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| Agenda Item | 8         |
| Report No   | BI/011/21 |

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Black Isle Committee

**Date:** 16 November 2021

**Report Title:** Place Based Investment Funds –  
Proposed Funding Allocations

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following on from the budget agreed by the Highland Council in March 2021, a £100,000 Place Based Investment Fund was allocated to each Ward for the 2021/22 financial year. This Fund is intended to enable a flexible local response to address the four harms of Covid which are identified as direct health harms; health impacts not directly related to Covid; societal impacts and economic impacts.
- 1.2 Early discussions with local Members at Ward level have identified four initial priority areas for spend against the Place Based Investment Fund for the Ward. This report asks the Committee to agree the budget allocations outlined in the report and note that a report will come to the next meeting of this committee to consider a detailed proposal on sustainable economic recovery.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to agree:
  - i. **£20,000 for Mental Health and Wellbeing** with a particular focus on young people, older people and disabled people to reduce increased feelings of anxiety or social isolation. Funding to be delegated to Fortrose Academy - Black Isle Wellbeing Group.
  - ii. **£25,000 for Community Spaces** (Play, Environment, Green Space) Recognising the increased usage of open spaces and supporting local projects to improve play opportunities. Funding to be delegated to the Council's Amenities team for direct delivery.
  - iii. **£25,000 to establish a grant fund** for investment in community-led projects to address the four harms of covid.
  - iv. **£30,000 to Support Sustainable Economic Recovery** - to address how the pandemic has impacted on the economic recovery; including tourism, training and employment. A proposal on how this will be delivered would be considered at the next meeting of this committee.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource implications – The resource implications are set out in the report. The proposals outlined would allocate up to £100,000 from the Black Isle Place Based Fund with a proposal on the support for sustainable economic recovery to be considered at the next meeting of this committee.
- 3.2 Legal implications – there are no legal implications.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) impacts – The allocation of funds being proposed within the report will enable activities that will promote equality, address inequality and promote community wellbeing. A number of the project strands will be community led.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever implications – Investment in open spaces will increase walking rather than car travel.
- 3.5 Risk implications – There are no identified risks as projects will either be delivered in-house within the identified budget or will be provided as grants to established experienced organisations using the Highland Council's standard grant criteria/process.
- 3.6 Gaelic – There are no specific Gaelic implications.

### 4. Background

- 4.1 As part of the budget setting process, a Place Based Investment Fund was created for 2021/22 allocating £100,000 to each Ward across Highland. The aim of this Fund is to address the four harms of Covid:

- **Direct health harms**; to people's health through contracting the virus.
- **Health impacts not directly related to Covid**; a wider impact on health and social care due to the impact on services and how people can or maybe cannot use these services.
- **Societal impacts** - as a result of the measures put in place to slow the spread of the virus this could lead to increased feelings of isolation or anxiety and impact on the wellbeing of individuals. It is also noted how different groups of the population have been adversely impacted by the pandemic – younger people and older people.
- **Economic impacts** – how the economy has been impacted by the pandemic including employment and income for individuals.

Any funding needs to set out how it will address one or more of the four harms of Covid.

- 4.2 Following initial discussions locally, including with wider community groups and networks, the following four areas have been identified as priority areas for targeting the Place Based Investment Fund.

#### 4.3 Mental Health and Wellbeing - £20,000

- 4.3.1 Mental health and wellbeing has emerged as a major concern following the impacts of Covid in the Black Isle.

- 4.3.2 Black Isle Members work closely with representatives of Wellbeing in the Black Isle Group, led by Fortrose Academy. This is a well-established multi agency group which has the wellbeing needs of the Black Isle community at its core. This group works with all generations - from nursery pupils to the most elderly and vulnerable across the Black Isle.
- 4.3.3 Strong links with Fortrose Academy, seven Black Isle Primary Schools, Black Isle Community Councils, Community Groups, Mid Ross Community Partnership, Police, NHS Highland and local Doctors, Highland Council (various teams including Education, Social Services, Ward Team), Highlife Highland and Ward Councillors were in place pre Covid pandemic.
- 4.3.4 Part of this funding would be used to kick start pre-existing plans, as well as helping to identify and target developing societal impacts. Engagement and surveys have identified social isolation of both young people and the elderly, which has increased significantly during the Pandemic. The funding would significantly enhance the existing work of the group - benefitting the Black Isle Community.
- 4.3.5 Planned intergenerational activities will help young people to become more resilient and elderly and vulnerable to feel less isolated.
- 4.3.6 It is proposed to allocate £20,000 to support initiatives relating to improving health and wellbeing through reducing increased feelings of anxiety or social isolation with a particular focus on young people, older people and disabled. This would be delivered through the Black Isle Wellbeing Group and funding delegated to Fortrose Academy who oversee the partnership.

#### 4.4 **Community Spaces (Play, Environment, Green Space) - £25,000**

- 4.4.1 Members and communities in the Black Isle are aware of the importance of play in the lives of children, young people and their families and the benefits to their mental health and well-being of having access to quality, accessible equipment. The impacts of Covid have been felt across the age ranges. This important investment will help in keeping Playparks open with replacing equipment that has been removed or has a life span of less than three years as well as replacement of play bark. There will be consideration of exploring sustainable play provision

#### 4.5 **Investment in community-led projects - £25,000**

- 4.5.1 A grant fund will be established for constituted groups delivering successfully in their communities. Projects must relate to off-setting at least one of the 4 harms of Covid. The maximum level of grant will be up to £10,000 and projects which bring an element of match-funding will be prioritised over those seeking 100% funding. However, 100% grant award could be made available for exceptional projects. There will be one funding round closing end of January 2022 which will see commitment by mid-March. All projects must be completed by December 2022. Applications will be made via the established process for Ward Discretionary Grants.

- 4.6 **Sustainable Economic Recovery (how the pandemic has impacted on the economic recovery – including tourism, training and employment) - £30,000**
- 4.6.1 Members and community/business/tourism representatives from throughout the Black Isle have worked closely over the last number of years with the aim and vision for the area for it to prosper as a place to work and live, based on principles that support wellbeing, a sustainable and self-reliant community safeguarding natural resources.
- 4.6.2 The impact of Covid economically on the area and the subsequent tourism pressures would indicate there is a need to develop a strategic approach for the area focused on building sustainable economic recovery.
- 4.6.2 It is proposed to allocate £30,000 towards this aim with a proposal for delivery being considered at the next meeting of the Black Isle Committee in February.

## **5. Management of Funds**

- 5.1 Black Isle Members recognise the importance of engaging with their local communities to provide opportunities for them to develop their own priority projects. The proposed funding allocations allow a number of community led initiatives to progress. Where an open grant fund is being established, applications will be invited from formally established community groups, charitable organisations and community development trusts and Community Planning partners. The proposed funding allocations also provide direct funding to specific named organisations and the Highland Council services for delivery.
- 5.2 The funds allocated in accordance with the report will be managed by the Ward Manager with any grants awarded of £10,000 or over being reported to a future Black Isle Committee for approval.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

Date: 8 November 2021

Author: Diane Agnew, Ward Manager

**Back ground papers:** Place Based Investment Fund Operational Guidance