
To: Communities and Housing Policy Board

On: 14 January 2025

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Community Funding Update

1. Summary

- 1.1 At the last meeting of the Communities and Housing Board on 29 October 2024, Elected Members agreed to pause any new applications to both the Sustainable Communities Fund and the Villages Investment Fund, to allow for a review of the funding guidance to be undertaken by officers.
- 1.2 At that time, 10 existing applications to the Sustainable Communities Fund were being processed by officers. These applications have been assessed by the officer Panel during December 2024 and this paper outlines recommendations in relation to these applications, with further detail provided in the application summary at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 Elected members are asked to note that two applications remain deferred. For clarity and ease of assessment, this application will be reviewed against the updated guidance by the officer Panel, alongside any new applications received.
- 1.4 Prior to any of the recommendations outlined in this paper, 27 awards from the Sustainable Communities Fund have been approved by Elected Members since its launch in January 2024, totalling £928,698. Appendix 2 provides an update on projects awarded funding through the the second round for information.
- 1.5 Elected members are asked to note that following the review of the guidance for the Sustainable Communities Fund and Villages Investment Fund, updated guidance will be submitted to the Leadership Board for approval on 19 February 2025.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that members of the Board:

- Approve the funding recommendations detailed in Section 4 and Appendix 1 of this report in relation to the proposed allocation of the Sustainable Communities Fund.
- Note the information provided on projects previously funded through the Sustainable Communities Fund, at Appendix 2.
- Note that the review of the Sustainable Communities Fund and Villages Investment Fund guidance is nearing completion, and that is anticipated that this will be submitted for approval by the Leadership Board in February 2025, with the funds being relaunched and reopened to applications thereafter.

3. Background

- 3.1 To strengthen monitoring and oversight of funding recommendations made in relation to a number of specific Council funding streams, the Policy and Partnerships service now submits a community funding paper to each cycle of the Communities and Housing Board. This includes recommendations from officers in relation to funding awards through the Greenspaces Fund, Villages Investment Fund and the Sustainable Communities Fund. This has been supported by the establishment and development of a cross-service officer panel which provides corporate oversight of grant applications in advance of making recommendations for elected members to consider.
- 3.2 On 20th September 2023, Leadership Board approved the key objectives and criteria of the fund and agreed that recommendations in relation to funding applications would be submitted to the Communities and Housing Board for final approval, following assessment by a cross service officer panel.
- 3.3 As outlined in Section 1 of this report, both the Sustainable Communities Fund and Villages Investment Fund were recently closed to new applications, as agreed by the Communities and Housing Board on 29 October 2024. This was put into place to facilitate a review of the funding guidance.
- 3.4 10 projects were in the process of being assessed, prior to this temporary pause. These have been considered by the officer panel during December 2024, with recommendations on these applications provided in Section 4.

4. Sustainable Communities Fund – Recommendations

- 4.1 The Sustainable Communities Fund utilises a tiered funding model to reflect different-sized community projects as well as the varying levels of support required at different stages of development. A tiered approach helps to ensure ease of access to a proportionate application process to enable a range of initiatives that align with community empowerment:

- **Small - awards up to £10K:** capital and revenue funding to develop local projects and initiatives which are targeted at enabling community participation and promoting community collaboration and which build resilience within our communities. This level targets groups where a small amount of money can make a significant difference to enabling community participation.
 - **Intermediate – awards of £10K to £25K:** capital and revenue funding to develop projects or organisations with a focus on improving community infrastructure and/or community wellbeing and which have the potential to be replicated in other areas; and
 - **Large – awards up to £100K:** larger capital grants with the aim of supporting communities that aspire to take ownership or develop land or buildings in local communities.
- 4.2 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), which makes up part of the Sustainable Communities Fund, comprises a clear split between capital and revenue funding with set amounts allocated over financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- 4.3 UKSPF has continued to be allocated to approved projects which meet the criteria and current projections are that the £650k funding contributed to the Sustainable Communities Fund will be fully allocated. Officers have continued to adopt a flexible approach to allocations in line with SPF guidance to maximise drawdown from UK funding in the first instance.
- 4.4 A cross service officer panel met in December 2024 to assess the 10 applications submitted prior to the temporary closure of the fund, against the existing funding guidance and criteria.
- 4.5 In summary the panel recommends that:
- 4 applications be recommended for award
 - 2 applications be deferred to gather further information and to allow for further engagement to be undertaken
 - 2 applications are not recommended for funding awards as these were assessed as not meeting the criteria of this particular funding stream
 - In addition, 2 applications have been withdrawn.

Applications recommended for approval

- 4.6 4 applications have been submitted which are recommended for approval, as detailed below:
- Renfrewshire Community Transport
 - RSPB
 - Sculpture House Collective
 - Get Active Coaching

Renfrewshire Community Transport

- 4.7 The purpose of this project is to purchase up to 2 accessible vehicles to meet the needs of vulnerable individuals and groups across Renfrewshire by providing community based transport solutions which support access to essential services, and opportunities; and help to reduce isolation caused by barriers to accessible transport.
- 4.8 This project will enable the group to build on the findings from their feasibility study and to develop a practical pilot offering community transport services to a range of groups and individuals. The operational learning and data will then inform their future work and be shared with the wider sector, as well as allowing the organisation to test their model.
- 4.9 The group were previously awarded £25,000 from the Sustainable Communities Fund to develop their business case, and have undertaken extensive work to demonstrate demand for a community transport solution. Being able to fully operationalise with their own vehicles will enable the group to gather the data required to apply for mainstream funding as part of the full business case.
- 4.10 The group have secured over £18,000 in external funding and sponsorship towards running costs and have further applications in the pipeline.

RSPB

- 4.11 The purpose of the project is to create a workshop that is accessible, sustainable and attractive for individuals with a variety of accessibility needs, within the RSPB Lochwinnoch Nature Reserve. It will include an accessible workbench, lockers for equipment and will be an insulated space that is powered by predominantly solar energy.
- 4.12 The group are seeking funding to supply and install a structure to act as the workshop shell, as well as funding for the purchase and installation of solar panels. The workshop will give both new and existing community members the chance to take part in practical conservation work, supporting local biodiversity and climate action. Improved accessibility and facilities will benefit family groups, wheelchair users, and those facing the greatest barriers to nature, empowering them to engage with and enjoy their local greenspace. The reserve is visited by many groups within the community such as Brownies, elderly day care groups, preschool, forest schools, befrienders, Rainbows, Nurseries, Walking Groups, School Groups, Scouts etc.
- 4.13 The group have secured external funding and will contribute approximately £116k towards the costs of the project.

Sculpture House Collective

- 4.14 The funding will allow Sculpture House to make a number of improvements to the environmentally sustainable home for the organisation. The organisation currently work from Craigielea house, a Victorian villa in Ferguslie Park.

They currently have a 20 year lease from Renfrewshire Council, and are becoming an established and embedded creative asset for Ferguslie Park and beyond.

- 4.15 The organisation has applied for capital funding to improve the energy efficiency of the building by installing insulation and replacing sub-standard and failing windows, enhancing the quality of the spaces within and reducing the carbon footprint.
- 4.16 These works have been identified following recommendations received in the feasibility study as to the best way to improve the building fabric and reduce energy consumption.
- 4.17 The initial application included capital costs for two phases, the first focussed on the energy efficiency measures above, and the second around creating a new kiln room to create a community-accessible ceramic facility within the building. It is recommended that capital costs are awarded for the first phase of this project at this time. The organisation has identified potential external funding for the second phase of this work.

Get Active Coaching

- 4.18 Get Active Coaching applied for funding to refurbish a unit for their “Get Active Hub”, a community wellbeing hub offering a range of affordable and accessible exercise opportunities within a multipurpose health, fitness and wellbeing space. The organisation currently rent space within another gym and are seeking to develop their own space in an unused industrial unit in Abercorn Industrial Estate, Paisley.
- 4.19 The key audience is people who are not currently engaged in physical activity to improve wellbeing and alleviate isolation. The panel noted the group have been successful in securing over £100k of external funding and are able to demonstrate wider community benefit through collaborations with local charitable organisations who would be able to access the space free of charge.
- 4.20 The application for £10,000 focussed on the purchase of equipment and also an infra-red heating system. The Panel are recommending a part award to support with the purchase of the heating system, and not the purchase of gym equipment.
- 4.21 The residual balance of available funding within the Sustainable Communities Fund is currently £117,194 of revenue funding, and £450,565 of capital funding. This includes the contribution from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, but does not include the recommendations detailed within this paper.
- 4.22 Subject to the approval of recommendations as set out in Appendix 1, £145,155 would be allocated to successful projects through this round of fund (£141,505 Capital, £3,650 Revenue).

Deferred applications

4.23 Two applications were submitted where further information requires to be gathered and evaluated before officers are able to make recommendations on these applications to the Board. To allow for further work to be carried out with groups relating to their proposals, it is recommended that applications are deferred as follows:

- Houston Community Council
- Life Church

4.24 Elected members are asked to note that for clarity and ease of assessment, this application will be assessed against the updated guidance by the officer Panel, alongside any new applications received.

Applications not recommended for award

4.25 Following assessment by the officer panel, the following applications are not recommended for a funding award, as they do not meet the criteria of the fund:

- Finding Your Feet
- Renfrew Cricket Club

4.26 Members are asked to note that where projects are not recommended for award, this does not reflect the quality and value of these projects and associated organisations at a local level, and officers will work with wider partners to signpost to other appropriate funding mechanisms.

Withdrawn applications

4.27 Two applications were withdrawn during the cycle from:

- Houston Old School Trust
- Friends of Barshaw Park

4.28 More detailed information in relation to each application is provided in Appendix 1.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – This paper recommends the allocation of £145,155 of funding from the Sustainable Communities Fund (£141,505 capital funding, £3,650 Revenue).
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none.
3. **Community/Council Planning** – the Fund set out in the paper supports engagement and collaboration with local communities on a range of activities which align with the new Council Plan 2022-2027; Our Renfrewshire Community Plan and/or Renfrewshire's Plan for Net Zero.

4. **Legal** - none.
5. **Property/Assets** – there are a number of applicants to this fund seeking to pursue community asset transfers, and where there are relevant property or asset issues these are covered as part of discussions at the officer panel.
6. **Information Technology** – none.
7. **Equality and Human Rights** – the Recommendations included within this report are considered to have a positive impact on equality and human rights. The fund continues to attract applicants seeking to make community assets more accessible for communities, for example in this round there are recommended awards to support disabled access and facilities in community venues, dedicated projects for older people, as well as a number of projects seeking to address poverty and socio-economic disadvantage faced within some local communities.
8. **Health and Safety** – none.
9. **Procurement** – none.
10. **Risk** – none.
11. **Privacy Impact** – none.
12. **Climate Risk** – the Sustainable Communities Fund aligns with the themes within Renfrewshire’s Plan for Net Zero and the delivery of relevant projects will assist the local response to the climate emergency.
13. **Childrens Rights** – while there are no specific children’s rights implications associated with the recommendations for this round Sustainable Communities Fund, there are applications in the pipeline which seek to widen opportunities for children and young people to actively participate within their communities.
14. **COSLA Policy Position** – none.

Appendix 1: Summary of applications with Officers recommendations
Appendix 2 – Information on previously funded projects

List of Background Papers:
Sustainable Communities Fund Guidance

Author: Laura McIntyre, Head of Policy and Partnerships

Appendix 1 – Sustainable Communities Fund

APPLICATIONS RECOMMENDED FOR AWARD					
Name of organisation	Project description	Tier	Grant Application Amount	Recommended Award	Comments
Renfrewshire Community Transport	<p>The purpose of this project is to purchase up to 2 accessible vehicles to meet the needs of vulnerable individuals & groups across Renfrewshire by providing community based transport solutions which support access to essential services, and opportunities; and help to reduce isolation caused by barriers to accessible transport.</p> <p>This project will enable the group to build on the findings from the feasibility study and to develop a practical pilot offering community transport services to a range of groups and individuals</p>	Large	£32,000	£32,000	
RSPB	<p>The purpose of the project is to create a workshop that is accessible, sustainable and attractive for individuals with a variety of accessibility needs. It will include an accessible workbench, lockers for equipment and will be an insulated space that is powered by predominantly solar energy.</p>	Large	£48,005	£48,005	

APPLICATIONS RECOMMENDED FOR AWARD					
Name of organisation	Project description	Tier	Grant Application Amount	Recommended Award	Comments
	<p>The workshop will give both new and existing community members the chance to take part in practical conservation work, supporting local biodiversity and climate action.</p> <p>Improved accessibility and facilities will benefit family groups, wheelchair users, and those facing the greatest barriers to nature, empowering them to engage with and enjoy their local greenspace.</p>				
Sculpture House Collective	The funding will allow Sculpture House to make a number of improvements to the environmentally sustainable home for the organisation. Upgrading the energy efficiency of the building by installing insulation and replacing sub-standard and failing windows, enhancing the quality of the spaces within and reducing the carbon footprint.	Large	£93,417.60	£61,500	
Get Active Coaching	The funding will allow the group to refurbish an unused industrial unit in Abercorn Industrial Estate, Paisley to become a community wellbeing hub and change the lives of the members and the wider community.	Small	£10,000	£3,650	

APPLICATIONS RECOMMENDED FOR AWARD					
Name of organisation	Project description	Tier	Grant Application Amount	Recommended Award	Comments
	The funding will allow the group to install a low carbon infra-red heating system so that they can set up a multipurpose health, fitness and wellbeing hub. The hub will be centred around affordable and accessible exercise opportunities.				
DEFERRED APPLICATIONS					
Name of organisation	Project description	Tier	Grant Application Amount	Recommended Award	Comments
Houston Community Council	The project will deliver a Local Place Plan for the area covered by Houston Community Council.	Intermediate	£23,500	n/a	Panel advised of proposed development to make Council funding resource available to all local bodies seeking to develop Place Plans on an equitable basis. Decision deferred to allow for development of this resource in principle.

APPLICATIONS RECOMMENDED FOR AWARD					
Name of organisation	Project description	Tier	Grant Application Amount	Recommended Award	Comments
DEFERRED APPLICATIONS					
Life Church	<p>The Lighthouse Project aims to transform the 1929-30 Henry Wilson Art Deco building at Paisley Cross, Paisley, Scotland, into a vibrant community hub featuring a café and public worship space.</p> <p>This initiative seeks to create a new home for the Church, preserving the architectural heritage of this iconic structure while addressing community needs such as socialisation, poverty alleviation, and addiction support.</p>	Large	£100,000	N/A	Recommendation to defer to allow for further engagement and clarification on the application.
Finding Your Feet (FYF)	Further to a Business Energy Scotland (BES) energy audit, funding is sought to work alongside a contractor to identify key actions to be undertaken and cost up a programme of work and engage potential contractors. The audit outlined a range of recommendation to lower running costs/reduce the carbon emissions of the FYF Charity Hub in central Paisley.	Small	£6,534.00	N/A	The Panel are not recommending an award for this application as it did not meet the criteria relating to Best Value and leverage of additional funding and / or resources.

APPLICATIONS RECOMMENDED FOR AWARD					
Name of organisation	Project description	Tier	Grant Application Amount	Recommended Award	Comments
Renfrew Cricket Club	The purpose of the project is to enhance the security and safety of the cricket club's grounds by installing 3-metre high fencing around the perimeter.	Large	£57,298.20	N/A	The Panel are not recommending an award for this application as it did not meet the criteria relating to the viability of the project.
WITHDRAWN APPLICATIONS					
Name of organisation	Project description	Tier	Grant Application Amount	Recommended Award	Comments
Friends of Barshaw Park	The group have requested support from the Fund for a range of capital works as well as a project manager and contingency to maintain structural support of the wall and bring buildings back into use as workshops and venues for activities.	Large	£80,000	N/A	N/A
Houston Old School Trust	Replacement of one of the Centre's gas central heating boilers. This boiler provides the heating for four of the rooms available for let and the hot water for the Kitchen.	Small	£4,000	N/A	N/A

Appendix 2 - Sustainable Communities Fund – Progress Report (Round 2 awards)

1. Summary

- 1.1** This summary updates the Communities and Housing Policy Board on progress made by community groups and organisations in receipt of funding from the Sustainable Communities Fund. It provides information for the Board on projects awarded in round 2 of the fund.
- 1.2** The key objective of the Sustainable Communities Fund is to strengthen work within communities to identify opportunities for land and assets within local areas to develop local projects which benefit those who live there – connecting people through regenerated local spaces and tackling inequality through community collaboration.
- 1.3** The UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Communities and Place portion of the Sustainable Communities Fund is made up of a clear split between capital and revenue funding; and has set amounts allocated over financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25 and will be allocated within these guidelines.
- 1.4** At its meeting on 12th March 2024 the Communities and Housing Policy Board agreed to allocate funding to 4 community organisations, totalling £155,000. This report updates on 3 of those projects. Also included in this report is a round 1 project, which was not reported on in the previous board paper.
- 1.5** At its meeting on 12th March 2024 the Communities and Housing Policy Board agreed to allocate funding to 4 community organisations, totalling £155,000. This report updates on 3 of those projects. Also included in this report is a round 1 project, which was not reported on in the previous board paper.

2. Progress of successful projects

2.1 7th Paisley & District J.N.I Scout Group – Small Award £10,000 (Round 2)

- 2.1(a)** The 7th Paisley & District J.N.I Scout group were awarded £10,000 to improve the toilet facilities within the Bield activity centre, which is in Broomlands Street in the west end of Paisley. The total cost of the improvements was £11,256.00, with the group contributing the additional £1,256.00 from their own funds. The group own the building which they purchased in 1984 from the Church of Scotland.

- 2.1(b) 7th Paisley & District J.N.I Scout Group provides fun, adventure, and outdoor learning to improve the physical and mental health of young people aged 5 years to 18 years, both male and female. The Bield activity centre offers community groups access to indoor climbing and archery to a range of community groups across Renfrewshire.
- 2.1 (c) At the time of applying the toilet facilities within the centre were inadequate and unsafe forcing the club to close the gents' toilets. This meant that the only female toilet was being used by everyone who was accessing the activity centre.
- 2.1(d) Improvements to the toilet facilities within the centre have produced upgraded male and female toilet facilities, with heating and hand drying facilities which weren't available previously. The centre also now hosts a fully fitted unisex disabled toilet. The male toilet has 2 cubicles and 3 urinals with 3 wash hand basins. The ladies' toilet has 3 cubicles with 3 wash hand basins. The roof on all facilities have been lowered, which along with the new heaters' provides a cleaner, warmer environment for users.
- 2.1(e) The improvements to the facilities within the Bield centre has meant that the centre has been able to increase lets of the hall and usage has increased from 7 regular lets from organisations with a combined total of 250 members to 12 organisations with regular lets with a combined membership of over 600 members. The hall management committee have expressed a huge thank you to the council for supporting these improvements.

2.2 Brick Lane Music Academy CIC Ltd – Intermediate Award £20,000 (Round 2)

- 2.2(a) Brick Lane Music Academy CIC Ltd received £20,000 in round 2 of the Sustainable Communities Fund to build an outdoor sensory music studio and sensory garden. The total cost of the garden is £22,000 with Brick Lane Music Academy contributing £2000 from their own funds.
- 2.2(b) The Garden Room was completed in October 2024. The garden works are now underway and will include a mural wall, yellow brick road, sensory garden and some musical outdoor sensory structures.

2.2(c) The Garden Room has had sensory lighting installed, a surround sound Bluetooth system, a TV, large beanbags and electric piano. The group started using the Sensory Garden Room in November 2024 with Toddler groups using it initially, some with additional support needs and they loved it! The group have also used the room for older adults and have attached ramps for wheelchair access.



- 2.2(d) Next year the organisation aim to increase the use of the garden room for additional support need community groups and an older adults Ukulele group, once the Sensory Garden is complete (anticipated completion February 2025) in time for Spring planting too!

2.3 Renfrewshire Community Transport (RCT) - Intermediate Award £25,000 (Round 2)

- 2.3(a) RCT received £25,000 towards the cost of a £35,000 project for initial startup costs. The additional £10,000 was provided by SPT's community transport fund. The £25,000 investment from the Sustainable Communities Fund allowed the group to engage a development consultant for the project on a part time basis. An officer from the council has met with the development manager to discuss progress of the project.
- 2.3(b) Renfrewshire Community Transport (RCT) carried out a pilot with Glasgow Community Transport, with Ferguslie Park Housing Association and Tannahill Centre who were supporting the service with the parking space, and key access to one (non-wheelchair accessible) minibus.
- 2.3(c) Community Groups were able to hire the minibus via Glasgow Community Transport, however, due to senior staff changes and illness within Glasgow Community Transport, they have not been providing the anticipated data, for example, hire organisations, trip numbers/types, distance travelled and hire data. While this has been frustrating for the Renfrewshire Community Transport group, it has not impeded the outcome of the pilot.
- 2.3(d) The pilot has confirmed that RCT require their own minibus, booking system and to take full ownership of the hires and support Renfrewshire's local community groups, which they will hopefully be able to do in due course by securing a minibus within the project. This approach looks promising as RCT have engaged with partner Community Transport operators for shared learning and have become active members of the CTA (Community Transport Association).

2.4 St Catherine's Primary School Parent Council – Small Award £8,680 (Round 1)

- 2.4(a) St Catherine's Parent Council were awarded £8,680 to develop a community garden and outdoor learning area. This idea came after consultation with the children about what they would like to see happen to the derelict space left by the demolition of the janitor's house within the school grounds.



2.4(b) The garden has been used to better engage parents and carers within the school community and has been a huge success, with parents, carers, teachers, and children from all year groups participating in the development of the gardens.



2.4(c) The money provided by the Sustainable Communities Fund has allowed the school and parent partnership to purchase a range of tools and equipment to help them prepare the land for all the growing and learning that the children wanted to see happen there.

2.4(d) As part of the project the school and the parent partnership have engaged with and built partnerships with Renfrewshire Youth Services and Sculpture House Project who supported a group of P5 and P6 (ASN) children to visit Sculpture House, and using the external at the school entrance by the artist Charles Anderson the children were supported to make new designs. They then visited Sculpture House and used their designs to make casts. These were then fired and installed on the Outdoor Learning Area walls.



2.4(e) St Catherine's also worked with Trinity High School. Mr Craig and his Tech class cut wood and put it all together to create planting beds for the children. The Janitor, Mr O'Neil who previously lived in the demolished Janitors house was also invited to be part of the process and was given the honorary role of starting the whole transformation off, by applying the first coat of paint to the garden walls.



2.4(f) The garden is almost complete and now boasts:

- A literacy pergola
- Library box for everyone to access.
- Area for health & Wellbeing (outdoor Yoga, quiet space)
- Art space with art box resources.
- Seating area made with recycled tyres.
- Birdboxes, wormery's, bug hotels and different planting areas, which were all made by each of the classes in the school.



2.4(g) An officer from the council was invited to the school to see the gardens and was treated to a lovely presentation from the school's garden committee, to hear all about the work they had undertaken and find how much they have enjoyed the experience.

'We have really loved getting outside and learning about all the different types of plants' Lucas

'I can't wait to get outside and read a book under the pergola' Kunashe

'Everyone in the school has been involved, and parents have come in to help us make our garden. I love our new garden and can't wait to see all the flowers bloom in the spring' Jaya



2.4(h) The school and the children plan to build on this experience and are planning a consultation to find out what they can do next in the garden. Residents of Kyle Court (the neighbouring sheltered housing complex) will be invited into the garden for a range of activities. The health and wellbeing area will be developed for use by the wider community.