposal will come forward to the next committee. Funding to be delegated to the Highland Council's Development and Regeneration Team who it is anticipated would work with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and business communities.

## 5. Management of Funds

5.1 The funds allocated in accordance with the report will be managed by the Ward Manager with any grants awarded of £10,000 or over being reported to a future Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee for approval.

Designation: Carron McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

Date: 27 October 2021

Author: Diane Agnew, Ward Manager  
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**Back ground papers:** Place Based Investment Fund Operational Guidance April 2021