

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

**On:** 7<sup>th</sup> June 2022

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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 Two new applications were received through this round from Inchinnan Community Development Trust and Spateston Development Trust as detailed within Section 2 and Appendix 1.
- 1.4 The next deadline for applications is 10<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

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## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the board approves the recommendation as detailed in Section 4 and Appendix 1, to award:
- £2,275 to Inchinnan Development Trust for business planning support relating to their application for a Community Asset Transfer of the India Tyres Playing Fields
  - £9,200 to Spateston Development Trust to develop a business plan for a purpose-built community hub on the site of the former Spateston Early Learning and Childcare Centre

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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:

- 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 and two applications were previously deferred. The total value of requested grants through this round is £11,475.

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. The total value recommended for approval is £2,275. The panel felt the funding would allow the group to develop their business planning in order to support their application for Community Asset Transfer of the India Tyres Playing Fields.
- To approve the application submitted by Spateston Development Trust. The total value recommended for approval is £9,200. The panel felt the funding would allow initial feasibility and business planning work to explore this site as an option now the building has been demolished and cleared.

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

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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** – 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
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### **List of Background Papers**

- (a) Background Paper 1 – None
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## Appendix 1: Community Empowerment Fund — Recommendations for award

Applicant	Project description	Requested	Recommendation	Reason	Geographical Area
Inchinnan Development Trust	<p>Inchinnan Development Trust are currently in the process of applying for a Community Asset Transfer of the India Tyres Playing Field.</p> <p>The group are seeking funding to commission support from the University of the West of Scotland to develop business planning documentation to support their Community Asset Transfer application.</p> <p>In particular, the group are seeking to develop their 1-year business plan into a 3-year plan, as well as developing a funding strategy.</p>	£2,275	£2,275	The Panel felt that the funding would allow Inchinnan Development Trust to progress their aspirations, by developing a robust business case to support their Community Asset Transfer application.	Inchinnan
Spateston Development Trust	<p>Spateston Development Trust are seeking funding to develop a secondary business plan and feasibility study to create a purpose-built Community Development Centre on the site of the former Spateston Early Learning &amp; Childcare Centre.</p> <p>The group are applying for funding to carry out an architectural study, flood risk assessment, stakeholder and community</p>	£9,700	£9,200	<p>The Panel felt that the funding would allow Spateston Development Trust to progress their long-term aspirations to provide wider community benefit, by pursuing Community Asset Transfer.</p> <p>After discussion at the panel, the application has been adjusted in conjunction with the group to</p>	Johnstone

Applicant	Project description	Requested	Recommendation	Reason	Geographical Area
	<p>feasibility study and for support with their business plan.</p> <p>The group previously received funding from the Community Empowerment Fund to do a feasibility study on the old nursery building, which demonstrated that this option would not have been financially viable. They also explored another site nearby which was not suitable due to flooding. Now the old premises on the site has been flattened, the group are exploring a purpose-built option.</p>			<p>exclude costs which were not considered eligible within this fund.</p> <p>It was noted at the panel that the funding would support business planning and some initial flood assessment, but that the group will likely need to raise additional funding in order to pay for the comprehensive flood and drainage assessments that would be required to progress this project on this piece of land.</p>	