

Agenda Item	6
Report No	ERA-04-22

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Easter Ross Area Committee

Date: 17 February 2022

Report Title: Highland Council Place Based Funds

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 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 Discussions with Local Members at Ward level identified play as a key priority for spend under the Place Based Investment Fund for the Wards. In addition, allocations are also proposed to support other priorities to support key toilet facilities, active travel and for small community grant funding streams to help communities address the harms of covid. This report asks the Committee to agree the budget allocations outlined in the report. This includes reallocating the sum of £12,000 originally allocated by Cromarty Firth ward towards the provision of a play officer. Both wards have so far allocated £2,500 of their £100,000 towards the Nigg/Cromarty Ferry service provision and each have proposals put forward for the remaining £97,500

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked:

Ward 6 – Cromarty Firth

- a. To agree to reallocate the £12,000 originally agreed from the Place Based Investment Fund for the intended Play Ranger Post to the provision of play equipment as set out in the report providing a total pot of £97,500 Place Based Funds to allocate.

To consider and agree the proposed allocations of Place Based Investment Funds as follows:

- b. Investment in play park provision in Novar Crescent, Evanton - £10,000
- c. Investment in play park provision Milnafua, Alness - £10,000
- d. Investment in play park provision Westford, Alness - £10,000
- e. Investment in play park provision Shillinghill, Alness - £10,000
- f. Investment in accessible play equipment, South Lodge Primary School - £5,000
- g. Investment in the Evanton, Alness, Invergordon cycle path to support Active Travel Active Travel - £15,000
- h. Provision an automated locking system for Alness toilets to prevent ongoing vandalism issues - £3,000
- i. Support to Invergordon Social Club for a Feasibility Study to consider their future development to ensure sustainability - £20,000
- j. Creation of a community grants funding stream for community groups to apply for grants of up to £5,000 for projects to address one or more of the four harms of Covid - £14,500

Total = 97,500

Ward 7 – Tain & Easter Ross

To consider and agree the proposed allocations of Place Based Investment Funds as follows:

- k. Investment in play park provision in Pinewood Crescent Tain - £2,500
- l. Funds required to make a new Chain for the Tain Links chain climbing wall - £850
- m. Investment in play park provision at Chapel Brae, Portmahomack –£5,000
- n. Investment in play park provision at Woodlands Drive, Milton and at Milton MUGA - £28,000
- o. Investment in play park provision at Redspur Gardens, Fearn - £2,000
- p. Investment in play park provision at Cameron Place, Nigg to provide landscaped play, - £2,000
- q. Investment in play park provision At Balintore (Abbotshaven Junior and Senior - £3,300
- r. Investment in play park provision at Hilton Seaside- £2,000
- s. Provision of a small grants stream of £51,850 to address the harms of Covid open for applications of up to £10,000

Total = £97,500

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – as set out in the report.
- 3.2 Legal – projects being delivered by Highland Council Services will meet all legal requirements, working within procurement frameworks. Projects being delivered by communities will make use of the existing Ward Discretionary application forms and process to ensure good governance and oversight.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – The allocation of funds to support local communities will enable activities to be directed in ways that promote equality and tackle the harms of Covid. The allocation of resources to support improved play areas will also

support strong communities with access to good quality play opportunities and improved mental health and wellbeing. There is significant investment proposed into play areas in some of the most deprived areas of the area. The proposed community grant schemes will support local communities to meet the needs in their communities and address the harms of Covid. This will also strengthen local communities.

- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – There are no specific climate change implications but cycle track improvements in the Cromarty Firth Ward will support active 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 organisations using the standard grants criteria / process.
- 3.6 Gaelic – There are no specific Gaelic implications.

4. Cromarty Firth Place Based Investment Proposals

4.1 Cromarty Firth Play Provision Proposals - £45,000

At the Easter Ross Area Committee of 25th May 2021, it was agreed to allocate up to £12,000 from the Cromarty Firth Place Based Investment Funds to fund the costs of a part time temporary post via Highlife Highland to develop a new approach to play area. It was intended that this work would engage communities in a wider discussion around play and drive an innovative and sustainable approach to play provision. It was not possible to recruit a suitable applicant and therefore this work was supported in-house by the Amenities team in consultation with Members. It is therefore proposed to reallocate this funding towards the provision of play equipment as set out in the report.

- 4.2 Site visits were undertaken at play areas across the ward by Members along with Amenities staff and the Senior Ward Manager. Outdoor play is seen as increasingly important after the past 18 months of lockdown for children and this has been identified as a key priority for the ward and investment of funds. The proposed allocations for spend have been put forward in the light of those visits and Members' discussions with Community Councils and others. The projects result in a spread of investment in play areas across the ward but also focus on provision in some of the most deprived areas.
- 4.3 In addition to the proposed funding allocations noted below there will be liaison with Criminal Justice Services as part of the community payback scheme to provide extra facilities such as benches at appropriate play areas and Members will liaise with Community Councils around additional investment using wind farm funds where these are available. A local company has offered to supply tyres suitable for use in play areas and the Amenities Service will install these and carry out general maintenance and improvement work based on the play area visits and discussion with Members.
- 4.4 All of this will complement the proposed investment which is as follows:
 - Novar Crescent, Evanton - £10,000 to provide a twinwall pipe, climbing ramp, grass matting, a rope bridge plus landscaping and planting.
 - Milnafua, Alness - £10,000 for a 2-seat swing set, climbing boulder and landscaping.
 - Shillinghill £10,000 for an inclusive roundabout with appropriate surfacing or similar.
 - Westford, Alness - £10,000 to provide springy tops, a giant's causeway steps, 2 climbing boulders plus grass matting, and landscaping.

- South Lodge School – contribution to school provision of accessible play as part of a £13,000 project to develop accessible play including a wheelchair accessible platform at the base of one of the playground trees £5,000.

Total - £45,000

4.5 **Cromarty Firth – Invergordon Social Club Feasibility study - £20,000**

The Social Club in Invergordon is a key organisation in the town and is currently (Covid rules permitting) providing a popular lunch club which aims to address issues around isolation and loneliness. They have submitted an application for £20,000 to allow them to undertake a Feasibility Study/Options Appraisal to consider the viability of the current operating model which has been badly affected by the pandemic and to develop a new business model that meets the needs of the community and is sustainable. This would include a review of the services and opportunities offered against the needs of the community post Covid and also a review of the membership model which the club is currently based on. This work will provide a clearer picture of how the community has been impacted by the pandemic and ensure that activities such as the lunch club reach those most affected and address issues around loneliness, isolation and general wellbeing.

4.6 **Cromarty Firth - Evanton- Alness- Invergordon Cycle track - £15,000**

The cycle track running from Evanton to Alness and then Alness to Invergordon is very popular and very well used by both walkers and cyclists. It is used for leisure but is also a key transport route for shopping and work. It is also well used by cruise passengers. The cycle track therefore supports active travel, improved health, access to work and the economy and is key for all these reasons. However, it has been in place for a number of years and general maintenance and improvement work is required to keep it fit for purpose and to continue to be used as a key active travel route. It is proposed that a budget of £15,000 be set for this purpose.

4.7 **Cromarty Firth - Alness Toilets – £3,000**

Alness public toilets are a key facility in a busy town for residents and visitors alike. Unfortunately, they have been a focus for vandalism and subject to inappropriate use and concerns have been raised by the Community Council. It is proposed to allocate £3,000 to install an automatic locking system to address some of these concerns. This proposal meets the criteria by.....

4.8 **Cromarty Firth – Small Grants stream - £14,500**

Community Groups are key in supporting the health of the community and ensuring that community venues are supported and projects in place to support the community. It is therefore proposed that a £14,500 budget be set aside for community groups or 3rd sector organisations seeking funding grants of under £5,000 to address the 4 harms of covid. Applications would be made using the standard Wards Discretionary application form and managed by Senior Ward Manager in consultation with local Members.

5. **Tain and Easter Ross Place Based Investment Fund Proposals**

5.1 **Tain & Easter Ross - Play provision proposals - £46,650**

Site visits have been undertaken by Members to play areas across the ward along with Amenities staff and the Senior Ward Manager. The proposals for spend have been developed in the light of those visits and Members' discussions with Community

Councils and others. Outdoor play is seen as increasingly important after the past 18 months of lockdown for children and this has been identified as a key priority for the ward and investment of funds. Once again, the projects result in a spread of investment in play areas across the ward with a significant investment proposed in some of the most deprived areas. The proposed provision is as follows:

- Provision of a new basket swing in Pinewood Crescent Tain - £2,500
- Funds required to make a new Chain for the Tain Links chain climbing wall - £850
- Provision of new equipment at Chapel Brae, Portmahomack - £5,000 towards a total project cost of £15,000 with the remaining £10,000 covered by the Covid Response Funds repurposed for play equipment and agreed at the November Area Committee.
- Investment in play park provision at Woodlands Drive, Milton (to include general maintenance and 2 additional items to be agreed subject to local consultation (£20,000) and at Milton MUGA (general maintenance and additional drainage (£8,000) – total £28,000.
- Investment in play park provision at Redspur Gardens, Fearn - £2,000
- Investment in play park provision at Cameron Place, Nigg to provide landscaped play - £2,000
- Investment in play park provision at Balintore (Replacement grass matting at Abbotshaven Junior and a new aerial rotator top Senior) - £3,300
- Investment in play park provision at Hilton, Seaboard - £2,000

Total - £46,650

As in the Cromarty Firth Ward the Amenities Service will install the equipment and also carry out additional minor works and maintenance.

5.2 **Tain & Easter Ross – Small Grants Scheme - £51,850**

Local communities and 3rd sector organisations have been key in terms of providing a response to Covid and the harms of Covid. In recognition of this it is proposed that the remaining £51,850 be allocated to provide a small grants scheme to address the 4 harms of Covid. This would be open for applications of up to £10,000. Applications would be made using the usual Ward Budget application form and process and managed by the Ward Manager in consultation with local Members. The fund would be open to constituted groups for projects that address the four harms of covid within the ward.

Designation: Allan Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

Date: 31 January 2022
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