

Agenda Item	15
Report No	CIA/44/21

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: City of Inverness Area Committee

Date: 18th November 2021

Report Title: Inverness Wards Place Based Investment Funds and COVID-19 Fund – Proposed Funding Allocations

Report By: Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following on from the budget agreed by 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 4 harms of Covid which are identified as direct health harms; health impacts not directly related to Covid; societal impacts and economic impacts.
- 1.2 Discussions with Members at Ward level have identified a range of opportunities for spend against the Place Based Investment Fund for a number of the City Area Wards. Governance for spend of this funding is through the Area Committee therefore this report asks the Committee to agree the budget allocations outlined in the report.
- 1.3 Members will recall that proposed allocations for Wards 12,13, 15, 16 and 19 were approved at the City area committee held on 26th August 2021. This report confirms the proposed allocations for Wards 14, 16 and 17.
- 1.4 In addition, a request is being made by Members of Wards 15 and 16, Inverness Ness-side and Millburn, to repurpose an element of their COVID-19 budgets.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider and agree the proposed allocations of Place Based Investment Funds as follows:
 - i. **Ward 14**
 - a. Investment in Play Parks (Merkinch)- £55,000
 - b. Investment in Community based Mental health and wellbeing projects in Merkinch - £35,000 with direct awards to:
 - Merkinch Partnership - £8,750
 - Rokschool - £8,750

- The Clay Studio - £8,750
 - Merkinch Nature Reserve - £8,750
- c. Investment in Community based projects in Dalneigh £10,000
- d. Total = £100,000

ii. **Ward 16**

Investment in Play Parks allocated as follows:

- a. Crown & City Centre Community Council - £13,750
- b. Culcabock & Drakies Community Council - £13,750
- c. Hilton, Milton & Castle Heather Community Council - £13,750
- d. Raigmore Community Council - £13,750

iii. **Ward 17**

- a. Investment in Play Parks (Croy) - £50,000
- b. Investment in GoodNess Community Garden - £30,000
- c. Investment in Ardersier Community Garden Project - £20,000
- d. Total = £100,000

2.2 Members are asked to agree the reallocation of the following COVID-19 funds

iv. **Ward 15 & Ward 16 – Hilton Covid Fund**

£6,500 from the COVID-19 Hilton Fund, which was allocated for both Wards, and £750 each from Inverness Ness-side Ward and Inverness Millburn COVID-19 Funds towards the Hilton Family Support project.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource implications – The resource implications are set out in the report and set out the proposed allocations against each of the City Wards.
- 3.2 Legal implications – Funding will be made to external groups and/or other Council services in line with the details agreed in the report and the Scheme of Delegation. This means that grants of up to £10,000 can be administered locally by the Ward Manager in consultation with Members and grants larger than £10,000 will require further approval through CIAC.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) impacts – The allocation of funding proposed targets a range of projects and activities, a number of which specifically address access, inequality and improved outdoor space in order to encourage greater use and promote mental wellbeing.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever implications – There are no specific climate change implications, but some projects will have positive climate change impacts such as the community growing projects.
- 3.5 Risk implications – Some funding allocations are dependent upon additional external funding being identified in order to complete the funding package and enable the project to progress. Placed Based funding will only be allocated once the complete funding package is in place. Grants will be made following established grant making procedures to minimise risk of project failure.

- 3.6 As stated in the report presented to Committee on 26th August, in relation to play areas. there is a risk that without investment more playparks/sports fields may become unusable and prevent the local communities from accessing safe outdoor spaces to exercise. However, new play equipment will also, in time, require maintenance and repairs and at present resources are extremely limited for this. The future maintenance burden can be mitigated, if not entirely eliminated, by Amenities staff working with communities to help ensure that any new equipment is low maintenance and uses standard parts. Additionally, a broader approach to play could potentially be promoted, including regarding play areas as social spaces for all age groups with less play equipment, and promoting natural play around existing features or features constructed out of standard materials (timber etc in order to minimise the ongoing maintenance costs.
- 3.7 Gaelic implications – There are no specific Gaelic implications.

4. Inverness Central Ward (Ward 14)

- 4.1 Central Ward Councillors have identified mental health and wellbeing of communities within the Ward as the primary objective in terms of allocation of Place Based Investment Funding. This includes how best to develop community spaces – including play areas -in order to provide sustainable open spaces for all ages within the ward.
- 4.2 Further work was undertaken to:
- Explore priority areas with community groups to understand use of space and opportunities for partnership development
 - Explore with communities priority play spaces for improvement/refurbishment including the potential of sustainable play provision
 - Explore alternative uses of end-of-life play spaces including repurposing for other community uses such as food growing.
- 4.3 Following on from the above, it is proposed to make to allocations for:
- 4.4 **South Kessock Play Parks** - Members are aware of the importance of play in the lives of children and their families and the benefits to their well-being of having quality accessible equipment. The impacts of Covid have been felt across the age ranges so this important investment will provide opportunities for active recreation. Improving facilities for children and young people to be more active will enhance their physical and mental wellbeing. This will also enhance the space and the place to provide improved recreational opportunities for local residents.
- 4.5 Funding should be prioritised in line with discussions with amenities officers and community groups/ Community Councils. The funding will be delegated to the Council's Amenities team for implementation and, in this main, this will be targeted at replacement equipment. However, Members are eager to encourage community involvement in the improvements and will encourage any opportunities for community funding where possible to further enhance the investment and create sustainable play provision.
- 4.6 It is proposed to allocate £55,000 for play park improvements.
- 4.7 **Partnership Development - Merkinch Partnership** – The partnership plans to develop and implement projects in recognition of the multiple barriers and inequalities facing the community. These projects will focus on Employability Skills and an In-work Poverty Support Service. These projects will have a specific focus on working with and assisting the digitally excluded and young people. The projects will also identify and work with

local partners to develop both volunteering and employability opportunities across a range of sectors and open those up to project participants. This is part of a “One Stop Shop” information and advice service focussed on moving people out of poverty, involving key partners from the public, private and third sectors and delivering Employability skills programme for people facing multiple barriers and experiencing inequalities preventing them from moving into work. The project has an overall annual cost of £110k and has a range of match finding partners including the Scottish Government and the DWP.

- 4.8 It is proposed to allocate £8,750 to the Merkinch Partnership.
- 4.9 **Rokschool** – local organisation Rokschool have been providing direct food and wellbeing support to families throughout the Merkinch area during the pandemic. Working with the support of Merkinch Partnership, Rokschool will continue its community-based projects around food provision and growing and also providing essential local resources around positive and mentally healthy outdoor activities for young people. The positive effects of being outdoors and engaging with nature on health and wellbeing (including mental health) are well documented and particularly important at the present time.
- 4.10 It is proposed to allocate £8,750 to the Rokschool growing project subject to additional clarification regarding existing project funding and project governance.
- 4.11 **The Clay Studio** - working with the support of the Merkinch Partnership this project will provide access to learning and development opportunities tailored to individual needs. The project will give local people of all ages the opportunity to take part in new activities, learn new skills, interact with others, build new friendships and links in their own community, experience the therapeutic effect of arts and crafts and build social skills. The key aims of this project include activities which improve mental health and well-being such as mental health therapy sessions and bereavement support. The project will provide opportunities for young people to gain qualifications, increase their skills, build confidence, develop motivation, improve individual resilience and reduce feelings of isolation. The community and individual benefits of these project objectives are well documented and particularly important at the present time. The project’s existing funding comprises of funding from ‘Awards for All’, a Highland Council contract to deliver Education one to one support activities and revenue income generated by workshop sessions.
- 4.12 It is proposed to allocate £8,750 to the Clay Studio
- 4.13 **Merkinch Local Nature Reserve** – will provide improved outdoor areas with space for people to reconnect and improve their physical and mental wellbeing, better facilities particularly for children to explore the reserve. The work of the project will enhance the reserve and provide improved recreational opportunities for local residents. Further engagement with the local community will determine how to take forward these improvements. Benefits of the project include improved mental health in the community delivered through wellbeing activities, increased volunteering opportunities and using the reserve to encourage social interaction in an accessible green space. This is part of a wider project to redevelop the nature reserve led by the part time Reserve Project Manager who coordinates volunteer development activity, Junior Rangers and health walks in the Reserve as well as general upkeep and maintenance of the area.
- 4.14 It is proposed to allocate £8,750 to the Merkinch Local Nature Reserve

- 4.16 **Dalneigh Community Food Project** – will improve and strengthen community led amenities and health and well-being activities utilising local green spaces in Dalneigh. This proposed funding will support this community-led initiative to develop communal vegetable growing spaces which are accessible to users of all abilities and create an important gathering place for people from this locality. The positive effects of being outdoors and engaging with nature on health and wellbeing (including mental health) are well documented and particularly important at the present time. The project will work alongside the existing Hawthorne Allotment group and will capture and develop wider community interest in more local growing spaces working with the Council's Tenant Participation Officer and local Parent Councils. It is planned that this project will feed into a Community Larder.
- 4.17 It is proposed to allocate £10,000 to the Dalneigh Community food project

5. Inverness Millburn (Ward 16)

- 5.1 The Inverness Millburn Ward Members allocated £55,000 to Play Parks to improve facilities for children and young people for them to be more active, which will enhance their physical and mental wellbeing. This will also enhance the space and the place to provide improved recreational opportunities for local residents. Funding was to be at replacement equipment and implemented by Council staff however Members were keen to encourage community involvement in the improvements and opportunities for community funding where possible to further enhance the investment and create sustainable play provision.
- 5.2 To this end the Members for this ward, and following further local discussions, have agreed to grant £13,750 to each of the following communities to support them to attract additional funding for play park improvements and thereby ensuring best value for the investment available:
- Crown & City Centre Community Council
 - Culcabock & Drakies Community Council
 - Hilton, Milton & Castle Heather Community Council
 - Raigmore Community Council
- 5.3 Further to the allocation agreed in August, it is proposed to award four grants of £13,750 (total of £55,000) to Community Councils to enhance play improvement in the ward.

6. Culloden & Ardersier Ward (Ward 17)

- 6.1 Local Members have continued to explore options related to the two key priority areas identified for investment, that were previously reported to this committee. Discussions have taken place with officers at Ward 17 Business Meetings regarding both housing provision and community growing projects (specifically the GoodNess Community Garden project in Culloden).
- 6.2 The Head of Development & Regeneration and the Housing Manager (Inverness) are now progressing an initial ward level review and will report back to Members. At the present time there is no funding required for this priority.
- 6.3 In addition to the GoodNess Community Garden project, other key priorities have emerged through discussion with the Amenities Manager (South) and with the Community Support Coordinators - and as a result Members have agreed to allocate

funding to a play area project and to support the development of a community garden project in Ardersier.

- 6.4 Following on from the above, it is proposed to make allocations to:
- 6.5 **The GoodNess Community Garden Project** – Members had already supported community growing projects as a key priority for the ward, and the GoodNess Community Garden has come forward as a project that already has strong support. There is positive involvement with Culloden Academy where S2 and S3 pupils are helping with designing elements of the garden. The three local primary schools would like to use the outdoor education area and the local GP surgery is committed to using the space for mental health placements. Local care homes, uniform groups, toddler groups and nurseries are also all keen to be involved.
- 6.6 A Phasing Plan has been produced and Phase 1 would provide a safe, secure and level foundation for the project to establish. There will be ongoing support from Council staff, including the Community Food Growing Co-ordinator and Community Support Co-ordinators, to further develop and strengthen links and involvement with the local community and to create a broad range of volunteering opportunities. The project will be at the heart of the community and the aim is that wide ranging health and wellbeing benefits will be available to all.
- 6.7 It is proposed to allocate £30,000 to Phase 1 of the GoodNess Project.
- 6.8 **Ardcroy Play Area, Croy** – In discussion with the Amenities Manager (South), Members have identified the village of Croy as a priority for improved access to outdoor play. Members would be keen to encourage community involvement in both identifying and being a part of finding solutions for the village, as there is a need to improve recreational opportunities for all. As it is recognised that it will require a longer-term approach to work with the community on the bigger picture, the play area at Ardcroy Road has been highlighted as in particular need of upgrading. It is therefore proposed to target this play area as an initial project for upgrade and enhancement and to look to encourage early community involvement in the process. It is also hoped that this project work will encourage local stakeholders in the community to become more involved. The funding will be allocated to the Council's Amenities team for implementation.
- 6.9 It is proposed to allocate £50,000 for play park improvements.
- 6.10 **Ardersier Community Garden Project** – There is strong community interest in the creation of a garden on the land adjacent to the War memorial, community café and library. Interest has also been expressed at a local level in community asset transfer of the land, which is in Council ownership. However, the land is bounded on one side by a wall that has suffered collapse. In order to make the area safe, and to enable the community to progress their project proposals for the land, it is proposed to secure the wall area and address the safety issues. The land is ideally situated in the village and offers an opportunity to develop a community and partnership approach to the creation of a garden area that would complement the existing community facilities. The wall is the responsibility of the Council and discussions are underway with the interested parties in order to ensure that the work is carried out and a partnership approach is undertaken.
- 6.11 It is proposed to allocate £20,000 toward improving the safety and security of the wall area.

7. Repurposing of COVID-19 Funds Inverness Ness-side (Ward 15) & Inverness Millburn (Ward16)

- 7.1 It was agreed at a meeting of the Highland Council on 7 January 2021 that wards with unspent covid-19 funds could decide to spend this on projects to assist children and adults post covid, especially within deprived areas. Any re-purposing of covid funds should be agreed at the local committee. Inverness Ness-side Ward and Inverness Millburn Members have agreed to repurpose COVID-19 funding to support an application from Hilton Family Support.
- 7.2 The application is for the group to strengthen the community of Hilton by supporting vulnerable families. The organisation already works with over 100 parents and children in the community.
- 7.3 The Hilton Family Support group provides practical, emotional and developmental support to the vulnerable families. This can include direct practical help such as food provision, running groups to support socialisation and receiving advice from service providers, supporting outdoor learning and employability support. The funding will contribute towards delivery of this provision.
- 7.4 The total project cost is £40,000 with this application being for £8,000 towards that. The other funding is from grants from Trusts as well as the group's own funds. All other funding is already in place.
- 7.5 Members are asked to agree the funding of £6,500 from the COVID-19 Hilton Fund, which was allocated for both Wards, as well as £750 each from Inverness Ness-side Ward and Inverness Millburn COVID-19 Funds.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Communities & Place

Date: 3rd November 2021

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