

**To: INFRASTRUCTURE, LAND & ENVIRONMENT POLICY BOARD**

**On: 24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021**

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**Report by: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE**

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**Heading: Infrastructure & Assets Community Investment Fund**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets the next steps in the development and delivery of an Infrastructure and Assets Community Investment Fund, as agreed by the Infrastructure, Land & Environment Policy Board on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2020. This fund will seek to involve communities to put forward proposals and make decisions on investments in infrastructure and assets within their local areas through participatory budgeting.
- 1.2 Communities will be invited to have their say on what improvements and new infrastructure they would like to see in their area. Not only will this give local people a key role in the decision-making process around improving infrastructure within their area, but the Council will gain a better understanding of community priorities.
- 1.3 COSLA and Scottish Government have developed and agreed a framework on which to take forward participatory budgeting. The framework acts as an enabler for active participation of communities in local decision making and it establishes a shared expectation that elected members, senior officers and local communities will go beyond the current arrangements for consultation and engagement.
- 1.4 It is proposed that over a three-year period £1.2m from the Roads Capital Investment Programme will be set aside specifically for this fund, this equates to 5% of the Roads Capital Investment Programme over this same three-year period. The funding is designed to be flexible and, dependant on the need and nature of the projects suggested, there may be the opportunity to supplement this funding from the Council's Capital resources or funding from external providers.

- 1.5 The principles of participatory budgeting are about addressing needs within communities. To ensure all areas benefit from this investment, we will bring forward proposals for every area of Renfrewshire, with local communities shaping the investments that will bring benefits and improvements in their local area.
  - 1.6 As this will be the first participatory budgeting project of its kind within Renfrewshire Council, the approach will need to be flexible to allow officers to respond to the needs of the different communities as the programme develops, and to learn from the feedback from participants on an ongoing basis.
  - 1.7 With the current COVID-19 restrictions, there will be a requirement to think differently and innovatively about the way in which local people are able to engage in the process, with specific focus on engaging with people who may be more unlikely to participate or face barriers in terms of participation. It will be important to adapt approaches and to continue to do so in response to feedback given, this will not be a one-off consultation and will be undertaken on an ongoing basis over a longer period of time.
  - 1.8 It is important that the local community play an active role to ensure successful outcomes for their communities. Communities will be asked to be imaginative and innovative when it comes to bringing forward potential projects for inclusion within the programme
  - 1.9 A public communications and marketing plan will be developed to promote the project as detailed in section 4.0 of this report. Communications will commence in May 2021. The aim is to have as wide a representative profile of Renfrewshire's communities as possible, with representation from all towns, villages and communities across Renfrewshire and we will use cultural activity and creativity to make it easy for people to engage.
  - 1.10 The process will be set out over three phases. As part of the approach to community participation, our residents will be invited to share their initial ideas for infrastructure improvements. This original long list of projects will then be shortlisted against the criteria set out at section 3.6 of this report. The third phase will involve local communities voting on the projects that they would like to see in their community.
  - 1.11 At the current time it is anticipated that this process would conclude in late Autumn 2021 with works being programmed to take place from late 2021/early 2022 onwards once the successful projects have been identified.
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## 2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Infrastructure, Land & Environment Policy Board:

- 2.1 Approves the implementation plan as outlined in section 3 of this report and notes that regular update reports will be brought back to future Policy Boards.

### **3. Community Investment Fund Implementation Plan**

3.1 Participatory Budgeting is the process in which communities are involved in deciding how public money is spent. This allows budgets to be spent in a way that reflects the strengths, needs and aspirations of communities. The Infrastructure & Assets Community Investment Fund will allow communities within Renfrewshire to decide which infrastructure improvements they would like in their area.

3.2 The implementation of the Community Investment Fund will be managed by officers from Environment & Infrastructure and the Chief Executives service.

#### **3.3 Community Engagement**

Although Participatory Budgeting is about local people being part of the decision-making process, Elected Members will have a key role to play in the process as well as supporting and championing the process and encouraging residents to participate.

3.4 In order to support Elected Members in this role, a full Members information pack is being developed which will be supplemented by a Members briefing session.

3.5 The public engagement will be carried out in three phases:

**Phase 1 – May - July 2021:** Residents across Renfrewshire will be invited to share their ideas and suggestions on infrastructure improvements they would like to see in their area. This first phase will form a 'long list' of potential projects. During this time, we will also be asking residents to get engaged with the process and start the conversation with communities.

**Phase 2 – August - September 2021:** The long list of proposals will undergo a technical assessment against the criteria outlined at 3.6 below, with the aim of producing an initial list of investment proposals for communities. It is essential to keep communities engaged and that this process is transparent, with the conversation continuing with communities to update and feedback on every proposal that comes forward with communities.

**Phase 3 – September 2021:** Residents across Renfrewshire will then be invited to vote on which project they wish to see proceeding from the shortlist of projects identified as meeting the criteria for the fund.

3.6 Due to the current COVID 19 pandemic it is recognised that traditional methods of consultation will need to be expanded, with new options considered to maximise opportunities for engagement with residents across Renfrewshire which will take place via:

- Online platforms
- Community groups
- Local Partnerships
- Leaflet drop via hubs/supermarkets/vaccination centres
- Schools

### 3.7 Assessment Criteria & Selection Process

The proposals put forward by communities will be shortlisted using the criteria outlined below:

- In Scope Definition – We want to encourage communities to be imaginative and creative in their thinking to consider environmental and physical infrastructure related improvements that would have wide community benefits. Examples of this could include: desire line pathways, green infrastructure, road, footways, drainage and street lighting improvements.
- Cost – The proposals would ideally cost between £5000 - £50,000. The ongoing maintenance costs of the proposal would require to be considered as part of the ongoing assessment along with the funding source to maintain the infrastructure & assets.
- Planning – Has the work or similar work already been planned – similar works in the pipeline or underway could have an impact on any proposals considered.
- Design – Will additional work be required? Ideas will be looked at to see what design work is required and if this would be feasible.
- Procurement – Ideas must meet the way the Council's commissions work.
- Location – It must be on Council land due to potential restrictions and delays around permission processes.

There are particular projects which cannot be considered for the fund such as festive lighting which have a significant ongoing revenue cost for the Council or infrastructure which is related to a community asset transfer.

### 4.0. Communications Strategy

4.1 Communication needs to provide clear, detailed information for residents on how they can participate in this project, including what can be put forward for consideration, how the ideas will be shortlisted, how they can vote and what the next steps will be.

4.2 The objectives of the communication plan are:

- To provide a clear, concise message to residents about what the project is and how they can get involved.
- To ensure that communities and local partners feel engaged with the project and the process around decision making is transparent
- To provide clear, accessible communications for a range of audiences, including on the council website, which is clear and fully explains how the project will work.
- To keep Elected Members informed and involved at each step in the process.

- 4.3 Promotion of the Community Investment Fund will be carried out in with the aim of generating awareness of Participatory Budgeting and encouraging residents to get involved in the process, particularly residents who are not in regular contact with the Council.
- 4.4 It is recognised in the current climate face to face engagement with communities will be limited and as such it will be important to utilise all existing and new communications channels to promote the launch of the initiative and to continue the conversation with communities as this progresses.
- 4.5 At the current time it is anticipated that this process would conclude in late Autumn 2021 with works being programmed to take place from late 2021/ early 2022 onwards once the successful projects have been identified.
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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – The budget has been set aside from the Roads Capital Investment Programme as approved by Council. The funding will be allocated based on community need and take consideration of the infrastructure and population of the town, village and community being considered, ensuring that investments are take forward in every community in Renfrewshire through this funding.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - None
3. **Community Planning – Creating a Sustainable Renfrewshire`**  
Better community engagement and participation leads to the delivery of more responsive services and better outcomes for communities. This is closely aligned to the ‘sustainable and connected’ priority of the Renfrewshire Community Plan which seeks to ‘listen and respond to the needs of communities, and partners.’ It is also aligned with the priority of Supporting the wellness and resilience of our citizens and communities through Enabling communities to have their voice heard and influence the places and services that affect them.
4. **Legal** – None
5. **Property/Assets** – None
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

as the proposals recognise individual arrangements that would have to be accommodated due to particular circumstances. 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** – None
9. **Procurement** – Works will be instructed using the Scotland Excel Roads and Related Structures Framework.
10. **Risk** - A risk register will be developed as part of the implementation.
11. **Privacy Impact** - None
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – This proposal helps to deliver on Cosla commitments to develop community empowerment and participatory budgeting.

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**List of Background Papers** – None

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