

**REPORT TO BANFF AND BUCHAN AREA COMMITTEE – 16 APRIL 2024****BANFF AND BUCHAN AREA COMMITTEE BUDGET 2023/2024 TOWNS AND VILLAGES AMENITY AND IMPROVEMENT FUND: YEAR END UPDATE AND OUTCOMES****1 Executive Summary/Recommendations**

**1.1** The purpose of this report is to (a) seek Members' consideration of the 2023/24 application of the Towns & Villages Improvement and Amenity Fund, including feedback from the projects, as part of the Area Committee budget; (b) consider and comment on the revised project criteria; and (c) confirm the continuation of the scheme in 2024/25.

**1.2 The Committee is recommended to:**

**1.2.1 consider the outcomes of the 2023/24 Towns & Villages Improvement and Amenity Fund, including feedback from the projects as detailed in Appendix 1;**

**1.2.2 confirm the project criteria, as detailed in Appendix 2; and**

**1.2.3 continue to support the provision of this fund in 2024/25.**

**2 Decision-Making Route**

**2.1** The recommendations within this report are in line with the criteria for the use of the funds as agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee on 19 April 2007.

**2.2** At its meeting on 12 September 2023, (Item 12), the Area Committee agreed to allocate a proportion of the Banff and Buchan Area Committee Budget 2023/2024 of £81,200, to two other new grant streams: Towns and Villages Improvements and Amenities Fund, and The Green Space and Food Growing fund. The Towns and Villages Improvements and Amenities Fund scheme was allocated £14,820, based on a pro rata consideration of three categories of settlement size.

**3 Discussion**

**3.1** As was known at the time of making the monies available to community councils and other community groups, the mid-year allocation, out of kilter with the growing seasons, caused some groups difficulties in being able to take up the funds on offer.

The monies were intended:

- to be for the benefit of all, to assist communities in maintaining the appearance of their towns and villages.
- to support initiatives by each community,
- to encourage the promotion of team working to develop stronger communities.
- to encourage on-going works (maintenance or 'revenue works') rather than one-off specific projects ('capital works').
- to be used to offer an honorarium to a dedicated individual within the village or town through a constituted body, such as a Community Association or Community Council, and/or to provide materials for the worker and volunteers.

- 3.2 The process allowed, to assist with any cash flow issues, that funds be released to the allocated settlement on the identification of appropriate projects, which were to be advised to the Area Manager for approval.
- 3.3 From the 22 communities which were identified, six were unable to take up the offer of funding: Cortes/Rathen, Crovie, Gardenstown, King Edward, Memsie, and New Byth. Their share of the fund totalled £3,000 and so was returned to the Area Committee budget.
- 3.4 Fordyce, Sandend & District Community Council were unable to progress with their planned work at Sandend, so the allocation of £500 has been returned.
- 3.5 Year-end spend totalled £10,600, as £4,250 of the original budget was not taken up. These funds were returned to the overall Area Committee budget and used to support Area Initiatives Fund applications.
- 3.6 One Community Council, unable to progress with its original distribution of funds, either for their own direct spend, or to assist with third party or other community projects, made awards to other projects which do not conform with the criteria of the fund. As the funding had been released on the original application proposals, and at no point had the specific details of the replacement projects been advised to the Area Manager, we were unable to assess the propriety of the spend. When details became available, in the project update report, it was noted that one project did not fully meet the criteria and so could not be funded. This is being pursued with the Community Council for a return of the money, as it is for each successful organisation to ensure that the monies are being spent in line with the scheme criteria.
- 3.7 As part of the award, recipients are required to provide an update on the progress of the works and identify the benefits. Updates from most of the groups are attached as Appendix 1 for consideration. Some groups have not yet been able to report on the conclusions of their projects so these will be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.
- 3.8 The criteria are appended with suggested updates, and it is proposed that this be adopted for the financial year 2024/25.

## 4 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

4.1 The projects supported will help to deliver the following Council Priorities:

<b>Pillar</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Our People	Health & Wellbeing
Our Environment	Resilient Communities

Underpinning the Priorities are a number of key principles. They are: right people, right places, right time; responsible finances; climate and sustainability; Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plans; human rights and public protection; tackling poverty and inequalities; digital infrastructure and economy.

The range of applications submitted for Members' consideration contribute, to varying extents, to the delivery of these priorities and principles.

4.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Financial	<b>x</b>		
Staffing		<b>x</b>	
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland		<b>x</b>	
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing		<b>x</b>	
Climate Change and Sustainability		<b>x</b>	
Health and Wellbeing		<b>x</b>	
Town Centre First			<b>x</b>

4.3 As previously advised, the criteria for Following the Public Pound (FPP) have been altered. The current threshold for is now £10,000. Officers will continue to be alert to cumulative grants, which would include any new funding options detailed above. No award will be released until, and unless, the applications are confirmed as complying with any requirements.

4.4 The screening section as part of Stage One of the Integrated Impact Assessment has not identified the requirement for any further detailed assessments to be undertaken as the proposed awards are for projects outwith the Council's management and conform with the Council's criteria for the award of monies to the area committees for which no discriminatory impacts have been identified. The Council's budget setting on 22 February 2024, (Item 4), was supported by appropriate IIAs, but no negative impact was identified relating to the Area Committee Budgets.

4.5 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:  
ACORP001 Budget Pressures;

ACORP005 Working with Other Organisations (Link to [Corporate Risk Register](#)).

No risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level. ([Link to risk register page on website](#))

## **5 Scheme of Governance**

- 5.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments have been incorporated. They are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 5.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section B.6.3 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to the authorisation of expenditure from the Area Committee Budget.

**LAURENCE FINDLAY**  
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Date: 27 March 2024

Appendix 1: Feedback Report of Projects Undertaken  
Appendix 2: Proposed Revised Criteria 2024/25