



**BOOXBURN, UPHALL AND WINCHBURGH LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE**

**TOWN CENTRE FUND 2019/20**

**REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION**

**A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to update the committee on progress in delivering the Town Centre Capital Projects agreed by the committee on 4 October 2019.

**B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the local area committee:

1. notes that 11 projects within the ward are being funded;
2. notes that officers are working with applicants to agree the final details to support the delivery the projects;
3. that the Scottish Government has advised local authorities that they are extending the expenditure deadline for all projects to 31 March 2021 and the completion deadline for all projects to 30 September 2021; and
4. that further progress updates will be brought to the committee.

**C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I</b>	<b>Council Values</b>	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; making best use of our resources; working in partnership.
<b>II</b>	<b>Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	To be assessed on an individual project basis but it is not anticipated that any proposals will require to be the subject of specific assessments.
<b>III</b>	<b>Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	The report sets out specific delegations to the Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration..
<b>IV</b>	<b>Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>	None.
<b>V</b>	<b>Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	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.

<b>VI</b>	<b>Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	A total of £1.826 million will be available to the Town Centre Fund.
<b>VII</b>	<b>Consideration at PDSP</b>	Not applicable.
<b>VIII</b>	<b>Other consultations</b>	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 from 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 2019.

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

- a) 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.
- b) 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.
- c) After doing so, if a balance remains, Council Executive will decide how and where all remaining balances from Local Area Committee should be spent across the whole council area.

## **D3 Broxburn, Uphall and Winchburgh Projects – Update on delivery of projects**

Officers are working with applicants to ensure projects can be delivered within the timescales and an update on each is provided in Appendix 1. Projects can broadly be grouped around:

- Projects delivered directly by the applicant with Council advice available if required;
- Projects delivered by WLC on behalf of the applicant; and
- Projects where there is a mix of both.

Where the applicant is delivering the work funding has been, or is being, transferred directly to them to deliver otherwise the funding is being held by WLC and transferred to the appropriate service delivering the work.

## **D4 Next steps**

All projects were advised that they had to be delivered, or contractually committed, by 31 March 2020. At the end of January 2020 progress of each project was reviewed to see if any projects will not go ahead and or where projects may have underspends.

However, the Scottish Government has advised local authorities that they are extending the expenditure deadline for all projects to 31 March 2021 and the completion deadline for all projects to 30 September 2021. The Regeneration Team have advised all recipients of the funding of this extension.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

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

## **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

Council Executive, 11 June 2019

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

Broxburn, Uphall and Winchburgh LAC, 4 October 2019

<https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/submissiondocuments.asp?submissionid=44269>

Appendices/Attachments: Appendix 1 – Project updates for Broxburn, Uphall and Winchburgh

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