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REPORT TO: East Lothian Council (Summer Recess Arrangements
– Standing Order 15.5)

MEETING DATE:

BY: Deputy Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community
Services)

SUBJECT: Scottish Government Town Centre Fund 2019–20

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To secure approval under Summer Recess Arrangements to allocate Town Centre Fund monies on the basis of the priority projects identified by officers following an option appraisal exercise.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council note the following key deadlines associated with the Town Centre Fund:
- Progress including notification of any underspend to be reported to Scottish Government by November 2019,
 - Funds must be legally committed by end March 2020, and;
 - Funds must be spent by September 2020.
- 2.2 That Council confirm the intention to allocate Town Centre Fund monies on the basis of the priority projects identified specifically:
- Haddington Town Centre: New facilities at Whittinghame Drive to increase public parking availability in support of Town Centre improvements, see section 4.1 below.
 - Prestonpans High Street: new public realm at War Memorial and John Muir Way in support of the PSG Great Place (Salt of the Earth) project, see section 4.2.

and if spend can't be achieved in full:

- Tranent: extend the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme, see 4.3.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Scottish Government have allocated £50m in capital funds to Local Authorities for 2019/20. The East Lothian Council allocation is £1,275,000. The purpose of the Fund is to facilitate “transformative investments which drive local economic activities and re-purpose town centres to become more diverse, successful and sustainable”. Grant conditions require that:

- Progress and notification of any underspend is reported to Scottish Government by November 2019,
- Funds must be legally committed by end March 2020, and;
- Funds must be spent by September 2020.

3.2 Funds should be targeted towards a small number of well-developed projects, considering where other external funds are also available (bigger intervention in fewer places / good leverage).

3.3 An options appraisal has been carried out to assess the viability of currently developed / developing projects in town centres. From this work projects in **Haddington, Prestonpans, and Tranent** were identified, see sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 below and are considered to be viable options in the context of the Town Centre grant award.

3.4 The timeline for all of the identified options is significantly challenging and key constraints include, in the case of Haddington, the development of a traffic model for the Town alongside ongoing community engagement.

4 PROJECTS

4.1 Haddington

- Build edge of centre parking facilities (high quality long stay for shoppers, traders, employees) with provision for tourist information, fast electric charge, cycle hire / city bike, park and ride / park and stride etc.
- Review the status of part of the car park at John Muir House for wider public use.

These proposals align with phased complementary investment in Haddington Town Centre in conjunction with Sustrans to create tangible public realm benefits to the Town (circa £6m over 10 years).

Project Owner: Assets and Regulatory Team Manager, Infrastructure

Constraints: requirement for significant engagement with community and business groups and alignment with Town Centre Design Project, land availability and access, traffic modelling, statutory consents, internal capacity (project management / engagement / modelling / design / TRO & Planning, legal & procurement).

Timeline

- May / July 2019 (ongoing) – carry out traffic and pedestrian counts, produce proposed junction layouts, pre-planning engagement, start traffic modelling, legal searches and complete any land negotiation that is to take place (Town Centre Design Project work).
- July / August 2019 – agree project scope, continue / complete legal searches and land negotiation, engage with Haddington Design Project Steering Group (community and business reps re. Town Centre impact) and review JMH campus car park.
- August / September / October 2019 – continue engagement, complete review of JMH campus car park, complete legal searches and land negotiations, confirm locations and capacity, complete road / junction modelling.
- November / December 2019 – produce detailed design and obtain statutory approvals including planning, issue construction tender(s).
- January / March 2020 – tender returns assessed and appointment(s) made (funds legally committed), conclude statutory approvals.
- April / September 2020 – construction (funds spent).

Budget: £700,000 to £900,000

4.2 Prestonpans

Re-design the area around the Prestonpans War Memorial to act as a focus for the High Street, providing:

- High quality public realm, including cycle parking and seating,
- Access to and views over the Forth with a heritage / tourist interpretation hub, and;
- Improved visibility, access and connections to the John Muir Way, and a reduction in antisocial behaviour.

The proposal aligns with local investment and aspirations for this area of the High Street and can be delivered in conjunction with the PSG Great Place project.

Project Owner: Town Centre Regeneration Officer, Development.

Constraints: requirement for design options and consultation / engagement with community, land ownership and access, flood risk and engineering constraints, ongoing protection of War Memorial, statutory consents required, internal capacity (PM / engagement / design / Planning / legal & procurement).

Timeline

- July / August 2019 – agree project scope, carry out legal searches, community engagement to agree and issue architectural design competition brief / ITT for design services.
- September / October 2019 – public consultation / engagement to choose ‘final’ design, appoint designers.
- November / December 2019 – produce detailed design and obtain statutory approvals, issue construction tender.
- January / March 2020 – tender returns assessed and appointment made (funds legally committed).
- April / September 2020 – construction (funds spent)

Budget: £300,000 to £500,000

4.3 Tranent

Extend the timeline of the CARS to deliver additional shopfront / building repairs and an extra 12 months of Officer support funded by HES.

Timeline: agreement from Historic Environment Scotland would be required as well as additional development work. For spend to be allocated to the CARS the target amount would need to be identified by October / November 2019.

Budget: extension of this project would allow for the allocation of up to £200,000.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Town Centre fund investment aligns with the Council Plan and East Lothian Plan outcomes and will contribute positively to the strategic work stream of the East Lothian Economic Development Strategy 2017-2022 *Energise East Lothian's town centres and rural economy* helping deliver the strategy outcome of *decreased town centre vacancy rates and increased footfall*. Town Centre funding will also accelerate delivery of town centre parking interventions meeting the aims and objectives of the Local Transport and Parking Strategies.

6 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The subjects of this report have been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and no negative impacts have been identified.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Financial – The grant is for capital expenditure which is additional to that which is already / would otherwise be allocated to the 2019/20 budget and should not substitute for existing spend.
- 7.2 The Grant is to be used in the financial year 2019-20. There is an assumption that the Grant will be applied to finance local authority capital programmes before the application of any other capital or revenue resources such as capital receipts or borrowing.
- 7.3 The Grant conditions stipulate “if the Grantee does not use the grant in the financial year 2019-20, unused grant is to be repaid to the Scottish Government unless otherwise agreed in writing by Scottish Ministers. It is expected that work will be completed; or, at least work or contracts signed or commenced within 2019-20”. Scottish Government have clarified that they have defined “spent” as where the construction work has commenced or contracts signed, whereby actual delivery of those works may run into the next financial year. Scottish Government expect work to be completed early in the next financial year up to a maximum of 6 months to ensure return of unused grant within 2020/21.
- 7.4 Whilst cost estimates have been undertaken during option identification, a firm understanding of project costs will not be secured until work has been tendered. The exact extent and specification of works may need to

be flexed within individual projects / across projects to ensure that the Town Centre funds are optimized.

- 7.5 Personnel - grant funding does not allow for additional resource implications to be funded from the award.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Town Centre Fund – Option Appraisal
- 8.2 Town Centre Fund – Capital Grant 2019-20 Allocation – Conditions of grant and supporting schedules.
- 8.3 COSLA Information Session FAQs
- 8.4 East Lothian Council Local Transport Strategy - Parking Strategy, Members' Library Ref: 142/18
https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16358/members_library_service
- 8.5 Haddington Town Centre Design Project, Members Library Ref: 95/18
https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16245/members_library_service

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