

Agenda Item	<b>9.</b>
Report No	<b>SCC/07/22</b>

## **THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**Committee:** Sutherland County Committee

**Date:** 28 February 2022

**Report Title:** Sutherland Place Based Investment Fund

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

### **1. Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 Following on from the budget agreed by 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 4 harms of Covid which are identified as direct health harms; health impacts not directly related to Covid; societal impacts and economic impacts.
- 1.2 Following the reports to Sutherland County Committee on 16 August 2021 and 22 November 2021, which allocated the Wards 1 and 4 Place Based Investment Fund, this report provides detail on proposals against those allocations.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider and agree the following grants:
- i. £10,000 of the Place Based Investment Fund for Ward 1 to Dornoch Firth Group for the Sutherland Cares Counselling Service
  - ii. £10,000 of the Place Based Investment Fund for Ward 4 to Dornoch Firth Group for the Sutherland Cares Counselling Service
  - iii. £23,500 of the Place Based Investment Fund for Ward 4 to Helmsdale and District Community Association for the Helmsdale Play SPACE project
  - iv. £23,500 of the Place Based Investment Fund for Ward 4 to Go Golspie Development Trust for King George V Playpark Refurbishment

### 3. Implications

#### 3.1 Resource implications

The resource implications are set out in the report.

#### 3.2 Legal implications

Funding is being made available to external groups and/or other Council services in line with the Scheme of Delegation, meaning these grants which are larger than £10,000 require Sutherland County Committee approval.

#### 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) impacts

Support for projects that improve the quality of community outdoor space and that address the mental wellbeing impacts of COVID will deliver positive impacts on communities and working through local groups helps build community capacity.

The provision of access to a counselling service across Sutherland offers equity of access for communities remote from current service provision.

#### 3.4 Risk implications

Grants will be made following established grant making procedures to minimise the risk of project failure, funding shortfall or funding being used for other purposes.

New play equipment will in time require maintenance and repairs, and at present resources are extremely limited for this. The future maintenance burden can be mitigated by Amenities staff working with communities to help ensure that any new equipment is low maintenance and uses standard parts; and by encouraging community groups to purchase service packages from manufacturers/ installers when they buy new equipment.

#### 3.5 Climate Change, Gaelic implications

There are no Climate Change or Gaelic implications.

### 4. Background

#### 4.1 Place Based Investment Fund

As part of the Health and Prosperity Strategy agreed through the 2021/22 budget process, £2.1m was approved for distribution through Area Committees to support local responses to address the four harms of COVID (direct harm caused by COVID; other health impacts; societal impacts and economic impacts) and consider local investments to support recovery. £100,000 per ward was agreed. Discussions with communities and partners highlighted priority areas for potential spend of the funding allocated to Sutherland:

#### 4.2 Ward 1

Members agreed at Sutherland County Committee on 22 November 2021 to allocate the £100,000 fund as follows:

Theme	Amount (£)
Playparks (Highland Council repairs and replacements)	50,000
Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing	40,000
Defibrillators	10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,000</b>

#### 4.3 Ward 4

Members agreed at Sutherland County Committee on 16 August and 22 November

2021 to allocate the £100,000 fund as follows:

Theme	Amount (£)
Playparks (Highland Council repairs and replacements) inc. contingency	33,000
Playparks (Community led projects)	47,000
Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing	20,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,000</b>

4.4 This report outlines the following three applications for funding for the Place Based Investment Fund:

Ward 4

- Helmsdale and District Community Assn – Helmsdale Play SPACE (£50,000).
- Go Golspie Development Trust – King George V Playpark Refurb. (£50,000).

Wards 1 and 4

- Dornoch Firth Group - Sutherland Cares Counselling Service (£20,000).

These applications are in excess of £10,000 so require approval of Sutherland County Committee.

## **5 Playparks (Community Led Projects)**

5.1 Helmsdale and District Community Association – Helmsdale Play SPACE  
Helmsdale and District Community Association has applied for £50,000 towards the £152,681 cost of refurbishing the playpark in Rockview Place, Helmsdale.

5.2 The latest play park inspection (Oct 2021) identified several issues with the current playpark including the removal of a spring rocker, the requirement to remove a broken see saw (currently fenced off), significant wear and corrosion of the swings and activity trail equipment and the general poor condition of surfacing throughout. The activity equipment was assessed as having a life expectancy of less than 12 months and the report recommends it should be considered for removal.

5.3 The application outlines proposals for the playpark that are ambitious and exciting and that provide an inclusive space themed play area for all ages. Local children were involved in the design which celebrates that Helmsdale is home to the first native Scot in space, Virgin Galactic's Chief pilot, David Mackay. To date only a small amount of match funding has been secured (£1850), but the fundraising effort has only just begun and will include approaches to SSE Renewables, Caithness & North Sutherland Fund, Westminster Fund and National Lottery.

5.4 The playpark is Council owned. Colleagues in Amenities have reviewed the proposals and are content with design and equipment. The proposed equipment will come with guarantees and the likelihood of minimal and affordable ongoing costs compared to the current equipment.

5.5 Go Golspie Development Trust – King George V Playpark Refurbishment  
Go Golspie Development Trust has applied for £50,000 towards the £72,000 cost of installing new equipment in King George V playpark, Golspie.

5.6 The latest playpark inspection (Oct 2021) notes that apart from the former road roller (which requires attention to corrosion and the design of steps and barriers) the only other remaining major piece of equipment, the swings, are nearing the end of their life.

The playpark looks very bare following the Council removal of a timber play tower structure which was no longer safe.

- 5.7 Go Golspie aims to replace the old equipment with a new large central piece of climbing equipment and several smaller pieces and has had meeting three separate suppliers on site. Go Golspie formed a voluntary subgroup to take forward the project, the subgroup has liaised with residents about what is preferred in terms of equipment and organised and raised nearly £5,000 through fundraising activities, events and donations. Go Golspie have also identified other sources of funding including Anne Duchess of Westminster Fund.
- 5.8 The playpark is Council owned. Colleagues in Amenities have reviewed the proposals plan and are content with design and equipment. The proposed equipment will come with guarantees and the likelihood of minimal and affordable ongoing costs compared to the current equipment.
- 5.9 Recommendation  
Both groups have established track records in their respective communities and have demonstrated capacity to liaise with the community and pull together designs and quotes from suppliers. Both have applied for £50,000 although there is only £47,000 available, so it is recommended to offer a 50/50 split to the two groups i.e., £23,500 each. Furthermore, it is recognised that both groups face a considerable funding effort to achieve what are ambitious targets. Normally, funding would not be allocated until all match funding is in place. However, recognising the considerable funding still required, it is also recommended that Members agree a flexible approach whereby if the full funding packages are not achieved but the groups can still evidence that part of the projects can be implemented with the funding in place, then the projects can still be financially supported in consultation with local Members.

## **7 Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing**

- 7.1 Dornoch Firth Group - Sutherland Cares Counselling Service  
Dornoch Firth Group has applied for £20,000 towards the £21,500 cost of delivering the Sutherland Cares Counselling Service.
- 7.2 The need for a counselling service emerged as one of the priorities identified at workshops organised by the Sutherland Pathfinder Project which focuses on mental health and wellbeing and was developed through the Sutherland Community Partnership (SCP). This project aims to address the challenges faced by rural and remote communities in Sutherland in achieving both equitable access to health services and equivalent clinical outcomes compared with their counterparts living in highly populated areas. In Sutherland, remote communities experience perennial difficulties accessing mental health treatments in a timely manner, which contributes to poor mental health outcomes. The project clearly addresses the Sutherland Place Based Investment Fund objective to support mental health and wellbeing.
- 7.3 Building on the proven success of a similar service offered via Scourie Community Development Company (SCDC) the project would offer an early intervention service, with the counselling being provided by the Scottish Counselling Service. The SCDC led service has demonstrated the need for such a service especially for the hard-to-reach groups, mainly our older population and men of all ages. The counselling service would be open to adults (18+) in all of Sutherland, excluding Sutherland's west coast which is already covered by the counselling service provided by SCDC. The service would also be available to those aged 16 to 18 and not in education - a separate service is

available to those still in education.

7.4 The service works by clients phoning a number extensively advertised by the Dornoch Focus Group and Sutherland Community Partnership, who refer on to the Scottish Counselling Service for up to 6 sessions. Initially 550 sessions per year will be available, and uptake and outcomes will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to ascertain the need for further sessions and funding.

7.5 Recommendation

Dornoch Firth Group has a strong track record of delivering projects and in this instance has agreed to support the roll out of a proven service by undertaking the management function of a project that will benefit clients across Sutherland. It is recommended that the project is supported with a grant of £10,000 each from both Wards 1 and 4 Place Based Investment Fund, on the condition of phased payments based on quarterly reviews of progress and monitoring of clients' locations to ensure a wide geographic uptake.

Designation: Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place

Date: 14 January 2022

Author: Phil Tomalin, Ward Manager, Sutherland

Background Papers: