



To: Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board

On: 26 October 2021

Report by: Director of Communities and Housing Services

Heading: Greenspaces, Parks & Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report updates the Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board on progress made in supporting community projects through the Greenspaces, Parks & Play Areas and Villages Investment fund, and seeks Board approval for the provision of grant funding for the projects described in Section 3 of this report and set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The key objective in allocating funding is to work with and support community groups to identify and deliver improvement projects in their local communities, to improve their local greenspaces (including parks and play areas) and to strengthen the identity, heritage, uniqueness and integrity of village life.
- 1.3 Section 4 of this report details a number of examples of communities and community groups that have become more active and engaged in improving and developing their local environment, local communities and green spaces building community capacity and engagement at a local level. It also provides information on funding being targeted at schools eco-groups to help them develop environmental projects in their local communities linked to COP 26.
- 1.4 The Villages Investment Fund received an additional allocation of £150,000 in the Council budget decision for 2021/22 giving a total fund of £520,000 to support Villages Investment. Just over £358,000 of this funding has been allocated to date with further potential projects totalling £50,000 currently being developed. It is intended that the lead officer for the programme will attend the next meeting of the Villages Local Area Partnership to highlight the work carried out to date and that there is around £110,000 currently available within this fund for further projects.

1.5 This report seeks approval for projects to the value to £58,000. Appendix 1, table 1 details applicants in this round. Following approval of these projects approximately 89% of total funding available will have been allocated to projects or be earmarked for projects currently being developed. In addition to the Villages Investment funding outlined above approximately £140,000 of funding will remain available in Greenspaces, Parks and Play Areas. Section 4 of this report highlights some of the work being carried out by local community groups, eco-schools committees and volunteers and makes recommendations for the consideration of members of the Board on the possible allocation of £110,000 of this funding to carry forward and support a range of small scale local environmental projects across Renfrewshire that would support the work of these volunteers and impact positively on greenspaces in all communities across Renfrewshire.

1.6 Approval of these recommendations would leave a small contingency allocated within the overall budget for any final projects that may come forward.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board:

- (i) note the work currently being undertaken to support communities as they develop projects to be funded using the Greenspaces, Parks & Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund;
- (ii) agree to fund the projects as detailed in Section 3 of this report and Appendix 1, awarding grant funding totalling £58,000 to support community groups; and
- (iii) agree to allocate £70,000 to support delivery of environmental projects developed by eco-groups' within local schools in line with the aspirations of COP26 and £40,000 to support local projects and improvements being championed by Team Up to Clean Up volunteers. Further details set out in Section 4 of this report.

3. Summary of Applications

3.1 Renfrewshire Council has supported 62 projects since October 2018 that meet the criteria for this fund. Further projects are actively being developed within communities with the following potential applicants still expected to apply:

- Johnstone Community Council – Pump track in Thomas Shanks Park
- The SuGAR Project - upgrade to McKerrell Street Play Park
- Houston Community Council Accessible outdoor gym
- Corseford TRA – Art Project
- Smaller applications from schools

3.2 Reports will be brought back for the consideration of the Board in relation to these projects at future meetings of the Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board.

3.3 In this round, 3 applications have been assessed and currently meet the criteria for approval of grant funding. More information on these projects is detailed below, with a summary of the applications included in Appendix 1 to this report.

Application 1: **Friends of Jenny's Well**
Funding Requested: **£14,100**
Recommendation: **Approve**

3.4 The Friends of Jenny's Well group became constituted just as COVID restrictions began to ease in summer 2020. The group, led by a longstanding Friends of Barshaw volunteer, have already transformed the nature reserve, removing over 300 bags of litter and all flytipping from the site, including items buried deep inside vegetation that had been there for a number of years.

3.5 With a regular volunteer group of over 10 local individuals, including 2 volunteer Rangers from Muirsheil Country Park, the group have also undertaken heavy tasks such as reclaiming a number of forgotten, overgrown pathways. They have made significant headway on ridding Jenny's Well of Japanese knotweed.

3.6 Local Area Partnership funding, donations from Arnold Clark, Miller Homes and Team Up to Clean Up have enabled the group to purchase a secure container, situated on site, which is a tool store facilitating continuous improvements and maintenance.

3.7 The Friends of Jenny's Well bid will enable them to continue with this work adding colour to the reserve with wildflowers, bulbs and other bright foliage to encourage biodiversity and bring wildlife to the site. Picnic benches and seating will be added to the reserve, alongside repairs to fencing and further work to reduce invasive vegetation. Tools and PPE for the regular volunteers will also be procured.

3.8 Friends of Jenny's Well have requested £14,100. The group have met the criteria by evidencing their work is valued by the local community. They have almost 700 local group members, who have donated to the group. Action Earth and Breathing Space Scotland have further funded the groups work.

Application 2: **Klas care Linwood**
Funding Requested: **£35,000**
Recommendation: **Approve**

3.9 Klas Care is a Community Interest Company which exists to reduce the number of local families living and working in poverty by providing affordable childcare. Klas Care has operated successfully in this form for over 10 years.

- 3.10 Klas Care achieved a successful asset transfer from Renfrewshire Council funded by a variety of external funders, alongside Renfrewshire Council, to the sum of £350,000.
- 3.11 The area beyond Klas Care's childcare facility fencing is a significant sized open space, covered in tarmac on Gilmartin Road, Linwood. The area is owned by Linstone Housing Association however Klas Care recently secured a long-term lease for this land for 10 years.
- 3.12 The current surface is tired and coming apart, the area is not used for any purpose. Klas Care intend to resurface the area and mark with thermoplastic lines to benefit children using their facility and local children in the area. The area will not be fenced off, it will be fully accessible to any child wishing to explore.
- 3.13 As well as a bicycle proficiency area, Klas care will present life sized games and other attractions such as hopscotch and other popular thermoplastic markings to encourage exercise and activity.
- 3.14 The group have met the criteria required through consultation with the wider Linwood community who are in favour of delivering this offering. The group further have achieved external funding from local businesses who have donated £1,000 to the project.

Application 3: Inchinnan Community and Social Association
Funding Requested: £8,900
Recommendation: Approve

- 3.15 The Inchinnan Community and Social Association was constituted in 1940 to organise recreational, educational, artistic, occupational and social activities for the people of Inchinnan and surrounding areas.
- 3.16 For many years the Bowling Club car park, where the group operate from, has offered a free parking facility for the village of Inchinnan. Parents drop and collect their children from there,
- 3.17 The group have requested £8,900 to improve the car park and secure its use as a community facility for years to come. In accordance with Fund criteria, consultation was carried out through social media in the village and 95% of those who participated agreed it was an appropriate and worthwhile project for the village.

4 Building Community Capacity and Engagement

- 4.1 The significant support provided to individuals and groups through the multi award winning Team Up to Clean Up initiative has been a catalyst for many local groups to have the confidence to take the next steps in improving the appeal of their community or local green spaces. 34 of the applications made to the Greenspaces, Parks and Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund have been from groups who began as Team Up to Clean Up volunteers – with some having become constituted and formalised in order to expand their efforts and secure funding for their local communities.
- 4.2 The Friends of Jenny's Well application outlined above is one example of an ad-hoc Team Up to Clean Up community group that has become constituted to support its work as it has transformed a local nature reserve. Already they have removed over 300 bags of litter and historic flytipping embedded in vegetation. The group are working to reclaim hidden pathways and removing invasive Japanese Knotweed, they are installing bird and bat boxes to encourage growing the wildlife on the site.
- 4.3 This is a model which can be seen across Renfrewshire with groups such as the Pals of the Privies, the Charleston Tenants and Residents Association, Elderslie Community Council and many more, all actively involved in creating and promoting local volunteering activities to generate residents' interest in improving their local community. The enthusiasm and interests of local residents are identified, and they are encouraged and guided to develop projects that take advantage of this Fund – building community capacity and cohesion.
- 4.4 The value of the genuine partnership with communities which has grown through supporting and developing Team Up to Clean Up groups now means that there is a bank of over 3,300 interested group members that can be called upon by colleagues in Environment & Infrastructure to directly liaise with communities to promote and broaden the scope of their Community Investment Participatory Budgeting Fund. Environment & Infrastructure Services - Parks are also consulting with Team Up to Clean Up volunteers in relation to the Outdoor Access and Play Area Improvements Fund – ensuring that these Council resources can be directly applied to the communities that need them most, in line with community needs and aspirations.
- 4.5 The Council's events team, alongside Cirque Bijou, a respected contemporary circus and street theatre group, have requested volunteers support them to create structures from recyclable materials found on litterpicks. This year's Halloween Spooktacular's theme is "Out of this World". Volunteers are attending workshops to design and create pieces to be displayed and celebrated throughout the festival.
- 4.6 The support of Team Up to Clean Up volunteers was a resource that could further be called upon to assist the Council in delivering a safe election in May this year. Many volunteers delivered the role of COVID Marshall in various community buildings across Renfrewshire.

4.7 Team Up to Clean Up has been shortlisted for 2 Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards this year in the Environmental Services and Community Involvement categories. Presentations were delivered to the LGC panels in September, with the winner due to be announced on 4 November 2021. The link between the Team Up to Clean Up Campaign and the support provided to communities through the Green Spaces Parks and Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund was evident and celebrated throughout the applications.

4.8 A number of the Team up to Clean Up groups have highlighted small scale projects or improvements that they would like to undertake to improve the look and feel of the areas that they have litterpicked – sowing wildflowers, installing planters etc. These sometimes require the support of specialist contractors/landscape professionals and the provision of small items of equipment and resources to allow the groups to undertake this work and maintain the improvements made.

4.9 It is recommended that £40,000 of the unallocated resources within the Greenspaces funding be allocated to supporting these volunteer groups with this activity at sites across Renfrewshire.

4.10 Through the Team Up to Clean Up Spotless September promotion, schools have been encouraged to support community projects delivered by their eco groups. Conversations are currently underway with a number of secondary and primary schools around the development of sustainable environmental greenspaces projects supporting and promoting the climate change outcomes of COP26.

4.11 Park Mains, alongside Johnstone High are 2 Renfrewshire secondaries currently in discussion with officers considering how the Fund could benefit pupils' environmental projects. A number of primary schools are also exploring how funding could benefit their school eco-projects. Growing grounds and wildflower areas are among the projects being considered.

4.12 It is recommended that an allocation of £70,000 of the currently uncommitted Greenspaces funds be made to allow funding of a programme of eco-schools environmental projects that meet the Greenspaces criteria to be available to all local schools.

4.13 Following the allocation of additional funding to support Villages Investment there remains an unallocated budget of just over £110,000 to support villages projects. The lead officer for the Greenspaces, Parks and Play Areas and Villages Investment programme will attend the next meeting of the Villages Local Area Partnership to provide an update on the projects and work funded to date under this programme and to highlight the availability of additional funds for further projects.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - Council approved the allocation of £2.020 million to establish the Greenspaces, Parks & Play Parks and Villages Investment Fund in March 2018. Due to the capital works being undertaken, Officers are ensuring that there are minimal recurring revenue costs to Services in the coming years.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - None
3. **Community/Council Planning –**
The Greenspaces, Parks & Play Parks and Village Investment Fund will be important to achieving and assisting the Community Plan by ensuring that Renfrewshire is thriving, well, fair and safe for residents, workers and visitors.
4. **Legal** - All legislative requirements will be taken cognisance of during this process wherever required e.g. health and safety requirements.
5. **Property/Assets** - There is the potential for property/assets to be included as part of this fund.
6. **Information Technology** - None
7. **Equality & Human Rights**
The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** - Cognisance will be taken of health and safety requirements wherever required e.g. for play park equipment.
9. **Procurement** - There is no potential for the Council to be procuring and installing equipment of behalf of a community group as part of this grant funding process.
10. **Risk** - Discussions with the Council Risk Manager are on-going to ensure that the risk to the Council, as part of this grant funding process, is minimised.
11. **Privacy Impact** - None.
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – Not Applicable
13. **Climate Risk** – Not Applicable

List of Background Papers

None

Appendix 1

Applicant	Project Description	Requested	Recommendation	Reason	Geographical Area
1. Friends of Jenny's Well Nature Reserve	<p>The group, formed with the intention of improving biodiversity, as well as the appearance of Jenny's Well, would also like to increase visitor numbers. Encouraging those who visit to stay for a while to enjoy the peacefulness and tranquillity the area offers.</p> <p>Jenny's Well has already been greatly improved however the group will continue to deliver benefits and increase the appeal of the nature reserve.</p>	£14,100	Approval by Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board.	Improving biodiversity is a priority for Renfrewshire Council. This application achieves many of the key principles in Renfrewshire's Biodiversity Action Plan (conservation, invasive non-native species and people and partnership).	Paisley
2. Klas Care, Linwood	<p>There is a significant sized piece of land outside Klas Care's after care premises is Linwood.</p> <p>Klas Care have entered into a long-term lease with Linstone to occupy this land and hope to use it as a play area for children, users of their facility and beyond.</p> <p>The land will be re-surfaced and thermoplastic line markings used to outline activities appealing to children.</p>	£35,000	Approval by Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board.	Local children, adults and parent have all indicated this would be a valuable asset to the Linwood community	Linwood
3. Inchinnan Community & Social Association	The carpark outside the Bowling & Social Club will be re-surfaced to enable long term use by the community for users of the facility.	£8,900	Approval by Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board.	There are few opportunities for safe parking near Inchinnan Primary. Resurfacing the car park will facilitate this for local parents and further provide a long-standing asset to the village.	Inchinnan

Greenspace, Parks and Play Areas Funding

Project	Funding proposed	External Funding (or other Council funding)
Friends of Jenny's Well – Improvements to Nature Reserve	£14,100	£600 – Breathing Space Scotland £250 – Action Earth £200 – Local Community Arnold Clark, Team Up to Clean Up and Miller Homes have also donated £550 funding/tools to the group
Klas Care Linwood – Resurfacing and Lines for Play	£35,000	£1,000 from Local Linwood businesses
Inchinnan Community and Social Club – Resurfacing Village Car Park	£8,900	Not Applicable

Funding	Allocated Budget	Committed Budget	Potential Additional Projects
Greenspace, Parks and Play Areas	£1,280,000	£1,021,618	£120,000
Village Investment Fund	£520,000	£358,566	£50,000
Staffing costs	£220,000	£220,000	-
Total	£2,020,000	£1,600,184	1,770,184