

**To:** Communities, Housing and Planning Board

**On:** 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020

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**Report by:** Chief Executive

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**Heading:** Community Empowerment Fund

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**1. Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Communities, Housing and Planning 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 The report recommends decisions are made on five applications to the Community Empowerment Fund. Three of these applications have previously been deferred in order to seek further information, and decisions are recommended to prevent any further delay for applicants. Applications have been considered by the officer panel established following the launch of the fund, and panel recommendations are set out in Section 2 and detailed in Appendix 1.
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## 2 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the members approve the recommendations as detailed in Section 4 and Appendix 1, namely:

- a) To approve the award of £8,500 to Finding Your Feet
  - b) To approve the award of £9,450 to Erskine Music and Media
  - c) To approve the award of £9,650 to Spateston Tenants and Residents Association
  - d) To approve the award of £9,625 to Values into Action Scotland
  - e) To approve the award of £10,000 to Friends of Howwood Park
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## 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, Housing and Planning 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 is important that applicants to the fund are able to demonstrate the following:

- 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 There are three previously deferred applications to the Community Empowerment Fund which require a decision due to project timescales and two further applications received.

4.2 A cross-service panel of officers review and assess the applications against the agreed objectives and criteria outlined in Section 3 of this report.

4.3 The officer recommendation is:

- (a) that an award in principle of £8,500 be made to Finding Your Feet for a feasibility study into a Charity Hub in one of three identified locations in Renfrewshire, pending the submission of full quotes and scope of work.
- (b) that an award of £9,450 be made to Erskine Music and Media to undertake a feasibility project into the development of a hub for activities in the Arts, in Erskine Sports Centre. This funding would be on the condition of close partnership working with both Renfrewshire Council and Renfrewshire Leisure on the development of plans for the future use of this asset.
- (c) that an award of £9,650 be made to Spateston Tenants and Residents Association to develop a Business Plan to develop a community hub in south west Johnstone, at the site of the Spateston Nursery.
- (d) that an award of £9,625 be made to Values into Action Scotland to carry out a business case for a new build HQ on the old nursery site on Mill Street in Linwood.

- (e) that an award of £10,000 be made to Friends of Howwood Park to undertake surveys and feasibility work on the pavilion in Howwood Park.

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## 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** – *n/a*
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 – n/a**

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 – n/a**

9. **Procurement – None**

10. **Risk – n/a**

11. **Privacy Impact – n/a**

12. **Cosla Policy Position – n/a**

13. **Climate Risk – n/a**

### Appendix 1: Community Empowerment Fund – Recommendations for Communities, Housing and Planning Board

Applicant	Project description	Requested	Recommendation	Reason	Geographical Area
Finding Your Feet FYF Charity Hub	<p>The purpose of this project is to scope out the feasibility of extending FYF charitable organisation to incorporate a Charity Hub in three potential premises the former Baptist Church Hall in Walker Street (5,000 sq ft), Chiron House (10,000 sq ft) or St James House (17,000 sq ft).</p> <p>The anticipated outcomes of this project are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A financial and market feasibility study for the purchase of property.</li> <li>2. Development of a business model for operating property as a Charity Hub that will help other local charities and provide FYF with improved financial resilience via diversified income streams.</li> <li>3. A business plan for the property that FYF can take to grant and bank funders to obtain finance for the project.</li> <li>4. Development of a fundraising strategy to support the purchase of property.</li> <li>5. FYF having a permanent home in Renfrewshire thus committing long-term to the area.</li> </ol>	£8,500	<p>Approve award of £8,500 in principle, on condition:</p> <p>Full quotes and scope of work provided</p>	<p>The award will enable the group to progress its search for a permanent base, and establish the viability of a Charity Hub model.</p> <p>Finding Your Feet are a well-established charity providing support to amputees, and are seeking to base their operation in Renfrewshire as a permanent home.</p> <p>Due to uncertainty surrounding the organisations current premises, it is recommended this application is now progressed in order to allow this work to progress.</p>	Unconfirmed
Erskine Music and Media (Emms)	Emms have been in discussions with RL about a move into the sports centre in Erskine and have agreed to rent space within the centre	£9,450	Approve award of £9,450	This award will enable the group to develop its longer-term plan around the Asset Transfer of Erskine Sports	Erskine

Applicant	Project description	Requested	Recommendation	Reason	Geographical Area
Erskine Arts Feasibility Project – Erskine Sports Centre	<p>commencing 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2020 as part of a phased asset transfer agreement. The Erskine Arts project is about providing a hub for activities in the Arts. The group wish to access development funding to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the building proposed for long term lease;</li> <li>• Architectural building condition survey</li> <li>• Feasibility of the potential future capital project.</li> <li>• Feasibility for use of the asset Phase 1 – How the building can be managed currently</li> <li>• Phase 2 – Internal re-fit to current building for short / medium term</li> <li>• Phase 3 – Extension of building / large capital project</li> <li>• Identify the works to be completed to deliver each phase and estimate costs of capital works to be carried out</li> <li>• Review funding availability for the proposed project/acquisition and prepare a funding strategy</li> <li>• prepare estimated financial projections for 5 years</li> </ul>			<p>Centre, in parallel with occupying part of the premises on a shorter-term lease.</p> <p>Erskine Music and Media are a well-known local organisation providing creative and cultural activities for young people. This would allow them to undertake feasibility while occupying the property, and working closely with RL around the future of the asset. In addition they have secured Creative Scotland funding to develop this proposal.</p> <p>Erskine Music and Media will be asked to engage in close partnership working with both Renfrewshire Council and Renfrewshire Leisure as part of this feasibility study around the future use of this asset.</p> <p>Due to uncertainty surrounding the organisation's current premises, it is recommended this application is now progressed in order to allow this work to progress.</p>	
Spateston Tenants and Residents	Spateston TARA want to work in partnership with Klas Care to develop a community hub in South West Johnstone. In order to do that,	<b>£9,650</b>	Approve award of £9,650	This award will enable the group to progress to the next phase of this project, in line with timescales	Johnstone

Applicant	Project description	Requested	Recommendation	Reason	Geographical Area
Feasibility and Conditional Survey – Spateston Nursery	<p>they are seeking funds to develop a Business Plan and conduct a Community Engagement feasibility study. This will also allow the group to investigate further Income Generation proposals including Employability Allowance.</p> <p>The business plan development and Community Engagement feasibility project will include: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder and community engagement</li> <li>• Market analysis</li> <li>• Business Planning (including strategic fit, community need, governance and staffing options)</li> <li>• Financial projections for 3 years</li> <li>• Potential Funding Plan</li> </ul>			<p>associated with the Spateston Nursery move.</p> <p>While there are community facilities in Johnstone, it is felt there is a gap specifically in the Spateston area for smaller community groups. The TARA have also developed a Place Plan for Spateston where this has been identified as a priority. The TARA are working closely with organisations such as KLAS Care.</p>	

<p>Values into Action Scotland</p> <p>VIAS Options Appraisal – Former nursery school, Mill Place</p>	<p>CEF application to develop business case and options appraisal to progress with an Asset Transfer request of land at the site of former nursery school, Mill Place, Linwood, to build a new HQ, so that Renfrewshire can become the new leader in support services for individuals with learning disabilities and/or autism in Scotland.</p>	<p><b>£9,625</b></p>	<p>Approve award of £9,625</p>	<p>The award will enable the organisation to progress this phase of the project to build a new HQ.</p> <p>VIAS are a national organisation working with people with learning disability and/or autism, but have a presence in Renfrewshire and have developed strong local partnerships. It is felt that enabling VIAS to develop a base in Renfrewshire will be an asset to the community.</p>	<p>Linwood</p>
<p>Friends of Howwood Park</p> <p>Howwood Park Pavilion - Asset Transfer Feasibility Study</p>	<p>The purpose of the project is to carry out investigations to determine the feasibility of a community asset transfer of the pavilion located in Howwood Park.</p> <p>This will be allow various surveys of the building to be carried out to establish feasibility of the Asset Transfer.</p>	<p><b>£12,306</b></p>	<p>Approve award of £10,000 in line with limits identified within the fund guidance</p>	<p>The award will enable the group to carry out a series of surveys and investigations into the condition of the pavilion, informing any future CAT request.</p> <p>The pavilion in Howwood Park requires upgrading, and bringing this back in to use would be an asset for the community. Friends of Howwood Park have recently undertaken a number of successful local projects, including a play park upgrade.</p>	<p>Howwood</p>