

23. CAPITAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE: TRADITIONAL TOWN CENTRES

Prior to consideration of the following item of business Councillor Hutton left the room and took no further part in the meeting.

The Council Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Planning Services Manager asking the members to consider the funding arrangements for town centre improvement projects in the five traditional towns for the forthcoming financial year.

The Planning Services Manager advised that in November 2007 the Council Executive approved a ten-year capital investment and asset management strategy over the period 2008/2009 to 2017/2018 and this included an investment strategy for each of the traditional town centres of Armadale, Bathgate, Broxburn and Uphall, Linlithgow and Whitburn. Details of the approved budgets for each of the next four financial years were detailed in the report.

A significant number of projects had been implemented across the five towns in financial year 2008/2009. However at the present time each of the five towns was at a different stage in terms of agreeing frameworks for future bids.

Given that each town was at a different state of readiness to prioritise future projects, consideration was to be given as to how the distribution of funding for the coming financial year was to take place. Therefore the following three options were proposed for consideration by a meeting of the Partnership and Resource Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel: -

Option 1 – Continue with the Council Executive agreement from February 2008 whereby each town would receive a fixed allocation of £25k per annum with the balance of the £413k being allocated on the basis of business cases for proposed projects being submitted from individual towns.

Option 2 – Continue with the same arrangement, which had been in place for this financial year 2008/2009 whereby the funding of £413k would be split equally between each of the towns.

Option 3 – Implement a higher level of guaranteed funding for each town (for example £50k) with the remainder of the £413k being allocated on the basis of business cases for proposed projects being submitted from each town.

Details of the discussions that took place at the meeting of the Partnership and Resource Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel were summarised in the report and it was concluded that the Policy Panel would recommend to the Council Executive a combination of Options 1 and 3.

The report concluded that the recommendation from the Policy Panel would allow a focused approach to town centre improvements and would

allow for a more substantive improvement to be undertaken.

It was recommended that the Council Executive approve the recommendation of the Partnership and Resource Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel in that funding should be allocated on the basis of a guaranteed amount being available to each town with the balance of funding being allocated on the basis of competitive bids. If the Council Executive accepted the recommendation from the PDSP it was suggested that the end of May was set as the deadline for groups in each of the towns to submit bids for consideration by the council.

Motion

To approve Option 3 of the report, whereby each town would get a higher level of guaranteed funding with the remainder of the balance to be allocated on the basis of business cases for proposed projects being submitted from each town and to ensure that there was suitable officer support to enable bids to be brought forward from each of the traditional town centres.

- Moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Day

Amendment

To approve Option 2 of the report, whereby the funding would be equally split between each of the five traditional towns

- Moved by Councillor Swan and seconded by Councillor Morrice

Decision

Following a vote the Motion was successful by 8 votes to 3, and it was agreed accordingly.