

To: Communities and Housing Board

On: 25 October 2022

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Community Empowerment Fund

1. Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Communities and Housing Board for the award of grants from the Community Empowerment Fund.

1.2 The key objective of the fund is to support community organisations to acquire and develop community assets. The fund aims to support and develop community organisations, with a specific focus on assisting those organisations that wish to acquire and develop community assets.

1.3 One new application was received through this round and one application previously deferred was considered, as detailed within Section 4 and Appendix 1.

1.4 The next deadline for applications is 7th November 2022

2. **Recommendations**

2.1 It is recommended that the board approves the recommendations as detailed in Section 4 and Appendix 1, to award:

- £7,720 to Inchinnan Development Trust for support with legal fees relating to the CAT lease for India Tyres Playing Fields
- £9,200 to Lochwinnoch Development Trust for soil testing on the Lochhead Gardens site

3. **Background**

3.1 At its meeting on 2 March 2018, Council agreed to commit £1.5million (£0.5million in revenue and £1million in capital) to establish a Community Empowerment Fund that will be used to support community asset transfers, by providing up-front investment in the condition of assets prior to transfer. It should be noted that the £1.5million represents a one-off investment fund.

3.2 On 20th June 2018, Leadership Board agreed the key objectives and criteria of the fund, and agreed that applications to the Community Empowerment Fund be submitted to Communities and Housing Board for final approval.

3.3 The key objectives of the fund are to support and develop community organisations with a specific focus on assisting those organisations that wish to acquire and develop community assets in three ways:

- **Project:** Support the development of the Business Plan for an asset
- **Organisation:** Develop the organisational capacity to manage and develop an asset
- **Property:** Upfront investment in assets prior to or after transfer

3.4 The fund is comprised of £0.5million in revenue funding and £1million in capital funding. As such, it is anticipated that revenue funding will support applications to develop the project or organisation, and the capital funding will be used to support property costs.

3.5 It will be important applicants to the fund are able to demonstrate the following:

- Able to demonstrate positive impact for local communities

- The community are involved in the design and delivery of the project
- Good working relationships and partnership with others
- The project is financially sustainable
- Strategic fit with the fund objectives and criteria
- Value for money and leverage of additional funding and/or resources

3.6 The award of funding from the Community Empowerment Fund does not commit the Council to a particular outcome as part of the Asset Transfer process, which will be subject to a separate decision-making process through relevant governance arrangements.

4. **Summary of applications**

4.1 One new application was received by the deadline date of 5th September 2022 and one application previously deferred was considered. The total value of requested grants through this round is £16,920.

4.2 A cross-service panel of officers has been established to review and assess the applications against the agreed objectives and criteria outlined at Section 3.2 and 3.3 of this report.

4.3 The officer recommendation is:

- To approve the application submitted by Inchinnan Development Trust (£7,720) for support with legal fees relating to the CAT lease for India Tyres Playing Fields
- To approve a partial award for the application submitted by Lochwinnoch Development Trust (£9,200) for soil testing on the Lochhead Gardens site

Elected Members are asked to note:

- That the award being made to Lochwinnoch Development Trust is a partial award of the full amount requested. This is to allow the group the opportunity to carry out the soil testing of the ground at Lochhead Ave, to ensure there is no asbestos present before the consideration of any capital costs.

4.4 A summary of the applications can be found at Appendix 1.

5 **Additional Information**

- 5.1 Elected Members are also asked to note that following the Community Empowerment Fund award of £50,000 to Renfrew Victoria FC in a previous round, the group have secured a further £83,000 from Sports Scotland to upgrade the facilities at Kirklandneuk.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - Council approved the allocation of £1.5million to establish the Community Empowerment Fund in March 2018.

2. **HR & Organisational Development** – Not applicable

3. **Community/Council Planning –**

The Renfrewshire Community Plan 2017-2027 states “There are new opportunities for communities to use, manage or take ownership of public sector assets and also to participate in the planning and delivery of services through the Community Empowerment Act. Over the last few years, there are over a dozen examples of community groups that have taken over public sector buildings or land in Renfrewshire, and more community groups are now thinking about assets and participation requests. As a partnership, we are committed to supporting this wherever we can.”

The Renfrewshire Council Plan also has a number of relevant priorities as part of the ‘Building strong, safe and resilient communities’ outcome. These include:

- Strengthening existing community networks and empowering local people to become more involved in their area and the services delivered there.
- Working with communities to support the regeneration of some of our most disadvantaged areas.
- Ensuring all towns and villages in Renfrewshire are better connected and able to participate in social, cultural or economic activities across the Renfrewshire area.

4. **Legal-** The establishment of this fund supports the delivery of a number of the Council’s obligations as part of the Community Empowerment Act 2015.

5. **Property/Assets** - The development of this fund will support Asset Transfer, and support the Council to meet its obligations as part of the Community Empowerment Act.
6. **Information Technology** – None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - It is anticipated that the fund will have a positive impact on equality and human rights, and applications for the fund will be assessed to ensure they take relevant equalities implications into account.
8. **Health & Safety** – None
9. **Procurement** – None
10. **Risk** – None
11. **Privacy Impact** – None
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – None

List of Background Papers

- (a) Background Paper 1 – None

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Organisation	Amount Requested	Purpose	Recommendation	Additional Info and/or Areas of Concern
Inchinnan Development Trust	£7,720	<p>Inchinnan Development Trust are planning to take up a 50-year lease of India Tyres Playing Fields - allowing them to begin work on a 3-5 year development plan to preserve, enhance and upgrade the site in line with the needs/wants of the community and their environmental ambitions.</p> <p>As part of the CAT long lease option the process requires solicitors to negotiate and agree the lease. The Trust also requires their solicitors to negotiate and draw up a letter of agreement with St. Mirren Youth FC who are currently using the playing fields for football training and home fixtures.</p> <p>As part of their development costs the Trust requires a full design brief for the site, which includes guidance on required planning permissions.</p>	£7,720	The Panel felt that funding would allow Inchinnan Development Trust to progress their plans for a Community Asset Transfer long lease, building on a previous small award from the Community Empowerment Fund for support with their business planning.
Lochwinnoch Community Development Trust	Development Funding £9,200 Capital Funding £30,500.00	Lochhead Gardens is a valuable, multipurpose community space for socialising, workshops, training, demonstrations and events, benefitting community wellbeing and social inclusion. The area will offer functional premises to their partners Lochwinnoch Community Larder, tackling food insecurity, reducing food miles, waste and	£9,200	The Panel felt that partial funding should be awarded to allow Lochwinnoch Community Development Trust to carry out the necessary soil testing for the site in the first instance.

		<p>production and carbon emissions. It will host community markets for food/crafts generating income for the Trust to invest back into other projects and site maintenance. The project seeks to develop areas for vegetable/ seed crops and include build on-site facilities for community use, and for our partnering social enterprise, including a vital community service of outdoor childcare.</p> <p>The group have applied for £9,200 revenue funding to support with soil testing for underlying soil which may possibly have contamination from heavy metal soils from historic industry on site.</p> <p>The group have further applied for £30,500 capital funding for new build of storage space, workshop, toilet and water services, alongside market stalls.</p>		<p>Officers will continue to work closely with the group throughout this process, and in the case of a satisfactory outcome of the soil testing then a further application for capital costs can be considered.</p>
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